

**Interviews with Georgette Hurd,
November 8, 2011 and January 17, 2012,
at her cabin on Hiawatha Highway,
Red Feather Lakes, Colorado**

Interview and transcription by Linda Bell

* * *

Summers with the McFarland Grandparents

Every summer we came up here and spent with my grandparents – from when we got out of school – we spent the whole summer until it was time to go back to school, back to Nebraska. I was born in North Platte, Nebraska.

L.D. and Myrtle McFarland. They are in the “First Hundred” book.* He built cabins up here, and many of them are still standing. I don’t know how they literally started up here. And my grandmother started the first Sunday School. That was in where the thrift shop is now. We spent the whole summer up here and we could do anything we wanted to. It’s not like now where you can’t do anything.

We had Sunday School. If they didn’t have Sunday School she had Sunday School at home on the rocks somewhere. She would say, “Let’s go out and use this pile of rocks.” We’d pretend like we were playing a piano, sing, and she would make us learn a verse of the bible.

You could go out, Linda, and go to the lake, throw your line in, and go play on the rocks, and go back, if we had a fish, OK, if we didn’t, we’d throw the line back out and go play some more. We did that for years. My sisters and my brother. I have two sisters and a brother.

(My parents) would bring us in a car. I was number 3, my brother was the youngest. His name was Edward. My sisters were Phyllis and Bonnie. Phyllis has deceased, my sister Bonnie is still alive in a wheelchair. She had a sever stroke

*A picture of the McFarlands appears on page 50 of *Red Feather Lakes; the first hundred years*

that they didn't catch in time. She's been years ... very sad, and very depressed, but she's still alive. She's in Texas. My brother is deceased.

(Our childhood) was idyllic – we just had a wonderful time – it was good. Grandma was very strict with us because of her religion, she was a strict Baptist. You couldn't go to the movies, you couldn't play cards. In fact, when we played cards, we would say we were doing arithmetic. And she believed it. There were games we were playing that were arithmetic!

We'd go to the store at Youngs' – the Hilltop now. We'd buy candy and she'd take it all away from us then dole it out. We didn't have much then, as young kids.

When my mother inherited the place with her sister, she bought my aunt's share of it, and they lived there ... my stepdad. My real dad never was up here. My stepdad was the one. We would spend every summer – they would come out like on vacation time and then go back. Then when I got married, and my sisters got married, we did the same thing. We came on our vacation, until my grandmother deceased, and then my mother deceased. Then the cabin was sold. It was on the way to Nokomis, and it, I can't think ... McNallys have a place close by.

We used to take this road down on the wagon, and go across the creek, and down the gully as you're going toward Nokomis. We would go on the wagon down and miss sometimes and land in the crick. Now there's a house there, where we used to go down. The wagon was a kids' wagon. We'd get in it and get it going and if we steered wrong we went in the crick and if we didn't, we made it across the bridge.

My maiden name was Miller, my stepdad's name was Gilmore. My Miller ones (grandparents) were in Nebraska. I don't remember them much because we didn't have as much to do with them as coming to see McFarlands, my mother's (family).

I was baptized Baptist, but I believe in what I want to believe in. Religion is not something I would argue about at all. Or politics – to each his own.

But we had wonderful summers. When she got electricity – she'd cook everything We never did anything on Sunday, you couldn't work on Sundays, that was the Sabbath Day. The Lord said that was your day of rest. So she'd have everything ready when we'd go home from Sunday School. But, she was strict when we first got electricity. She'd go look at the meter, and see it going around

and around, then she'd go look to see what was going, making it go round and around. She was funny but a real sweetheart. She was real good.

We'd go down the gullies and pick blackberries and raspberries and plums, wild strawberries. We'd take the old lard buckets – do you know those old lard buckets? They were metal, like a little small bucket. And we had to take those and put berries in them and bring them back and she'd can them. Whatever size fish we caught, she'd can those sardines.... They were small.

My grandparents' cabin was ... When we came (in the summer) our parents did not come with us. They left us with Mamma and went back to wherever. My stepdad worked here and there. The McFarlands stayed up here all year. No indoor plumbing.

Open the door (of the outhouse) and there's the bear. The bear ran one way and I went the other. We didn't have electricity or anything at first. Then when she got electricity, like I said, she'd watch that meter.

I was in the ninth – younger than that – but I remember being in the ninth grade. You know, when you're a kid, you don't remember a lot of that stuff. You just remember the good times and not the years.

Many Childhood Homes, High School and Marriage in California

I was married in '46, because I was married to my husband for 57 years.

We lived in California, we lived in Idaho, oh, I can't think if we stayed anywhere else long enough.... The picture tells a lot more about the age – I must have been what age in that picture? I was going to say I was 13, 14. (See Georgette Hurd Addendum Number 1, page 1)

I got my schooling in every state we stayed in long enough. I graduated out of high school in Santa Ana, California. My oldest sister's high school graduation wasn't in California, Bonnie could have been, Edward I don't know.

I got married (the summer after high school). In California, I was working at the Naval Air Station in the housing office, my brother-in-law, my sister Bonnie's husband knew him – they worked together at the Naval Air Station – and told my husband Bill that he had somebody he wanted him to meet, but he had to treat her

right or he'd be in trouble. And we met and three weeks later we got married. He'd just got out of the Navy. We were married 57 years. Sometimes you can go with them forever and it doesn't last

He worked for Naval aircraft, on aircraft at the Naval Air Station. Then when we moved out here ... you know, I don't really remember (why we moved out here) ... oh we just wanted to get away from the rat race in California. It was just getting so you couldn't do anything, everything was a mess. Our son was going to school there. He was born in 1950. He's getting old now, I tell him....

Return to Colorado – Livermore and Red Feather Lakes Area

Anyway, (Gary) went to school We lived in San Leandro. We bought a house there and we sold it and (Bill) came out here to work for Swans, Wes Swan. We worked there and our son went to school in Livermore. When he got out of school in Livermore we board and roomed him in town with friends. He graduated from Poudre High School. And his father out of Fort Collins – Bill had never graduated and he went back to school.

Bill started working for the Forest Service up here – God, I don't know how many years. He retired out of that and when he retired, then he took over the cooking, he did everything for me. I was still working.

It's like my son. He's retired and his wife isn't. He's spoiled the devil out of her. He cleans house, he cooks, he does everything. It's hard for me to cook now because he cooked for so long, and, it's hard to cook for one.

He worked for the Forest Service for years. He checked the grazing allotments and permits. Then he did a lot of beetle killing work – people would call him. It used to be that they gave wood permits and they'd come on his day off. I'd tell them it was his day off and he's not working. "Well, we'll report you" and I said "You can go ahead, I'll give you the Congressman's name." They thought he was supposed to be available because he was a government employee. I was the one they'd deal with – I would say "He's not available." If he knew somebody was coming, then it was different.

I worked as a clerk at the post office under Ted Dunning. I don't remember when I started.

Gary was ... I don't remember years. He was older than (fourth grade), cause he could drive the tractor and stuff. Bill had his finger that was cut off and Gary would put the tractor into first gear. He told his dad there was no "half gear" – because his finger was only half there. That was their joke. Well, Bill had a frozen finger and it was cut off, so there was only a half. He could go like that and make it look like he had his finger clear up his nose. Gary was running the tractor and (Bill) wanted him to slow it into first gear. He put his finger up, but there was only half a finger – no half gear. We had a good life.

I think Gary must have been – he only stayed one year in Livermore, or two. I have something, but I can't read it because I cry every time I read it. This might give you some idea. My son wrote this when he was in high school and it's got the year on it.

"Gary Hurd, English, March 13, 1968..." You're not recording that, are you? Well, what I was going to have you look at was the contents. How when he was going to high school in town and that, how he felt we had deserted him. He goes on that he would do things to hurt me, make me cry. It really tells you at the end of this, that he says he found out at the end of this that his two best friends were his mom and dad. (This was written when Gary was a senior in high school. He graduated in 1968.) Well, it was hard to leave home, and it was hard for us to leave him.

(Gary) was on the ranches with us, the Swan Ranch, the upper and lower ranches. The upper ranch is where Lafi and Jo Miller are (Lady Moon Ranch) and the lower ranch was at the top of McNey, the one down in the gully. The ranch is still there, but I don't know who has it now or anything. It was by the LOX, Currie. The LOX is where (Clarence) Currie used to live. It says LOX on the chimney. We lived down in the valley, south. That's where the Swan Ranch was. They built a little house behind for us to live in. As far as I know it's still there, I haven't been down there for years. It's down off the Hewlett Gulch roads. That's where we moved when we moved from California to here. The upper ranch was when we moved cattle.

Now I do as little as possible.... I try to keep busy. I belong to Chapel in the Pines, I go with Lib Jefferson a lot. But I haven't gone for quite a while. I work at the thrift shop, but only as fill-in. I told her I would be a sub any time, but I didn't want a special day in case I didn't want to do that day. Years ago I took Tuesdays and I had to be there every Tuesday, and I didn't like that. If I could do it without a day, then put me as a sub, and they did.

(Bill) retired several years before I did – doing all the food and the cleaning. The only thing he refused to do was dust. He said, the only way I'm going to dust is open the front door and the back door and let the wind blow it through. And windows, he didn't want to do the windows. It was just like any marriage, it had an up and down, but for 57 years and we'd gone together for three weeks.

He grew up in Chicago, Illinois. After we got married his mother would see us. They were separated. Then his dad, we'd go see his dad. His dad lived in southern California. They were separated for quite a few years. They had eight kids. She came, but we didn't get to see him much. My mom didn't come to spend summers with us – she'd had enough, probably. She didn't come. The McFarlands were already gone when we came to work on the Swan Ranch.

We were out here and Bill was looking for work, more or less. That shows `ya you don't have to have a college education. It's like me with the post office. Now you can't get it without knowing all this extra stuff and that. That didn't faze me, I could still do the work. But he just was working with cattle and this job came up and he got it. We had the two best jobs in Red Feather, really.

Like that kid wrote about him on that picture, when he passed away – I'm going to get sentimental again – the kids who worked under him (in the Forest Service) thought so much of him that they came from California, Alaska, to his memorial here in Red Feather, at Chapel in the Pines. Jim Abbot still writes to me every year at Christmas, so does Andy Anderson. He didn't do anything that he wouldn't do it himself. He would not teach you to do something he would not do. Some people know their work but can't teach it, but no, you saw him (in the picture) on the ground up there with the chainsaw. (See Georgette Hurd Addendum Number 1, page 7) When he was with those kids, they thought the world of him. There were some that worked year-round, back then. But now it's just summer. He'd get summer crews, too.

We had bought this (cabin) – this was not like this when we bought it. It was all open. The windows were hooked by wires to open them. And this front bedroom and bath and that, that was just a screened-in front porch. That back room there, was not there. Gary never grew up here. When he got out of high school he was pretty well on his way to doing what he wanted to do. He went to college at UNC and now his daughter, my granddaughter, the youngest, is going to UNC. She has one more year to go. She turned 21 and I told her she couldn't. She did on November 1(2011). When she takes a trip to Nebraska alone, I said, I don't like

that. I don't think Grandma thinks you should travel alone. They grow so fast. Alex was 25 – she was four years old when they got married – she's a step granddaughter. He's so proud and he raised both of them. Alex calls him dad, and her real dad, Greg. She does that right in front of her dad. He's been a good father to them.

He's so glad to not be teaching kids anymore. He was tired of them. He said it was time for (him) to get away from them. He taught at Fort Collins. For years he taught at the little Waverly one, that had several grades in one room. And then he did his student teaching at Livermore. And then he started – what, there were two schools he taught in and then he ended at Warner Elementary, teaching fifth grade. The kids just loved him. They said they never liked history, (in) the book they wrote about him – a photo book, a scrap book – said they never liked history until they had Mr. Hurd. He would get on the desk and demonstrate and do all these different things. They said he made it interesting. We need (more teachers) like him. He says he doesn't miss it at all. He says he misses the staff, but he doesn't miss the kids.

I'd have some of his (kids) in the summer, or they'd call and say we need you to have the kids and they'd bring them up here and then take them back. Just like grandparents do. Hannah's the one – she called (Bill) papa – and she said papa never let us use bait. We had to use bugs, because he was a fly-fisherman. He didn't use bait. Very rarely would he let them hook fish with bait. Hannah was the one that was more here because Alex was five years older. She was a smart gal. She went to SMU and went right into a job. The people came to her and said, "how come you haven't applied for a job at our office?" And she said, "I didn't know you needed someone." She works for a cancer magazine in Dallas – has ever since she graduated.

And Hannah is goin' to be good because she does a lot of summer work. She does a lot of dog, animal sitting. But she does like a camp that people send their kids there for the day, a day camp. She does a lot of that, so she's really good with kids. I think she's going to be a good teacher. I think she's going to be good like her dad.

"Grandma" was the only one that was mean. I was more the stricter type. I always told my son that I was a mean mother. But I say, "look how you turned out." Strictness is not bad. But you know, he was used to being gone for college already – before he left high school.

Red Feather Lakes Postmaster

I'm sorry I couldn't help you pin down some of the dates for (the post office). You know, when I went in there, I was amazed I got the job. I got it over Jerry Dalton and she was clerking there before me. When the inspector came up he was interviewing people to see what they thought of me – because I was applying for the job too. ... I got the job over her and I know my score wasn't as good as hers on the test.

It takes a lot ... you have to use a lot of discretion when you're dealing with a little post office. You have to *bend* an awful lot – they don't do that now. Public relations, that's what I was trying to think of. I told everybody I was not a "postmistress" because I didn't get paid enough to be anyone's mistress. That's what I used to tell them.... I used to have a little inch by inch notepad on the old scales that we had, and I said; "Please write your complaints here. Use only one sheet." And it was like that, an inch by an inch.

A lot of people didn't use the post office. General delivery.... To this day I can go over there and tell you where Chuck and Carol Arent – I could find their mailboxes for you. I think that's so smart because I can remember that far back.

Mountain Friends

We were much more (involved) with the Livermore (community) when we first moved in – the Steinhoffs and the Hansens. We could take our kids everywhere with us. I can remember Joy Buchanan, her husband was the vet that used to be down there, she would invite you over to eat, and we'd say, "OK, we've got to bring the kids"; "Well, if you bring the kids, you can't come." Well, I said, when you live in this area, you take your kids with you. We used to go to the Livermore Hall and put the kids to sleep on the cots and square dance. Lafi Miller was the one that taught us how to square dance. My husband had two left feet so he'd separate us. Bill could not square dance with me. And he was left-handed; I told him it was because he was left-handed. We had a good life in Livermore, too.

If I'm going somewhere. ... I went to town one day and didn't tell anyone I was going, and they had everyone in Red Feather looking for me. They were upset. They couldn't get in the house, because it was locked, and then there's people who

know where I have a key outside, but they found out I was not here. I have my own car but there was a vehicle here because I'd gone with somebody else. Now when I go, I let Beth or Bill Jefferson or somebody know, and then I'm good. If someone questions, they can say, "she went to town." I go good and early and I get home early. They say they don't see how I can get to town and back so quick. The stores open early and I can get in there and out, no crowd, and I can park and don't have to worry about going round and around. I park way out so I can walk.

Sometimes there's an old junker parked near me when I come back. One time I parked way out because I didn't want to park in by where there are a lot of nice cars, and here's this old rusty car parked next to me. I guess they thought I belonged in a lot out there. I don't even go out when it snows or I don't want to go. I have a list and if somebody's goin' to town I ride with them, or they drive my pickup. I don't think I could handle that – not being able to drive.

And I pray every night – and this is in my prayers, that God will keep me able to drive. And don't take that away from me, because that would be the hardest thing for me. But I told my son, that day will probably come, and I won't be able to drive. It will break my heart, but I'm not going to drive. If it's a hazard, I will go (with) somebody else.

I've had a good life. I'm 83 years old and I have some problems, but that comes with being old. I can hardly remember things.... I'm sorry I couldn't help you more.

More Memories of the Red Feather Lakes Post Office

I was already working in the post office for Ted Dunning when I was appointed acting postmaster (in December 1966). When we moved up to Red Feather, Gary went to Livermore to school for a year, then when he went down to school in Fort Collins we boarded him with friends. I think I got the job with the post office after he went to town. We bought this place in 1964; I think it was '64 when we bought this. I clerked at the post office for a little while and then I took over when he (Ted Dunning) retired and was acting postmaster. Ted was never (working) in the new post office. I moved to that on the date that it moved over there.

The new post office (built in 1969) was completely handled by the Postal Service. I had nothing to do with it, other than the company – I don't know if they still own

that building – Marie would know that. They built it and I just moved into to it. It was leased.

Oh, when all the new equipment came in, yeah, I had to have the big safe moved over there. Some guy came with a big bucket on the front of a tractor and scooted under it and tilted it up and brought it over and moved it in. Yes, it did take supervision. Then, you see, they had so many mailboxes, and then we run out of mailboxes and they added that section that goes back. They put those in several years after.

This isn't very nice, but people would come in and say "what are you doing?" when we had all the new mailboxes, and I would say "I'm screwing mailboxes!" I had to put the numbers and everything in. Put the little screws in to get the locks on and all. I'd say I was just "screwing."

We used to have a Dutch door. You know when you go into the office part, the front part that you face going in to the left, that whole section in there used to be a Dutch door. I was told that when I leave it open so I can watch people and talk to them and greet them, they told me I couldn't do that because of the safety of the mail. The slot was on that door. People could reach over and see. My mail was not secure, they told me, so I had to close the door.

Then, when we ran out of mailboxes we took that section and door, and moved everything over. So I had to renumber boxes for the additional boxes they put in. And then they put the ones in at the back. Now there is a new section put in – it has those, what do you call it, roll-in ones. They are to the left as you walk in the door.

I probably started with a hundred and some boxes.* I would have to screw on the numbers. Then when a lock would get loose and (patrons) couldn't get their key out, I'd have to press on the front of the key part to get the key out. And then, I'd have to open the box, and these tiny, tiny little screws that you had to screw back in to tighten it. It wasn't easy. If you lost some of those screws – well, I ordered some to have as extra – but they weren't easy to put in, let me tell `ya.

The boxes in the old post office had combinations. Combinations, that you had to go "L", "R", "O". The old post office had, what I used to call – like an old store –

* There are now 600 mailboxes available at the Red Feather Lakes Post Office according to Marie Sands, Postmaster.

it had a window with bars that came down and a circle thing with a depression so you could reach in and out for the money. I didn't ever take pictures of that.

It had a (propane) stove and a couch so people could come in and wait for their mail. The stove was right there to get warm by. They didn't play (cards), but they had community get-togethers. The guys would come in and sit there and talk and have a really nice time catching up on stuff. Then they'd get their mail and go home. The couch, I think it was an old wicker one, and then there was a chair on the other side. Everybody would sit on that couch because the heater was right there.

When you walked in, there was a door that had the safe and stuff in that section, then the other section had the money and the stamps and all that. I can remember people getting mad at me because I wouldn't cash checks for them. I said "I am not Ted Dunning, I can't cash checks for you." He had his own money in there, so that he could cash them. They let him be a Notary Republic, but I never was.

Ted had the old post office fixed there for a while. He would run home to his house when he wanted to and come back. It was "freedom" then....

The new post office was wonderful. I was ready to get out of that little one. I'm thinking maybe the one hundred boxes were in the old one. I don't remember just how many were in the new one, because we put a whole section in. When we started in the new post office there were some boxes vacant, but they filled up fast.

The post office never closed during the move. I think it was during the week – see we didn't have a cleaner that would come and clean the post office then. I had to do that myself. They pay to have it done now. If I had extra help, I had to pay it out of my money. I would go in on the weekends and scrub and wax the floors. I had to do it all myself.

By the time we moved I had a clerk, especially when I moved into the new one. I had Connie Thaler, then I had Joe Koenig's wife Marge. I trained her and I remember she was so good. They got a divorce and she went on to California – this made me proud – she went way up in the postal service and they said it was because of the training she had. That made me feel good. She was really nice and really good. Then I had some that just did things to get a pay check or retirement money or disability. I wanted to refuse the one to get it, and they said, "Georgie, you cannot do that, you have to sign the papers." I said the papers can wait a while. I was stubborn.

I had a guy – Ed Mays – that could just bug you something terrible. He didn't help that Wayne and when he went into the post office. I hung up on him. He called me back and said, "Did you hang up on me?" I said no, we just got disconnected.

That Wayne, I felt really sorry for him, because they did not help him; they did not help him from the main office in Denver and he would ask questions. I told him that if there were any problems to call me, and I could help him. But he got to the point that he didn't care and he didn't send deposits, he didn't do anything. Wayne came after me (as postmaster), before Patty or whatever her name was, that went to Oklahoma.

Nothing was wrong with Wayne – he was a nice young man. I just felt so sorry for him when he got so disgusted because they wouldn't help him enough from the main office. And he didn't ask me, so he just couldn't – make deposits, or anything. He didn't care anymore.

And I can't remember that other clerk who lived along the Red Feather Lakes Road – you're trashing my brain too much. What brain there is here.... Thelma Morrison. That was her name.

I was postmaster 23 years. I kept all these files. I thought if ever I got another job and needed to go back – the things I did. (Laughter)

An undated childhood poem "by Gig" that Georgette Hurd wrote to her mother:

My mom is the best in this whole world
She's got lovely big brown curls,
She's always happy, seldom cries,
She's more than money could every buy.

She's got her worries but you'd never know,
that she worries and I love her so.
She's helpful & kind and good hearted too,
She's the best in this world and I mean it too.

Georgette Hurd Addendum Number 1

Family Photo album and Red Feather Lakes Post Office Memories



Georgie's family on the road once again – left to right:
Back row; Phyllis, Buck Gilmore (Georgette Miller's step-father) and Bernice
Front row; Taby (the dog), Bonnie, Edward and Georgette
(often called Gig by her family and friends – rhymes with "Jidge")
Everything the family owned was on the trailer, including the bathtub.
Location possibly in Idaho.



Georgette and Bill Hurd circa 1950



The old Red Feather Lakes Post Office where Georgie Hurd started clerking for Ted Dunning in 1966; picture circa 1965



Georgie Hurd on a summer day at the Red Feather Lakes Post Office. Note the vacant lot to the west where the new post office will be built.



Ted Dunning and Georgie Hurd in the newly opened post office, 1969

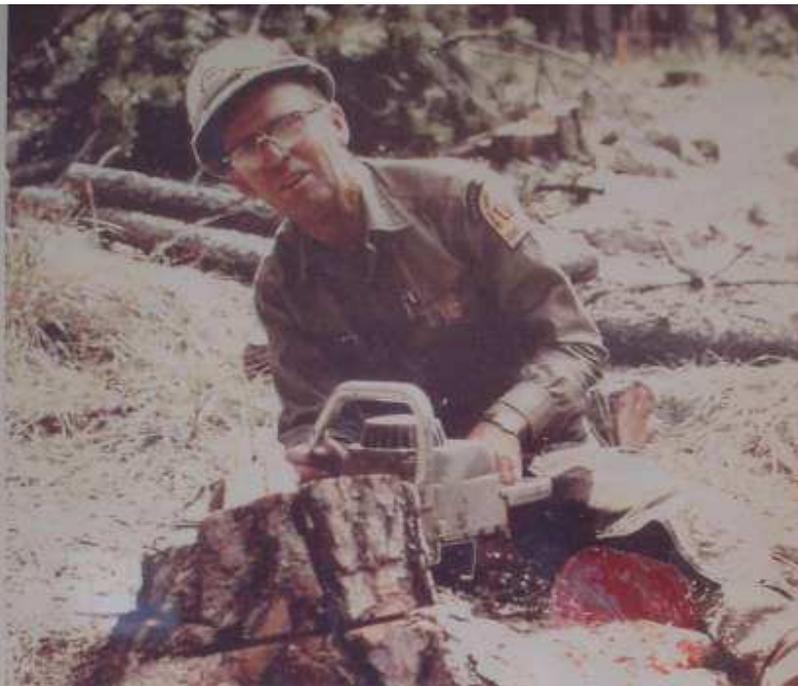


Georgie Hurd's initials and date when the cement was poured for the new post office and as they are today on the back steps of the Red Feather Lakes Post Office / 2012





Georgette Hurd's retirement plaque from the Red Feather Lakes Post Office. The plaque has one of the old combination lock box fronts on it. The plaque reads: *Georgette Hurd, Postmaster, Red Feather Lakes, Colorado. In appreciation of your many years of loyalty and dedication to the United States Postal Service. November 25, 1966 to March 31, 1989.*



Bill Hurd

A great man died just yesterday
 He was so many things to me
 He touched my life, I'm here to say
 Bill Hurd was Forest Service family



A jack of all trades — the very best
 He could fix anything — also fight a wild fire
 We summer hires were most impressed!
 Bill worked hard; he never seemed to tire

A boss, a friend, Bill knew how to reach us
 Fix fence, run a chainsaw, you just name it
 We had plenty to learn, and Bill could teach us!
 Work hard, take pride — that's the point of it

Bill lives on in my Redfeather memories
 He's playing golf in heaven I'm sure
 I'm a better person for all he taught me
 There simply wasn't a better man than Bill Hurd

Tribute to Bill Hurd written by one of his Forest Service colleagues.