

Summer of 1957: a memoir

By John Teisberg, Becketwood Member

Introduction

In the spring of our junior year at Concordia College, Paul Dussere and I talked about going to Seattle the following summer and getting a summer job with Boeing. We had both almost completed our mathematics major requirements and thought we would be in great demand. I still, to this day, have a hard time believing that I told my folks that I wouldn't be working on the farm that summer. I was the youngest of eight children and the only one available to work with my dad on the small farm.

The farm consisted of a quarter section and half a quarter section (240 acres), which would have been a sizable farm in 1957 but when you take out the woods, lakes, and the Great Northern railway and highway 52 that cut through the farm, we were left with about 100 acres of tillable land. This meant we needed to be a dairy farm, milking 16 cows and raising corn, oats, alfalfa, and another cash crop like barley, flax, rye, or wheat. The workload had decreased somewhat, though, over the years, since we had purchased a used combine and had our hay baled. I guess I thought that my dad could get a hired hand for a day or two, as needed.

Tri-State Auto Auction in Fargo had advertised a need for cars to be driven to various locations—they needed a car to be delivered to Yakima, Washington and Paul and I concluded that would be close enough to Seattle that we could hitchhike the rest of the way....

The story continues....

A side trip becomes more

We were given some money for gas, probably about \$25 (gas was about 26 cents a gallon in those days) and sent on our way. We got to western North Dakota in our Chevrolet station wagon when we discovered a low tire. We stopped in a small town, maybe Sentinel Butte (the home of a former classmate, Ralph Hogoboom), to get the tire fixed. The guy at the service station fixed the leak and informed us that the tubeless tire contained a tube and this was not an ideal situation. We drove until both of us were tired, probably in Montana, and pulled off the road on a field entrance and slept in the car.

The next morning we continued on our way on old highway 10. Neither of us had been to Yellowstone National Park so we decided we'd take a side trip. We started at the northeast entrance and after some distance we came upon a gate blocking the road. It was very early in June and we found out that entrance didn't get plowed out until at least the middle of June. We backtracked and went south to the east entrance and entered the park.

I suppose we briefly looked at Old Faithful, found out the Park headquarters was at Mammoth Hot Springs and that the Yellowstone Park Company (the YP) was hiring, so we thought we'd apply. I was hired to work in the laundry at Mammoth as assistant wringerman and Paul was

hired to work in the kitchen at Old Faithful. That left the problem of the station wagon that needed to get to Yakima. We flipped a coin to see who'd go on and Paul lost. He got in the car and headed for Old Faithful.

I was shown a room in the bunkhouse, which was a hundred feet from the laundry and unpacked my suitcases. I had no roommate yet and I realized I didn't know anyone there. I heard some sounds on the communal washroom and went to introduce myself. I met two guys from Fremont, NE, Cliff Cushman and Lyman Heine, who were wearing their busboys uniforms and heading for work. *[At Christmas 2011, I received a card and note from Lyman's sister-in-law informing me that Lyman had passed away two years earlier and she was notifying those people in Lyman's address book of that event. I had last talked to Lyman in 1998.]* Shortly thereafter I met Gene Ulansky from Yonkers, NY, who became a best friend until his untimely death in 1998.

Then I went down to the porch of the bunkhouse and looked out at the landscape. I thought it was the most godforsaken place I had ever seen. Two weeks later I would think the whole park was beautiful. The YP employees ate in a large dining hall nearby. The food was not great but it was nourishing. Thus ended my first day in the Park, a place that would become a huge memory in my life.

Wringerman

The laundry workday started at 7 a.m. so I needed to get up early. Janet Murdock, who seemed quite elderly but was probably in her early sixties, ran the laundry. The washerman was a guy in his late fifties named Les and the chief wringerman was an old guy on Social Security named Jack. Les was a recovering alcoholic and Jack was a grump who seemed to live on coffee, blackberry brandy and Tums. I can't recall him eating food but he probably snuck some when I wasn't looking. We worked six days a week and were paid \$125 per month plus room and board. Since it was very early in the season, our workload wasn't huge and we were usually done by 1 p.m. After a couple of days I got a roommate, a Hispanic man named Rudy. Janet, who apparently had a great grapevine, soon asked me who my roommate was. I told her Rudy and she said, "Rudy! He's a wino; we've got to get you out of that room."

She got me moved to a room with Joe Burrow, who was from West Memphis, AK. [I called Joe in 1988 when Jacqueline and I had a stopover in Memphis and he was pleased to hear from me.] Joe confided that when he'd told his dad he was going to Yellowstone that summer instead of working in Memphis, his dad said he didn't want to see him again until Labor Day. Joe did quit his YP job in midsummer and went to the Grand Tetons to work for the National Park Service.

Our laundry's wringers were centrifugal and needed to be loaded carefully so they were balanced. If they were unbalanced they would set up a hellish knocking and we'd hit the circuit breaker and try to repack and balance the load. The laundry staff included between four and eight girls who would take the spun-dry sheets and run them through a mangle. They needed to be folded just right to make it easier for the room cleaners to make the beds. The sheets coming through the mangle were hot and the girls at that end would switch with other girls every fifteen minutes so they could cool off. There was no air conditioning but fans helped a little. Janet was a stern boss, but did look out for her employees and got us a few perks. She coaxed the wranglers

to take us on a horseback ride and other little favors. The first four girls were from the Salt Lake City area. Soon four more from California and two more from elsewhere arrived and two of the first girls were sent to the Old Faithful laundry. The California girls were Nancy Beller, Sally, Linda, and a fourth I can't remember. Nancy and I kept in touch for about five years and then re-connected in 2010.

After work hours

The early quitting times allowed opportunities to explore the area. Gardiner, MT was five miles north of Mammoth, just outside the Park. There were numerous bars; I remember the Blue Goose, the K Bar, and the Bank Club, and a few eating places. After 9 p.m. they were crowded with Park workers and tourists. The Blue Goose had a woman piano player known as Bloody Mary, but I think her real name was Mary Deare and she claimed to know over 400 songs. If you stayed late enough and the crowd in the bar was fairly small, sometimes the bar would buy a round.

Of course, many of the Park employees were under age 21 and wished they were of legal age. One early evening the electricity went off and some of these kids thought they'd head for Gardiner and it would be too hard to check IDs in the dark. Six of us jumped in a car and a 16-year-old named Jim drove. Gardiner was 1,000 feet lower than Mammoth and 52 curves away. We headed down the road at too fast a speed (in my opinion). As we approached the first curve I thought we wouldn't make it but when we got there it wasn't that sharp a turn. Then I looked at the next curve and I *knew* we couldn't make that. Just as we were entering the curve the left front tire blew and the car was jammed between the shoulder and the hillside. If it had happened a quarter mile farther we would have rolled several times and wound up in the Gardiner River. Jim the driver then confessed he'd had three accidents before now. He said he was having trouble getting insurance. We caught another car heading for Gardiner. When we got there we found out that they *were* checking IDs—this wasn't the first time the electricity had gone off.

There was an "almost" ghost town north of Mammoth named Jardine that had some gold mining in the old days. We went up to the mining area one afternoon and climbed around on the remaining sluiceways and other decaying equipment and then became tired of it and returned to Mammoth. We later found out that we could have been picked up for trespassing. Jardine, some 30 years later, became the headquarters for the Church Universal and Triumphant headed by Elizabeth Clare Prophet.

An informal group at Mammoth was The Damn Fools Club. The membership requirements were: during the first full moon you were at Mammoth you were to climb Bunsen Peak and when you reached the top you were to say, "I am a damn fool!" Bunsen Peak was about five miles southwest of Mammoth and wasn't a hard climb since you could walk all the way to the top.

Occupational hazards

One of the first groups of government workers I encountered was the Blister Rust Control (BRC) guys. They were in Mammoth for a week of training. Their job was to eradicate the gooseberry bushes, which were an intermediate host for the White Pine Blister Rust that was destroying the

white pine. The workers would go up and down the mountainsides and grub out these bushes. What they couldn't get out completely was sprayed with 2,4, 5-T ester—the main component of Agent Orange. I've often wondered what happened to the guys who sprayed this for eight hours a day. These men were the main backup for the crews that would fight forest fires in the park, getting lots of overtime. In 1957, there were no significant fires in Yellowstone. Many of these guys were on college football teams, and this work was supposed to increase their endurance. In the evenings they would hang out at the Mammoth Coffee Shop and play two Coasters tunes, over and over—*Searchin'*, and *Young Blood*. They were white Southern guys listening to black rock and roll, which amused me a little.

My sister Louise was a Registered Nurse and, after attaining her B.A. from Macalester College, decided to spend a summer working at the hospital at Mammoth. When she found out that I was working at Mammoth, she wrote me a letter telling me to not follow the Gardiner River from Mammoth to Osprey Falls, since she almost lost her life three times when she tried it. Of course, that was all the encouragement I needed. The next Sunday, Gene Ulansky and I decided we should do that very thing. We did find a couple of very dangerous places and, since it was getting dark, we decided that we had seen enough.



Moving on

After two weeks and two days, I realized that I was spending more than I was making. There was a dance every night at the recreation hall at Mammoth, with a concert on Sunday night. A combo of about six guys from Oklahoma State played often and was quite good. The beer was a reasonable price, but my \$125 per month wasn't going to leave me much at the end of the summer. I decided I should explore our original plan and try looking for work at Boeing in Seattle so I give my resignation notice. Jack the old guy in the laundry said, "I don't blame you,

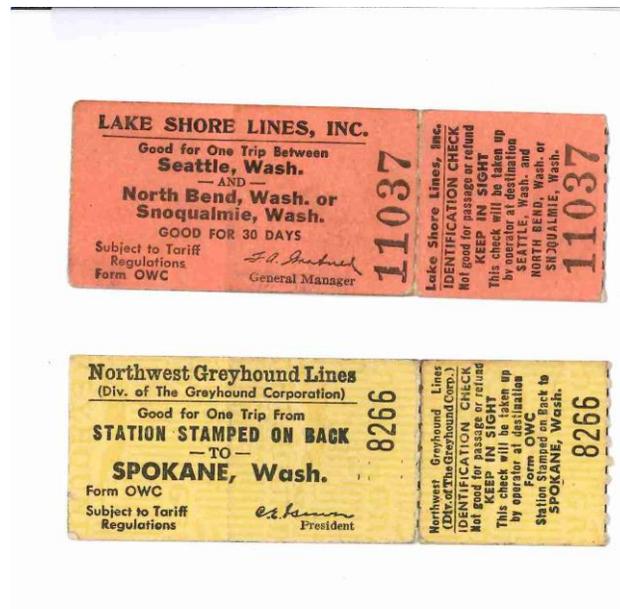
kid, there's nothing here." Little did I know that about five days later he would quit, because his earnings were reaching the point where he's lose some of his Social Security benefit. Had I known I might have stayed since I would have gotten his job at a little better pay.

I started hitching in front of the Museum at Mammoth after lunch on a Friday. I quickly got a ride with two carpenters who had just been laid off at Canyon. They were heading for Billings and had a case of beer to make the trip shorter. They offered me a beer in the first half-mile, which I politely accepted. We got to Gardiner about 15 minutes later and they said, "John, do you mind if we get something to eat?" I was okay with that—always go along with the ride. Their lunch consisted of a hamburger and another beer while I had another as well. When we got back to the car they said, "John, can you drive?" I thought that sounded good, since I was now the soberest one. I could ride with them only to Livingston (50 miles away), because I wanted to head west to Bozeman for the night while they wanted to go east. I hadn't gone too far before the two beers started making me sleepy but I fought through that. When we got to Livingston they said, "John, if you'll drive us to Billings, we'll buy you a bus ticket to Bozeman." I politely declined but encouraged them to eat a couple of steaks before they continued on.

I then caught a ride to Bozeman with people who were not memorable to me. They dropped me off in downtown Bozeman and I found a room for the night. I wanted to visit a former girlfriend who was living there. We had a nice visit and I met her mother. I never did find out what happened to her father—I'd never asked during the three months we dated, and she never volunteered the information. Then I retired to the hotel and watched the lobby television for the evening. I did call Mammoth to see if any mail had arrived for me and talked to Gene Ulansky—no mail for me, he said, but he wished me luck at Boeing.

The next morning, a Saturday, I was back on the road and caught a ride with an auto transport heading as far as Deer Lodge. The driver said I could throw my suitcases in the Cadillac right behind the cab. It was a pleasurable ride, as he told me about driving a semi over mountain passes. He dropped me off in Deer Lodge about noon. I soon found out there is a penitentiary in Deer Lodge with a lot of signs saying, "Do not pick up hitchhikers!"—cars kept sailing past me. Finally a car stopped. I had a CONCORDIA pennant taped to my suitcase and a Concordia student and her mother were in the car. The mom said, "We're not going your way, but a car behind us is and can pick you up." Thank you! These folks gave me a ride to Missoula.

At Missoula, a car stopped and asked, "Concordia in River Forest?" I said no, but they picked me up anyway and gave me a ride to Coeur d'Alene. I needed to get to Spokane and, just as a backup, I bought a bus ticket to Spokane (which I still have). But I did get a ride from a retired Army officer, who was kind enough to give me a ride to the west side of Spokane, to a large truck stop. The guy in charge of the truck stop seemed a little skeptical of me and my efforts to find a trucker who would give me a ride to Seattle. After a while he softened; he told me I could sleep in a bunk where other truckers were bunked. In the morning (Sunday) he helped me get a ride with a trucker going to Seattle. The trucker dropped me off in Seattle at the corner of the Boeing employment office, with a hotel kitty-corner. I checked into the hotel and waited for morning so I could apply.



Moving Back

Boeing treated me courteously and said they'd be happy to see me next summer, but there wasn't anything available now. Sadly disappointed, I went back to my room at the hotel and called home. Mom was happy to hear I was heading east. I said I would be stopping in the Park to say goodbye to my friends. I then headed for the bus depot and bought a ticket to Snoqualmie Pass, where I figured I'd have better luck hitching. Too late I found the bus left from a different location and I had missed it. (I still have *that* bus ticket.) I negotiated a cab ride across the floating bridge and hoped for the best. About 45 seconds later, a truck heading for Spokane stopped and picked me up. He dropped me in Dishman, a suburb on the east side of Spokane.

It was now about 9 p.m. and the sun was setting. To hitch a ride you need good lighting (so a potential ride can size you up) and room to pull off the road. Soon a cab with a woman driver pulled up and said she'd give me a ride to a better spot to hitch. (The kindnesses of strangers!) Soon a beat-up Ford coupe stopped. The driver said he was going to the Idaho border. "Are there any lights there?" Yes, he said (he lied, though not maliciously). "I'm Cactus Pete, The Idaho Plainsman, been on Grand Ole Opry for seven years. Here's some gin, but watch your gullet—it's 90 proof." He handed me the fifth. "Here's some seven-up for chaser. Anytime I see a cat digging the road this time of night, I figure he needs a shot. I'm heading for the border to do a benefit. This is just my fishin' car. Here, take another shot—the ice-worms'll never nest any earlier." A short and fun ride, but there wasn't much for lighting at the border, just signs indicating a nightclub. "If you can't get a ride, come in and get me and I'll give you a ride back to Spokadiddle." He pulled into the parking lot after dropping me off, and suddenly he rolled down his car window, turned up his radio and said, "Hey, dig this, String of Pearls." While thumbing, a farm dog came over to be petted and kept me company. A car pulled up and asked if the dog was with me. Assured it was not, he told me he was heading for Coeur d'Alene. He turned out to be a tired salesman who wanted someone to keep him awake until he got home. We made it to Coeur d'Alene and I got a room for the night.

The next morning, I got a ride all the way to Butte but I don't remember any of it now. At Butte, a guy stopped, rolled down the window, laughing, and said, "Where the hell are you going and where the hell have you been?" He was a salesman who just enjoyed stories and we had a nice ride to Bozeman. At Bozeman, I got a ride with two guys who were heading for the Park to look for jobs. By late afternoon, I was back at Mammoth. I needed a place to bed down but there was always a vacant bed in someone's room. I think I slept in Joe Burrow's room (from West Memphis). There was a problem of food but my friends continued to feed me in the YP dining hall.

Another opening

The next morning, someone suggested that I apply for a government job. An unspoken rule existed that the government wouldn't hire people who had quit working for one of the concessionaires, but I thought I'd try anyway. The employment officer said there were no job openings right then, but July 1 was a few days away: July 1 was the start of the new fiscal year and there would be some new jobs so I should fill out a job application. I said I'd worked for the YP company but had quit, gone to Seattle to apply at Boeing, and was now heading home. He said to leave the YP employment off the job history. One question on the form was "Do you belong to any honorary societies?" I put down Alpha Phi Gamma, which was a "Mickey Mouse" journalism group at Concordia. He asked what that society was and what I did in journalism. I told him I was a photo editor and wrote sports and a column.

When I checked in on July 1, I was told they needed a guy to work on a survey crew at Canyon and that my math major would be a plus. They found a ride for me on a government truck and I headed off. When I reported at Canyon, I found out I would be working on a tree-planting crew, planting trees around a new intersection at Canyon. I was escorted to a small cabin that had been used by the YP as a "camper's cabin" but was now too rough for park visitors and the government used it to house seasonal workers. It consisted of two single beds, a Coleman lantern, a pot-bellied stove, and a water-pitcher that leaked. Firewood was nearby, along with a box of "fire-starter," sawdust that had been soaked with white gas. When you put it on logs early in the morning, you could have a roaring fire in minutes. An outdoor toilet was about 20 feet away and a water faucet about 20 feet in the other direction. Later I borrowed a large hubcap from a neighbor to use as a washbasin.

My employers at Canyon were Frank Rose and his wife. Frank was a private contractor hired by the WODC (Western Office of Design and Construction) to handle the re-forestation around Canyon after the new road construction. There were two other guys in the laboring class, Bill and Jack (Churchkey), who were a step above the crew I was on. Bill drove a 1950-something Mercury, painted with gray primer and purple flames painted on the sides. Churchkey got his nickname since he always carried one—churchkeys were used to open beer cans before the days of pop tops, and I guess Jack wanted to be prepared, since you never knew when you might run into a can of beer.

The clean-job guys for WODC were landscape architect students, Don Childs and King Harvey from Michigan State and Jim Hudson from Georgia. They determined where the trees were to be

planted. I soon had a roommate, Bob Kephart from Cal Poly, who was a grunt like me. Our daily tasks were to dig up small trees and seedlings from up on the mountainside and transplant them at the indicated spots. Soon four young guys from Cleveland, some who appeared as though they could have been on work-release, although they never caused any trouble, joined us. Every day we would drive a Jeep pickup along a rough trail to look for small trees. We looked for lodgepole pine, white pine, Engelman spruce, and Alpine fir. The seedlings (generally less than 2 feet tall) were taken bare-root, dipped in special mud Frank Rose had acquired in the Bighorn Mountains, and wrapped in newspaper. The larger trees were balled and burlapped with dirt around their roots. We would usually make a trip in half a day and then return for lunch or dinner.

The dining hall was about a quarter mile from our cabin and adjacent to the lavatory. The meals were pretty good, as I recall, and there was always bread and butter and jam if I needed something to make the rest of the meal more palatable. I remember a minor uprising about the food and the woman in charge quit and meals improved. Canyon is at about 8,000 feet, and I would often notice frost on the ground—about three mornings out of seven—when going to breakfast in July. The group eating included all of the government workers—truckers, trail builders, construction workers, etc. Two guys in an adjacent cabin, Jim Key and Walt Ferguson, were in a trail-building crew. Much of this work was on steep inclines so they rigged up a motorized wheelbarrow. I asked them what they did to build trails. They said they dug down a foot or so and took out all of the dirt, rocks, and sand and then filled it with “material.” I asked what “material” consisted of and they said dirt, rocks, and sand. Of course, the fill was then covered with asphalt. The next summer, I heard that Jim and Walt had rear-ended a semi loaded with telephone poles and Walt had been killed and Jim severely injured.

Some of the trees were planted in an old roadbed. We’d dig through about four inches of soil, then three inches of asphalt, then five inches of soil and plant the seedling. I’ve wondered if any of those trees survived. I always carried a few “farmer matches” (strike anywhere) in my pants pocket. One day I hit my pocket just wrong with my shovel handle and they started on fire. I escaped with minor burns and a hole in my pocket.

When we were working around the new crossroad, an occasional tourist would stop and ask for directions. On more than one occasion, four guys would point in four different directions. One time, Will Whitney, asked a driver for a cigarette. Will was a college basketball player and didn’t even smoke. The driver replied he didn’t smoke but would some gum help? Will was a Catholic, had gone to Creighton Prep, but was enjoying his time in the Park. He said, later on, “Confession is really gonna be a bitch this time.”

The group of guys who ate at the dining hall, besides us tree planters, were BRC (Blister Rust Control) guys, trail builders, some truck drivers and general laborers. Two guys, Tweety Bill and Pauly Fecketty, were recovering alcoholics. Tweety was an artist and a bar in Cody had some murals he had painted. Both of them went home to Cody one weekend and a “friend” gave them some wine. They returned for work on Monday looking like death warmed over. I think that was their last week of work and we never saw them again.

Roll-your-owns

After about four weeks the newly transplanted trees needed some regular watering and I was given the task of doing this all day. It was terribly boring work and I had to fight the urge to fall asleep on the job. I had been a pretend pipe smoker. I broke my pipe and it was before payday, so I concluded that rolling cigarettes using Bull Durham would be an interesting diversion. I never was good using those materials, but King Harvey taught me how to roll cigarettes using gummed cigarette papers and Velvet pipe tobacco. This made a good smoke but was the beginning of a ten-year habit, although I did graduate to tailor-mades. I usually hitched a ride up to Mammoth each Saturday morning and hitched a ride back on Sunday afternoon. Canyon was about 8,000 feet above sea level but I don't recall a problem breathing. One evening we played touch football against the BPR (Bureau of Public Roads) guys without becoming exhausted, even with my newly acquired bad habit.

Some notes about roll-your-owns. The primary tobaccos (outside of Bull Durham) were Velvet, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Prince Albert. Sir Walter Raleigh was pretty harsh and, as King Harvey said, "Would rot your socks." Prince Albert was better but Velvet was the best. The Velvet's can wasn't very tight and the tobacco would dry out. Prince Albert's can sealed tightly, so I would put Velvet in an old P.A. can. I would buy a one-pound can of Velvet (a circular can about 6" wide and 10" tall), which would last for quite a while, and fill the P.A. can from that. I once calculated the cost of a cigarette at about 1/3 of a cent, not counting the damage I was doing to my lungs. At that time a pack of 20 cigarettes was selling for about 25 cents. Velvet cigarettes were comparable to Pall Mall or Lucky Strikes.

Mammoth camera

This life went on for about five weeks, when one evening the Chief Naturalist, David Condon, came to Canyon looking for me. He had found out from the employment officer that I had some photography experience (my Alpha Phi Gamma entry on the application form). Also I had experience taking pictures with a Speed Graphic, the big press cameras you used to see in old movies, and the camera they had at Mammoth. The permanent rangers and others took pictures during the fall, winter, and spring but there was no one to make contact prints, nor possibly to develop film. He asked if I would like to come to Mammoth to do this work. Although it meant a cut in pay, from \$1.70 per hour to \$1.67, I quickly accepted the offer. The job would be to work in the dark room four days a week and spend the fifth day going around the park and taking pictures of people enjoying the Park. "Pictures of people taking pictures," I would say. Pretty sweet deal. I was back at Mammoth where my friends were. Unfortunately, some friends did not stay: Gene Ulansky quit to work for the Park Service in the Tetons, Leon Odendahl quit to go home to Dragerton, Utah, and Nancy Beller thought "we should spend less time together."



My room at Mammoth was shared with two guys, one (Russ) who worked for Public Health, testing food and water in the Park, and the other (Lev) taught at a prep school back east but was spending the summer working as a seasonal ranger. Russ told me that he could have closed down some of the eating places in the park, but that would take until the end of the summer and the season would be over then, anyway. One night a guy knocked on our door about 11 p.m. and said, "Russ, Miller wants to see you." Miller was a rather voluptuous waitress. I heard the following summer that they had gotten married.

Our room had advantages: We had a washroom that was used by fewer guys and it was quieter than the barracks. Also, we had a lock on the door. I ate most of my meals at the Hamilton Coffee Shop at Mammoth and got to know most of the employees there. Some of the young ladies were permanent residents at Mammoth and this was good seasonal employment for them. Through them, I met some of their parents, which became a big help in the next couple of years in the park.

The darkroom was in the basement of the Visitor Center at Mammoth, and whenever I had some slack time, like waiting for prints to wash, I would go up to the main floor and talk to the seasonal naturalist rangers. I learned about the park history, geological features, and plant and animal life. I also had the wonderful opportunity to spend some time talking to David Condon, the Chief Naturalist, and David Beale, the Assistant Chief Naturalist. These two fine men led me to believe that the National Park Service was maybe the finest government division of the Department of Interior. They were always very fair and looked out for my welfare. This job lasted until about Labor Day when I needed to get back for my senior year at Concordia College. I was able to be the photographer at the dedication of the newly built Canyon Village and a few other occasions. On the Canyon dedication I took along a young lady in my government vehicle, probably much against the rules, but no one ever criticized me for that.

One interesting aspect of the later part of August was the increasing scarcity of men, which enhanced my own desirability. By this time, most of the BRC guys were gone and a lot of the seasonal help had left, too. There was one young lady that deserves some mention. She was a Mormon from Salt Lake City who referred to herself as a “Jack Mormon,” the term given to a Mormon who drank alcohol, smoked, or drank caffeinated beverages. We met in the rec hall one evening and decided to have a couple of Cokes. She was admiring my class ring so I took it off so she could look at it. She tried it on her finger and I jokingly said, “Okay, we’ll go steady for tonight.” After finishing our Cokes, we decided we’d hitchhike to Gardiner.

While we were waiting for a ride, a car pulled up with some guys in it. At this point she gasped and said she was supposed to be with one of them and didn’t want to be. One or two of them started toward her and we ran to the men’s dormitory behind the museum, where I knew I could yell for help if the situation came to that. After a few minutes we left the dorm and took a circuitous route back to the rec hall. Then I asked her why she didn’t go with them. She said, “I’m not going to go with someone else when I’m going steady.” I paused to think about that. We did date a couple of times in the next few days, until it was time for me to go home. On the day I was leaving, I stopped by the laundry where she worked, to say goodbye. She cried and gave me a present, a bolo tie (which I never wore). A few weeks later, I wrote a letter to her but never got a reply. The next summer someone told me she got married two weeks after I left the park. May have dodged a bullet there.

There were four NPS-approved campsites at Mammoth. You had to (or were supposed to) sign out for one at the Chief Ranger’s Office. These campsites were nice to go to, build a fire, and have a beer or two with friends. They often had a little stream running nearby which made a nice cooler for beer. One night Nancy Beller and I were sitting, watching a campfire when a large dark animal went crashing by. Nancy jumped in my lap and startled me as much as the animal. I think it must have been a deer, since I don’t think a bear would have been running from another animal.

Just prior to this encounter I had dated another Salt Lake City Mormon who was as tall as me. I even went to a Mormon service one Sunday evening. There was a chapel at Mammoth and a part-time pastor named Jack Jennings, as I recall. I think he was a UCC pastor and he conducted a service every Sunday morning. The evenings were open, and the service I mentioned was Testimony Night for the Mormons and a Joe Murphy conducted the service. Joe was a seasonal naturalist who taught biology at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. Each testimony went like this: “I believe that the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints is the true church and Joseph Smith was His prophet.” Then they had communion, which consisted of passing a tray with bread cubes on it followed by a tray containing little paper cups of water. I did not partake.

When I headed back to Minnesota, I rode with the Mattsons as far as Livingston. Frank Mattson was the park landscape architect and later became one of my heroes of the Park Service. They were taking their daughter Margie to the dentist in Bozeman. Other rides, as far as Bismarck, weren’t memorable but there a semi of furniture stopped to pick me up. That driver was a guy named Bob Grohnke and I had waited on him during the school year when he ate at Sharel’s, a coffee shop between Concordia and Moorhead State Teachers College (now University of Minnesota-Moorhead). I had worked the dinner hour, two hours for two meals! Bob was heading

for Fargo so we had a good time visiting. We got to Fargo in late afternoon and, after sleeping at a friend's house, I got back home to Ashby the next day. In assessing the summer, I decided I should probably go back in 1958 for new adventures.

