ORAL HISTORY FOR ARCHIVES

APRIL 8, 2003 FOREST SERVICE HISTORY

Interviewed by Dottie Grimes and Shirley Spears

DON PETERSEN BIO:

Don Petersen spent 23 years working for the Forest Service. He was born in Molen and lived in Ferron most of his life. He and his wife Laverna went to school together and married in 1946. They have four children, one of whom has written a brief history of the Manti Forest.

Don worked on the watershed project on Ferron Mountain digging trenches and furrows on steep slopes. The trenches were about 12 feet wide and five feet deep. "We knew the trenches would only hold water so long, but it was seeded with grasses and brush and became very effective. In just a couple of years the grasses would grow and the elk would go back and forth along the trenches and eat the grasses.

After the watershed project was completed, Don worked on the road crew–building and maintaining roads on the forest. He recalls that the years 1983-84 brought the biggest problems. "That was when we had the big snows in the mountains. That was the year that we had the slides developed on the mountain. There were slides over here. There was one in 12 Mile (Canyon) that they calculated that by volume, it was four times the size of the slide at Billy's Mountain. There was one on the Ferron side on Meadow Gulch that was also bigger than Billy's Mountain, but it didn't effect people as much. The one in Meadow Gulch was near what they called Blue Lake, that was a good fishing hole, but that slide drained it–it just slid on down the mountain. That's all we did for those years–well '83 and '84. All we did was try to repair the roads that had been affected by those slides."

The years spent with the Forest Service were not only productive years full of

developed recreation sites that accommodate about 1.7 million people at one time. The Government Accounting Office reports that more outdoor recreation occurs on the Department of Agriculture' s Forest Service lands than on any other federal lands. (1991, April). During the 1970s and 1980s, recreational pressure on forest lands was steadily increasing from 184 million visitor days in 1972 to 253 million in 1989 (GAO, 1991, January).

The national USDA Forests Service provide 4,400 campgrounds, 1,400 picnic areas, playgrounds and parks; 108,000 miles of trails; 32.5 million acres of wilderness areas; and 28 National Recreation Areas, National Monuments, National Scenic areas, and National Scenic Research Areas (GAO, 1991, April).

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