



TRIBUTE TO A FAMOUS FORESTER

The 200 letters sent by members of the Forest Service to Will Croft Barnes on his seventieth birthday are remarkable not only as a sign of the affection and admiration felt for this veteran forester, but also as a symbol of the spirit of the service. Written by rangers, inspectors, and directors, by clerks, and by ex-chiefs of the organization, they give more clearly than could any impersonal account a true idea of the picturesque and hazardous life and the camaraderie on the range.

Mr. Barnes retired year before last as assistant forester in charge of range management (THE OFFICIAL RECORD, July 18, 1928), having completed 21 years of active duty with the Forest Service. Since then, as secretary of the United States Geographic Board, he has kept in touch with his former associates through personal contact and through his writings. Several of those who wrote to congratulate Mr. Barnes on his birthday had never met him, but owe their feeling of friendship for him to his contributions to Government bulletins and circulars, to the house organs of the Forest Service, and to the Saturday Evening Post and a dozen or more other magazines. Excerpts from a few of the letters received bound for preservation as one of his most cherished possessions, will give an idea of the general tone of all of them.

One man expresses the gratitude voiced by many other for help received by a beginner from the experienced forester and at the same time paints a picture of life in the great open spaces:

Toiyabe days! Me, a punk of 21 or 22, with the weight of the world on my feeble shoulders. Sleepless night of worry. Wild men—wild horses—and still wilder women—town sites booming on the far-flung mining claims—saloons springing up on other forest acres—a thousand and one dismaying problems. If ever angel appeared in mortal man, you played that role when you appeared on those limitless horizon of central Nevada!

That visit of yours was one of the most helpful, inspiring, stimulating experiences of all my enduring days. Your keen balancing of relative values—the oil you poured so expertly on troubled waters—your fatherly advice—your good-humored criticisms and suggestion, full of encouragement and good will. Boy! That was good medicine! I shall always be grateful for it.

Kindness, courage, generosity, poise, perception—these are admirable, inspiring attributes of the human spirit. Of your spirit, W.C.B.!

This letter, from one who had apparently worked side by side with Mr. Barnes, indicates how condition in the forests have changed:

Old Timer, Howdy!

The rough trails of the old days have been smoothed out—many of our friends have crossed the Great Divide—the open friendly hand has replaced the clenched fist—and plus fours have taken the place of Angora chaps. But what memories those are to have and to hold—memories of days when every step of progress meant a fight.

Ever shall we be mindful that it was you who led the first cavvy [sic] across the plains and mountains of the West and helped build up that esprit de corps and public confidence which to-day is the heritage of every Forest Service officer.

Boiled down to one-paragraph, the feeling of the Forest Service at large seems to be that set forth in the tribute from one of the office force in Washington:

Occasionally, on some steeper slope or some wider range of life there appears an outstanding figure moving in bold relief against a graven background or silhouetted against a colorful sky. Such a rare being is Will C. Barnes, and such an impression of vital personality is made upon those with whom he is associated even casually.

Mr. Barnes is the author of *Tales from X-Bar Horse Camp*, *Western Grazing Grounds and Forest Ranges*. *The Story of the Range, and Cattle* (to be out in October). His next activity is the completion of a *History of Arizona*.

In March of next year, Mr. and Mrs. Barnes will sail from the west coast for Honolulu, Australia, the South Sea Islands, and other points of special interest to this author and investigator, on around the world. The steps in this trip will be taken as inclination and opportunity for eventual happenings present themselves.