

Jim Settee

1943 - 1965 Manned 7 towers

I remember as far back as 1915 when the Forestry Department began building towers in the Prince Albert National Park, wooden and twenty five feet high. In Montreal Lake there were two towers that belonged to Dominion Forestry, Marydale Tower was near Little Red reserve, the other tower was beside Waskesieu Lake road and both were manned by returning men from the war. The park opened in 1928 when they began building towers all over the park.

Firefighting was a very tough business in those days, it was very hard and slow going and with no equipment like today and no transportation. Firefighters had to pack everything in for miles, taking days to get to the fire after the towerman detected the smoke. A big fire broke out south Big River which was sixteen miles wide and kept traveling to Bittern Lake, rain helped at night {1917}. One hundred men fought that fire during the day and one hundred fought at night. There were six sawmills that started up at that time, this fire and the new sawmills were manned by returning soldiers,

There were eleven camps of one hundred men each hired from the Montreal Lake and Little Red areas. Someone started it to burn everything, even the Prince Albert Lumber Company burned down, after they built a larger sawmill.

In 1942, I was a fire patrolman in the Dore Lake area during WW 2 the war time, there were lots of fires, at Lavallee Lake they broke out in a string of fires in a line of nine fires, lightning or man made for work. In those days they had three airplanes that belonged to a man by the name of R.D. Brooks, that they used to patrol the area. The pilots who ran the planes blamed the men, they said that they started those fires on purpose, that's the only way they can make money haa! haa! haa!

Then there's the trappers: I was patrolling by packsack with my groceries and new rifle walking patrol around the bush all the way from Waskesieu to Sherwood Pond in Prince Albert National Park. When I was getting short of food I went to the nearest warden and he gave me some more food to get me back to start over again.. When I started working for the park, I was getting eleven cents an hour and then they raised my wages to a dollar a day. It was hard time for the people, they were poaching muskrats in the park and while I was working patrol I stayed where the trappers were camping. I used to visit around but I thought they might shoot me in the dark Haa! Haa! Haa!.

While I was patrolling Big River and Clark Lake to Smoothstone in that area, there were four men from Crane Lake that were caught trapping rats. While I was stationed at Merasty Lake, that time they caught those six trappers, metis half breeds from Meadow Lake and Green Lake. They got caught poaching, there was no money, no employment and the only way that they could make money was by catching muskrats, so they got caught. They took them to the court and they were each fined \$100.00. Where could they get it?. And they had to leave their kids in the bush close to my area, I had lots of stuff to eat so they took my grub which was more than I could use. The Government gave me a shotgun, rifle and a twenty two, a canoe, tent and that's how I fed those kids. In those days there were lots of animals everywhere you went, today you hardly see any, even birds now. In Big River the head man wanted me to be a field officer. No, I didn't take it on account I didn't like the way my people were being treated. I was mostly working with the half-breeds and Indians, my people, so I did not want to be a field officer. I worked for the park a long time.

Towers: In **1943** I started as a towerman at **Kingsmere Tower** {old Sentry Tower}, **Boundary Tower** , **Rabbit Cabin Tower**, **Summit Tower**, **Wapaweeka Hills Tower** where I relieved George Roberts, **Stewart Tower** and then **Round Hill Tower** where I finished off, it was **1965**. Retirement at age sixty - five, I was too old to work any longer in the tower so they retired me after all those years and seven towers. In 2001, I am 90 years of age and I am glad to be recognized as an Alumni of the Tower Observer Association and to tell about my time in the towers.