



Edith Fagan

October 20, 1921 to June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

Edith Fagan passed away a few days ago. She was a very energetic and lively person throughout her long life. Edith was one of the many “silent partners” who accompanied their warden husbands as they performed their duties in the backcountry of Canada’s National Parks. Although no obituary has been posted for Edith, the following the story of her experiences as the wife of a national park warden appears in the book Silent Partners, Wives of National Park Wardens, by Ann Dixon 1985. (P. 189-190).

Edith Fagan knew how to ride a horse but really didn’t make a practice of it until she had to travel that way in the summers to arrive at her isolated home in a lonely wilderness. Her husband, Glen, had just been assigned his first warden district, Indian Head, in Banff National Park. In those days the new wardens of Banff Park were sent to Indian Head to take complete charge of a district and work out their probation period at the same time. If they didn’t know how to handle horses, or how to ride, they had no other choice but to learn. Lucky for Edith, Glen knew horses and was very capable.

Life in the backcountry for Edith meant making their food supply last for a month, and reverting back years to the use of the old scrub board. Mary, their only child, wouldn’t have to attend school, which would be quite agreeable to any teenager, but correspondence lessons would have to fill that gap. Eventually, the Fagan family was

moved to Windy, another warden district which was closer to Banff, but still in isolation only in a different way. Windy was situated behind a locked gate on a fire road and was at the far end of the Cascade Valley.

The trio was taken by truck to Stoney Creek, the first warden station that was located five miles in from the gate. From there, it was shanks pony for 15 miles on a road that was not plowed in the winter months. Because the trail was the width of a road, the edges were quite visible, making it easy for the three skiers to follow. Edith was not looking forward to this long tiresome trip on “those boards” as she called them. The temperature was ten degrees below zero Fahrenheit but it felt more like forty below to Edith as she secured her cross-country ski bindings and started out. By nightfall they had covered a good three-quarters of the journey. Edith, who had very little experience with foot travel in winter snows, could feel her feet getting sore. When Glen took her boots off, she had two large red throbbing blisters, one on each heel. As Edith said, “If you have ever had heel blisters, you’ll know just how painful they can be.” After Glen taped both her heels, Edith felt much better and they continued on. A full moon shone down brightly on a couple of big moose that stood silently watching from the edge of the timber as the three trudged slowly past.

At long last they stood on the drifted front steps of Windy, the house Edith was so relieved to see. With one final effort she removed her skis, limped over the hard snow and up the steps into the cold house.

Edith only lived at Windy a short time when Glen got a transfer to Kootenay Park. After May got married the family moved to Williams Lake when Glen quit the service. Edith moved back to Alberta after Glen passed away and lived in Olds to be near her family. Edith’s daughter, Mary passed away a number of years ago.