

JAY R. BENTLEY

Jay was a trim, handsome young man when he reported for work in the Experiment Station in November 1933. He has not changed much through the years, except now he is more distinguished looking with the accumulation of a few gray hairs.

Jay started his career in the Range Division. At that time Mr. M. W. Talbot was division leader and F. G. Renner and I were his assistants. I was Jay's immediate supervisor during his first 6 years at the Station. He was a good boy in 1939, when I turned him loose to go on with other work.

Jay is from Kansas. What do you think he wanted to see first when he came to California? The ocean. He said it was one of the big thrills of his life.

Jay's first job was as crew leader of one of two 2-man crews on the San Joaquin Range Survey. His partner was John Magee, who later went to forest administration. Larry Short and Hap Johnson, both retired now, made up the second crew. I'm sure Jay will never forget his associations with these men and his experiences on the survey.

On the survey he was introduced to salami and French bread -- strange foods to a Kansan. After one taste, however, Jay made sure he always had a good supply of these items in the ration box. He got to know the warm hospitality of sheepherders and fared with them on lamb, cheese, sourdough bread and red wine. Jay enjoyed working on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley particularly and such places as Maricopa, Taft, McKittrick, Avenal, Coalinga, Mercey Hot Springs, Panoche, Dos Palos, Los Banos, Gustine, Newman, Patterson, and Tracy must hold fond memories.

Jay is a flat-lander. Where he came from, a knob on the landscape a few hundred feet high is a mountain. I remember Jay's reaction to California hills and mountains. On his first trip on the survey we traveled some moderately steep roads south of Tracy. As we approached the first steep grade he said, "You are not going to drive up there, are you?" "Yes I am," I replied. Jay sat pale and speechless, gripping the handle of the car door until we reached the top of the hill. He has traveled much steeper and more dangerous roads since, but probably none left as lasting an impression on him as that impossible grade south of Tracy.

Jay admits he was in a fog and bewildered a good part of the time on the survey. One day he said he would take me out to a plot and demonstrate survey procedures. We drove about 20 miles to the plot vicinity and then drove back and forth on the road trying to locate the plot. Over and over Jay muttered, "It should be right about here." He never did find the plot, although he worked on it the day before.

You may say that Jay had an excuse because it was so foggy that day we could not see the fences along the road right-of-way. But he had no excuse as far as I was concerned. He knew it was foggy before we left camp.

Jay's activities shifted to northeastern California in 1935. Here he worked on the Burgess Spring Experimental Range, on the Lassen Forest and in other locations. He was headquartered at the Blacks Mountain Branch Station, which is about 20 miles west of Burgess Spring.

Jay got married by this time, and because there were no housing facilities at Blacks Mountain for married people, Jay had to house his family in a tent. For four summers he led a rather primitive existence, but I'll bet he wishes he could relive these times again.

Jay worked on both forest and range projects at Burgess Spring. One study called for planting pine seeds. As expected from a Kansan, he used a corn planter to do the job.

Bob Gardner, now in forest administration in Region 4, worked with Jay throughout his stay in northeastern California. These two men were like Mike and Ike. Other people Jay worked or associated with while at Blacks Mountain were Larry Short, Ted Daniel, Harold Biswell, John Parker, Dick Klugh, William Gansberg, Dehnon Gish, Jerrald McNulty, James Warren, Wayne Gray, Jerry Mahoney, Bob McCulley (present Station Director), Gene Zumwalt, Jack Bongberg, Les Lloyd, Jerry Riley, and many others.

During his last 3 years in northeastern California, Jay spent some time on the Devil's Garden area of the Modoc Forest. Here he was stricken with a painful disease that affected him in the fall of the year as cold weather set in. Symptoms started to show in October and were gone by December. The middle finger on his right hand would swell to twice normal size and his arm would turn black and blue to the shoulder. He suffered great pain. There is a simple cure for this disease, but Jay refused to take it.

This malady known as Bentley's disease came on with the duck hunting season. Damage to his finger and arm came from shooting an old, heavy jolting, 12-gage shotgun. Jay would say, I can take the pain, show me the ducks.

So in retirement, Jay, we all hope you have yearly attacks of Bentley's disease.