

An Old Interesting Letter to the Editor...

Dear Sir:

Vancouver, B.C. Feb. 21, 1970.

I noticed your letter, clipping enclosed, in an old paper (Feb. 2 Vancouver Sun) I was about to throw out. I met a Hollingsworth away back, two or three years before the start of World War 2. I think he was called "Ed" but may be wrong on that. He was a fire ranger for the Ontario Dept. of Forestry; whose Northern Ontario headquarters were at Port Arthur, Ontario. Recently this town's name has been changed to Thunder Bay. If you care to write them, they might give you some information about him. As he was on their payroll for a number of years, and if still alive will be on their pension list. He was married to a school teacher, and I dimly remember he had one or two small children at that time, so there should be survivors if he has passed on. He was living then in a house provided by the forestry at their station on Lac Mille Lac, across a small bay, from a small village, the name of which I should know, but I am Damned if I can remember it right now. It will probably pop into my head again about 5 minutes after I post this letter. (See note on back: Atikoken, Ontario.) If it is any help this town is about 90 miles northwest of Port Arthur and it is about nine miles from - and the shipping point for - the Steep Rock Iron Mine. I remember Ed Hollingsworth for a couple of reasons. He

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walked with a limp, due to a broken leg he got in an accident while alone in the bush; 5 miles from his canoe, and another 12 miles from help. He dragged himself over the five miles, fainting with pain every once in a while, but crawling on, when he woke up, then paddled the remaining 12 miles back to the camp. His leg was in too bad shape, due to the rough treatment while crawling, that it could not be completely straightened out, and he had a permanent limp.

A good man in the bush, and good to those who worked for him. The forestry did not pay much in those days, and he thought it was not half enough, and to square things up, he put his own job on the line, and doubled every man's pay. If a man worked 10 hours a day, he credited him with 20, on his payroll, if another worked 8 hours, he credited him with 16. He did not like pilots, said they were taking work away from fire-rangers and their men who watched for fire from towers, but he took a liking to me and I was the only one he ever invited up to his house for a meal, and that was only once, and once was enough.

He must have been carrying on some kind of a feud with his wife, and decided to shame her in front of a stranger and guest, for no sooner had we sat down to eat than he started to use filthy language ... 'Pass the (expletive deleted - Ed) butter,' he would say, and 'What the () you got in this dish?' Blushing with anger, and sparks flying from her eyes, she replied, 'What do you think it is?' ... to which he replied ... 'It looks like (), I hope it doesn't taste like ().' and pushing the dish over to me, he continued, 'Here - you try it, I am scared to tackle it, I think she is trying to poison me.' I did not know what to say or do; I had never heard anyone talk like that to a woman, and I had had meals at his camp on the fire-lines and had never heard him talk like that to his men, where he let out a curse word now and then, but was mostly friendly and jovial.

P.P.S. As I write this, other memories pop up. With no formal education, his reports were wierd, and he hated bookwork, and puzzled inquiries from the forestry serv. accounting dept. in Toronto. He doubled one man's 13 hours to 26 hours and eventually got a desperate wire from the Toronto auditor, inquiring as to how a man could work 26 hours in a 24-hour day?? On another occasion an indignant ...

... on another occasion an indignant inquiry as to how a whole gang could work 22 hours a day for 3 days in a row; leaving only 6 hours for sleeping and eating in 72 hours? When I asked him, "How did you get out of that one?" He replied: "I sent 'em a wire saying 'You don't sleep, when a forest fire is scortchin' your ()." and he roared with laughter and continued, 'none of them is goin' to get off their fat (), to come up here on the fire lines to check up and if they do I'll put the bastards to work, an' they won't stay long.

On the fire lines he was in sole command, so as he said, there was no one to check him. Another habit he had was that he never brought any groceries or gasoline back to the station after a fire had been put out; just the equipment, pumps, hose lines &c. The groceries and gas he piled conspicuously on the shore of the lake where he boarded the plane with his gang, for the station or another fire. His explanation was "The government's got lots of money and they don't need this grub as bad as some wandering Indian or hungry prospector out there in the bush... an' don't think they don't know it, and I'm leavin' it for the

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bears and wolves ... they've all got the word I leave this stuff when I move, and I'll bet there is two or three of 'em out there right now, peeking at us from behind a tree, just waiting for us to get out of sight, so they can dash in here and load up, and who knows, one of you bastards may run out of gas some day, and be damn glad to drop in here or some other lake where they know I've left behind a few cans of gas." He was quite a character, that is why I remember him so vividly, you do not remember the ordinary, run of the mill Joes, just the unusual and spectacular ones ...

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Well, readers, this "Ed" Hollingsworth was quite a character, if Mr. McKinney has anything to say about it. That is the first time we have had to censor a letter like that. Unusual in genealogy. But that is what you might expect when you run letters in newspapers. Thus far, we have not followed up this Forestry Service lead. Sounds like one of our Wexford Hollingsworths. Name is right too, by ()!