

Vice President - Designate

## Jerry Ford - "A Darned Good Ranger"

By Jean Bullard

Gerald R. Ford will be the first National Park Service seasonal ranger to become Vice President of the United States if his nomination is confirmed. His name has become familiar to most Americans recently, but few of us in the Park Service realize that Jerry Ford was a seasonal ranger at Yellowstone the summer of 1936.

"One of the greatest summers of my life," Jerry Ford responded enthusiastically to a query from the NEWSLETTER about his summer as a ranger.

This answer was delivered by his wife, Mrs. Betty Ford, who invited me with a warm welcome to the Ford's home in Alexandria, Virginia. She said that the Yellowstone summer was one often mentioned in the Ford family.

Among the favorite bedtime stories of the four Ford children, Mrs. Ford explained, was the one their father used to tell about his adventures as a ranger feeding the bears at Yellowstone.

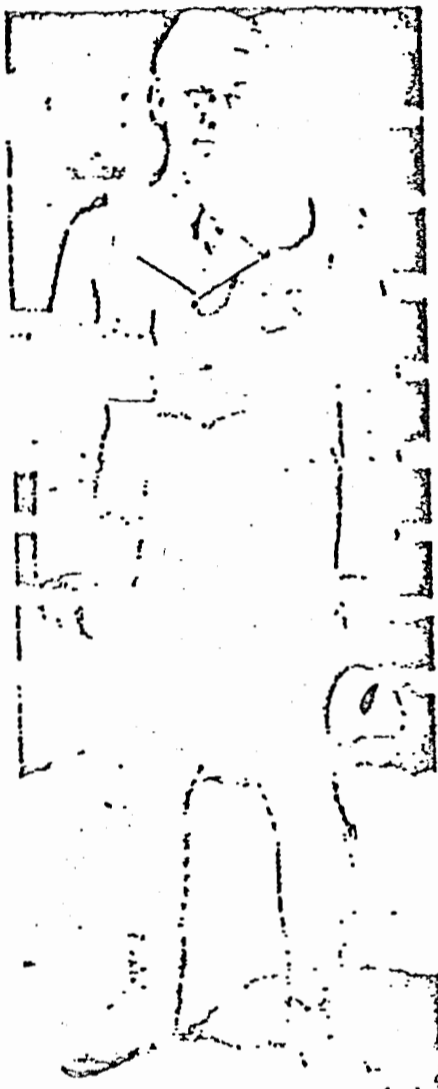
"Of course we realize that rangers feeding the bears at Yellowstone is a thing of the past," Mrs. Ford quickly explained.

At that moment her tall blond son, Steve, 17, a senior at local T.C. Williams High School, entered the living room. Mrs. Ford asked him, "Steve, do you remember your father's Yellowstone stories?"

"You mean the bear tales? said Steve with a smile. "I sure do."

Mrs. Ford mentioned that the influence of the west and the parks has been evident in the whole family. She said that the Ford's second son, Jack, 21, a forestry student at Utah State University, spent last summer working in Utah for the U.S. Forest Service in a position similar to his father's Park Service job.

Mrs. Ford generously lent the NEWSLETTER their only photo of Jerry Ford in his NPS ranger uniform. The other photo of the Canyon District rangers and ranger naturalists (see page 7) was obtained from Frank Anderson through the persistent efforts to locate him by



Else Doherty, park technician, PNRO.

The NEWSLETTER contacted several men in the photo to learn more about that summer in Yellowstone.

"Jerry was a darned good ranger," said his former supervisor, Canyon District Ranger Frank Anderson, now retired. "I had a letter from Jerry just last August mentioning his fine memories of that summer we shared in Yellowstone."

Among the duties Frank assigned to Jerry was the task of armed guard on the bear-feeding truck. Every evening visitors were fenced-

in in an area with benches while grizzly and black bears roamed free when they appeared about 7:30 p.m.:

The ranger truck would drive into the garbage pit to feed the bears while Jerry rode in the back with a gun in case there was any trouble. He never did have to fire a shot but there were some close calls.

Another ranger duty was meeting the VIP's at Canyon Hotel and Lodge, a job that called for someone who could meet people well and who had a very neat appearance in uniform. "When I asked Jerry to do the job," Frank explained, "he said he felt it was undemocratic and un-American to give special attention to VIP's, but he did the job and did it well."

Everyone contacted mentioned the evenings they used to hold wrestling matches among themselves and with some of the road crew in the community room of the ranger station. One night the conversation turned to football and Wayne Repogle suggested that Jerry Ford demonstrate a straight-on tackle.

Ford gave an energetic try and both he and Wayne went right through the thin masonite wall into the next room. There followed a great scramble to repair the damages before arrival of the chief ranger.

Wayne Repogle, senior seasonal of the group, roomed with Jerry Ford in the ranger station and frequently shared duties with him.

"I never saw Jerry show any excitement or emotion during a difficult rescue or at other times of stress," said Wayne.

"He would always say, 'Calm down everybody. It'll turn out all right.' He was always so reliable that we looked to him to get difficult assignments done right, even though he was one of our youngest rangers that summer.:

"In those days," continued Wayne, "rangers were on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You could not get out of uniform without permission from your district ranger who in turn had to clear it by phoning the chief ranger at Mammoth.

(See page 7)



(From Page 6)

It would furnish a gleeful break in the routine, despite the inherent hazards of falling off a horse during tearful spasms of hilarity or being crushed by thousands of fear-crazed steers.

I've long advocated uniform changes more in keeping with current styles, and this suggestion fills the last gap in my overall plan.

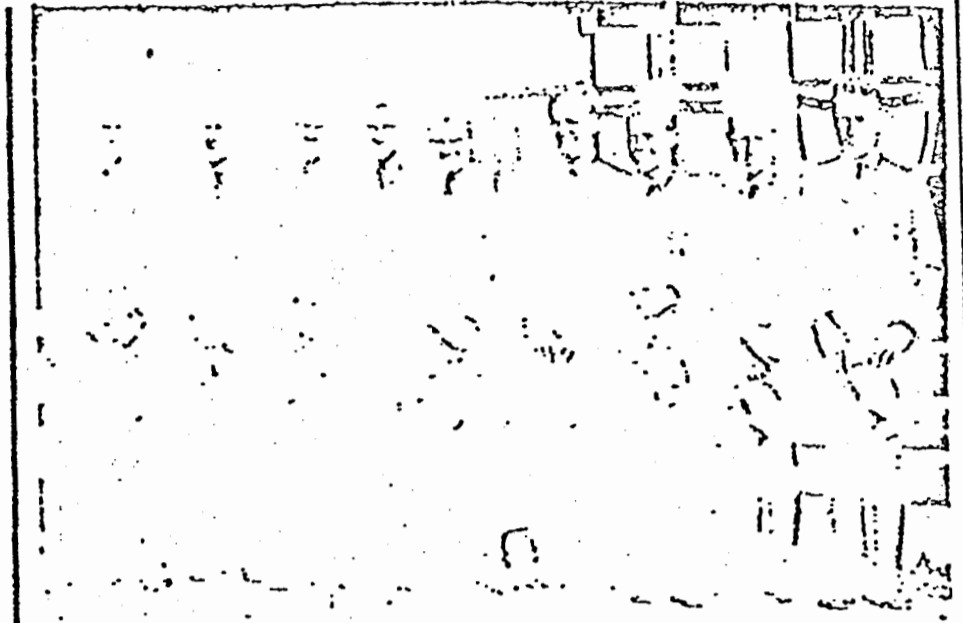
Keep the hat, but add a sequined band and a large ostrich plume (ala the Jeff Davis hat of the mid-19th Century military.) The scarf with arrowhead done in sequins to complement the basic orange color should be accompanied by a matching shoulder bag (cordovan.)

No shirt; name tag tattooed on skin. NPS arrowhead tie-tack to be worn in the navel; hip-hugger short shorts in forest green (skin tight) for summer wear with optional water pistol and can of Redi-Whip (in keeping with our low profiles.) Sandals. Optional elbow-length white gloves in a soft kid.

Uniform issue to follow completion of a 40-hour course at Mather in Limp Wrist (Basic.)

By the way, it may be of some interest to know that at present we do have two basic uniforms; summer—short-sleeve grey shirt open at the neck, straw hat, light-weight trousers. Winter—long-sleeve shirt, tie, heavy trousers, felt hat and, when required by weather, jacket.

Nicholas J. Bleser  
Park Ranger  
Tumacacori NM, Arizona



Yellowstone rangers and ranger-naturalists (Canyon District), summer 1936. Left to right, Frank H. Anderson, Al Raume, Jerry Ford, Wayne Replogle, "Bev" Hart, John "Adam Huddam" Moore, "Johnny" Ihune, Bob Jennison and Thurston "Admiral" Peary.

#### Ranger Ford (From Page 3)

"Even to go on a picnic you had to ask for permission and then tell where you were going, who with and when you would return. Jerry was handsome and young, maybe 24, and with the girls he was the most popular of us bachelors that summer.

"He was frequently chosen for dance duty. This meant spending the evening at the lodge or the hotel in uniform all cleaned and pressed with riding boots polished with a clean white dress shirt and green tie. Daytime shirts were grey wool.

"Visitors really flocked around

and would often ask pointless questions just as an excuse to say that they had talked with a ranger."

One duty Jerry liked was the early morning check, about 5 to 7 a.m., of every auto in camp. Rangers recorded the make, state and license number of each vehicle and type of tent. Wayne said, "We had to run most of the time to get 150 to 200 licenses listed in two hours.

"Jerry, a football player, was in good shape and enjoyed this early duty. In fact he was fine company because he genuinely enjoyed just about everything we rangers had to do," Wayne concluded.

## Newsletter Strikes a Happy Medium

Dear Editor:

I just wished to express how much I enjoyed reading the October 29 issue of the NPS NEWSLETTER. This is the first issue for almost a year that I have done more than just scan and check to see who has transferred where. This issue seemed to me to contain a much better balance of Washington and field news. Washington news is more interesting to me if it is interspersed with charming articles like "New-Old Gale for Mount Rainier"

and good editorials like Howard Chapinan's. For sometime now I felt that the NEWSLETTER was over-balanced with Washington news.

Allen F. Simonds  
Supervisory Park Ranger  
Shadow Mountain NRA

P.S. Maybe I just got sentimental when I saw the pictures on page 1 since we lived for one and a half years in the shadow of that old Nisqually Entrance, Mount Rainier gate. Just knowing its character has been restored and retained has made my day brighter.

## Query from the Field

Q. What can you do when you get a question about a Federal agency or function that you cannot answer?

A. You can call the Federal Information Center in your area. There are 36 cities with local FIC's and in 37 other cities you can make toll-free calls to FIC's through tie-lines. For the list, "Federal Information Centers" write to General Services Administration, Wash., D.C. 20405.