

Dear Laura:

I read with great interest about your upcoming Clackamas Watershed hikes, especially the one to the "Bull of the Woods" on July 13<sup>th</sup>. I would love to visit that area again, however, at the age of 80, with a new hip joint, I regret to say that I am unable to make the hike.

I worked for the USFS from 1944 through 1983. Years 1944-1951 were on the Clackamas River Ranger District, and later in 1952-1957, on the Collawash District. I have revived some memories of the early days (text and photos) which I will pass on to you, assuming that possibly, some of the July 13<sup>th</sup> hikers will be interested in "the way it was."

*Bud Unruh*

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**Clackamas River Ranger District Back Country Lookouts –  
"The Way It Was," as I remember it - 1944-65**

*Bud Unruh, July 22, 2003*

Information written from my memory for the future enjoyment of anyone interested in "the way it was" on a back-country Forest Service Lookout in the early days.

Serving as a Forest Service lookout was something I had the great privilege of enjoying early in my career. This memory speaks about a time which most likely will never again be experienced by Forest Service employees.

What was it like to be on a back-country lookout in the 40s? If you were assigned to "The Bull," you hiked 16 miles from the end of the road to the lookout. After the packer unloaded your personal items and a month's supply of grub, he was gone and there you were, alone for at least two months of the fire season. You would probably see one more person, the packer about August 1<sup>st</sup> with more grub supplies, and then again in early September to move you out.

As I recall, the Clackamas River Ranger District back-country lookouts that were manned in the summers between 1944 and 1965 were: Bull of the Woods (16 miles by trail), Thunder Mountain (14 miles), Mount Lowe (11 miles), Hawk Mountain (18

**Estacada**

*The Oregonian*  
June 10, 2008

**3 guided hikes view  
Clackamas watershed**

Hikers can go on guided tours of the Clackamas watershed. The following tours, led by watershed naturalist Bryon Boyce, all meet at 9 a.m. at the Estacada Ranger Station at 595 N.W. Industrial Way.

- **Sunday:** Clackamas Lake Loop, a 2.5-mile hike that includes open water, wetlands, springs and old-growth fir.
- **July 13:** Bull of the Woods, a 6.5-mile hike up to the shoulder of South Dickey Peak.
- **July 20:** Headwaters High Elevation Loop, a 5-mile partial loop hike.

Details: 503-558-0550, e-mail [laura@clackamasriver.org](mailto:laura@clackamasriver.org) or [www.clackamasriver.org](http://www.clackamasriver.org)

miles), and Fish Creek (8 miles). Other stations included Bagby Hot Springs Guard Station (13 miles) and Rho Ridge Guard Station (8 miles). All of the people assigned to these stations needed to have supplies packed in. There was the initial pack-in, then another about once a month thereafter. This was the job of the District Packer with the aid of horses and mules kept at Oak Grove Ranger Station. Other stations manned but served by primitive roads were: Hillockburn GS, North Fork GS, Bedford Point LO, Lookout Springs GS, and Plaza Lake GS.

Each lookout and Guard made up a grub list to last a month. The order was then placed by phone to Estacada, and delivered to Three Lynx Power Plant where a FS person from Oak Grove drove the seven miles on the very primitive one-lane (pipeline) road and picked it up.

A fairly typical plan for the packer was to pack in The “Bull” and Bagby GS on one trip. The packer’s horse and mules were usually hauled to the end of the road just south of the Clackamas River in the morning. The lookout and guard along with their supplies were transported in another vehicle to the same location where the packer loaded the pack mules. The mule loads were secured using the “diamond hitch,” a mysterious and complicated procedure that only an experienced packer knew. The first day for the pack string usually ended at Tom’s Meadow after seven miles on the trail.

There was a large three-sided pole-type shelter with split cedar shakes on the sides and roof. Also, there was a fenced pasture where the mules could be turned out to graze and spend the night. The lookout person assigned to the “Bull” walked and spent the night there also and assumed some of the duties of fire building, cooking, and cleaning up – tasks involved for supper and breakfast.

Early in the morning, the packer rounded up the animals. Nosebags filled with oats made this job pretty easy. Next, the packer reloaded all supplies, and got on the way, another nine miles to the Lookout. After unloading at the Bull, the next stop for the packer would often be Bagby GS, where he would leave the Guard’s supplies and spend the night. Next day, 13 miles down the trail to the end of the road, load horses and mules in stake-body truck, and return to Oak Grove.



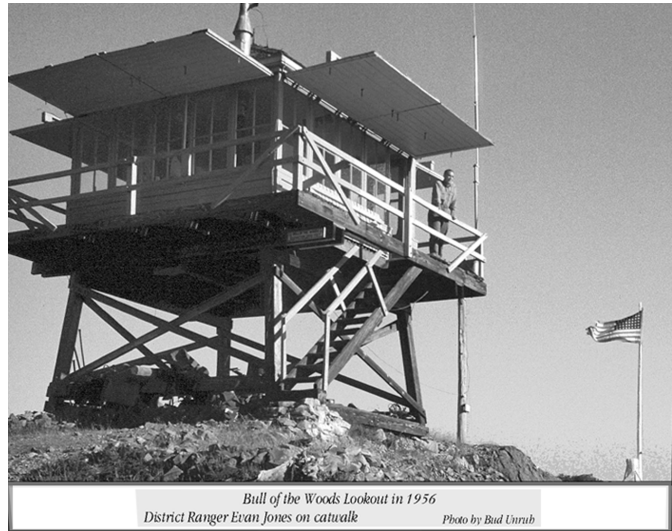
Loading a pack mule. The mule pack string was the means of supplying Lookouts, Trail crews, Fire Guards, Etc. from the beginning of the FS.  
Time and place of photo unrecorded.

*Paul Throck*

Some of the duties and activities of the lookout as I remember them:

Initially after arrival:

1. Open up the lookout building. Raise the shutters, and generally organize equipment and supplies for appearance and efficiency.
2. Level and orient the Osborne Fire finder so that any azimuth readings on potential fires are accurate.
3. Gas up the Coleman lantern or Alladin lamp and install new mantles. This is to be the only light source after dark.
4. Lay out your sleeping bag on a metal cot with wire mesh springs and a cotton filled mattress that has been rolled up all winter.
5. Build a fire in the cook stove and prepare supper for yourself and the packer...then heat water and clean up dirty dishes (usually all made of tin material).
6. It's been a long day!!!



Daily:

1. Rise early, usually with the sunrise.
2. Make an intense study of surrounding terrain for any visible smoke at least once an hour.
3. During lightning storms, be constantly searching for smokes. Make records of strikes so you can spot any following smokes soon as possible. Listen for reports from other lookouts so that possibly a fire azimuth can be read from two directions and help pinpoint location.
4. Check in and report the weather to Oak Grove Ranger Station on a schedule morning and evening. The weather report to include wind speed and direction, temperature, and humidity. Each lookout had a small weather station which included an anemometer to measure wind speed. A wet and dry bulb sling psychrometer along with a conversion table was used to calculate humidity.

5. Haul water up the hill in five gallon metal cans a half mile up the very steep trail once or twice a day. Use a wood-slat pack board that is not so easy on the back.
6. Prepare meals and clean up after. No fresh meat, vegetables, or milk after the first few days you arrived.
7. Keep the lookout clean and presentable. You may possibly get a visit from the DR or Fire Asst to check you out.

Throughout the summer:

1. Hunt and cut wood for cooking and warmth. Stockpile enough to leave a good starting supply for the next year.
2. Maintain trails in the vicinity of the lookout. This was always scheduled on days when fire risk was low.
3. Make any repairs which may be necessary after winter snows and weather.

Evenings:

1. On the telephone party line with all of the other lookouts, get to know each other, and hash over your experiences for the day.
2. To bed early because there is little to do in the dark. Reading by a Coleman lamp light isn't that great. The light gets dimmer and dimmer as the gas pressure goes down. Pump it up again to get some decent light back for a while. Anyway, the sun rises early in the morning, so get some good sleep.

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### **Bull Of The Woods Lookout Water Source –**

In 1945, when I (Bud Unruh) helped pack-in of the lookout, I went with the new Lookout (Phil Hoffman) to help haul the first load of water from the “Bull” spring. We strapped five gallon metal water cans on a wood slat pack board and went down a steep trail on the east side. It was about half of a mile to a small spring inside a cave which had been dug by a prospector at some time. A hole had been dug inside of the cave to collect water. To fill the five-gallon cans, it was necessary to dip water with a smaller container and pour. The hike back up the steep hill carrying the 40 pound water can was tiring. This was a trip the lookout had to make once or twice a day all summer. The water was clear and cold; and had a good taste. I wonder if the Lookout's water source still exists (2008) ?