

BOOK REVIEW

The Badge With a Tree. By Stan Tixier. 2005. Western Heritage Company, Loveland, CO. 201 p. US\$14.95 paper. ISBN 1-887200-13-4.

In Stan Tixier's previous novel, *Green Underwear*, he bases his stories on true-life experiences. The characters are fictitious, except for one that is based on a real-life Forest Service ranger. *The Badge With a Tree* is designed similarly. Some readers will know which character is real, but others will have to figure out or guess which one. *Green Underwear* tells a story about Lawrence G. Weaver III (Larry) and his adventures on the Elk Creek District of the Rio Verde National Forest. *The Badge With a Tree* is a prequel to *Green Underwear*, which was reviewed in the August 2002 issue of *Rangelands*. This prequel tells a story about district ranger Lawrence E. Weaver Jr. (Lew); his wife, Grace; and their teenage sons, Larry and Jim.

Set in an earlier time, this novel tells how things used to be on several typical ranger districts on western National Forests, including a National Grassland district. It describes the daily activities of a forest ranger and his staff and begins with an airplane crash.

Ranger Lew Weaver was in the copilot seat looking for forest fire starts from a recent storm. Pilot Carol James heard a change in the sound of the engine of her Cessna 180. Before a course change could be made taking them back to town, the engine noise increased and there was a sharp BANG. "We might have thrown a connecting rod and if so a piston has probably been blown down into the crank case," Carol said to Lew. Seeing that a smooth landing was out of the question, she told her copilot to "hang on we'll be touching down, soon." The touchdown was surprisingly smooth, at 45 or 50 mph before the plane rolled and bounced over the grass. Lew was able to walk away, but Carol was unconscious. Lew pulled Carol away from the wreckage before it burst into flames. They were rescued by a helicopter fire-fighting crew. Carol was taken to the hospital with a broken leg and Lew headed back to his office before going home.

Recovering from the plane crash, Ranger Lew set out the next day to check on a control compliance for a timber sale, then to meet with a lumber company officer. He meets with the foreman of the Z Bar Ranch, where the owner has a grazing permit for 750 head of cattle. The owner is a poor manager and has failed to meet Forest Service standards of his leasing agreement. This leads to a roundup to determine how many cattle are actually on the allotment.

The ranger's stories include law enforcement challenges, catching tree thieves, and spotting forest fires. Lew's 2 sons enjoy listening to their dad tell about his days in the Navy during World War II in the Pacific. They especially enjoyed Lew's story of a grizzly bear attack. Through the ranger's stories the reader will learn about the US Forest Service and its mission and challenges.

Author Stan Tixier is retired and lives in Eden, Utah, where he and his wife, Jan, raise and train fox-trotting horses. Stan is also a well-known cowboy poet. He is an ex-ranger, forest supervisor, and regional forester. Always a strong supporter of the Society for Range Management, he served as Society President in 1991.

Past President and Society member William D. Hurst, retired Regional Forester, Southwestern Region, states in the beginning of *The Badge With a Tree*, "If you are interested in the work and responsibilities of a district forest ranger in the on-the-ground management of the National Forests, read this book. The situations described and the problems confronted, although fictional, are encountered regularly by this special guardian of the beautiful National Forests, the district forest ranger." The forest ranger is a special public servant.

Jan Wiedemann, Texas Section Society for Range Management, College Station, TX. ♦

