

Forest Manager Retires . . . Heeren's Career Spanned Formative Years

When Gunther Heeren brought his bride to the wilds of the Schoolie Ranger Station in 1949 the forest was a vastly different place. The BIA forester and his wife traveled to their temporary quarters by unpaved roads and, once there, heard only the sound of the Warm Springs River.

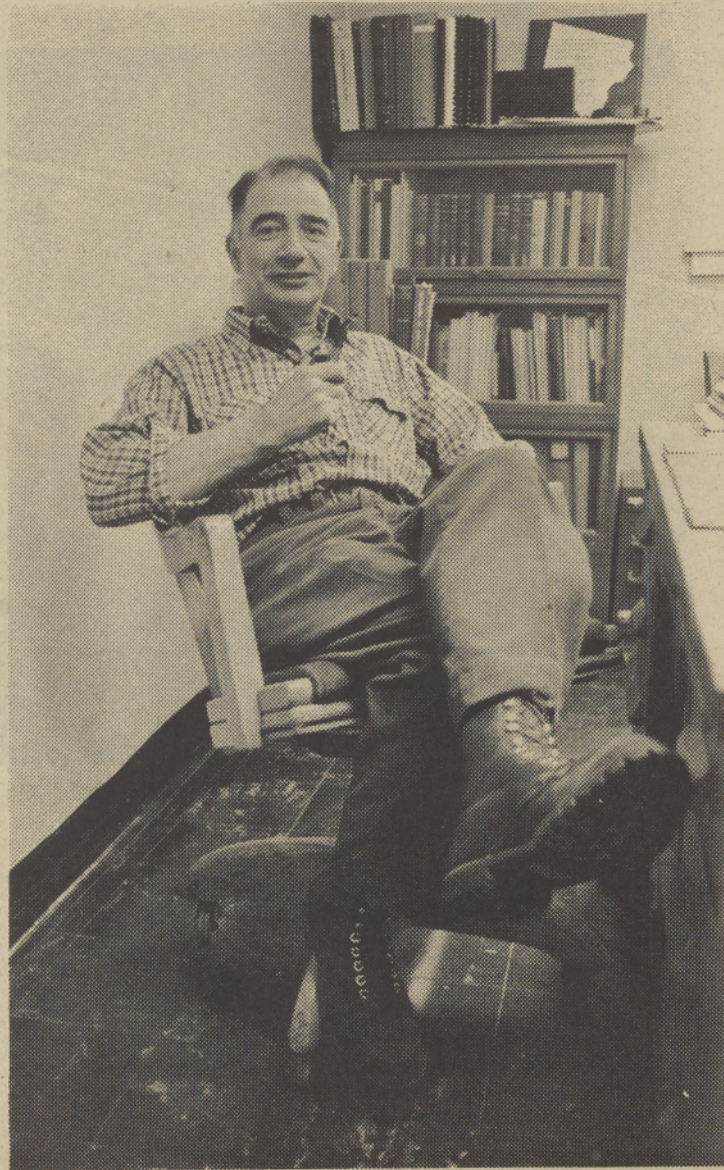
Now the Heerens' abandoned "honeymoon cottage" is not far removed from the drone of Highway 26 and the rumbling parade of heavy equipment fetching logs for the Tribes' own forest products industry.

Both the reservation and Heeren have come a long way. Heeren's career with the BIA, which ended this week, spanned three decades of dramatic change in the Tribes' use of its timber, the BIA's fulfillment of its trust responsibilities and the forest resource itself.

When Gunther Heeren arrived as a junior forester after graduating from the University of Michigan in 1948, he joined a department of seven and spent his days cruising, marking and scaling in the forest's two logging units. As he prepared to retire from his position of forest manager this month, Heeren paused to reflect at his huge oak desk. From there he directed a staff of 38 in the administration of 45 timber sales and 366,235 acres of commercial forest.

Leaning back and throwing one leg over the other in his characteristic style, "Gunner" puffed on his pipe and spoke fondly of the "early days" and proudly of today. Witness to the Tribes' purchase of Warm Springs Lumber Company in 1967, the return of the McQuinn Strip's 61,360 acres in 1972, and the setting aside of conditional use areas, Heeren led BIA Forestry during some very formative years for the reservation.

But Heeren hasn't always occupied that old oak desk. In fact his standard wool flannel attire harken back to his outdoor days.



BIA Forest Manager Gunther "Gunner" Heeren, known for his plaid wool shirts, hiking boots and pipe, lounged back at his desk and recounted his long career at Warm Springs. Two days before his April 21 retirement Heeren was honored with a party where stories and memories were swapped. CDS Photo

Those were the days when Heeren worked and lived in the woods. Schoolie was the summer home for Gunther and his wife (who also has a degree in forestry) and Old Mill was where they wintered. "That got old" however, and when housing be-

came available at the agency they left their ranger cabins to the packrats.

A promotion lured the young forester and his growing family to the Colville Reservation in 1956 where he became the assistant forest manager. Eight years

with the "largest Indian forestry complex" and Heeren was ready to take on the administration of Warm Springs' expanding forest activities.

While he was gone the Dahl Pine Mill had burned down and the transition from dependence on outside processing to an almost totally in-house operation was underway. Markets were demanding east-side fir and the Tribes saw a bright future for their own pine and fir forest industry.

During this time the BIA was growing in response to the Tribes' growth, but 1972 proved to be a real turning point, according to the forest manager.

The return of the McQuinn Strip that year meant thousands of additional acres of commercial forest and the necessity of more staff to fulfill the BIA's trust responsibility.

Also beginning in 1972 the government's 10 per cent administrative fees became available to Indian tribes for forest management projects. Gunther breathed a sigh of relief as timber stand improvement finally became a reality, and the welcome new funds were channeled into such ongoing activities as tree planting, hazard reduction, brush control and pre-commercial thinning.

Through the years the BIA's fire protection techniques have modernized, noted Heeren. Few roads meant firefighters had to walk into most fires "in the early days." Communication was limited to a couple of telephones.

Since then networks of roads have been built and radios have become commonplace. Air reconnaissance has made it possible to hit fires and contain them more quickly. The BIA has access to smoke jumpers, retardant aircraft and helitank crews ("unheard of in the early days") and cooperative fire protection agreements exist with adjoining agencies.

Cutting techniques have be-

come more varied and sophisticated with passing time. Heavy cutting on early units has given way to selective removal based on tree conditions. Varied terrain and management goals have necessitated a range of removal techniques from cable logging to overstory removal.

The evolving forest and increasing demand for lumber are also bringing a change in harvesting practices. "We're now working toward a younger, healthier, faster-growing forest," explained the retiring forest manager.

Heeren predicts the next manager will face the challenge of designing a forestry program based on the "increased utilization of smaller logs."

The veteran manager has experienced the satisfaction of providing more intensive management for the Tribes' increasingly profitable forest industry. But he has also endured the headaches of scarce funding, personnel ceilings and recent challenges from timbered tribes of the BIA's management practices.

Heeren remains optimistic about the future of BIA-tribal relations, saying "I think the tribe is very concerned with their forest and recognizes the necessity of a very close relationship with the BIA in management."

As he packed up his books and samples of tree cross-sections, Gunther Heeren thought of his life without the 24-hour worry of forest fires and the screech of demanding radios. More than likely he was thinking about the woods: "That's the best place to be — out there talking to the trees. They don't talk back!"

The day after he turned 55 Heeren left his oak desk and headed for his home in Terrebonne. The woods will be no stranger to him even though the early days at Schoolie are long past.

COCC Classes Popular Here

Central Oregon Community College adult education classes at Warm Springs are a BIG success this term, with each of the seven non-credit classes and two credit classes having a minimum of seven persons registered.

The five new classes being offered this term are Baskets and Bags, instructor Isabelle Keo; Geology of Warm Springs, instructor Mel Ashwill; Wasco Indian Language, instructor Alice Florendo; Elements of Supervision, instructor John Trujillo, and Introduction of Sociology, instructor Pat Mazzeo. The latter two classes are for college transfer credit.

The other classes returned from fall and winter terms. Beadwork, instructed by Caroline Tohet; Auto Tuneup, instructed by Leon Maxwell; Sahaptin Indian Language, instructed by Ada Sooksoit and Refresher Shorthand instructed by Reba Powell.

All classes are held in the Community Center except for the Auto Tuneup, which is taught in the Tribal garage.



Bag-making can be a very "entangling" experience as students of Isabelle Keo's Bags and Baskets Class have been learning. Once their string was untangled they began constructing woven bags and then advanced to Cornhusk in the COCC-sponsored class, which is one of nine classes going strong at the Adult Learning Center this semester. CDS Photo

Funds Raised For Celilo Longhouse

Over a hundred spectators anxiously awaited to hear their "lucky" number to be called at the Celilo Longhouse benefit raffle held April 9, hoping to win one of the many prizes offered.

Merchants from The Dalles and many other people donated hundreds of dollars worth of merchandise to help the Celilo Wyam Board improve the condition of the longhouse in Celilo Village.

Close to \$2,700 was raised through the efforts of several girls of Warm Springs, Umatilla and Yakima descent who sold tickets. The girl selling the most tickets was to be named Queen. Minnie Yahtin of Warm Springs, sold 770 tickets for the cause.

Her father had a fistful of the tickets, but was not lucky enough to win. However, Don Maxwell, who was exceptionally lucky, won a camera and a beautiful shawl, the only things he has ever won in his life.