



Heroes. Heritage. Renewal.

*Exerpts from the collection
"When the Mountains Roared"*

Stories of the 1910 Fires

PEND OREILLE NATIONAL FOREST

The Pend Oreille escaped better than most of the Idaho Forests, though there were several large fires. The big fires from the upper North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene cut the extreme southeast corner of the forest, south and east of the town of Clark Fork. Two firefighters lost their lives in this fire. The following is quoted from the official report on the fire:

DeFaut Fire

'William T. Brashear, Forest Guard, in charge.

"The party in which loss of life occurred was working under the direct charge of W. E. LaMonte, who had previously been in charge of a trail crew on this forest and who had been pressed into service on the fire line under the exigencies then existing. This fire burned largely I the DeFaut Gulch, which is a small dry gulch near Cabinet, Idaho, and south of the Clark Fork River (now called Dry Creek). It was originally supposed that this fire came over the divide from the Coeur d'Alene National Forest, but later investigations showed that it came around the head of Elk Creek from the Cabinet National Forest and joined with the smaller fire already burning in the DeFuat Gulch. The fire already in existence in DeFaut Gulch had been brought under control by LaMonte and his men. The party, consisting of 10 men, were camped about one mile from the fire line in a clearing of two or three acres. At noon on August 19 the men came back a short way from the trenches for lunch. LaMonte had returned to camp to hurry up the lunch, which was late. He had hardly got into camp before he became aware of the fire which was sweeping in from the south, driven by a fierce wind. Brashear, the Forest Guard, had learned of the approaching fire and hurried back to camp from a trip over the fire lines. He met LaMonte coming out and at once started to warn the men. When they reached the clearing it was plain to Brashear that the fire would over-take them. There was a spring in about the middle of the clearing and Brashear ordered the men to wet their clothes and bedding thoroughly, put their bedding over their heads, lie down near the spring, and wait until the fire had passed. They had hardly done this when the fire swept on them. At this juncture two to them apparently lost their reason completely, jumped up, threw off their bedding, rushed into the fire, and burned to death only few yards from where the rest of the men lay.

"The fire had hardly passed over when a relief party was organized by Deputy Forest Supervisor E. G. Stahl and a search started for Brashear and his men. They were found on August 20 in the clearing in an unconscious condition, but were soon restored to consciousness. If the two men who perished had followed orders and stayed with the crew, they, too, would have been saved. As it was, some of the balance of the crew had their eyes and hands badly burned trying to restrain the two men who were killed.

“The men at the time the fire occurred were working under instructions to patrol the fire lines around the fire on DeFaut Gulch, which was then under control.

“The names of the two men who lost their lives in the fire were J. Plant and J. Harris.”

Excerpts from the collection of “When The Mountains Roared”, (page 35 – 36), USDA Forest Service