

PIONEERS
of
the
OLYMPIC
PENINSULA

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CHAPTER SIX



BRANDEBERRY AND THE BEAR

In February, 1919, I was on the Upper Hoh at Pete Brandeberry's homestead. It was located one mile up from the John Huelsdonk Ranch. The Otis Crippen Homestead was one more mile up at the mouth of the south fork of the Hoh River. Pete and Otis were getting ready to leave one morning to go about 12 miles up the south fork. They had built a one-room cabin for trapping headquarters, and asked me to go along. I had just gotten home from the army and loved the woods, so I said, "Sure, I will go." We all had a pack, some food and bedding, stove pipe and tools. We were late getting started and only made about five miles. We camped on a gravel bar to have a fire all night and slept on the rocks. Sometime in the night, Pete moved the fire back. The gravel was hot, and he put in several spuds so they could bake for breakfast with a pot of coffee. Pete had two or three cougar hounds along; they were also good for bear.

We got a good start in the morning and made it to camp early; we had traveled seven miles and there was no trail. In camp we had to cut wood, get a place fixed for the dogs, put in the stove pipe, and arrange things in camp. The next day, Pete took the hounds across the river and up. Otis and I started down and back to the mountains to set traps and we wanted to get some meat. The ground was frozen and we made lots of noise walking. No luck for any of us this day and the same the next, and we were running low on grub. Then Pete's hounds bayed at a bear. It was a large black

bear and Pete got in a shot that killed him. We tried to eat a little, but it was hard to get down. About the fifth day Pete killed a cow elk and we helped pack it in. That night and for breakfast the next morning, we had fried steak and plain yellow corn meal hot cakes, no baking powder, just flat cakes fried in elk tallow. The tallow stuck to our lips, but hot coffee washed the cakes down. The next morning Pete was ready to start back, but Otis was staying to put out more traps. Pete carried the big bear hide and I carried about 50 pounds of elk meat. Pete had a family of six kids to feed, besides his wife. We were very tired after getting home that night.

The next morning Pete canoed me across the river to the Fred Fisher Homestead. Fred was a bachelor and he wanted me to stay a few days. He also had a trapline and I went with him the next day. Then he said, "Roy, there is a big buck deer around this clearing. I've seen him several times when I didn't have the rifle." Fred had a large caliber rifle that belonged to his nephew back east and his was a 30-30. After breakfast the next morning, he took down the big 35 and gave it to me. I lacked the experience to know to look it over. I knew it had been greased with heavy grease for a year and it was sticky. Fred went one way with his gun and I went the other. I was taking it easy under the vine maples when I raised my head up, and there in front of me was this buck and two does! I took aim, and the hammer snapped. I cocked it again, and it snapped. I started counting the times it snapped, up to seventeen times, then the three deer walked off. I started for the house and Fred was inside. I laid down the rifle and took off my coat, and threw it with my hat across the floor. Fred said, "Roy, what's the matter?" When I told him, he was all excited and started getting ready to go. I said, "Look here, I want to warm up this rifle," so I laid it on the stove, then poured hot water down the barrel, and it snapped fine. Then I said to Fred, "You do the same. Now my rifle is okay." We started out, I soon found the place where I had stood, and we saw the fresh tracks. We crawled slow and easy, and soon, not over 100 yards, there stood the deer! Fred wanted that deer and that rack of horns, so he never gave me a chance. He stepped in front and pulled the trigger on his 30-30 and it snapped. Before I could shoot, all three deer jumped a large log and took off. We went back to the house feeling sick.

The next day I moved down river six miles and stayed with Fred's brother, Carl Fisher for a few days. By this time I'd had plenty of

exercise on the Upper Hoh and started for the Lower Hoh. I was waiting for a report from Port Townsend that I was appointed road supervisor for the west end of Jefferson County, for the district covering the Hoh River.

In the spring of 1919, after coming back to Forks from the army, I met Dick Manning from Bear Creek. He was leaving for Coos Bay, Oregon, and wanted to sell his bear hounds. There was Mack, half hound, half airedale, Nelly, full blooded airedale, and two of her pups, nine months old, Prince and Don. Dick delivered them to the Lower Hoh. Bear hides were a big demand and a good price. Dick had gotten nineteen bear that winter.

One Saturday after I had the dogs for awhile, I took the rifle and Mack down river by Anderson Creek. Mack hit a cat track and trailed it about two miles down river on a high bluff. He stopped tonguing, (barking,) and I looked and hunted all around the area. After an hour or so, I followed down a steep creek. It took me down to the main trail along the river about four miles from the mouth of the Hoh River. Where this creek crossed the trail, there was a foot bridge and there I ate my lunch. It was a warm day and I was tired. I heard a dog howl, a long, lonely bark, and I knew at that moment it was Mack. I jumped to my feet and looked up the steep bluff, some two or three hundred feet high. I started to call and he would answer, but it was always in the same spot. After an hour of calling, he still barked in the same place, so I back-tracked up the steep creek. I had the spot marked by some trees on the bluff. I finally crawled close and looked over the bluff, and there was Mack sitting on a narrow ledge, six feet down. A windfall tree had broken off, and a small limb was leading from the windfall tree to this ledge. The cat he was trailing could climb the limb down and back, but not Mack, he could just stand. He knew if he tried to climb the limb and fell, it would be the last. I always carried Mack's collar and chain in the pack sack. There just happened to be a little tree close to the bank. I buckled the collar around the tree and tested it out first, then I let myself down, until I stepped on the ledge. Hanging with one hand to the chain, I grasped Mack with my right hand and with help, he scrambled to the top. By the time I had crawled out, Mack was gone on the cat's trail and I ran to keep up with him. He headed back up river and soon treed the cat. If I hadn't sat by the creek, eating my lunch and heard Mack, he would have fallen off and lost his life. I was a happy man that night.

One of my greatest experiences was after I had Mack, Nelly, Prince, and Don, all very good hounds. I owned a good Indian made canoe while I lived on the bank of the Hoh River, eight miles from its mouth. The canoe was part of my life. Duke Nichols was living with me then. He was fire warden in the summer months, and in the winter, he worked with me. I was trail and road supervisor and had 75 miles of trail and some roads to keep up. Most Saturdays I would cross the Hoh River to cougar and bear hunt; it was very wild on the south side. I took all four dogs early that Saturday morning in the canoe, then the trail west to Nolan Creek. There the dogs hit a cougar track. They were so fast, they were soon out of hearing distance, but I kept going in the direction I last heard the hounds. It started to get dark by 4 p.m. and it was raining, and I had to make camp. I always carried a pack sack, a bucket, and some rice for lunch. I built a fire close to a cedar tree and was cooking my rice when a spark got into a crack! Before I knew it, a great fire started inside! The flames went 40 feet high! I had to move back quite a distance. Later the fire died down some, so I kept getting closer, and finally by 3 a.m., I could get inside. It was warm there, but the hot coals kept falling down and burned several holes in my hat and coat.

At daylight I started out looking for the dogs, and by noon I gave up and headed home. After a good night's rest, I was up early and crossed over with the canoe. I had to find the dogs. Late that afternoon, I came to the river about three miles up from where I had the canoe. I never heard a sound from any of the dogs. It was going to be a hard trip back, thick brush and timber. At the river I found a tree that had lodged in a log jam, a two foot hemlock that tapered to six inches. It lacked about 25 feet from going clear across. If I could only make it, the trail wasn't very far and I could make it home in the dark. I started out on the windfall and I came to the end and there was no turning back. I jumped in the cold, icy water about waist deep and I floundered to keep my feet on the bottom. But I made it and I started running for a half mile to the Lower Hoh Trail. I knew if I got on the trail, I could follow it home. John Dengate lived on the trail, if I should have to get aid before I reached home. Mack caught up with me, Duke had hot coffee, and he soon made me dinner. It was raining most of the day and that night it sure poured down, and my canoe was across the river, tied to a 12 inch log. I worried most all the night about losing

the canoe; they were worth about twenty-five dollars for a used one. Then I would have to pole it up from the Hoh reservation, if I could buy one. I was up before daylight and talked it over with Duke. I took a look at the river to see how high and muddy it was and I could see the canoe. It was floating and the log was moving and swinging. The day before, I had pulled the canoe way up on the bar as anyone should. I set to work with Duke's help and found three long fence posts. With the rope and cleats, I put them together and made a paddle from a board. I put on some old calk shoes and emptied my pockets and then straddled the fence posts. I paddled as hard as I could and with the current to help, I soon was two-thirds of the way over and getting close. Then the raft started turning, and I jumped in the water to my waist, with paddle in hand. I made it to shore and got to the canoe. I crossed the river in a hurry, being so cold and wet. I ran for the house to change clothes. Three days later, the other three dogs came back home.

In June, 1919, I was working on the trail close to the John Dengage Homestead when two men came along and started asking me questions. They had walked in from Forks, 16 miles, leaving their wives at the Forks Hotel. They had taken the job in Seattle, to cross the Hoh River and go up Winfield Creek, to post oil leases at section corners. In the early days oil companies had filed claims, then they had to be renewed every few years. When they said, "Winfield Creek," I knew they were on the wrong trail, and they were going up the creek four miles counting four sections; that could mean six miles of winding around and trying to run corners. I had already worked eight months with surveying parties. The men said they had told their wives they would be back the next day, and on top of that, they were each carrying two fishing poles and a .22 rifle. They thought it would be easy and they could fish on the way. I had hunted and fished Winfield Creek many times; it was very isolated over there, miles from any homesteader. There was a man named Winfield in the early days; he had a claim at the mouth of the creek that emptied into the Hoh River.

These men wanted to hire me. I gave them my price, \$5.00 per day and \$1.50 each for two horses. This was in the afternoon, and they were very tired. I had to go back home and get the horses, two miles. They rode and I walked the six miles to the H.O. Milbourn Ranch; he let us sleep in the barn that night. At first they said they had food to eat, but for dinner and breakfast, it was about gone

and I was still hungry. Milbourn let us use his canoe to cross the river, and we had a good mile down river to hit Winfield Creek. The old Pacific trail went up the creek, but hadn't been used for years and was in bad shape. The two men still had their fishing poles and the one .22 rifle. I carried a pack sack, a large surveying compass and staff and a .38 Wesson side arm. The men also had a black water spaniel dog and a frying pan; they thought more of catching a lot of fish, than staking an oil claim.

About one p.m. I found blazes on some trees and started running the line west, and we finally came to a section corner. With a section map I took along, it showed we had one more mile to run to have the right corner. I put the claim sheet in a tomato can and nailed it upside down to keep the sheet dry for years to come. In this mile we had to cross a deep canyon down and up; so steep they had to pass the dog up. We lost time, but found the right corner about dark in a little creek. There is where we made camp, gathered wood, and made fire for the night. All day I had watched for a squirrel or bird, anything to fry to eat, but there was nothing. The men had one can of Vienna sausage to split three ways. I thought they had more to eat, maybe coffee and a bucket for water but they had nothing in their packs but empty tomato cans. It was a long, chilly night, and in the morning, we had to start and run north another mile. It took us to 11 a.m., with nothing to eat. We did find one dead elk and I found a tooth from it.

We started down hill and followed the creeks down and I knew they would lead into Winfield Creek. It was rough going after we hit the larger part of the creek about two miles from the mouth. The men wanted to fish, and I said, "I will sit here in the sun, and as soon as you start catching fish, I will build a fire." Soon they threw me one fish, and then another, so I started the fire on the bar. Luckily, their frying pan had a little grease from bacon back at the Milbourn Ranch. I cleaned the fish, but left the head and tails on. The boys caught nine fish that were about eight inches long. It didn't take long to cook them, and it gave us three each. Then we took off three miles to where the canoe was and just at dark we were back there to the Milbourn Ranch. Mrs. Milbourn was asked to cook us dinner; it was good old fried spuds, bread and vegetables.

The men rented a horse from Milbourn and the three of us started for Forks for a night ride of fifteen miles. We arrived in Forks just before daylight and waited in the Forks Hotel lobby

until breakfast was served. The men got their wives up to eat. They had been waiting five days. The men had told them it would only take three days; one up, one to stake the claim sheets, and one day to come back on. After breakfast I gave them my bill, for a little over \$30.00. You never saw or heard words like these two women used! I got my money and took off fast. I had to take Milbourn's horse to his ranch, 15 miles, then three more miles back to the forks of the trail, then five down river to where I lived.



Canoeing hay across the Hoh River

In the summer of 1919, I didn't have very much hay to cut here at home for the two horses that I had to use over the winter months. About one mile down river on the south side, an Indian by the name of Toby Saux had a homestead. He had worked hard with a mail contract, carrying mail to and from Forks once a week; he had cleared several acres of good land and had a fair house and barn. He moved from this homestead before 1919, and each year the grass grew up high. I decided to cut the hay so I had to cut out a wide trail at places along the river bar and use a skipe to haul the hay. I also cut the hay like all the old timers, with a hand sickle, and raked it by hand with a pitch fork. I used lots of

rope and tied it in bundles after it was dried. After it was sledded up river, I would take the canoe and pile it high with hay, and canoe it across on the side where I lived; then I had to carry it about 100 yards to the barn. You can see by these pictures, taken by my sister, Mabel, how I got the hay home. The Toby Saux Homestead is where the Fletcher Stump Ranch is today. At this date there were only about three mowing machines and hay racks on the Hoh River. I have packed hay on horses. One way is to stuff gunny sacks, and you can get about seven sacks on a horse. The best way is to twist the hay; you can get it started twisting in a hay barn and you can coil about 50 to a pack horse. One time I was packing for the state, and we had to have hay for the four pack horses, and I made a hay baler in Copeland's barn at Forks. You had to get in the box and tramp it, and use tight ropes. I packed two bales to a horse.



July, 1919