

ELWOOD KOPPANG

1980 - 1989 In Two Towers

Elwoods entry was submitted by his wife Bertha, on his behalf, he is seventy eight years of age and now resides in the Shellbrook Nursing Home. His experiences in the towers took him through the **Nisbet Tower** {Prince Albert} and **Holbein Tower** over ten seasons. He was relief in the towers between fires, he was full time on the fire crew and did fire patrols. His entry describes some of the major fires and local history and the early Forest Ranger Station in the Holbein area.

Wildfire in 1937 almost burned the growing hamlet of Holbein to the ground, managing to burn down two elevators. Firefighters and the weather stopped the fires advance on the town and it blew back into itself. Yet again in 1981 fire threatens Holbein when it comes just a half dozen miles away down the new highway. North Cabin Fire came close to Holbein again in 1989.

" The Lilly Plain Fire", In mid May 1989 the firestorm had consumed 10,500 hectares of provincial forest as well as another 2,000 hectares of private holdings. Heavy equipment made a fire break around the perimeter and one hundred and twenty volunteer and professional firefighters battled the blaze keeping it in check. The fire was held in the holding stage of containment. It caused the death of a pulp contractor by the name of Lucien Grimard of Prince Albert, who was fifty eight years old at the time. Mr.Grimard went back into the danger area to get his tractor trailer outfit out to safety, he was trapped and overtaken by the fire. This fire burnt one house and caused mass panic and concern all over the area. The fire was beaten back many times in its advance just feet from many homes. The fire jumped the North Saskatchewan River on thursday, firefighters stopped. The police had issued an evacuation of people along Highway 302 to the west and south of Crutwell. People were allowed to go back to their homes on the weekend and the schools were closed friday to make emergency shelters available. Holbein and Crutwell was on evacuation standby.

1989 Montreal Lake had a fire that had consumed some 15,000 hectares, North of Paddockwood there was a fire that burned 8,000 hectares and one at Fort Le Corne that was another 8,000 hectares.

Terry Toute of the Nisbet fire center reported that these fires were being held and that the weekend rain was a major factor in getting fires in the holding stage. Praise was given to all the firefighters for their efforts in saving the many homes that were threatened.

The Holbein Ranger Station:

The first ranger Ernest Jewitt from 1914 to 1918, 1914 the first ranger was cabin built, 1915 the first Holbein Ranger Station steel fire tower was built. Followed by these fifteen rangers - John .J.Callaghan from 1918 to1922, In 1921 the **Nisbet Forest Reserve** was established under the Department of the Interior, in 1927 Holbein became a town, Cliff Pocock from 1922 to 1928, 1930 **Department of Natural Resources** was established, Tom Adams from 1928 to 1940, 1947 The original square Holbein Tower was built, Herbert Tanner, Bill lidster, Wallace M. McDonald, Bob Johnson 1year, Pete Mazarek, Jack Brown 1 year, Alex Russell, Lawrence Horne from 1955 to 1958, Clarence Williams from 1958 to 1962, Douglas Pegg from 1962 to 1964, Harvey Juskow from 1965 to ?, Harry Minifie from 1966 to?. 1984 progress caused the abandonment of the Holbein Ranger Station, the old fire tower was torn down and the station buildings were sold off.