



CHIEF'S FILE CABINET

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Who Wore that Badge?

I do not know when I started to collect badges. I do know when I got my first one. It was pinned on me as a member of the United States Forest Service in 1960. Over my lifetime I have accumulated a fairly large collection of badges that I have worn personally. But that is not the reason for this observation. I have collected hundreds of badges that were worn by other people. And therein lies my reason for collecting them, the tales behind them.

My favorite story about badge collecting centers on the fact that I found a badge in a bookstore once that was in a box of junk to be disposed of. I salvaged that badge and began to pursue the story behind it. What I found was fascinating. I learned about an individual, their contributions to the fire service and then personally I was able to form a conclusion that his own family had regarded the badge as being so meaningless they tossed it with other things to be thrown away.

A collection of badges is not a collection of metal. It was a collection of memory. With the exception of those badges that go directly from the manufacturer into personal collections, the vast majority of them have been worn by somebody under some set of circumstance. That is what makes them unique even if they look alike.

In my collection I have close to a thousand badges. In reality there are not a thousand stories there are probably three thousand stories. More often than not the badge is worn by an individual and passed onto another person in a line of succession and it arrives eventually in a glass case of a collector.

My hat is off to Don Skalsky for his work in putting this book together. It should be sitting on a shelf of anyone that has more than two badges, one that they wore themselves and one that they have collected from someone else.