

Oral History Number: 443-003

Interviewee: Bob Hayes

Interviewer: None

Date of Interview: October 13, 2013

Project: College of Forestry and Conservation Alumni Oral History Collection

Bob Hayes: Bob Hayes—it's B-O-B, of course, H-A-Y-E-S. I graduated in 1953. I came out here in 1950 from Vermont and I had gone to the University of Vermont. They had a pre-forestry course there and so I went there for 2 years and then I had to transfer. So, I came here in the fall of 1950. My wife and I—we'd been married and we came out here in—I don't know—I think in September or October. Anyhow, we were here to sign up and enter the university. I have some stories about some of my famous professors that were here.

One professor that I had that I remember well was Fay Clark. Fay taught mensuration and valuations. Those subjects were about measuring the forests and they involved some pretty intricate mathematical formulas that he gave to us. Back in those days, there were no hand computers. I think there were some mechanical computers or electric computers, but they were so big and heavy you couldn't tote them around. So all of our calculations were made with a slide rule. Fay taught a course called Introduction to the Slide Rule. The slide rule is sort of like a small ruler and it has parts that slide back and forth. You manipulate those different scales on there and you can use logarithms. You can take a number to the—I don't know—the 12th power or you can find the 10th or 12th power of a number and there. They took the place of the hand calculator. First Fay—you had to enter a class called Introduction to the Slide Rule. So, we were all sitting in the classroom there waiting for Fay to come in, and the door opened up and in came the end of a slide rule about two feet wide and followed by Fay Clark. The gol dang slide rule was about seven feet long. He hung it up on the blackboard and then he went through all the manipulations we had to do and had to learn. That was my introduction to Fay Clark.

One time—Fay wore a monocle and he had a little mustache and he chewed snus. One time in class, it was in the springtime, and the window was open there and Fay was lecturing. Every once and a while, he would go out and spit out a nice big mouth full of snus. Then he'd come back and keep on lecturing. One of the students was sitting by the window there and when Fay wasn't looking he reached over and carefully closed the window. Fay was long lecturing and pretty soon he walked over and let fly another mouthful. Course, it hit the window and spattered all over, but it didn't seem to bother Fay. He just said, "Oh, damn students!" He knew all about students and how to handle them.

Another story about Fay that I've heard—I'm not sure if it's true or not—but Fay used to take a group of student over—cruising team—and they would live out in tents out in the woods and cruise timber all summer long. They were over on the St. Joe Forest and they'd been over there all summer. Finally summer was over and they were coming back to the university, so they stopped in Avery [Idaho] there. They all went into the bar there in Avery. I guess Fay got pretty

well snookered because he lost all of the cruise notes that the student had made all summer long. The story is, the next day after he sobered up, he sat down and tried to recall everything that they'd done and written down. He compiled a whole list of the cruise notes and turned them in. I guess that's one of the reasons some of those cruises there on the Forest Service didn't pan out.

There was a story going around that Fay Clark at one time had been married to Claire Trevor. Claire Trevor was a movie actress in Hollywood in the 1930s. I researched that one time and she'd been married three times, but Fay wasn't listed. He could have been courting her and so that's maybe how the story got started. Anyhow, Fay was a really interesting character.

Another professor we had was Tom Spaulding. I believe Tom was the dean here at one time. Anyhow he taught Forest Utilization. He was a chain smoker and you'd go out to his office to talk to Tom and he'd be smoking a cigarette. He'd put it down in the ashtray and then, while you were talking, he'd light another cigarette. Then pretty soon he'd put that down in the ashtray. By the time you left his office, he was smoking a cigarette and there would be three in his ashtray still smoking.

One time, he took us on a field trip to the mill at Bonner. They had some big drying sheds that they stored lumber in and they were pretty tall. The pigeons liked to go up there and roost in the top of those drying sheds. We were in there one time and he was telling us about how they dried lumber and this, that, and the other thing. He looked down on the ground. He says, "Oh here is something new. This is some of the insulation they are digging out of the mountain up by Libby [Montana]." One of the students walked over and looked at it and said, "Tom that's not insulation. It's pigeon shit."

We really had some interesting professors then and they stuck in my mind for a long time. Later on, I built a house up the Rattlesnake [in Missoula, Montana] close to where Fay lived. When he died, his widow wanted to know if I wanted to buy his cork boots. He had a pair of cork—now, cork boots are logging boots with spikes in the bottom like track shoes. They called them "corks." They're "corks" or "caulks." He had a pair there; I think they were 16 inches high. They didn't fit me, but I often regretted that I didn't buy them and put them in my museum.

Another story I have is about a summer job I had. The first summer I was here, in 1951, Tom Walbridge—he was a logging engineer professor at the university—he got five or six of us jobs up at J. Neils Lumber Company in Libby [Montana]. We were going to cruise timber. So, we drove up there after school was out long in June, got to Libby, and the forester there, Dick Griffith, who went to school here, he said that he had a house the company owned down at Troy, which is just a little ways from Libby. It was vacant and we could all live in that. So, we went down there and paired up in rooms and were there. Then we had to come back to Libby the next day and they were going to give us some classes on how to cruise timber. So, we came back there. They had classes for 3 or 4 different days about measuring trees and taking plots and pacing. He said, "Now, I noticed that you all have just kind of plain, ordinary shoes on, but in order to work in the woods here in Libby, you have to wear cork boots. Those are the boots that I was telling you about that had the spikes in them. He said, "You go down to this store in

town and you can charge the boots to the company here and we'll take it out of your paycheck." He said, "It's 25 dollars a pair for a pair of these cork boots." So, we all went down and bought cork boots. We went back to our house in Troy and there was some old telephone poles out there. One of the guys put his cork boots on and—I don't know—he was so proud of those, he walked out there. He spent the whole afternoon on Sunday walking up and down on those telephone poles and looking behind him to see how his corks were kicking out these little splinters of wood.

I don't know, the next week or so we were out there cruising timber. We paired up into two-man teams and we would go out and pace through the woods there and take a plot every five chains or whatever. I was with Jim Quesenberry (?) and we came to this rockslide and we started our—our line went across the rockslide there. We started across and I noticed Jim wasn't behind me. I looked around and Jim was taking his boots off. I said, "What are you doing Jim?" He said, "I'm not going to walk across that rockslide in my brand new cork boots and dull them up." When we were cruising timber all we had was a diameter tape. There was one Abney level that circulated around through the different crews, so about once a week we'd get an Abney level to use to get the height of the trees. Otherwise, we just had to make a guess to see how tall they were.

I remember the first cruise plot that Jim and I did, Bob Beebe was there. He was one of the supervising foresters and he was supervising us. We got to the center of our plot and Jim gave me the diameter tape. I was supposed to go around and estimate the tree height and measure the diameter and Jim would mark it down in the book. Well, the first tree I saw there was, gee, a really nice Doug fir [Douglas fir], a big one, so I walked up there and put my diameter tape around it. I had to walk around it to measure it. I got around there and I said, "Thirty-six inches, Jim!" So, he wrote that down and then I turned around. I walked away a little ways to see how tall the tree was. I looked up and it wasn't a tree at all. It was just a stub about ten feet high. Old Beebe there looked at me and just kind of rolled his eyes as if to say, "Oh man, I've really got some work to do here."

Let's see if I've got anything else here I want to talk about. Well, here at the university down where the field house is now was a forest nursery. They grew trees there for shelter belt projects and you could work down there part time when you weren't going to school. They paid you 75 cents an hour. You could grade these trees and put them in little bundles. The foreman down there was a fellow by the name of Pard Gerald (?). I don't know if Pard was his real name, but anyhow, that's what they called him. He was from Miles City [Montana], and he was a real cowboy. He wore cowboy boots, of course, and he smoked Bull Durham cigarettes. I thought, Gee, that's pretty neat smoking Bull Durham cigarettes, so I started smoking Bull Durham. My first cigarettes—I don't know what they looked like—they were tapered at both ends and fat in the middle. We would work down there and Pard didn't know any of our names, of course. A lot of the forestry students had these crusher hats. They were felt hats you could buy for 75 cents, and they came in different colors. There was red, black, and green and, I think, a brown. I had a red one, so he always called me, "Red Hat." He'd say, "Now, Red Hat, go over and get some string to tie up those trees," or, "Red Hat, grade these trees here." Then there was a guy,

Blue Hat. "Now, Blue Hat, you come over here and dig these trees up here." So, I always remembered that, the way he called me Red Hat. Here about four or five years ago, I saw one of these crusher hats advertised in a catalog, so I wrote and got one. By the time I paid the postage on it, I think it was forty-five dollars.

Well, let's see if I have anything else. I told you about Tom Spaulding—one word that he used that has always fascinated me, he'd say, "Ergo." I think ergo means "and if" or "and such." Anyhow, he'd be talking along and he'd say it, "And ergo!" He was a really nice guy, though.

I think that about is the end of my stories and lies or whatever they are. I really enjoyed my time here at the university and the Forestry School. I've worked in forestry all my life and I'm still interested in it. I have a lot of friends that I made here at the Forestry School that usually I don't see them very often, but I send a lot of them Christmas cards. We exchange stories and tell tales about what great loggers we were and timber cruisers. We—I think everybody enjoys going to the Forestry School and are really interested in logging and it's a great profession. Thank you.

[End of Interview]