



Rudy Lange

Courtesy Louise L. Bauman (1931)

Rudy Lange: Delavan Tree Surgeon

Rudy Lange was one of Wisconsin's truly extraordinary tree surgeons. He was born in the family home in Delavan on April 1, 1907. His father, a teacher at the Wisconsin School for the Deaf, was also a nationally known arborist and was instrumental in having Arbor Day observed in Wisconsin. Rudy learned his tree-climbing and arboricultural skills from his father and when he was old enough he took over the business in Delavan. For over fifty years, until his death in 1981, he was a leader in the field of tree care. An extremely strong and energetic man, he set a hard pace to follow.

His friend and fellow naturalist Delavan postmaster W. Gordon Yadon wrote of some of the adventures for which Rudy was noted: "As a teenager, he swam alone across Delavan Lake; was a barnstorming stunt pilot; nearly perished in the 1936 fire at the Wisconsin School for the Deaf; as a scuba diver explored and chartered ship wrecks in Lake Michigan; encountered sharks and Moray eels off the coast of West Africa; was seriously stung by a Portuguese Man of War in the Caribbean; was nearly swept to sea by strong current off the Canary Islands; recovered the bodies of numerous Walworth County drowning victims; skied on treacherous slopes in the Swiss Alps; at age 66 felled two thugs who attacked him in a robbery attempt in Bogota, Columbia, received a deep knife wound in the leg which required 17 stitches and ten days later defied piranha and crocodiles to swim the Amazon River in Peru; at age 70 made an excursion to the Himalayan Mountains in Nepal where he stayed with Sherpa natives at 14,500 feet altitude near Mt. Everest; encountered anacondas in South America, cobras and tigers in India and handled and detonated tons of explosives during WW II and in his tree business." He died, ironically, in a home accident. As requested, his cremated remains were incorporated in the soil at the base of his favorite tree, an Adams flowering crabapple.

Excerpted from *Every Root an Anchor: Wisconsin's Famous and Historic Trees* by R. Bruce Allison
(© 2005 Wisconsin Historical Society)

Permission is granted for downloading this work for personal, educational and other non-commercial purposes. All other uses are prohibited unless permission is granted by writing: Permissions, Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 816 State Street, Madison, WI 53706-1482

Electronic copy of the entire book is available at
<<http://dnr.wi.gov>><http://dnr.wi.gov/>>