

# Woods Work Waits on Rain; Tramp's View of Job-Seeking

(Editor's note: What's it like to look for work in Medford? Bo Peep knows. He's a self-styled "tramp," who has been looking over the Rogue Valley with an appraising eye. We present a second article he has written.)

Vernon wasn't a tramp when he got here, but the storm clouds followed him up the coast, two days behind, and rained out his chances for work.

His home is on the Gila River in Arizona, and he's a member of the Pima tribe. He came up here for one reason, to work in the great green woods.

"Biggest tree we got is cactus," he said, "and I love trees."

The first thing he did was call up every logger in the phone book.

"Hello," he said, "my name is Vernon Eagle and I want to work in the woods."

Was he experienced? "No," he answered, "but I..." And that was as far as he ever got. The logger usually cut in right there, saying, "We're all full up."

Early next morning he walked out to the Elk Lumber company on Pacific highway. He got there just as a log truck was being unloaded. When the driver swung the empty rig around the crane-house, Vernon stuck out his thumb. The driver, Frank Applegate, told him to climb aboard.

An hour later they were still rumbolling along beside the Rogue river, and Vernon wondered if they would never stop; he didn't know of the great distances that often separate the loggers from the mill.

When they turned into Elk Creek rd., the big timber began to show itself and Vernon's heart beat faster. Ten miles further on they swung onto a narrow strip of red clay and began to climb steeply. Suddenly there was so much forest around him that Vernon saw nothing but bark and fir—like the small child seeing an elephant for the first time, taking in only hide.

They finally reached the landing, where the logs are loaded, and Vernon got out and looked around. The towering Douglas fir, three hundred feet high, so far up in the azure sky that they seemed to lean over the clearing.

On a distant ridge the fallers and buckers were hard at work, and the whine of their chain saws rang down through the forest.

A man in a tin hat came over. This was Oscar Hanson, the boss. Vernon lowered his eyes and found it hard to focus them on a man only six feet tall. Hanson said yes, he could watch the work, as long as he stayed out of the way.

"It's okay," said Vernon politely. "I been around."

One of the cat-skinners had just dropped in a turn of logs. This was Buddy, a light-haired little guy who looks like Jesse James. He had seen Vernon nearly fall over backwards as he looked at the timber, and knew Vernon had never been in the woods before. He caught Vernon's eye and motioned him up on the seat beside him.

They started up the skid road. Vernon quickly learned that in order to stay aboard he had to use everything including fingernails. They lurched up the steep slopes, two men astride a ferocious yellow monster, chewing up the ground and stopping for nothing, neither rotten log nor boulder.

Pete, a sour tobacco chewer, was the choker setter, and Vernon watched him at work. He saw how he cleared out a space under the end of each log and then slipped the cable through; how he fitted the nubbin into the bell; how he jammed a stick into each coupling so it wouldn't slip; how he lugged the heavy winch-hook into the bush whenever a choker didn't reach far enough.

Applegate had said that setting chokers was the hardest, and most dangerous job in the woods. That's exactly what Vernon wanted. He watched Pete all morning, and by the time they clattered down to the landing at noon he figured he knew almost everything there was to know about setting chokers.

Everybody gathered at the landing with dinner pails. As soon as the cats

were shut (low) the intense silence of the forest closed in and Vernon's heart beat faster. Wilson, the head skinner, built a small fire of pine boughs and soon a wisp of sweet-smelling blue smoke arose through the slanting shafts of sunlight. Vernon noticed how slowly the men moved as they took their places around the fire, as if trying not to make too much noise. He sat apart from them as they ate, but near enough to hear their logging-talk.

When they finished eating, Vernon went over and asked Buddy what a bridle was, for he had heard the word four times. Buddy got up and took him over to a pile of old chokers, bristling with sharp jiggers, and showed him how to fit the nubbin of one choker into the bell of another—thus making a double-sized ring for an unusually big log.

Now Vernon figured he knew everything.

Then the storm clouds caught up to Vernon and it started to rain. The red clay became soft, the mud was washed off the cats and rivulets plashed in the gullies. When Applegate showed up for his third and last load of the day, Vernon rode back to town with him. Applegate asked how he liked the woods.

"Mr. Applegate," he said, "I like them." He told him that if it was the last thing he ever did in this world

he was going to become a choker setter.

Applegate gave him the names of several gyppo loggers around the county, and that night Vernon called them.

"Hello," he said, "My name is Vernon Eagle and I'm looking for work. I'm a choker setter."

Was he experienced? Oh, yes.

Who had he worked for? A. R. Tuckey, Roseburg. (That was a name he made up.) Three of the men he called told him to check back in a few days, and that was encouraging.

Then Vernon walked over to the Mail Tribune and placed an ad for three days. The girl behind the desk helped him write it, and it came out like this: "Man, 28, wants work in woods. Can set chokers. Call SP 3-9297 between 5 and 6."

That number is a phone booth beside the Chevron station at Sixth st. and Riverside ave. Vernon waited there at the proper hour for three days and of course the phone never rang. It finally sunk through his stubborn skull that rain means no logging.

Right now he's waiting out the storms with the rest of us. You can be sure he'll stay right here until he gets that job. If you want to see what he looks like, drive past the employment office around eight. He's strictly off the reservation so you can't miss him.

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### STAR GAZER

By CLAY R. POLLAN

Your Daily Activity Guide According to the Stars. To develop message for Sunday, read words corresponding to numbers of your Zodiac birth sign.

<b>ARIES</b> MAR. 21-20	1. You	31. Solitude	61. Generosity
2. 3-15-29-34	2. Your	32. Heavy	62. Through
3. 4-6-7-14	3. Pleasant	33. Follow	63. To
4. 5-17-24-31	4. You	34. Courtesy	64. Calls
5. 6-28-4-9	5. Can	35. Cooperation	65. Attainment
6. 7-11-18-27	6. All	36. Good	66. Hidden
7. 8-20-28-4-9	7. Think	37. You	67. For
8. 9-30-38-43-49	8. Charm	38. The	68. Attract
9. 10-18-27	9. Don't	39. The	69. A
10. 11-27-35-41	10. Be	40. The	70. A
11. 12-16-23	11. Express	41. And	71. Against
12. 1-5-12	12. Will	42. Better	72. Concerning
13. 2-4-11	13. Hate	43. Star	73. Meaning
14. 3-10-17-24	14. Much	44. Bring	74. Good
15. 4-19-26	15. Manners	45. Means	75. Indicated
16. 5-28-4-9	16. Influence	46. Lines	76. Date
17. 6-17-24	17. Better	47. Bring	77. I
18. 7-6-13	18. Forced	48. Don't	78. And
19. 8-15-22	19. Delight	49. Or	79. Sex
20. 9-24-31	20. A	50. A	80. Favorable
21. 10-13-20	21. In	51. Break	81. Shines
22. 11-22-29	22. Read	52. See	82. Better
23. 12-1-8	23. Between	53. For	83. Cooperative
24. 1-11-18-27	24. In	54. Fortune	84. Reading
25. 2-10-17	25. Makes	55. Gain	85. Sudden
26. 3-9-16	26. Short	56. Spending	86. Halt
27. 4-18-25	27. Or	57. Ways	87. Tasks
28. 5-7-14	28. The	58. And	88. Efforts
29. 6-13-20	29. And	59. Much	89. Judgment
30. 7-12-19	30. Or	60. Opposite	90. Brightly
	Good	Adverse	Neutral

## In the Day's News

By FRANK JENKINS

From Taipei, Formosa: The Chinese communists unleashed an artillery bombardment at Quemoy a few hours after President Eisenhower's visit to Formosa was announced. It is feared that the Chinese Reds may try to harass his visit to this staunch anti-communist country by launching a heavy artillery attack on the Nationalist islands in the Formosa Straits.

expense account and had written in after the bar items the explanatory word FOOD — indicating that SOMEBODY had got scared. To make it worse, the clerk of the congressional committee that has charge of these expense vouchers closed the record to the public so that nosy reporters couldn't delve into it and turn up scandalous stories.

HMMMMMMMM. It isn't as if he hadn't heard artillery fire before. The chances are he won't scare too easily.

BAD business? Well, of course it is. If members of congress are going to delve into the peccadilloes of other people they should first make sure that their own skirts are impeccably clean.

I SUPPOSE you've noticed these tales from Washington about traveling members of congress who have been turning in big expense accounts.

That principle was understood and accepted two thousand years ago. Pultarch, in his immortal "lives," relates that when Caesar was asked why he parted with his wife he replied: "Caesar's wife ought to be above suspicion."

One of the most interesting of them concerns a member of the investigating committee that a while back was frying out radio disc jockeys accused of accepting "payola." It appears that this gentleman had been in Hawaii a while back on a government mission and had stayed at one of the plushiest of the plush hotels. On his expense account when he turned it in appeared a quite considerable number of BAR items.

The same goes for members of congressional investigating committees.

THE interesting point is that after the investigation started it developed that someone had gone over his

INCIDENTALLY—When Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn heard about the order closing the expense account voucher record to public inspection, he promptly COUNTER-MAND it.

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Note to hard-shell GOPs: There are some good Democrats, you see.

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