HISTORY OF PALOMAR MOUNTAIN
As Remembered By
HANK AND FLORANCE SADDLER

The First Permanent or Year-Round Park Employees
on Palomar Mountain State Park

(July 1, 1940 to January 15, 1943)
(December 1, 1945 to April 24, 1948)

My first experience at Palomar Mountain was as a 14-year-old boy who, while working on a construction job near Rincon, was called to Palomar Mountain to fight a forest fire about August 1923. I was a truck driver (Model T) at the construction camp and hauled about ten fire fighters up the West Grade to the fire.

The next time I arrived on Palomar Mountain was in the summer of 1936, as the PX Steward in a CCC Camp. At the end of the summer, the camp was moved to what is now San Clemente State Beach.

In 1937 I again returned to Palomar Mountain, this time as a foreman in the National Park Service CCC Camp. My crew built some of the stoves, camp and picnic tables in Silver Crest picnic ground, the stone cooler house, most of the rock walls in and around the original residence, and did some trail and road work.

At 2 a.m., June 30, 1940, I once again traveled to Palomar Mountain, accompanied by my wife, Florance. This time I was to be the State Park Custodian in charge of Palomar Mountain State Park. There was no stove in the beautiful

two bedroom cabin that had been constructed by the CCC forces. Florance prepared her first meal in the fireplace and thereafter for about a week until the stove arrived. There was no electricity in the house for about one and one-half years, so we used Coleman lanterns. The only heat we had in the house was from the fireplace and, believe me, it takes a lot of wood (sawn by myself with a one-man crosscut saw) to keep a house warm when there is three feet of snow on the ground.

Since the State was too poor to purchase a pickup, I used my personal car, a 1935 Plymouth Coupe, for patrol, hauling garbage, etc. There were no flush toilets at that time, except in the residence; only chic sales throughout the campgrounds and picnic areas.

I was a member of the National Guard and had to attend a three-week encampment in Chehalis, Washington, during August and September 1940. During these three weeks Florance collected the fees, policed the grounds, and in effect ran the park. She would hike from the residence two miles down to Doane Valley twice a day and back. She also did a lot of painting around the camp and picnic areas. Mail came three times a week, and Florance would hike to the Post Office, a distance of seven miles round trip. Harvey Moore, Warden at Cuyamaca Rancho State Park, drove to Palomar Mountain at least once weekly and hauled the garbage for Florance.

On February 1, 1941, I received a telegram from the Chief of the Division, Mr. Darwin Tate, to proceed to Morro Bay State Park to assist in construction of a combination building. I remained at Morro Bay, not only to help build

a combination building, but also to assist the Custodian, Clyde Newlin, now Superintendent of District 3, with the operation of the Park. I returned to Palomar Mountain May 1, 1941.

In the early spring of 1942, an inmate honor camp was established in the old CCC chow hall. Superintendent Lee Blaisdell (now retired) and I, in February 1942, started converting a part of the old CCC chow hall into living quarters for twelve inmates, which were the nucleus of a 68-man camp. The first twelve inmates arrived on a cold snowy day in April 1942, and were primarily concerned with getting the camp ready for additional inmates from the minimum security prison at Chino. The one correctional man, called a Camp Supervisor, was the only free man furnished by Corrections.

The first Camp Supervisor was Malcom Harris, who later became the director of Alcoholic Beverage Control. Another Camp Supervisor was Walter Dunbar, who now is Director of Corrections. When I had hunter problems, I called on a Game Warden, Walter Shannon, now Director of Fish and Game, whose headquarters were in Julian.

By the spring of 1942 it had been decided that a dam, a 100,000 gallon reservoir in Upper Doane Valley, and a 100-man barracks were needed. I had acquired two assistants prior to this: Robert Hatch, now Superintendent, District 2, and Louis Juch, now retired. These two men and I were the project foremen for everything that was built by honor camp inmates. We were visited by the Chief, two or three of his staff from Sacramento, and District Superintendent Flemming one day. After looking at several possible sites, Chief Tate pointed

across Doane Creek in the lower portion of Upper Doane Valley and said, "Put a dam here, 'Sad'." That was the extent of the plans for this job. Before proceeding to build the dam, I called on a friend in Julian who headed up a Soil Conservation District that included the Palomar Mountain State Park area. I asked him to loan his engineer to run soil tests, determine watershed area, and based on maximum rainfall figures to advise me on the capacity of spillway for the dam. If he would loan his engineer, I would furnish his room and board at Park Headquarters at no cost to Soil Conservation (except salary) or to the State. He agreed and about 15 days later we had complete plans for the dam on letter-size sheets of paper.

The working plans for the 100-man barracks were drawn under my supervision by an inmate I selected who had mechanical drawing experience. Likewise the working plans for the 100,000 gallon soil cement reservoir. In constructing the dam, we acquired a small D-2 Division Cat, a gasoline-powered Cat with dozer blade, and we rented a D-4 Cat with a 4-yard pan from San Diego County. In the meantime we had acquired a pickup and a 1½-ton truck. I used my 1941 Plymouth on State business and was paid 5¢ a mile for the first 500 miles and 3¢ a mile for anything over 500 miles. If you asked for a per diem allowance in those days when away from your unit, it was $5.00 per day.

Construction started on the dam, the reservoir, and the 100-man barracks in the early summer of 1942. By October the dam was nearing completion, but because there was not an adequate bypass for water to get around the dam while under construction, it was decided to work a 12-hour shift. We began to worry about possible heavy rains and doubled our shifts to two 12-hour shifts. In

other words, 24 hours a day there was work on the dam. For lights we had the headlights of a truck and pickup (my personal car sometimes), and a 1,000 Watt generator. I believe we worked three or four days, working clock round, before we completed the dam and spillway. A few days later we did receive a heavy rainfall and water behind the dam began coming over the spillway. We had lucked out!

We did all the plumbing and carpentry work, including the structural plans for the 100-man barracks and the 100,000 gallon soil cement reservoir. All details and layout of plumbing and electrical work were done by free park forces. No outside skills were employed to construct these structures. Skills not available within the inmate forces were taught the inmates by Juch, Hatch, or Saddler.

There are several apple orchards in Palomar Mountain State Park, and heretofore the apple crop had been picked by a concessioner. Sometime during the summer of 1942 Chief Tate and others decided we should pick the apples with inmate crews. So when apple picking time came around in October, we started picking apples with inmate labor. Now the problem was how to get rid of the apples. I remember loading my Plymouth Coup up with boxes of apples and peddling them to the supermarkets in Escondido. About two trips like this and I decided that this was for the birds. I advised Chief Tate and he said, "Well, then, have the apples made into cider on a percentage basis." Louie Juch, a native of Julian, was given the job of finding someone in Julian, which was apple country, who would be interested in converting our apple crop into cider, and he was successful. I don't remember the percentage basis worked out, but

we had apple cider all over the place in gallon jugs. Somehow or other, this cider got dispersed throughout the State under the direction of Chief Tate.

One year Gene Velsey, now a retired Assistant Superintendent, and Jack Fleckenstein, now a retired Ranger III, came up to the park to assist me in pruning some apple trees. They arrived about 10 a.m. one day sometime in February 1941, and by evening it was snowing. They returned to their respective units the following morning as soon as the snow plow had cleared the roads. That was the end of the pruning project that year. The apple trees did get pruned one year by inmate labor. I can still taste the flavor of the Palomar Giants from the orchard below Boucher and the Arkansas Blacks in the same orchard. Other apple varieties were Maiden Blush, Ben Davis, and Pippins.

I also remember the old hermit of Palomar, Robert Asher, who was a botanist and accomplished photographer and did quite well at oil painting. He lived down the road which was known then as the Baptist Trail where the Baptist Church had acquired some property from Mr. Asher to establish a camp for their church.

I also remember Mrs. Alice Hill, a retired actress, who lived on the road to French Valley above Lower Doane Valley. She was visited by the famous actress Maude Adams, whom Florance and I had the pleasure of meeting at Mrs. Hill's residence.

While stationed at Palomar Mountain, I also had the pleasure of meeting some of the world famous scientists who visited the observatory.

Uncle Sam put his arms around me on October 31, 1942, and I left Palomar Mountain State Park for active duty in the Sea-Bees on January 15, 1943. In the meantime the dam had been completed, the barracks were 99% complete, and the 100,000 gallon reservoir just needed a roof. After WW II, I returned to Palomar Mountain on December 1, 1945 as Ranger in Charge (while in the service, the titles Custodian, Assistant Warden, and Warden had been changed to Ranger, Assistant Ranger, and Chief Ranger). Shortly thereafter, I was appointed a Ranger II, still in charge of Palomar Mountain State Park. Sometime early in 1946 a Ranger I was appointed to Palomar Mountain. His name was Paul Haines, and he came with his wife Charlotte. Two finer people I have never met. Paul eventually resigned and they now live in San Diego. While Paul and Charlotte were still there, another Ranger was assigned to Palomar Mountain, whose name was Clyde Strickler, now a Ranger IV at San Luis Reservoir State Recreation Area. Clyde and his delightful wife Rosemary were another nice couple with whom I had the pleasure of working.

The work was routine - taking care of park visitors, working closely with the observatory people, and the County Road people, and others, particularly in the winter time when we had to depend on each other for assistance.

I was appointed Chief Ranger of Richardson Grove State Park in Humboldt County on November 1, 1947. Because no residence was available, they asked me to remain at Palomar Mountain which I did, and reluctantly left Palomar Mountain State Park in late April 1948 for Richardson Grove State Park. Amongst other things that Florance and I left behind at Palomar Mountain State Park was a great big portion of our hearts.

THOUGHTS ON PALOMAR MOUNTAIN

Watching the deer in the early morning hours and in the late afternoon feeding on the salt licks across the driveway from the Park Headquarters.

Meeting up with an occasional mountain lion.

Feeding the foxes on the picnic table behind the Park Headquarters every night. The meals were so good we finally had three foxes, and our neighbors all over the mountain came over to watch them many times.

Feeding the hundreds of Oregon Juncos just outside the back door of the Park Headquarters in the winter time, primarily with wheat germ.

Sitting and watching the friendly Nuthatches and watching the mischievous Blue Jays.

Watching and talking with the Indians every year when they came up to gather acorns which they used in making "wee-wish." Florance and I finally learned to like "wee-wish" and looked forward to the Indians giving us some each year as they came back to gather acorns.

PLANTED BY DOANE

The giant pears and crab apples between Upper and Lower Doane Valleys.

The Canyon Live Oak with a rock about five feet in diameter in its main trunk, situated on the north side of lower Doane Valley.

Seeing the giant glass for the 200 foot telescope when it arrived on the mountain; and, after it was installed, looking down on it within the dome.

The burial ground of a pioneer adjacent to the Silver Crest Picnic Ground.

Notable people joining with us at our campfire programs.

Mrs. Margaret Flemming, wife of the District Superintendent, sketching and painting on some of her visits to Palomar Mountain State Park. ASK JOHN ABOUT THESE

Helping the County Road forces kick and remove rocks from the south grade.

Les McKnight, now a Ranger I at Hatfield (who was not a Ranger at this time), courting his wife Addie, who was a lookout on Boucher Hill.

The Park Headquarters being called Honeymoon Cabin because the newly-married Custodian, Al Salzgeber, and his wife, Hank, had spent their honeymoon there the summer before. Al was the summer custodian in 1933 34

Watching a rainbow (moonbow) on a bright moon-lit night from Boucher Hill.

Sitting around an open campfire with Mr. Stone, the cattle-grazing concessioner, his Indian cowboys, and cattleman Hap Mendenhall; then eating steak and beans cooked by one of the Indian cowboys, served on an old piece of rusty steel plate for a table, pie tins for plates, and rocks or hunks of wood for chairs. Enjoying a glass or two of red wine afterwards and singing songs with a guitar being played by one of the Indians.

The mournful Coyotes' howl almost every night.