

VANISHED!

BY most accounts, Ellsworth Arthur 'Art' Teed was a popular and well respected deputy game warden, passionate about his job and with a reputation for being an aggressive pursuer of game violators. When Teed failed to return home after investigating a possible out-of-season deer poaching near Mullan, Idaho, his wife Alma became concerned; and that evening, August 28, 1934, she contacted local authorities. It had been his custom to inform his wife whenever his game warden duties required him to be away overnight. And before he left he stated that he would return home in time to attend a funeral in town that afternoon. Now she feared her husband had met with an accident or with violence while investigating the poaching report. What transpired next would be an all-out effort to locate Teed, dead or alive.

Teed had originally come to Shoshone County, located in the panhandle of northern Idaho, to work in the area's booming lead and silver mines. An avid sportsman and capable outdoorsman, he had a good knowledge of the local mountains and seized on the opportunity to become a deputy game warden. This was a relatively new profession, and in the 1930's there were only a handful of game wardens in Idaho. Each was assigned to a specific district; Deputy Ellsworth Arthur Teed was appointed to the position on June 1, 1934.

What would become the largest search in the history of Shoshone County began in earnest at first light on Wednesday morning, the day after the 39-year-old Teed failed to return home. It had been too dark to start searching the night before when Teed's Model A Ford coupe was found parked near Mullan Cemetery, at the entrance to Boulder Gulch. His jacket and lunch still inside, Teed was wearing only light clothing for the hot summer day. Shoshone County's Sheriff Fred May was joined by city,

county, state and federal officers along with about 50 volunteers to begin looking for the missing game warden. Initially, it was thought that Teed had become injured in the rugged terrain and was unable to walk out of the canyon. There were reports of gunshots Wednesday night and Thursday morning speculating that those shots had been fired by Teed as a distress signal, or that he had been wounded by a hunter. Though the summer days were hot, nighttime temperature in those mountains could drop significantly, making it a race against time to locate Teed. After the first day's search proved unsuccessful, Sheriff May called for additional resources; and the following day 200 local townspeople came out to join in the search. An aerial search was conducted by a local pilot, but smoke from a nearby forest fire and tree density made it difficult to locate any sign of the deputy warden. A team of bloodhounds from Walla Walla Washington State Penitentiary was brought over to assist; but the tracking dogs fell short after the trail turned cold and conditions became too windy or dusty for the dogs to pick up any scent.

By the third day of the search, desperation was beginning to set in that Teed would not be found alive. Sixty men from the Civilian Conservation Corp joined the search team, now numbering around 250. That day, searchers found evidence of recent poaching activity with the discovery of three deer carcasses buried in shallow graves along with piles of bird feathers. Once again the tracking dogs were deployed, but the scent ran out about a mile up the trail from the carcasses. It was beginning to look like Warden Teed might have met with foul play if he had encountered poachers. Poaching was a fairly common

THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF IDAHO DEPUTY GAME WARDEN ELLSWORTH A. TEED

occurrence in the 1930's - the game department hadn't been around all that long, and enforcement of laws were sparse and not always welcomed. Besides, the country was coming out of a depression and some were struggling to survive by any means necessary.

On Sunday September 1st, the search team had swelled to around 500 men, including Teed's brother and two of his sons. The local mines were closed so workers could join in the search. Tracking dogs were still in use and a state-owned airplane was provided for continued aerial searches. Sheriff's deputies began looking into the possibility that there might have been bad feelings against Teed for his "relentless effort to track down law violators." One group working along a trail found several spent shotgun shells and a handkerchief with an initial 'E' monogram, although it was never confirmed if the handkerchief actually belonged to Ellsworth. By Monday, the search party dwindled to less than 100. Rumors abounded. Had Teed's body been dumped into one of the area's many mineshafts?

Amos Eckert, the State Game Warden, and North Idaho Chief Deputy Game Warden M.R. Quales had been involved in the search from the start. The two and Sheriff May, though becoming increasingly despondent over the lack of progress, vowed to continue until Teed was located and

the mystery of his disappearance revealed. Hope of finding his body dimmed as there was no evidence of either his murder or death by accident. On speculation that Teed might have tracked poachers into nearby Montana, Sheriff May enlisted the help of the Mineral County, Montana Sheriff and the local St. Regis, Montana game warden. Rumors of cash rewards being offered for information begin to surface.



Indeed, a cash reward was being offered. The Shoshone County Sportsmen's Association had posted a \$100 reward for information leading to the whereabouts of Deputy Game Warden Teed. A statement released by the Association said: "The Sportsmen of the district are very much concerned. In Teed, we had an efficient and aggressive game officer who went about his duties in a thorough manner. If he has been killed in the line of duty by game violators, it is time such criminals were brought to justice and we propose every effort to solve the mystery of his disappearance. If we find his body, and it is shown that he met with foul play, the Sportsmen will give every aid to state and county officials in running down his slayers."

As the areas yet to be searched and incoming tips from the public both dwindled, remnants of the search team pressed on. A deputy sheriff was sent to Montana after someone resembling Teed was said to be in nearby Paradise, but it turned out to be a hitchhiker with no connection to the incident. Teed's sister, who lived in British Columbia, added \$300 to the reward fund.

Towards the end of September, Wardens Ekert and Quarles returned to the Mullan area with what they described as "hot new clues." "It is the game department's intention to carry on the search until Teed is found or until we are satisfied he will never be found." It is not known what new information they had received. During that same time period, an additional \$25 in reward money was added, bringing the total to \$425. The Idaho Mutual Benefit Association offered the reward for information verifying that Teed was either dead or alive. This revealed that Teed had taken out a \$3,000 insurance policy just three weeks prior to his disappearance and fueled new rumors that Teed may still be alive and living somewhere else.

Over the next few months the investigation lagged until, in mid-December of 1934, Sheriff May announced to the press that he believed Teed was alive, revealing that an unnamed Spokane, Washington man - who had worked with Teed in the mines - reported seeing him walking along a highway from

Republic, Washington towards Canada. When the man was interviewed by Idaho Wardens Ekert and Quarles, they found the man's story to be "substantially correct."

From that point the trail mostly fades. The search effort which lasted for over a month and involved 1,000 people was one of the biggest manhunts in Idaho history. With no new information, the disappearance of Teed becomes cold. In January 1942, over seven years after his disappearance, Alma Teed filed paperwork in district court to have her husband declared dead so that she could collect on the \$3,000 insurance policy. A month later, Ellsworth Arthur Teed is officially declared "Deceased."

Three theories arose about Teed's mysterious disappearance. Was he murdered by poachers? Did he die from some accidental mishap? Or did he run off to start a new life somewhere in Canada? No definite conclusion is possible. The extensive searches to locate him by 1,000 people and tracking dogs surely should have located him, or some trace of him, if he had succumbed to any environmental hazards in the area.

Additionally, he was widely respected in his community and a devoted family man with three children and no known enemies or financial issues.

While it would be possible to start a new life undetected, there is no apparent motive for him to give up so much - his sister did live in Canada, but she put up the bulk of the reward money. Ellsworth's brother had died at a similar young age, which may have inspired him to take out the insurance policy. A darker theory is that Teed was murdered by poachers. Evidence existed that recent poaching had taken place in that area. With only one game warden in the entire county, it is likely poaching was common. Teed's reputation as a hard charging lawman may have put a target on his back. Who reported the out-of-season deer poaching that Teed initially responded to? Was he set up for murder and his body removed or disposed of down an abandoned mineshaft?

Until recently, the disappearance of Deputy Game Warden Teed had been lost for almost 90 years to the shadows of history. Melissa Stellers Teed, whose husband is the great nephew of Ellsworth Teed, has tried to keep his memory alive and find answers to his disappearance. After she contacted a group called Idaho Cold Cases, the story again was brought to light. The Idaho Fish and Game Department has also done a thorough investigation of his disappearance and now recognizes Teed as missing in the line of duty, and lists his cause of death as felonious assault. In December 2022, Deputy Game Warden Ellsworth Arthur Teed was approved for inclusion to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, D.C as well as the Idaho Peace Officers Memorial.

It is possible that the disappearance of Ellsworth Teed might still be solved. Perhaps some day, a hunter, hiker or miner could stumble upon a portion of his remains. Until then, the mystery of Boulder Gulch will remain the oldest missing persons case in Idaho history. ☹

☞ *By Dan Kelsey, Senior Conservation Officer (retired) Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game*