

Two Blades of Grass Where
Thousands Grew Before...

By

John O'Neal

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JOHN AND HARRIET O'NEAL
Author and his wife, February, 1952.

■ Two Blades of Grass Where Thousands Grew Before . . .

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■ a pioneer cattleman who knew the forests of California's Madera County before they came under the 50-year stewardship of the U. S. Forest Service—has plenty to say in support of his contention that the agency has failed miserably in its obligations . . .

By JOHN O'NEAL
O'Neal's, Calif.

✓ Neap. 1

ONE of California's greatest resources are her high mountain areas which are for the most part owned by the people of the United States. Since these areas belong to the people of the nation, it is only fitting and proper that they be managed for the benefit of these people and their children to come. Considerable acreages have been set aside as National Parks; however, most of the area is administered by the U. S. Forest Service. The National Forests were established, so we were told, to prevent continued wasteful exploitation of our national forest lands and to manage them for maximum production and continuous supply of national forest products and services of timber, water, forage, wildlife and recreation. This is sufficient reason for such a step.

When the National Forests were established, the stockmen were named as one of the spoilers of our lands and the Forest Service has continued this defamation down through the years even though they have supposedly been managing these areas for half a century. They have fed their propaganda into our school systems so that our children are taught that there parents were despoilers of their country. Conservation of our natural resources is a very important subject to all the people of this country. Its teaching should be based upon facts of practical importance and not on hallucinations that do nothing but create dissension between different segments of American citizenry.

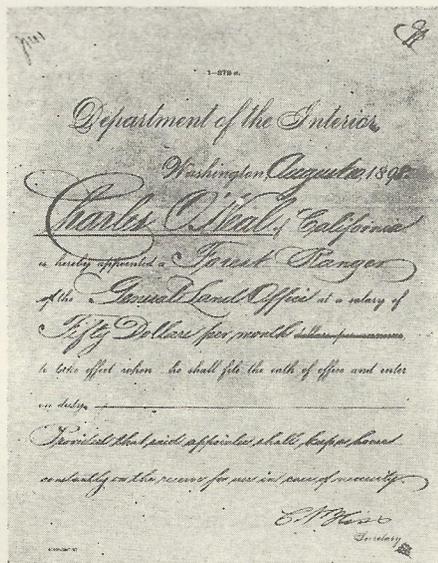
During the past 50 years, the Forest Service has been quite vocal about its position of leadership in conservation in this country. During this same period, this federal agency has had a greater responsibility in being charged with practicing conservation on a considerable acreage of public forest lands in this country. The Forest Service has likewise been quite generous in self-appraisal of their efforts. There are many people in this country who have no relationship with the Forest Service, and who are capable of passing judgment on various phases of the Forest Service's 50 years of stewardship. It is past time that we had such reports free from Forest Service bias.

Beauty to Deterioration. While it is true I cannot speak for any great area of U. S. forest lands, I have been associated with that portion of the Sierra National Forest within Madera County most of my life. I saw this area and grazed stock upon parts of it before it came under the management of the Forest Service. I have never seen a more beautiful place for recreation, hunting or fishing, and one could not have asked for a better summer range for his stock. When the Forest Service took over the management of this area, it had not been spoiled by the overgrazing of stock as they contended without so much as even riding over the area. Through the years of Forest Service management, there has been a gradual and marked deterioration of

this area with a corresponding increase of hazardous fire conditions.

It is my contention that the Forest Service's stated obligation to protect and manage national forest lands for the maximum production and continuous supply of national forest products and services of timber, water, forage, wildlife and recreation has been a miserable failure as far as this portion of the national forests is concerned. From what my neighbors to the north and south of here have told me about the changing conditions of the forests in their area and from watching and listening to a good many Forest Service officials, I am convinced this mismanagement of our forest lands has been common throughout California.

Most people who make their living from the land know there is a great variability in the land from one section of the country to another. Variability often exists between adjoining fields and even within a field. For this reason I have argued with various Forest Service officials, since the establishment of the National Forests, that they cannot manage all the forest areas of the United States with a single set policy. Some of these men admitted their policy was wrong in California (and some are experts at double-talk), but they had to follow the policy laid down from above or they would lose their jobs. There appears to be little chance of change in policy because those who fail to follow the party line closely have little hope of advancement to important positions.



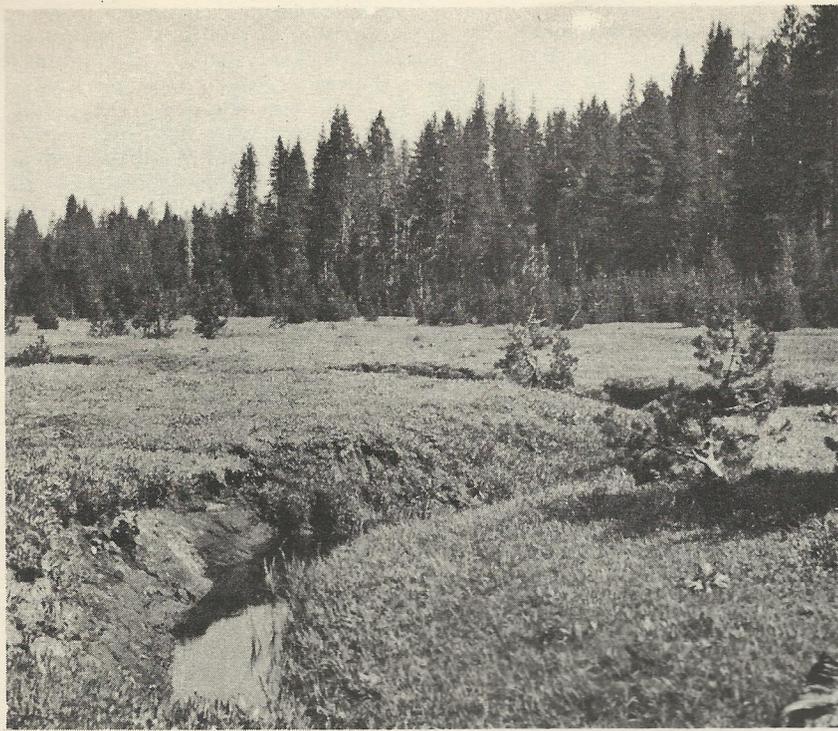
This is the official appointment of the author's father, Charles O'Neal, as first forest ranger in area, Aug. 10, 1898. His salary was \$50 a month, with the provision that he keep a horse "constantly on reserve for use in case of necessity."

One-Sided Story. I am not in a position to exploit the national treasury to publish my observations and opinions; nevertheless, I wish to make them public as I am sure the story the public has been getting from the Forest Service these many years is quite 1-sided. Furthermore I am convinced that in time the mismanagement of the national forest areas in California by the U. S. Forest Service will be well proved.

I was born in 1880 at O'Neal's, Calif., on the ranch I now own and operate. O'Neal's was named after my father as the first post-office in the community was in our home. My father was engaged in the livestock business; however, he did not trail his stock to the high mountain summer pastures. My entire life has been spent in this area in close association with livestock and the ranges upon which they lived. My education was mostly what my father taught me plus long hours spent teaming and raising cattle and sheep.

As a boy I saw Henry Daulton, Bill Raynor, Sr., George Mordecai and other old-time local sheepmen drive their bands of sheep past our ranch house to mountain pastures in the spring and then back down to foothill and valley pastures in the late fall. At this latter time it was common to see from our front porch the smoke from fires set on Shuteye Ridge by the sheepmen as they left the forest. These fires were set, as was formerly done by nature and the Indians, to keep the forest floor clean of accumulating pine needles, dead limbs, windfalls and similar filth which provide tinder and fuel for the disastrous forest fires we have in this day and age. I was still a lad when old Indians told me how they and their fathers used to burn the forests to improve their hunting grounds. They did not burn the whole forest each year, but would select an area that was growing up with brush and getting an accumulation of needles and other trash. After burning, this area would be a favorite hunting ground for the next few years as the deer would move into the area to get the new brush sprouts as well as the more abundant and favored range plants. After three to five years they would then burn another area.

Into the Forest. My first trip into what is now the Sierra National Forest occurred when I was eight years old. At that time I accompanied my father, Charles O'Neal, on a trip to the Soquel country to deliver four head of bulls to Pettis Station, which was below Soquel Meadow just across the North Fork Creek (the stream that ran through Crane Valley—now Bass Lake). Bull teams were then used in the logging operations in that area. My first real trip back into the forest proper, however, occurred a few years later. At this time my father, Frank Wetmore and I made a trip to Arnold Meadow to get some mules from Billy Larmie. Leaving home we traveled by North Fork and then over Big Shut-



ENCROACHMENT OF LODGPOLE PINE ON JACKASS MEADOW
Recreational, scenic, forage values are going, going . . .

eye to Arnold Meadow. This meadow was named for Ben Arnold and is now owned by Claude Williams.

Billy Larmie's mules were wild and had not been broken to lead so for a while we had quite a time. My father started out leading two mules and was followed by Frank who prodded father's mules besides leading two mules. I brought up the rear prodding the mules Frank was leading. We finally made it to the top of Big Shuteye and started down the other side. Frank was having a time fighting and cussing the mules when his horse fell into a hole filled with light fluffy ash left from a burned out stump. The ash rose in a dense cloud, completely covering the sputtering Englishman and his horse.

To me this trip into lower Chiquito Basin was a trip to paradise. Never had I seen such beautiful country. This magnificent forest was not logged and hasn't been until the last few years when a small amount was taken out, but its beauty has long been lost to encroaching brush, thickets of stunted trees, tangled windfalls and other debris. Today you can't see this forest for the accumulated debris.

Through the Mountains. When I was 14 years old, my uncle, Jim Douglas, took three other boys—Ben Marty, George Marty and Jack Welch—and me on a pack trip through the mountains to the old mining camp of Mammoth. Leaving home, the first day's travel took us through the familiar neighboring hills up to Crane Valley

where we camped the first night under a pine forest. The next morning we continued on until we reached the Old Mammoth Trail that we were to follow through the mountains.

The forest was beautiful and park-like since the forest floor was not covered with a thick blanket of pine needles, tangled windfalls and slopes of impenetrable brush as is the case now. A person could see a considerable distance through the forest and could ride almost any direction without hindrance. Following the trail we reached Beasore Meadow the afternoon of our second day's travel. It was a beautiful large open meadow and received its name from the Beasores who ran cattle in the area during the summer. Tom Beasore passed away in 1952 at the age of 92.

The next day we continued our trip up the trail beneath a magnificent forest that towered high above us. We were thrilled at the beauty and joys of traveling and camping in the mountains. Many were the deer seen and the vistas enjoyed that the present traveler would fail to see because of the worthless and hazardous tangle of undergrowth and windfalls that now dominate the forest floor. This day we traveled only a short distance to Chiquito Creek where we camped a couple of days. This later became the Cap Keith cow camp.

Continuing Trip. When we continued our trip, we traveled a short distance to Jackass Meadow where we

again camped for two or three days. At that time Jackass Meadow was a large, open, wet meadow consisting of from 1,500 to 2,000 acres. The meadow land ran off into the forest on all sides and was free of the thickets of small stunted tamaracks and tangled windfalls now encroaching upon it from all sides. The meadow received its name from the jacks pastured there by the old-time miners, "Daddy" Norris, Pete Killday, Frank Wheelock, Frank Fuller, Bob Ladel, Green Hitchcock, Pete Simas, Phil Ralph and Zack Taylor, while they mined for gold on Jackass Mountain. "Daddy" Norris also ran a trading post in the meadow beside the Old Mammoth Trail during the times the Mammoth Mines were booming.

Zack Taylor homesteaded in the meadow and we saw his old cabin. Its remains still stand beside my old cabin in the meadow. When Taylor died, Ezera Chapin, who owned Cascadel, was named administrator of Taylor's estate. He offered to sell Taylor's homestead to my father for \$400. When I urged my father to buy it, he said, "John, what do I want with a piece of land away up in the mountains?" Times were hard then and money not easy to get.

Leaving Jackass Meadow we continued up the trail through a series of beautiful stringer meadows all the way to Granite Creek, which we crossed, and continued to Granite Meadow where we made our next camp. The country we passed through this day was exceptionally beautiful with the bright green of the small stringer meadows surrounded by the park-like forests. It was possible to see a considerable distance in any direction and to ride almost anywhere without hindrance.

Lost Beauty, Value. Today these stringer meadows are gone and the area is covered with millions of puny tamaracks in dense thickets beneath the larger trees. These worthless stunted trees plus the tangle of countless rotting windfalls now make this area very difficult to walk through. Periodic burning used to clean up the windfalls and needle litter besides preventing the growth of the thickets of useless stunted tamaracks that now dominate the space beneath the forest of large trees. Not only has the area lost its great scenic beauty, but it has also lost most of its value for recreation, hunting, forage for livestock and as a source of valuable water needed in the valley below. Each one of those useless, stunted trees is a wick dissipating moisture from the soil into the air as well as a means of preventing a desirable snow pack by allowing the air to circulate beneath the snow and causing it to melt faster. On this day's trip we crossed the former boundary of Yosemite National Park just before reaching Clover Meadow. This meadow was named afterwards by Bill Turner who pastured horses there.

After leaving Granite Meadow the trail took us through several fine meadows before we reached the Old Sheep Crossing on the North Fork of the San Joaquin River. This crossing is about a mile above the present bridge crossing the North Fork. After fording the river the trail winds up through lava outcrops until we reached the old "77 Corrals." This country was then covered with fine forage among the rocks and upon the benches. This is not true today. This area received its name during the great drouth year of 1877. That year several valley sheepmen, who had not had previous experience grazing sheep in the mountains, took their bands of sheep into the mountains to prevent their loss from starvation. Several different bands became mixed and it was necessary to construct corrals in order to separate the various bands. Thus, eventually, the name "77 Corrals." It was this year that "Uncle" George Russell, an old friend who ran sheep at Gilroy, trailed a band of 2,000 sheep to the mountains and returned home with only 600. When we traveled through this area, it was very beautiful with many nice meadows and the mountain slopes green with feed.

Time Out for Fishing. We camped at "77" a couple of days and while here we boys made a trip down to the San Joaquin River where we caught a nice mess of trout. On the way back to camp we found a stray sheep that had become lost from its band. We butchered it and packed the meat back to camp as coyotes would have killed it become lost from its band. We butchered it and packed the meat back to camp as coyotes would have killed it had they found it before we did.

Leaving "77" we traveled up the Devil's Stairway, through Pumice Stone Meadow, on through Snow Canyon and across King Creek to our next camp at Soda Spring Meadow on the San Joaquin River. This country was all open, beautiful, and covered with fine feed. Here we camped three or four days. One day was spent on a trip up the river through several fine meadows to Agnew Meadow. Once there was considerable mining activity in this area, and then "Daddy" Norris had a trading post at Agnew Meadow. Another day we rode downstream past the Devil's Postpile, through Red's Meadow and the Hot Springs to Rainbow Falls before returning to camp. It was beautiful country in which to have a wonderful time, and we had splendid trout fishing in the San Joaquin River.

When we next continued our trip, the trail led us up over Pumice Stone Mountain, past the Mammoth Lakes and on down to the old mining camp of Mammoth, which had been abandoned; however, there was still a trading post there which was operated by the Wildersons and afterwards by the Sommers. From here we went on to the Casa Diablo Hot Springs where we camped. While here we cooked a pot of beans in the boiling water of

the springs. In returning home we backtracked on the trail. Although there were several bands of sheep being grazed in the area through which we traveled, we saw only two bands the entire trip. There was a great abundance of feed for our horses and pack stock wherever we went.

Next Journey. My next trip into the mountains was about 1897 when I hauled a quartz mill to Jackass Mountain for the Mud Spring Mining Company, which was owned by Trueman Hart, Bill McKinsey, John Hockse and Jim Muscle. Starting with two 16-foot wagons and an 8-animal team driven with a single long line, we traveled through Coarsegold, up over Potter Ridge and down to Fresno Flats (now called Oakhurst). Because of a slide on the old Salt Spring road, we took the Sugar Pine road to the Bufford Ranch and then followed a cutoff that went back down to the John Henry Castro slaughter house. From here we took the old Fresno Flats to Salt Springs road to Soquel. Here we left one wagon and followed the Soquel trail to Beasore Meadow Trail and then the Mammoth Trail to Jackass Mountain with the other wagon which was loaded with a 3,500 lb. boiler. At Rocky Cut, above Soquel, the boiler was unloaded and skidded 300 feet up over the rocks to the top where it was loaded and chained to the running gear which had been coupled to fit the boiler. The trip was continued to Jackass Mountain without any brakes on the wagon.

In 1886 the Peckinpaw brothers—Charles, Edgar, Dave and Edwin—settled at South Fork and built a sawmill up on the mountain above, now called Peckinpaw Mountain. The lumber from the mill was hauled to Fresno by long line teams. Charles Peckinpaw was the father of Dave, an attorney in Fresno; Mortimer, a recent Fresno County supervisor; and Lincoln, who is with the U. S. Forest Service. Soon after this Brown and Bartram moved to North Fork where they started a box factory. Also about this time a man by the name of Ellis (not of the Bill Ellis family) came to this area. Ellis Meadow, now called Benedict Meadow, was named after him. As a youth I hauled lumber off Peckinpaw Mountain with a long line team.

In those days there was very little brush on Peckinpaw Mountain as the area was kept clean from periodic burning. After the establishment of the Forest Reserve when the Forest Service stopped this burning, debris rapidly accumulated and the brush began to close in. In the mid-'20s Forest Ranger Audie Wofford's house caught fire. This in turn set the brush on fire. The resulting fire burned to the top of Peckinpaw Mountain before it was controlled. There would have been no forest fire had the Forest Service maintained the area in a clean condition.

Sheepmen. Before the establishment of the Forest Reserves, many stockmen

grazed their stock in the mountains in the summer time. Each had his range which was more or less respected by others. Migrant sheepmen were discouraged and sometimes shot at—and some were hit. At times these migrant sheepmen warred among themselves for range. Henry Daulton, Bill Raynor, Sr., George Mordecai and Miller and Gordon were local early-day sheepmen who ran sheep on the high mountain ranges. P. M. Klette, father of the late Judge Ernest Klette of Fresno County, ran sheep on Peckinpaw Mountain as did George Wagner and his partner. Jim Walker ran sheep on what is now the Green Mountain range. Bill Brown, father of Billy, Herrick, Jerry and Blaine, once took 100 head of mules into Cassidy County. The sheepmen would not let him cross them at Miller's Bridge (named after Heber Miller's father) so he crossed the San Joaquin River near the mouth of the South Fork and brought the mules up and through a gap near the side of Balloon Dome.

Miller and Lux also trailed sheep from their West Side ranges up into the mountains. Alex Grieves was their camp tender. There is an old chair that he cut from a log at my camp in Jackass Meadow. Later Miller and Lux quit taking sheep to the mountains and started taking steers. When I hauled the quartz mill to Jackass Mountain, Miller and Lux had 1,000 steers on the Beasore-Jackass ranges and another 1,000 head on the Cassidy range. Tom Beasore and Tom Jones also had cattle in the Beasore area.

I took my first cattle into the mountains in 1900 when I was 19 years old and continued to take either cattle or sheep into the mountains each year—except for 1944—until 1950. The first year I took 125 head of my father's cattle. It was a mixed bunch consisting of cows, calves, steers and bulls. With the exception of one year I ran cattle on the Jackass range until the close of 1916 when I sold out to Bill Turner and went into the sheep business. Up until this time my father and I were partners and we held a permit for 500 counters, 490 cattle and 10 horses.

Trailing Cattle. During the first three years that I took cattle into the mountains, we trailed them by way of North Fork. Leaving home the first day's trailing took us to Pomona Dick's place this side of Bill Ellis's ranch near North Fork where the cattle were confined to a fenced field overnight. The second day we traveled past North Fork, Cascadel and then along the old road past Joe Kinsman's to the Jess Ross place for our second night's camp. The Ross place was later called the Halloch place and is now called the Hogue Ranch. Here the cattle were turned loose in the forest for the night.

The forest was then so open and abundant with feed that the cattle did not scatter far and little difficulty was encountered the next morning in rounding up for the third day's trailing. This day we traveled to Logan Meadow



THICK GROWTH OF SEEDLINGS AND DEBRIS ON MARSHALL MEADOW
Stunted seedlings have destroyed forage crop and continue to dissipate moisture.

on lower Chiquito Creek for our third night's camp. Logan Meadow received its name from Cap Logan who homesteaded and ran cattle there. The meadow is now owned by the Wagner brothers. Tom Brown ran cattle on the lower Chiquito range, and his summer home was where the Placer Fire Guard Station now stands.

At the time the lower Chiquito country was very beautiful with a fine stand of timber that was kept open and park-like by periodic light burning. This prevented the accumulation of rotting windfalls, litter and thickets of brush and stunted trees that have since crowded out the fine stand of feed that once grew under the trees and greened the mountain slopes. This country once produced sufficient forage for a great many more cattle than are permitted there now. Here also is the last sizable stand of good virgin timber left on the Sierra National Forest; however, roads are now being built into the area so this timber may be logged. This timber was produced and protected from destruction for ages by the periodic use of fire. The Forest Service moved in with their false propaganda and rump-type of management and in 50 years have allowed so much brush and highly inflammable trash to accumulate in this forest that all now needed to destroy the whole area is a careless match or the right lightning flash.

After rounding up our cattle the morning of the fourth day, we followed the old Indian Trail to the trail from John Brown's Meadow to Jackass Meadow where the cattle were turned loose

on their summer range. John Brown Meadow received its name from an early-day prospector by that name who had a cabin there. It was at this meadow that Old Dick Wade, an oldtime sheepherder, was almost killed by a bear. Dick, who herded sheep for many of the old-time sheepmen, was camped at John Brown Meadow with a band of sheep. A bear got into the band of sheep, and when Dick tried to stop him, he was attacked by the bear. He had to play possum before the bear would leave him alone, and by then he was so badly chewed up they had to bring him out of the mountains.

MY first cow camp was at Graveyard Meadow on the old Indian Trail. There are several stories about how Graveyard Meadow got its name. One, told by Heber Miller and which is probably true, is as follows: One spring a group of men, who were packing salt to the Cassidy Range for William Miller and Alex Gordon for their sheep, had camped at the meadow. They had a bottle of whiskey which was emptied and the empty bottle then buried. Among the group was Jim Hicks, a brilliant man when not drinking, who even went so far as to set up a grave marker upon which he wrote a suitable inscription for the occasion. Thus, the name Graveyard Meadow. Another story is that an Indian killed an early day miner there for his gold and the miner was buried there.

In these early years we would start our cattle to the mountains in late May. In early September the steers would be gathered and trailed below where they were sold for beef. When sold, the stockman was only paid for half the live weight of the animal. Thus, in about 1903, after trailing our steers from the mountains to Fresno, they were sold to Charlie Schougaard for seven cents per pound. Actually we were paid three and one-half cents a pound for their live selling weight. Forage conditions in the mountains were good enough, in those days, to finish our cattle. About 1913 I took fat long 2-year-old steers off the Jackass range that weighed 1,100 lb. after being trailed 100 miles to the Raynor place for sale to John Robinson of Merced.

In 1902 I married Harriet Jones and she has helped me take our stock to their mountain ranges most years since. While the forest reserves had been started earlier, this is the first year in which permits were issued and our cattle were counted into the mountains. Gene Tully and Hess Morton were the rangers who made the count. It was this year that our cow camp was moved from Graveyard Meadow to Jackass Meadow where it was kept the following years I trailed stock to the mountains.

Early Organization. The first man in charge of the reserve was a man by the name of Dobson, who was shortly replaced by a man named Newhall. I remember seeing Dobson but never saw Newhall. Neither man maintained an office in this area. In 1898 my father was appointed first ranger of the

local Reserve at a salary of \$50 a month, and he furnished his own horses. His office was our home, and in carrying out his duties he traveled the roads in the lower Reserve area in a 2-horse spring wagon. He carried no fire fighting equipment and his duties appeared to be mostly helping Dobson check the legality of the landholders within the reserve. I believe that he worked only the summer months of the first year.

Charles Shinn was the first regular U. S. Forest Service supervisor to move to the reserve and establish headquarters. This he did at North Fork in 1902. When Shinn took over, he made the public statement that "the forest was being overgrazed by the stockman and that the forage cover was being destroyed. With our management of the forest we are going to make two blades of grass grow where only one is now growing."

This was quite a statement considering the fact the Forest Service knew nothing about the area since they had not made a study of the conditions before passing judgment. Their abilities at range improvement were untried and mostly vocal and, unfortunately, so they continue to the present day. The results of 50 years of their management of the forest ranges easily verifies their inabilities. Their opinions on forest management were then and continue to be foreign to California conditions.

New Management. In taking over the management of this forest area, Shinn hired such local men as Joe Crane, Boot Taylor, Mal McCloud, Gene Tully, Frank Fuller, Hess Morton, Jack Noddin, Frank Russell and my brother, Charlie O'Neal, Jr., as rangers. Boot Taylor and Gene Tully are the only ones of these old rangers still living. These men knew the forest and all its trails. After they had blazed all the old trails with a dot and a slash, all but a few were replaced by men from other areas who had been schooled in forestry.

In order to get his two spears of grass growing where one grew before, Shinn first stopped the fall burning of the forest litter and then started making all the Indians and homesteaders living within the forest boundary sell their hogs. He claimed the hogs were rooting up all the little pine trees. If light burning of the forest killed all the reproduction, how could there be any little trees left for the hogs to root up? Furthermore, at that time the reserve boundary was a good five miles below the present boundary and quite a few hogs were raised on the acorns produced from oaks below the pine forest.

When Shinn forced the people living within the forest boundary to get rid of their hogs, many of the Indians sold theirs to Bill Ellis, who lived within the Reserve, for a dollar per head. Joe Kinsman, who also had a few hogs, told the Forest Service if they wanted the hogs off the Reserve, to get them off themselves—that he couldn't.

After making these people sell their hogs, permits were issued for all hogs over six months of age. Thus, a rancher could obtain a permit for one sow, but then he could run as many pigs under six months of age in the forest as he wished. Many hogs were raised in this country in these early days. These hogs were driven in droves to Fresno and other valley points for marketing. Some droves would contain as many as 300 hogs. A man on horseback would lead the drove, and from a sack of corn across his saddle he would scatter grain along the way. He was assisted by herders on foot.

Sheep Banned. Shinn then commenced putting the sheepmen out of the forest since, with the establishment of the reserves, a general order had been drawn up excluding the grazing of sheep in the forests. Many sheepmen, however, continued to move their bands of sheep across the national forests and national park in a seasonal movement starting in the spring from their winter range in the San Joaquin Valley to Tehachapi, Lone Pine, Bishop, Mammoth and then in the fall crossing the Sierras to their winter range on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley. They grazed the sheep along the way.

Besides rangers the Yosemite National Park had soldiers patrolling for trespassing sheepmen. Arch Leonard and Charlie Lydic were park rangers at this time. When a trespassing band of sheep was found, the park authorities would not impound the sheep and have the owners arrested for their violations. Instead they would take the herders and their burros away from the band, allowing the sheep to scatter. This would result in severe losses to the sheepmen. As I will relate later, the Forest Service used similar tactics instead of using lawful means. These government officials were a law unto themselves.

Further evidence of their arrogance occurred shortly after Bill Ellis was elected supervisor of the fifth district in Madera County in the fall of 1902. Along with his duties as overseer of roads within the district, Supervisor Ellis laid a corrugated culvert across the county road within the reserve. Shortly afterward Ranger Gene Tully planted a sign post by the culvert intake and then piled rocks about the post. Ellis threw the rocks out of the culvert intake and removed the sign post and laid it upon the adjacent bank. This resulted in considerable controversy between the Forest Service and the Madera County supervisor. Shinn even went so far as to take the matter to the chief forester, but word came back that the local authorities had a right of way on each side of the road as needed and this closed the incident.

Different Trail. In 1903 we started trailing our cattle through Crane Valley instead of by North Fork. Leaving home we traveled to Crane Valley crossing the North Fork Creek at Sharpton's place where we made our

second night's camp. At that time the Teaford family lived there. It is now The Pines on Bass Lake. One year, old Mike Walker, an Indian, was helping us drive our cattle to the mountains. As we started up Willow Creek from The Pines, we saw about 200 large alligator lizards. Old Mike said, "Too damn many lizards. I go home."

And he did, as he was quite superstitious about lizards. I have never seen so many of the wood lizards as I saw this trip.

Here at The Pines we hit the Old Mammoth Trail and traveled to Beasore Meadow for the third night's camp and then about 12 miles to Jackass Meadow the fourth day. This year Miller & Lux, who had been taking 2,000 head of steers to these mountain ranges, trailed only 1,000 head in and these were all placed on the Cassidy range. I do not know if their permit was cut or they just quit bringing 2,000 head of their own will. In 1904 Miller & Lux's permit was cut to 500 head; and as they refused to take this small number to the Cassidy range, Frank Murphy and I were each given a permit for 250 head on that range.

My first trip into the Cassidy and Mono Creek country was about the middle of September, 1903. At that time Harriet and I were at our cow camp in Jackass Meadow getting ready to start rounding up our cattle to trail them home for the winter. Shinn sent my brother, Ranger Charles O'Neal, Jr., up from Graveyard Meadow to see if we would help them escort some bands of sheep across the forest. We joined the Forest Service party that night at the Miller & Lux cow camp at Cassidy Meadow. That night was our first introduction to concentrated food when "pill soup" was made by placing a pill in a cup of hot water. A can of tomatoes poured over shredded wheat completed the meal.

Easy Travel. After breaking camp the next morning we started up the trail to Rube Meadow. Members of the group were Shinn, his wife Julia, Rangers Gus Goodale, Frank Fuller, Jack Noddin and Charles O'Neal, Jr., and Harriet and I. Each had his own pack horse which carried his grub supply and bed. At meal time all cooked together over the same camp fire. The first three or four miles above Cassidy Meadow the trail wound through an open forest of large fir, yellow pine, some sugar pine and incense cedar. There was little brush and were no thickets of little trees to speak of, so travel was easy.

In passing over the ridge to Rube Meadow the trees were mostly fir and tamaracks all the way to String Meadows and then mostly tamaracks with a few firs until we started dropping down into Fish Valley, where the fir was sparse and there were a few yellow pine. On this trip we passed through beautiful feed country—both the meadows and the hillsides. Even

Chap. 1



FOREST FLOOR IN MILLER MEADOW AREA
Rotting windfalls, debris increase fire hazard.

there was abundant feed for our saddle horses and pack animals. An amusing incident happened when Shinn was riding along at the rear of the group reading a book. His wife was up ahead talking with various members of the party as they rode along. Ever so often Shinn would stop reading and call, "Julia, what is that you are saying?" Since he was quite deaf, she would have to shout back the questioned conversation.

Mr. and Mrs. Shinn and Ranger Goodale left us at Fish Valley. They were on their way to the other side of the mountain where Goodale was to be stationed. We never saw him again. The rest of us made camp for the night in Fish Valley. While here, we found a stray band of from 20 to 25 sheep. We killed one for camp meat, a custom in those days, and left the rest to their fate. Fishing here was wonderful and the fish were so plentiful you could almost dip them out of the stream with a bucket. I had never seen such good fishing nor have I since.

No Sheep Yet. The next morning we started for Mono Pass. We traveled up Fish Creek past Fish Creek Hot Springs to Cascade Valley. From here we traveled up Minnow Creek to Beetlebug Meadow and then on to Lone Indian Lake. Continuing we passed through Silver Pass and then dropped down to the Mono Trail which we followed up to Mono Pass (altitude 12,900 feet), where we met Ranger Joe Crane, a fine man. He had arrived here sometime before us and had already journeyed way down the other side of the pass without finding any sign of the bands of sheep we were to escort through the mountains.

We rested here for some time and since it was getting late we traveled back down the trail to a nice meadow beside the creek where we made camp for the night. Here Ranger Jack Noddin was noticed searching intently through his pack. When Ranger O'Neal inquired what he was looking

for, he replied, "My bar of chocolate." When the lost bar was found, Ranger Noddin said he was saving it in case his horse gave out and he had to walk. With that he took a bite off the bar which was then returned to his pack. Nothing more was said.

Ranger Crane was up early the next morning and had caught a nice mess of large trout for our breakfast. Leaving here we started for Blasingame's main cow camp. This camp was called China Camp because the head cowboy was a Chinese who had been raised by Blasingame (father of Lee, Jess and Bill). The trip down Mono Creek was through a beautiful feed country. Ranger O'Neal had traveled ahead of us to China Camp and we made camp nearby. After we made camp Ranger Noddin was again noticed searching through his pack for his bar of chocolate, but this time he failed to find it. Shortly afterward all the rangers went over to Blasingame's camp. A short while later Ranger O'Neal returned to our camp and brought out the missing chocolate bar. It was soon made into a delicious pot of chocolate.

At Cow Camp. Since the bands of sheep we were to help guide through the mountains failed to show up, Harriet and I left early the following morning for Jackass Meadow so we could get started rounding up our cattle. At noon we stopped at the Miller & Lux camp at Cassidy Meadow and had lunch with three of the cowboys—Juan Acosta, a Spaniard; Pomona Dick, an Indian; and Vedo, a Frenchman. From Cassidy we went on to Jackass arriving at our cow camp late that night. Rangers Noddin, Crane, Fuller and O'Neal stayed at Cassidy Meadow overnight and came on to Jackass the next day. While coming up the mountain from Miller's Bridge, Ranger Noddin's old black horse, Harry, gave out and he had to walk—and his chocolate bar still missing. That night Ranger Crane went on to Beasore Meadow, Rangers Noddin and Fuller camped at Ben Norris Meadow on Ben Norris Creek, and Ranger O'Neal camped with us.

We saw no sign of the sheep we were to have escorted through the mountains until two days later when we were riding up Jackass Mountain looking for our cattle. At that time this area was in Yosemite National Park; but since there were no fences or natural barriers, it was impossible to keep cattle from drifting into the park. When we reached the place where the trail crossed Ben Norris Creek, where the fish troughs are now, we saw a dust cloud. Riding on up the creek to the willow patch, we found Ranger Gene Tully with a band of trespassing sheep. He had caught them just as they were getting ready to move from the park into the Reserve.

We left Rangers Tully and O'Neal with the sheep and continued on up to Mud Lake on Jackass Mountain where we camped for the night. We gathered cattle on Jackass Mountain the next

day and moved those found over to the Hole on the other side of Granite Creek. We were still in the park and the government had a camp of negro soldiers at what is now Soldier Meadow, formerly Granite Meadow. It was their job to keep trespassing stock out of the park. This night we camped in the Hole planning to ride that area for our cattle the next morning. Six inches of snow fell during the night so we returned to our main camp at Jackass leaving the cattle until we could return for them. When we reached Jackass, it was deserted; however, my brother Charlie arrived a short while later having seen where I had left my "picture" in the snow when my horse bucked me off. The next morning Ranger Noddin passed through the meadow on his way to Beasore Meadow with another band of trespassing sheep that he had picked up.

Heading Home. With the help of Ranger O'Neal the next four or five days were spent gathering our cattle. We worked out from our camp at Jackass each day. In those days there were no holding fields in which to put the cattle as they were gathered or to hold them overnight in and out of the mountains. As we gathered the cattle they were brought to Jackass Meadow and turned loose. There was still sufficient feed remaining at the end of the season to keep the stock from drifting very far. When the cattle had all been gathered, Billy Brown and Charlie helped us round them up and start down the trail for home. Our first night's camp was at Boggy Meadow just before reaching Chiquito Creek.

That night the Forest Service sent Joe Rivas after Charlie. They had found and gathered 14 bands of trespassing sheep, about 2,000 sheep per band, at Beasore Meadow. Most of these sheep had come through the park and had entered the forest through passes they had made over Jackass Mountain. Most were picked up in the Chiquito country. These sheep, which belonged to several different owners, had been bunched into one huge band. Imagine, 28,000 sheep in one band! Ranger O'Neal was to help move this huge band of sheep out of the forest. On the trail out the various herders attempted to keep the sheep together, but the rangers took every opportunity to scatter as many sheep as possible off into the forest on each side of the trail as they moved along.

To make it more difficult to recover the sheep, the rangers caught the bell sheep, removed the large expensive French bells, and tossed them aside. From Beasore Meadow the sheep were driven past Soquel, the Darnell place, China Cheu's, and then up to the old Ahwahnee Road which was followed to the forest boundary where the sheep were released. Thus in driving these sheep a distance of about 20 miles, a great number were lost forever to their owners. There was also an enormous loss in flesh by the sheep not lost.

Thus, although the sheepmen were violating the law in trespassing, the Forest Service, in destroying the sheep, was likewise a violation of our laws.

Disagreement. This abuse of the sheep was opposed by some of the rangers such as Gene Tully. They asked Shinn to resort to lawful means and impound the trespassing sheep and have their owners fined. This Shinn refused to do and as a consequence some of the rangers resigned after the affair.

From Boggy Meadow we trailed our cattle to Beasore Meadow where we camped the second night. Billy Brown left us here and returned to Jackass Meadow. The next morning Tom Jones helped us round up our cattle and trail them to the top of Beasore Mountain. From here Harriet and I trailed our herd of 200 head home without any further help.

As previously stated, Miller & Lux's permit was cut to 500 head in 1904. They not only refused to take this reduced number to the Cassidy range, but quit taking cattle to the mountains altogether. For this reason Frank Murphy and I were each given a permit for 250 head on the Cassidy range, and I took care of all the cattle. The cattle were trailed the usual route to Jackass Meadow and from there to Miller's Bridge where it was necessary to swim them across the San Joaquin River. At that time the Cassidy range, like the rest of the surrounding forest, was still open, clean and had abundant feed. Because of the lack of thickets of brush and undergrowth, a heavy mat of needle litter, and windfalls, it was possible to travel and move stock most any direction through the forest.

Changed Conditions. Across from Rube Meadow on the mountain side where the Bear Meadow trail runs, there were side-hill meadows comprising from 400 to 500 acres each. These are now dried up with little evidence of their former existence, and the forest floor has become choked with a blanket of highly inflammable filth. When I turned the 500 head loose upon this range, forage was so abundant that it could easily have carried twice that number. It was not necessary for our cattle to range much past Silver Creek and Rock Creek was the range boundary at the time.

That year it began raining at the home ranch on Sept. 21 so we (Frank Murphy, Harvey Bugg, Joe Lugio and I) got things ready and started to the mountains to gather our cattle. Our second night's camp on the way in was at Logan Meadow, and here we saw a man quite sick from exposure. This man and another, both miners, had stopped at the ranch a few days previously to inquire about traveling the old French Trail through the mountains to Mammoth.

They were warned against going through the mountains on foot at this late date because they might get caught in a storm. They went anyway and were caught in a storm as they reached the North Fork of the San Joaquin

river. They climbed back up on the North Fork ridge where they had an argument about which way to go. There was four feet of snow on the ground on top of the ridge and they were lost. The man we saw had managed to make his way back to the Fuller Place at Fuller Meadow where he was found by Indians camped there. The other man was never seen again. Fuller Meadow (and probably Fuller Buttes) was named after Frank Fuller who raised a family there besides running a few cattle. He also raised wonderful gardens and planted an orchard.

Obstacles. We reached Cassidy Meadow on Sept. 25 and commenced gathering our cattle. There was four feet of snow in the String Meadow country and nine head found there were brought to the lower country only after breaking a trail. Murphy thought we should ride the lower country as he did not think we would find cattle up in the snow. When we had found all but 40 head, a thick fog settled over the country, and we had to camp there for three weeks.

The first clear day Murphy and I went back up into the upper country. Nine head were found in Lake Meadow, and I left Murphy with them while I went on to look for the others. I soon found them across Silver Creek in a quaking aspen thicket. When I got back to Lake Meadow with them, I found Murphy vigorously throwing his arms about in an attempt to keep warm, but he was almost frozen. When I asked him why he hadn't built a fire to keep warm, he retorted, "How in hell can you build a fire in country like this?" I soon had a fire going so that we could warm up before setting out for Cassidy through the snow with our cattle.

Because of our prolonged stay in the mountains, we had about run out of grub. A day or so before the fog lifted we were down to just flour, so we killed a large fat steer. When we first came in with our cattle, we found four steers that had spent the previous winter along the river. The three remaining steers were taken out with our cattle and returned to Miller & Lux. Just before we were ready to start out with the cattle, my brother Charlie and an Irishman named Barney Slaven, rode into camp to see why we were so delayed. We sure were glad to see them since they also brought another supply of grub. All but four head (three of mine and one of Murphy's) were driven out. The steers were very fat and after being driven to Fresno sold for five cents a pound.

Finally Home. I then returned to Cassidy to get the four head we had left. I found my three animals, but never did find Murphy's. It had left the range and I trailed it to where it had crossed the South Fork of the San Joaquin River. I don't know if Murphy ever did get his animal. It was Dec. 2 when I got home with my three head. There was fine new feed on the

home range at that time because of the early rains.

In 1905 the boundary of the Yosemite National Park was moved back to its present position, and I returned to the Jackass range. Again I took in 250 head of my cattle and 250 of Murphy's, which again I looked after. It was this year that Foster King, Frank Murphy, George Teaford and an Irishman who was passing through the mountains helped me build a log corral in Jackass Meadow so that we would have a place to hold stock. Murphy quit sending his cattle to the mountains after this year, and my permit was increased to 500 head. At that time there were permits for 1,000 head of cattle on the area later used for range by the Jackass Association. These were: O'Neal, 500 head; Chetwood, 100 head; Tully, 100 head; George Brown (no relation to Bill Brown), 150 head, and Brown brothers (Bill, Herrick and Jerry), 150 head.

Billy Brown took cattle into the mountains for the first time about the same time I did. His brothers, Herrick and Jerry, started taking cattle later, and they ran in the Graveyard Meadow area. George Brown ran his cattle in the lower Granite Creek range and made camp at Soldier Meadow. Joe Chetwood, father of Bill, Lee and Travis, was the first to take cattle to the west side of Green Mountain where Walker formerly ran sheep. About this time Ranger Tully secured a permit to run about 100 head on the other side of Green Mountain. George Brown took cattle to the mountains only one year. Earl Bugg later took over Tully's permit.

Cattle Counted. The Forest Service usually counted the cattle taken to mountain ranges as they entered the reserve to make sure the ranchers did not take in more cattle than their permit called for. One year while trailing our cattle to their summer range, we were overtaken near where the trail crosses Chiquito Creek by Rangers Gene Tully and Billy Brown. They told me that another ranger, whom I shall not name here, had secretly counted my cattle back along the trail and had reported that I was taking in quite a few more cattle than my permit called for. The recount, a public and open count, showed that I actually had fewer animals than my permit called for. No apology was offered and nothing further said about the affair.

I continued to run cattle on the Jackass range until the end of the 1916 season when I sold out to Bill Turner. That year when I gathered my cattle they were trailed to White Rock for delivery to Turner. When I sold my cattle and permit to him, there was an agreement with the Forest Service that the permit would be cut only 10%; however, a year later they were going to cut his permit further so he quit taking cattle to the mountains. He returned to the Jackass Range the following year with a permit for 2,000 sheep which he ran for two years.



AFTER selling our cattle I went into the sheep business, and secured a permit to run 750 head on the forest in 1917. This year my range was under the rim next to Yosemite Park from Jackass Mountain up past Lillian and Rutherford Lakes to where the trail went over Post Peak Pass. The next year I moved my sheep to the "77" range where I had a permit for 2,000 head. Jay Evans was the first cattleman to run cattle on the "77" range, but took cattle there only one year—1910 or 1911. Bill Turner then ran cattle there the following year, but lost so many from larkspur poisoning that he did not return the following year.

Bill and Rose Kennedy (brother and sister from Australia) then ran cattle on the range for three or four years. Ike and Harry Ball ran on the range for a year after the Kennedys, and they in turn were followed by George Muller (father of Dick Muller of Coarsegold) for a year. The following year was 1918 when I secured my permit to run sheep there, and it has been a sheep range ever since. I ran sheep on this range until 1926 when I sold out to Mike Urrutia.

In 1918 H. E. Bigelow and Ed Wagner secured permits to run sheep on each side of my range at "77." This same year—a war year—Bigelow and Neil McDougald took cattle under permit over Isberg Pass into Yosemite National Park. George Muller moved his cattle to the Jackass range when Bill Turner dropped his permit. In 1919

Bigelow and McDougald secured permits to run cattle on the Jackass range and made their camp at Clover Meadow. Other cattlemen who secured permits to run cattle in this area were Oliver Chetwood (brother of Joe), Lon Sellers, and Jess Ward. All ran cattle on Green Mountain.

Mismanagement. At the time I went into the sheep business the effects of the Forest Service's mismanagement of the forest were becoming quite apparent. An ever thickening mat of needles, accumulating windfalls, and enlarging patches of brush were creating a highly hazardous fire condition that was almost unknown previously. The burning of the carcasses of dead livestock in the forest, once demanded by the Forest Service, was now forbidden because of the increasing risk of setting the forest on fire. This increasing blanket of forest debris, which I call filth, was smothering out the grasses, lupines, peavine, and other herbaceous plants that formerly "greened" may of the forest slopes.

Countless seedling trees, most of which were detrimental to each other's welfare and were destined to a stunted existence, sprang up in the forest in the moist park-like areas such as the stringer meadows between Jackass and Clover Meadows and on the margins of the larger meadows. Besides decreasing the forage growing in these areas, many beautiful meadows have been practically destroyed, and moisture that had been flowing to the valley lands below was being dissipated

into the air.

Protests by the stockmen against such abuse of the forests were in vain. Even though the Forest Service was managing this forest, it continued to decline in condition while the Forest Service officials continued to blame the stockmen for the decline. Other people engaged in agricultural pursuits within the state adopted cultural and management plans in line with the California climatic conditions while the Forest Service continued to impose Eastern or some other foreign management methods upon our forest areas.

Beneficial Fire. Considering the hazardous fire conditions the Forest Service had created in the forests, the forest fire on Peckinpaw Mountain, which was started by Ranger Wofford's burning house, did considerable more good in cleaning up highly inflammable debris and excessive brush growth than damage to the forests. Furthermore, following the fire, this area did not become a barren waste gouged with eroded gullies. This fire probably would not have occurred if the Forest Service had practiced fire prevention similar to the conditions existing when they took over the forest. Fires starting in the grasslands below did not start a forest fire each time they burned up to the forest. In fact such fires usually went out when they reached the forest area.

A year or so following this fire I was able to produce fat spring lambs on the burned area from improved feed conditions while my neighbors with

sheep on adjoining unburned areas were not able to do so. These fat lambs were the first to be shipped from Prettyman Station near North Fork on the newly built Minaret and Western Railroad. At this time Wagners, Bigelows, and I were running about 6,000 head of sheep on the west side of Peckinpaw Mountain each spring. During the past few years Max Arnold has been having difficulty finding sufficient feed for 1,500 head of sheep on the same area that my permit called for.

This is further proof of the value of the use of fire by the Indians to promote better feed conditions on their hunting grounds as well as protecting the forest from destruction by fire. The sensible use of fire today would produce the same results; and if carried out, we would not have our present problem of starving deer and poor fawn crops. Furthermore, the opened forests would give the sportsman a much better and pleasanter hunting area, none of the extremely hazardous camp fire conditions now existing, and fatter deer that have been more properly grown.

Planned Burns. When the stockmen, following the practice of the Indians, set fires in the forest in the fall, they likewise did not burn the whole forest each year. When they encountered a windfall or an area where the needles or brush were getting too thick, they would set them afire. For the most part these fires burned slowly with a low flame. Such a fire might creep around as much as two weeks and still not burn over extensive areas. Consequently no damage was done to the forest. Unwanted seedlings were killed and young trees which survived were usually in openings where needles did not accumulate from surrounding large trees. While it is true that some trees developed fire scars at their butts, this is an extremely small price to pay for a forest that is not in eternal jeopardy from destruction from a disastrous fire that can arise from the present highly hazardous conditions.

In 1920 Supervisor M. A. Benedict had the permittees in the Jackass area combine all their permits to form the Jackass Community Association. This was done so the Forest Service would have more control of the movement of the grazing animals upon the forest range. The permittees brought their cattle to the mountains where they were combined into a single herd, and the Association hired a rider to look after all the cattle. The Forest Service contended that the stock were being allowed to graze the high country too early and were killing out the forage.

That same forage was being smothered beneath a blanket of pine needles and windfalls. That same forage gave way before the myriad of stunted and deformed seedling trees crowding out and drying up the meadows. Under this new management system they would start all these cattle at the lower end of the range, and then gradually work them to the higher country as the forage became more

mature.

Unsuccessful. The scheme did not work for several reasons, and resulted in further deterioration of the area. In the first place, except for the river canyon slopes on the lower end of the range and the rim area at the upper end of the range, there was not sufficient difference in elevation over the range to have much difference in stage of forage growth by the time the cattle were allowed upon the range. Most serious, however, was the very detrimental effects resulting from the concentrating of this large number of cattle in one area. According to records there were approximately 1,300 head belonging to Association members in 1922.

Meadows such as John Brown, Marshall, Miller, Graveyard and McCreary were so badly trampled that they looked as though they had been plowed. The association members objected strenuously to such abuse of the forest and their stock, but the Forest Service insisted on a continuation of their system of management. Conditions finally became so bad Jess Ward was forced to exclaim, "They are trying to make my cattle eat mud!" The ill-effects of this abuse may still be seen in the remnants of some of these meadows.

It was also in the early years of this association that they brought in a Forest Service official locally called, "Salt Log Clark." This man along with the local ranger established salt logs hither and yon without making a study of the cattle to see how they used this range. Their objective was to pull the cattle up on the slopes to feed on forage that had vanished beneath the pine needles, windfalls, etc. Just because salt may be used to attract cattle to unfavorable sites on some ranges is no reason the system will work on all ranges. On some of my ranch pastures the cattle refused to take salt. While I may sound overly critical of the Forest Service officials' attempt at range improvement, I would like to add that these officials not only scoffed at the stockmen's suggestions on how to improve the range but also acted as though we were a bunch of morons each hell-bent upon selfish exploitation of the forest.

Home Ranch. In 1922 my brother, Spence O'Neal, obtained a permit to run some of the home ranch cattle on the Beasore range. They were run in the upper Chiquito Creek area where Cap Keith had a permit to run cattle. In 1924 I took over operation of the home ranch, and had the cattle permit transferred to the Jackass Association range and became a member of the association. After selling my sheep I continued to operate and expand my cattle operations, and shortly had a forest permit for 125 head. The dissension within the Jackass Association finally became so great that in 1941 it was disbanded, and each permittee was given his own range allotment. At that time seven permittees were running about 1,025 head on the area.

My membership in the Jackass Association eased in 1935 when I obtained a permit for 400 head on the Cassidy range, and the Cobb Brothers (Edwin and Lawrence) moved to the Jackass range. At that time Arthur Bartlett also ran 125 head on the Cassidy range making a total of 525 on that range. In 1937 John Medley purchased the Bartlett permit, and I acquired it in 1938. The Forest Service then pulled their usual squeeze tactics and cut it to 100 head. Thus I had a permit for 500 head on the range that easily carried 1,000 head when the Forest Service took over management of this forest.

In trailing my cattle to their Cassidy range, I drove them by Jackass Meadow in 1935 and 1936. The country between Jackass Meadow and Miller's Bridge crossing on the San Joaquin River had grown up so badly with mostly useless trees that I had to brush out a stock driveway through the thickets almost all the way. Due to difficulty in crossing the high water in the San Joaquin River I changed to trailing the herd by way of Mammoth Pool where there was a bridge across the river. A few years later after the Forest Service had built log bridges across Granite Creek and at Miller's Bridge crossing, I again trailed my cattle by Jackass Meadow. I continued to run upon the Cassidy range until 1950 except for 1944 when I took non-use, and Jess and Henry Ward ran 200 head there. During some of the World War II years, when labor was scarce, some of my neighbors ran cattle with mine. At no time, however, did the total number of cattle on the Cassidy range exceed my permit for 500 head.

Examination. In 1948 Waldo Wood from the San Francisco office of the Forest Service came to examine the Cassidy range. I spent two days showing him, Earl Spangenburg from the Supervisor's Office, and Ranger Neil Perkins, the local ranger, over the range. Wood's verdict was that the range was overstocked and the number of cattle run there should be decreased. Considering the fact that this mountain range covered an area of 12 square miles and that Wood had not seen it previously, his verdict is a classical example of Forest Service expertism. Within the area of the Sierra National Forest that I have known during my life, I do not know of a single area where the range has been improved or is at least in as good condition as existed when the Forest Service took over. With such glaring lack of evidence that the Forest Service knows anything at all about range management or improvement why should any credence be expected from such a brief examination? Besides I had heard that a decision had been made to decrease my permit before Wood came to examine the range!

For personal reasons I decided to quit taking cattle to the mountains, and in 1951 Lester Bissett took over the range. He was given a permit for 234 head which is a severe decrease from

my permit of 500 head not to mention the 1,000 head it carried 50 years ago. In a similar manner there has been a marked decrease in the number of cattle permitted on the Jackass range. In 1952 four permittees, Chetwood, Bigelow, McDougald, and Jones ran a total of 620 head upon this area.

It is of especial interest to note that during the period of Forest Service management, there has been no logging or reduction in size of either of these two mountain areas. Thus the disastrous results of 50 years of Forest Service mismanagement of this forest area speaks for itself. Instead of having the two blades of grass that Supervisor Shinn said he would produce for each one that grew when the Forest Service took over management of the forest we now do not have two blades of grass where thousands grew before. Where would this country be today if the production results of its farmers paralleled that of the Forest Service!

Overgrazing. In my years of ranching I have read and heard much from the would-be range experts how we stockmen were responsible for overgrazing our ranges and killing out what was once a bountiful cover of perennial grasses. The facts are that they have no actual proof that such a condition existed when the Spaniards brought their stock to this state, and what they tell about are only assumptions. As to the changes that have occurred on this area of the Sierra National Forest since the Forest Service came into being, I and many others still alive have seen with our own eyes. I only hope that some of these people will also take time to record what they have seen so there will be sufficient evidence to pay the devil his due. With the increasing demands upon our mountain areas due to our heavy increase in population in the state this date should not be too far away.

The deceptive cry of "overgrazing" is not the only smokescreen used by the Forest Service to cloak their inabilities. They have constructed themselves a many-sided corral in which the posts were set but the poles left off. This they call multiple use. Thus, when some group attempts to corner them over some of their shortcomings for which they have no sensible answer, they cry "multiple use" and vanish like water in a sand bank. By multiple use they mean that these National Forests have several different uses such as lumbering, watershed, fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, mining, and livestock grazing. No one of these interests is to have exclusive use of this area. This is as it should be, and there would be little conflict of these various interests if the Forest Service had at least maintained the forest in the condition existing when they assumed control.

Since the arrival of Shinn into our community, there has been a continual stream of propaganda fed to the city papers accusing the stockmen of overgrazing the forest. For the most part the papers have published these reports without any attempt being made

to check their veracity or offering the stockmen an equal opportunity to present their side of the problem. An example is a release of the Sierra National Forest in the March 12, 1951, issue of the Fresno Bee under the heading "Forest Timber Sales Bring in \$550,000 in 1950."

Decline. After giving a summation of timber sales and insect damage to the forest, Supervisor Beattie reports a marked decrease in numbers of cattle and sheep grazed on the forest between 1949 and 1950. "Reasons listed for the apparent decline include decreased forage due to past overstocking; erosion in high meadows and an increase in timber stocking; economics of present day livestock production, and a change in the type of beef animals."

I have already gone to great lengths to show what actually happened to the forage resources of one part of this forest. Thus no further comment is necessary on this false propaganda other than a lie repeated long enough will be believed by the perpetrators themselves. As for economics of present day livestock production and a change in type of beef animals being raised being responsible for reduced numbers being grazed in the forest, it is pure bunkum. I am quite sure that if Supervisor Beattie will produce the forage and grant the permits, he will find no shortage of beef cattle of a suitable type to efficiently use all the feed available.

Now that we have reached the place where we have great need for our forest resources, we find a sad state of affairs. With valley agriculture and cities crying for water, we find our most important watershed, as well as what should be our principal timber growing areas, covered with a moisture robbing and dissipating blanket of debris plus millions of small stunted trees of no value that transpire and intercept valuable moisture needed in the valleys. Furthermore this debris and thickets of brush and trees prevent a good snow pack by allowing the air to get beneath it. With our rapidly growing population we have need for more recreational areas. Our overgrown meadows have decreased the scenic values and destroyed camping sites. Travel through the debris choked forest, if one leaves the trail or roads, is anything but recreational.

Wildlife. Deer are suffering from malnutrition because of needed forage smothered out, while the sportsmen have poor hunting because of poor visibility and difficult travel through the forest. Our state is lacking in sufficient forage resources to supply needed meat, and we find a once valuable forage resource dissipated by the agency created to protect and foster it. Furthermore the highly hazardous fire condition that has been created not only keeps our forests in eternal jeopardy from destruction by fire but also is equally dangerous to those using the forest. It may be of great use to our enemies for sabotage purposes in case of war.

Not content with their mismanagement of our public forest lands, these Forest Service experts also forced their influence over our private lands so that our range lands have deteriorated badly from the encroachment of worthless brush. This resulted in losses of thousands of dollars from decreased productivity of our ranches, and is costing further large sums to remove this brush. We landholders worked many long years to secure the necessary legislation for a control brush burning program. Even then we had interference from Forest Service experts in either attempting to wreck our program or trying to tell us how to do it.

There are millions of acres of badly deteriorated public lands in California. If this army of land management experts really want to demonstrate their abilities, the best service they can do this country is to bring these public lands which are under their control back into useful production. It is doubtful that this shall ever come to pass, however, as most of these experts do their managing from cities remote from the forest areas. If any progress is to be made, it will be necessary to thin out these "brass imposers" and hire somebody who will work upon the land.

Education. Down through the years I have had several occasions to talk with students of the School of Forestry from our state university. In practically every case these boys expressed the same reasons for the decline of our forest ranges and methods of improvements as the Forest Service officials. Is the U. S. Forest Service also dominating our School of Forestry or are the professors just training a bunch of parrots to pass a civil service examination for a job of security?

I know that it is necessary that our forestry graduates be taught range management for forest areas other than those in California. If the California taxpayers are to support our state School of Forestry, it is only right that this school also teach its students how to manage California's forest range lands. If this is being done, just where are the examples of "range improvement" that are being shown our students? It appears to me as though our School of Forestry is also partly responsible for the decline of California's forest lands.

For years many have considered the fight over the declining forage resources of our forest areas merely a controversy between the stockmen and the Forest Service. It is more than that. Each mountain hiker with his camp pack upon a burro; the campers, fishermen, and hunters with their pack animals; and the Sierra Club with its many members traveling down the crest of the Sierras have their impact upon the forage resources of the forests. The decline in forage conditions to where we now do not have two blades of grass growing, where thousands grew before is of serious concern to all users of Forest lands.