



Source: Park Warden Service Alumni Society oral history interview with Andy Anderson.

Arthur S. (Andy) Anderson was born in February of 1917. His father was a Station Agent for the CNR and the family lived in Beaverton, 12 miles from Portage La Prairie, Manitoba. When Andy's mother was about to give birth, the snow prohibited the use of a motor vehicle to take Andy's mother to the hospital so the neighbor came over with a team of horses hooked to a sleigh. It was a crisp -30 degree F. when they transported Andy's mother to the hospital in Portage by horse drawn sleigh. Andy's parents were used to facing these types of challengers and

overcoming adversity. Andy would inherit this characteristic and find it useful in his future career in the Warden Service.

As a young man Andy served in World War II as a Locomotive Engineer. After the war he moved to Jasper, Alberta where he worked on the railroad but quit railroading and went up north to work on the DEW Line for a period of time. When he returned to Jasper he ended up working for Mickey McGuire who was the Chief Warden in Jasper at the time.

Eventually Andy found himself in Banff and was hired on as an Assistant Warden for about one year to learn the basics from the experienced wardens. Warden Schools were being held to teach the variety of skills required for the job. Climbing and skiing schools were started about the time that Andy came into the Warden Service. Andy had to deal with his fear of heights and admitted, "I never really did overcome it. I always had to ignore it because the thing about climbing a mountain, it doesn't matter if you fall 50 feet or 5000 feet. Chances are, you aren't going to make it!"

Andy became District Warden and spent his first winter at Bryant Creek and moved to the Panther River to Windy Cabin for his second winter. With lots of time to learn new skills, Andy spent numerous hours reading (ski instructor) Ernie McCulloch's book on skiing. At every opportunity he would spend his days off at Mount Norquay practicing his skiing skills. This was during Andy's bachelor days and he really got to learn how to pack (horses) and travel and master various tasks associated with a park warden's responsibilities. Walter Perren was a huge part of Andy's training when Andy worked under Walter at the ski hill. Walter taught him a lot about avalanches. Walter had tremendous expertise and experience in all aspects of avalanches from forecasting to avalanche control. Andy soaked up this information. As the years passed and Andy became a park manager, he was to observe the techniques for avalanche control were improved upon tremendously. Others such as Freddy Schleiss, Peter Schaerer and Willi Pfisterer complimented the training of park warden service expertise.

Andy had developed his skiing ability as well as the knowledge about avalanches and was able to be in Banff or Lake Louise for most winters. He was assigned the Cyclone District and while stationed there he met and married Barb Compton in September of 1960. Andy and Barb embraced their life in the backcountry where Barb's resourcefulness as a Home Economics Teacher were put to the test. They also had many adventures – some good; some not so good.

Later, Andy was transferred to Lake Minnewanka as District Warden where he had to acquire a new skill of handling a boat on the lake. Andy recalled one incident that happened when Ed Carleton was escorting an East Indian Dignitary around Banff National Park. They came to Minnewanka as part of the tour. Andy recalled, “Ed Carleton, partly because of his military background, partly because he was a tall, good looking warden who always wore his uniform just impeccably. He was the picture of what all the wardens should look like. Ed and the dignitary came out to Minnewanka and I took them out on Peachy, which was a big 40 foot wooden boat. Actually, it was a big well-built boat, but it was not very fast. We had a garage for it, a floating boathouse. It just fit nicely into it. There was a walkway all around (the boathouse). You had to go in fast (when you were parking the boat) because if you went in too pokey and slowly you lost it...as you approached it, (the boathouse) looked smaller and smaller...I was coming in just a little faster than I normally would...and it had a great big lever...that was the reverse lever. At any rate, when I would run in and just as the nose got inside the thing, I would reverse it and get it in there. I reversed it and the lever flopped over and all I could do was shut off the motor and wait, and we hit the end of that thing! The walkway was planks of two by eights. It was sturdy, but it only put a slight dent in the front of the boat. There was quite a stairway up to where the vehicle was and the East Indian dignitary just raced up the stairs! He got out of there in about 30 seconds! Ed was standing there, and Ed turned around to me and he said, “*Young man, do you always dock that way?*” At that point I thought there is no use in trying to make explanations!”

Andy then went to Tech School at Hinton for training in forestry and took their wildlife program. A short time later Andy got promoted to Chief warden at Yoho National Park. That was at the time of centralization. Yoho proved to be an enormous challenge that Andy faced head-on. One huge challenge was the Amiskwi fire. Andy recalled that things were so dry that year that “if you took a pine needle and rubbed it together between your fingers it would turn to powder. When the fire got going, it just spread. We ended up with nine fires in the park.”

Andy’s resourcefulness and strong instincts served him well throughout his career in the Warden Service. He faced many changes and challenges. He experienced many changes within the warden service from advances in how avalanches are managed, manpower training expertise, helicopter mountain rescue to name a few. Superb organizational skills and leadership abilities served him well over the years. Possessing a sense of humour was also a benefit during many trying times.

Andy retired as Chief Warden of Banff National Park in 1982. After he retired he became the Environmental Coordinator for the Highways. In 1987 he and Barb moved to Vancouver Island where they enjoyed their retirement. They raised a son Robbie who is a helicopter pilot with Discovery Air out of Terrace, B.C. Andy and Barb both enjoyed the challenges of the Warden Service. Sadly, Barb passed away in October of 2002.

One of Andy's prize possessions was a retirement gift from June Mickle of a painting June painted of Andy and his saddle horse. Andy was in awe of how well June captured the detail of his saddle horse.

Many of us have many memories of Andy which we can reflect on with fondness.