

Silent Crags of Wallawas Call Long Lost 'Silvertip'



Silvertip Seeber—legend of the Wallowa peaks.

Lord of Peaks 'Fed Up' on Bustle of City After Six-Month Frolic

BY HERBERT S. LAMPMAN
Staff Writer, The Oregonian

"Silvertip" Seeber tarried briefly in the city Wednesday to announce that he's going back to his mountains.

The 63-year-old living legend of the incredible Wallowa peaks dwells soul-alone at Aneroid lake, where he owns a 60-acre place.

He has been away, he said, for six months, and that's altogether too long for Silvertip to stay away.

Hair Grizzled, Hence Name

His sobriquet is oddly fitting, in that it is at once descriptive of his thatch of white hair and is a hillman's name for the grizzly bear. Trifling with Silvertip, it is said, is a lot like heckling a grizzly.

There are only two subjects in the world that rouse Silvertip to the full heights of his sulphurous wrath. One is the forest service and the other is sheepmen.

Mountaineer Own Ranger

"I haven't got no damned quarrel with the forest service," he said, "but why in thunder can't they do something up at my place? I build my own trails, plant fish, fight fires, keep fences that hold some of their own horses, and do every other confounded thing I can think of, but they won't help me.

"Right now I'm fighting to get that Wallowa area set aside as a national park and if Senator McNary doesn't do something about it I'll go back to Washington and raise a little hell."

The slight, wiry figure fairly bristles with indignant anger at such points.

Crags Home Half Century

It was exactly a half a century ago when Silvertip went into the mountains with his father and built his present camp.

Doctors had told him that his lungs were bad and that his life's span was measured in the space of a few months and it was something of a feat for the boy to toil up the steep slopes to the 7600-foot elevation.

"I was a pretty good man," he grinned, "until I came out of the sticks and got down into civilization. I couldn't stand that. They made a liar out of me in no time."

Herders Big Headache

But his favorite battle is with the sheepmen who, he claims, run their asterisked sheep "all over the place."

"I told 'em to stay off my place last year while I was out for a little while, and I'll be damned if they didn't graze them animals all over the area. It's gettin' so there isn't a thing safe any more. I threatened to shoot me a couple of 'em and they stay pretty much away now.

"It's on account of sheep that the government killed off all the coyotes and badgers, and now the mountains are crawling with gophers and ground squirrels. Those were the animals that kept the squirrels down. Now the government has got a fine mess on its hands—but they won't listen to me."

And with that Silvertip bade his farewell, refused a cigarette and left with the graceful swinging stride of the hillman going home to his mountains.

To Sample Wallowa Area for Minerals

A two-weeks' field trip sponsored by the state department of geology and mineral industries will be undertaken beginning this weekend in the Wallowa mountains. Sampling of molybdenite deposits on Hurricane creek will be one of the jobs of the workers, who will be under the supervision of W. D. Smith, University of Oregon geologist.

Aneroid, Hurricane and Fall creeks will be the sites for the camps of which John Eliot Allen, Baker geologist, will be in charge of one.

A general survey was made last year when the area was mapped. This trip, the mineralized zones will be sampled, structure sections developed and additional fossils will be taken to further the knowledge of the area's geology. Few mineral indications were found last year.