

Volume 9 — Number 1

Forest Service employees, we want to help!

From the Rocky Mountaineers Board of Directors

As this edition of the Rendezvous is being shared with our 450 plus members, we are deeply troubled by the impact that the government transformation actions are having or will have on the Forest Service in this region and across the country. In just a couple weeks there have been a number of actions (i.e. unprecedented firings, frozen funds, hiring freezes, and other confusing and chaotic directions) that are disconcerting. The impacts are far reaching and will have long lasting affects on the ability of the Forest Service to serve the American public, meet its responsibilities in managing the National Forests and Grasslands here in the Rocky Mountain Region. These impacts extend also to other programs and work being done at the Rocky Mountain Research Station, Job Corps Conservation Centers, and with partners throughout the region.

As retirees who have worked in all parts of this region and other parts of the country as well, we know there is always room to do better, be more efficient, or respond to changing public needs. The Forest Service’s decentralized organization places huge responsibilities on people at the field level where so much of the work and challenge in resource management is. We, who are retired, saw many changes during our years working for the organization. We were able to adapt to new programs, new ideas, new technology, ever-changing budgets, and changes in administration.

For the most part we enjoyed very good public support for what we did. We clearly understood that our goal was to protect and manage the great resources found on these public lands and to always remember we were doing that in service to the American public, because it was their land. We were to care for it and provide for the “Greatest Good for the Greatest Number in the Long Run.” What is so troubling right now as this administration undertakes this transformation is the way it is being done and disrespect for the people who work for the Forest Service.

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“The official newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Forest Service Association, the Rocky Mountaineers.”
 Editions are published Fall, Winter, and Spring and posted on-line.

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Even though the Rocky Mountaineers as an organization is in reality quite small, and our purpose is not advocacy, we believe we need to do all we can to support people in the organization as they endure this very difficult time. We also believe we have an obligation to do all we can to ensure the public understands what is happening and how it will impact their use or their community. It is a very difficult time for people in the agency to do much themselves in this regard for fear of retribution so it is up to us and others who care so deeply for the Forest Service to do all we can.

It is hard to get much reliable information, but we believe there are probably a couple of dozen probationary employees who have already been fired, some employees are on administrative leave and directed not to report to work, and an unknown number have perhaps chosen to accept a delayed resignation offered to them three weeks ago and

will no longer be working for the agency. We all know this is happening all across the country in many different departments and agencies. It appears the intent of those leading this transformation is to continue reductions in the federal workforce through whatever means regardless of what the impacts are. How this will unfold nationally is yet unknown.

So why are we sharing these thoughts with you? The answer is simple, we want you to help in whatever way you can to share with your friends, your family, and your community that the transformation, at least the way it has unfolded thus far, is having or will have a huge impact on the ability of the Forest Service to do the things and provide the services we have all come to expect from the Forest Service.

So how might you help?.....

Your Area Representatives

Denver Area Representative
Jim Thinnes, Littleton, CO

Wyoming Area Representative
Bill Bass, Sheridan, WY

Northern Front Range and Southeastern Wyoming Area Representative
Steve Johnson, Ft. Collins, CO

South Dakota/Nebraska
Craig Bobzien, Custer, SD

Southern Front Range and Kansas Area Representative
Vacant, Pueblo

NAFSR Representative
Frank Beum, Denver, CO

Western Colorado Area Representative
Martha Moran, Carbondale, CO

NMFSH Representative
Tom Thompson, Littleton, CO

Liaison for Region 2 (not retired yet)
Jace Ratzlaff, Golden, CO

Website - www.rockymountaineers.us

E-mail - rmountaineers@gmail.com

Editor of Newsletter - Dave Steinke, dave.steinke@gmail.com, 720-289-7621

Website Manager - Bill Disbrow, bdisbrow@aol.com, 303-548-7501

E-Mail Manager - Johnny Hodges, rmountaineers@gmail.com, 970-226-6890

Memorial Grove - Steve Deitemeyer, sdeitemeyer@msn.com, 303-456-0799 or

Tom Thompson, thom46pson@gmail.com, 303-552-1711

Membership & Others - P.O. Box 270462, Fort Collins, CO 80527

“What did you do last week?”

Federal workers government-wide received the following email from the infamous hr@opm.gov email address with the subject line “What did you do last week?”

A Region 2 retiree’s response to the five things I did last week.

1. I called and wrote my United States Representatives about the importance of the Forest Service and how unfair and unjust the cuts are that are being made.
2. I looked for a local protest I could attend or support.
3. I wrote a letter to the editor of my local newspaper about the direct impact of the cuts to Forest Service employees that will affect the neighborhood where I live. They are our neighbors and they all have families and need to pay their bills and are unfairly targeted with this careless action.
4. I copied and forwarded Tom Thompson’s letter “**Power Versus Pride**” to my friends and neighbors. I told them that good Forest Service people – dedicated to caring for the land and serving the public – are being mistreated.
5. I called my local Forest Service Office (Regional Office/Supervisor’s Office/District Office) and voiced my support for them. I got a recording at a couple of offices so I left a voicemail. “Hang in there and weather this storm – you have thousands of retirees advocating for you.”



Please call your members of Congress today and tell them you are not happy. (The U.S. Capitol switchboard is **202-224-3121**. Tell the operator where you’re from and the operator will connect you to your representatives and senators.)

Here are a few quotations reflecting reactions and emotions to FS employees and their careers

"Any tips or tricks for dealing with the crushing stress and anxiety that comes with not knowing if you will have a job tomorrow? The stress that comes from daily emails that try to intimidate and harass and belittle you, to try to break your spirit.

Asking for a friend. Asking for several hundred friends actually. For the friends that have dedicated their lives to serving the American people, working harder than I have ever seen, for less pay, simply because they are dedicated to their country. The friends that have children to raise, and mortgages to pay. The friends that volunteer at church, little league, and school boards. The friends that have spent 20 or 30 years building a career that cannot be replaced. Asking for those friends. Because they sure as hell don't deserve to be treated like garbage...."

"I've worked in federal government for 24 years now and have embraced the public servant mentality. I embrace the mission of my agency, have a real passion for natural resources and technology, and have been willing to bring in less pay than my skillset warrants. There's an actual need for public servants, and it will be interesting to see how government products and services change in the coming years whilst those who lead government are determined to undermine it."

"I retired in 2023, and after spending 40 years of federal service traveling the country and doing international work in a variety of countries. During that time, I met and worked with so many incredible passionate people who put in long hours and intense commitment for their values, not for the money. I am so grieved for my federal colleagues in a time to have a president degrade, insult and question these good people. Do the most good you can, with what you have. Know there are many standing behind you. We know the days ahead are uncertain, so find community and connections, choose courage..even if it's just for 2 min, rest and recreate, find joy and laughter."

Questions, not answers, reign in Colorado's high country now, where communities rely heavily on millions of acres of public lands for recreation, reprieve and livelihoods.

"I'm concerned that all the folks I know are gone and my emails are going into the ether," said Jeff Sparhawk, the executive director of the Colorado Search and Rescue Association. "I am confident I'll be able to talk with the national parks. Not so sure about the USFS or BLM. Will campgrounds or entry-free locations be open this year? Will pit toilets be emptied? Will Forest Service roads be opened once the snow melts? Will permits be issued for boating or guiding?"

"To all the federal public land employees whether you have been terminated or not, I would like to add that although the current administration has berated and disrespected you, you are heroes to many Americans. Thank you for your service.

- Letter to the Denver Post

"When Park Rangers are hanging upside down flags in Yosemite, you know something is messed up."



Support from Colorado Legislators

Dear Secretary Rollins:

We write with significant concerns about the decision to fire 3,400 US Forest Service (USFS) employees in accordance with Executive Order 14210: The Department of Government Efficiency "Workforce Optimization Initiative," and urge you to immediately reinstate them. The USFS is already critically understaffed, and further employee cuts will have real and immediate consequences for Colorado's economy, rural communities, and wildfire resilience.

USFS employees steward and manage nine national forests and two national grasslands in Colorado, including some of the most visited forests in the country. These public servants not only maintain the health of our headwaters and wildlife habitat but help keep our communities safe by decreasing the risk of wildfire destroying homes and critical infrastructure. They put out campfires, clear trails, clean bathrooms, and manage trailheads. They also help businesses with the permitting process to use Forest Service lands, including grazers, guides, outfitters, ski resorts, and oil, gas and mining operations.

The return on investment for the American people from USFS employees is enormous. With just 35,000 employees, the USFS manages over 193 million acres of forests and grasslands, or about one employee for every 5,500 acres of land. Using visitation data alone, national forests produce nearly \$400,000 in economic activity for every USFS employee. These employees also live in and contribute to many of our country's most rural

communities, keeping downtowns vibrant and critical services intact.

Our offices have heard for years about chronic understaffing at the USFS. Today, the agency's workforce is nearly 30% less than it was three decades ago. This significant reduction in staff has occurred even as the country's population grew by over 100 million people, visitation to national forests exploded, and wildfire risk increased drastically. Agency employees have entered public service despite low pay, the frequently seasonal nature of the job, and limited housing in the remote areas they serve. With the rising cost of living across the state, Colorado communities are already challenged with limited USFS staff to confront land management challenges. Combined with the existing hiring freeze, yesterday's staff reductions will stretch the agency to its breaking point and place an enormous burden on Colorado communities.

Importantly, Forest Service employees are trusted and dedicated public servants, neighbors, and friends in communities across Colorado. The decision to terminate these employees reveals a complete disregard for the value of these public servants and the roles they fill. The decision will destabilize the agency and the rural communities they serve. Therefore, we urge you to reinstate these employees immediately.

Sincerely,

Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper,
Congressman Neguse, Congresswoman Pettersen,
Congressman Crow.

The National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) strongly supports the dedicated workforce of the USDA Forest Service. We know from experience that this workforce is full of hard-working, conscientious people deeply dedicated to the Forest Service mission of maintaining the health and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands for the benefit of current and future generations, as well as active members of their communities. Go to the NAFSR website for employee support documents and updates. We have started a list.

[The National Association of Forest Service Retirees \(NAFSR\)](#)

Contact Numbers and Links



Colorado

[State Legislators](#)

[U.S. Representatives](#)

Wyoming

[State Legislators](#)

[U.S. Representatives](#)

Nebraska

[State Legislators](#)

[U.S. Representatives](#)

Kansas

[State Legislators](#)

[U.S. Representatives](#)



South Dakota

[State Legislators](#)

[U.S. Representatives](#)

Resources for Discussion and Support



Greetings to our fellow citizens! We are a small group of employees of the USFS. Dedicated to conservation of our great lands and dialogue of truth. 35,000 followers .

Alt Forest Service on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/p/Alt-US-Forest-Service-100079367270115/>

Other Facebook Pages with information and help:

U.S. Forest Service Employees

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/16579457499>

USDA Forest Service Employees And Friends

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/USDAForestServiceEmployeesAndFriends>



The official "Resistance" team of U.S. National Park Service. Our mission is to stand up for the National Park Service to help protect and preserve the environment for present and future generations.

Alt National Park Service on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/AltUSNationalParkService>



FedNews on Reddit - Information and Discussion for Federal Employees

A secure platform for US Federal employees to discuss work-related topics, share perspectives, and stay informed. Unofficial and not endorsed by the US government.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/fednews/new/>



<https://shop.ourparks.org/>

Who's in Charge?

Secretary of Agriculture



Courtesy Creative Commons

Brooke Rollins

Brooke Leslie Rollins is from Glen Rose, Texas, a small agricultural community in the American heartland. She grew up working summers on her family's farm in Minnesota, barrel racing, and raising livestock for 4-H and Future Farmers of America. She proudly served as a Texas State FFA Officer and worked for the National FFA Organization.

Rollins most recently served as the Founder, President and CEO of the America First Policy Institute. Prior to that, she was Director of the Domestic Policy Council and Assistant to the President for Strategic Initiatives in the last White House under President Donald Trump. In these roles, she helped lead the transformational domestic policy agenda of the Trump Administration, enacting the President's vision and leading to historic achievements for the American people.

Rollins graduated with honors from Texas A&M University with a degree in agricultural development and was the first female to be elected student body president. After earning her Juris Doctor with honors at the University of Texas School of Law, she served as Governor Rick Perry's policy director before running the Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF) for 15 years.

"It is the honor of a lifetime to serve as the nation's thirty-third Secretary of Agriculture - and a privilege beyond description to have the trust of President Donald J. Trump, and the opportunity to advance his agenda. I am thrilled to lead the United States Department of Agriculture and to serve the people of this country," said U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins. "Every day, I will fight for American farmers, ranchers, and the agriculture community. Together, we have an historic opportunity to revitalize rural America and to ensure that U.S. Agriculture remains the best in the world for generations to come."

<https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/press-releases/2025/02/14/secretary-rollins-delivers-opening-remarks-usda-headquarters>



Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment

Michael Boren will serve as the United States Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment.

Michael is a successful businessman, who has founded six companies, including Clearwater Analytics. He has also served as a volunteer fireman for Sawtooth Valley Rural Fire Department, and as a board member of the **Idaho** Department of Parks and Recreation.

[\[More\]](#)



Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment

Kristin Sleeper was appointed as Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment.

Kristin Sleeper will serve as Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. Kristin previously held roles as Professional Staff on the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture, where she contributed to key natural resource and environmental policy initiatives.

[\[More\]](#)

Randy Moore's Letter To All Employees



Chief Randy Moore

I write to you today for two reasons. One, to let you know effective March 3, I am retiring after 45 years with the Forest Service and two, to address our current situation.

Our agency's work supports the nation's wellbeing and its economy by providing community protection, jobs, goods and services and a place to

retreat and enjoy nature's beauty. Many small businesses generate their livelihoods through permits to operate on national forests and grasslands. We provide drinking water to over 80 million Americans. We also help provide energy independence to the nation, issuing nearly 3,000 oil and gas leases. I say that to say this: You and the work you do is vital to the American way of life and you are a valued employee who has performed admirably.

As you have likely read in the news or are personally experiencing, the federal government is undergoing a significant transformation. How agencies are structured, staffed, and operate is shifting and the Forest Service is not exempt from these changes.

The past several weeks has been incredibly difficult. As part of a broader effort to reduce the size of the federal government, we parted ways with colleagues we worked alongside, who successfully contributed to our mission, and who were valued members of our Forest Service team.

If you are feeling uncertainty, frustration, or loss, you are not alone. These are real and valid emotions that I am feeling, too. Please take care of yourselves and each other. I have been silent these last few weeks because these decisions are being made at a level above our organization, and I was and am learning about the changes the same time as many of you. Our focus now is on how we respond and adapt to new priorities and continue delivering on our mission with the workforce we have.

As we work together to meet new opportunities and expectations and leverage those we already deliver upon, give yourself and one another grace and support as our workforce evolves, including as we return to a stance of more in-office work (except for those of you who are always field going). Our workforce must be nimble and flexible, so we will not restrict ourselves to limited roles; instead, we will help one another across boundaries. I invite you to make suggestions about how we can continue to rise to the occasion and improve our service to the American people.

The workforce will continue to be unsettling for a while. Thank you for your dedication to our mission and for the work you carry out every day. You and the work you do are meaningful and do not let anyone make you believe otherwise.

As I end my career and reflect on it, I am validated in knowing and believing that the Forest Service is about its people and its worthy mission. Our impact is global in nature and our mission reaches people around the world. I am so proud of the work we have done together.

Thank you.

Randy Moore
Chief



Chief Tom Schultz

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins today announced **Tom Schultz** will serve as the 21st chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service.

"Tom is the right person to lead the Forest Service right now, and I know he will fight every day to restore America's national forests," said Secretary Rollins. "Together, Tom and the incredible employees at the Forest Service will work to execute the agenda of President Donald J. Trump to make America's forests healthy and productive again."

Upon being sworn in, Schultz will replace Chief Randy Moore, who recently announced his retirement in a message to all Forest Service employees after serving the agency for over four decades. [\[MORE\]](#)



April 9, 2013

USDA Decides to Keep Iconic Forest Service Logo

From the Yakima Republic Herald, Washington



A plan to drop a recognizable logo in this part of the country -- the Forest Service's iconic shield -- generated so much outrage among the agency's retirees that the idea has been dropped.

In early January, the U.S. Department of Agriculture quietly introduced a policy to phase out all of its sub-agencies' logos, including the Forest Service's, and replace them with the USDA symbol.

But that policy was kept so under wraps that not even Pacific Northwest forest supervisors were told. Some of them only heard about it in retrospect late last week -- after the USDA had decided, in light of the virulent opposition from the Forest Service's "Old Smokies" retiree group, to keep the service's shield logo intact.

"We were all getting ready for a good fight," said Jim Golden of Sonora, Calif., chairman of the retiree group.

"Of course the alarm went off with our group. The strength of an organization like ours is we can say things in a different way -- we can say things the Forest Service (current employees) can't because of politics.

"We went into it with the attitude that it would be no holds barred."

The retirees, though, didn't swing into action until barely two weeks ago because the new USDA policy -- while ostensibly already in force for 31/2 months -- wasn't known to the people in the field.

Questions sent Monday morning by the Yakima Herald-Republic to the office of USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack prompted a short email reply with this statement, which was "to be attributed to 'a USDA spokesperson' ": "The US Forest Service shield is exempted from the One USDA branding directive."

[\(More\)](#)

Here's a sampling of just some of the news clips and voices of support that have been seen and heard over the past week or so.



[CBS News on the Shoshone NF](#)



[Face the Nation](#)



[KKTV - Colorado Springs](#)



[NBC - Los Angeles - job cuts](#)



[Southern California TV](#)



[Go Fund Me Page for Montana](#)

Forest Service Employees Make Memories!

It's thousands of pictures like this one below is why Forest Service employees get up in the morning - to serve the American public. It's to make generations of memories for families who come together every December to cut a Christmas tree on our National Forests.

The Forest Service employees who manage these forests are not villains or lazy public employees. They work incredibly long hours and nights and weekends for help Americans. The nation is losing the dedication and service of these individuals. Our small and rural communities are losing the security of a reliably employed core of families adding to the local economy, needing services and being a part of the greater community. Our Forest Service workers and their families have been catapulted into uncertainty, many into serious financial turmoil.

If you are a family or know of families who love this annual tradition, or other forest related activities that are suddenly on the chopping block because of recent policies, have them reach out to their elected officials and ask them to do something about it.



(Back row) - Kelsey, Ryan, Devin, Linda, Jamie (holding Alice), Dave, Sue, Rachel, Chester, Scott (with Joey in the backpack), Susan holding Whiskey the wonder dog, Colton, Zane, Charlie and Erin.

(Front Row) - Reiner with the twins Annelie and Elena, Lindsay, Kyle, Maxwell (with his tree) and Hugo.



From Bill McKibben on the web... 3-1-25

"Those of you who know your American history may remember Ethan Allen, leader of a gang of Vermont rowdies called the Green Mountain Boys who caused no end of trouble to King George. Well, we need more of them to take on King Donald, and I'd follow Lucy Welch in a heartbeat." Pushback from the **Green Mountain National Forest** in Vermont! Click on the link to the right for a powerful story from a 25 year old.

https://open.substack.com/pub/billmckibben/p/special-vermont-resistance-edition?r=adiya&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=email

Membership and Finance

February 20, 2025

By Ellen and Johnny Hodges

Membership in the Rocky Mountaineers is holding steady at **461** members. This is about the same number as this time last year. This includes a record **174 Lifetime Memberships**.

We have not been able to break the 500-member barrier yet, but we are still trying. Help us recruit new members.

Remember, dues for the first year are complimentary, so it doesn't cost anything to give the Rocky Mountaineers a tryout.

Membership is open to both retirees and current Forest Service employees.

You can find the Membership Application on our website under the "Membership" drop down at the top of the page. Here is a link - [Rocky Mountaineers Retiree Association](#)

Our Newest Members

Linda Aumiller, Pueblo, CO
 Tim Buskirk, Chadron, NE
 Madelyn Dillon, Denver, CO
 Tyler Hill, Pompano Beach, FL
 Susan Kinzer, Florence, CO
 Christine LaBerge, Westminster, CO
 Al Martinez, Loveland, CO
 Liane Mattson, Paonia, CO
 Karley O'Conner, Paonia, CO
 Fred Patten, Littleton, CO
 David Van Norman, Cross City, FL

New Lifetime Members

Dave Clement, Arvada, CO
Kathy Hardy-Ungari and Bruce Ungari,
 El Dorado Hills, CA
Bradley Orr, Ft. Collins, CO

Thanks to all of you that have paid your dues or made a donation for 2025. We still have some members that haven't gotten around to paying their dues. Don't forget! Annual dues are \$25 per household and a Lifetime Membership remains a bargain at \$250 per household.

You can receive a printed copy of our newsletter, The Rendezvous, for an additional \$20 per year to cover the cost of printing and mailing. All members with an email address will receive an electronic copy in full color. Go to our payment form to pay the extra \$20 for a full year (3 editions) for printed copies.

You can pay with a check or a credit card. Go to our website to complete the payment form. Here is a link - [Rocky Mountaineers Retiree Association](#).

If you don't need a receipt, you can drop a check in the mail to:

Rocky Mountaineers
Box 270462
Ft. Collins, CO 80527

We have three categories for our donors –

Friend: \$1 - \$49

Patron: \$50 - \$199

Sponsor: \$200

You can donate to any of our three funds - **Memorial Grove**, **Scholarship** or **General**. If you would like to donate in memory of someone, you can fill in their name on the donor form.

We will recognize all our donors in the spring edition of The Rendezvous.

The Rocky Mountaineers are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Thank you for your support!

Rocky Mountaineers Giving Back

We've Got Dough!

By Frank Roth and Dan Nolan



Rocky Mountaineers 2025 Grant Program

Is there a high school senior in your life?

Here's great news for them!

Applications are now being accepted for the 2025 Rocky Mountaineer Scholarship. Deadline is March 31st, 2025. Four scholarships of \$1500 each will be awarded, with two being specifically earmarked for natural resource majors. Applicants must have a Rocky Mountaineer member as a sponsor.

We are reaching out to seniors who are known by RM members or are relatives of FS employees.

Questions: Call **Frank Roth** our scholarship committee chair at **307-754-7063**,

Check out all the application details on our website at www.rockymountaineers.us.com.

Please help spread the word!

The Rocky Mountaineers are accepting applications for grants that help fund projects in 2025.

The following criteria shall be used for project selection:

- The project furthers the mission of the Rocky Mountaineers.
- The project will have a lasting influence on National Forest and Grassland management, natural resource management, and will help educate the public on the importance and significance of these resources.
- The project will reach large numbers of people.
- The funds provided by the Rocky Mountaineers can be leveraged with other funds and in-kind contributions by organizations or individuals.
- The project/restoration or improvement project will help sustain and maintain the legacy of the Forest Service.

Grant applications will be accepted from private, non-profit, or non-governmental organizations and individuals. Grant awards will not be made directly to the U.S. Forest Service

Approximately \$2,500 - \$5,000 will be available in 2025 for project grants.

Grant applications are due by April 30.

More information about the grant program including how to apply can be found on the Rocky Mountaineers website at: <https://rockymountaineers.us/grants/Grant%20Program-Directions.pdf>



National Museum's History Corner

Sharing the rich history and stories of America's conservation legacy

By Andy Mason

February 2025



We Are BUILDING the National Conservation Legacy Center!!



We had a superb groundbreaking ceremony on September 6, 2024, and construction is well underway. THANK YOU, Rocky Mountain FS retirees, for your support that helped so much to make this possible! The Museum is forever thankful to all our dedicated volunteers, generous donors, and staff. If you haven't seen the groundbreaking ceremony, view it here: <https://youtu.be/pcKbVudQt78>

Note the progress we've made in these two photos! Thanks to Board member Fred Cooper for photographically documenting the construction. We've had a favorable winter for construction but recently a difficult week of snow and below-freezing weather. Temps are now mainly above freezing so full speed ahead! Have you seen the virtual fly-through of the Center? Enjoy: <https://youtu.be/-E6PkFOUTVE>

Looking north, this is the front entrance area of the National Conservation Legacy Center. The short concrete pillars will support the tree-like columns. The primary tasks they are working on now are laying rebar, building forms around the rebar, pouring concrete, and removing the forms after the concrete has hardened.



Looking northeast, this is the repository part of the Center – our amazing collection of 55,000+ items will be housed and protected here. This is where we will, literally, be saving history for current and future generations!

Your regional museum key contacts:

Dan Nolan, Regional Director for the Rocky Mountain Region (R-2) and Rocky Mtn. Research Station.

Pat Lynch, Board Liaison

National Museum's History Corner

We continue to fundraise (~\$1 million needed) to cover costs for our opening exhibition, which will be world-class! To save funds, Museum staff and volunteers are constructing parts of the building and exhibition, and providing Center furnishings. A great example is the fabrication of cruciform blocks that will support the tree-like columns that hold up



Cruciform blocks for the Center are being fabricated by Museum Board member Brian Leisz and his company, Fall Creek Timber Frames, Inc., in Troy, Montana. The blocks will be at the base of the tree-like columns that support the roof of the Center

into the columns, as well as other wood to be used in the building. An interesting side note - Brian is the son of **Doug Leisz**, longtime Museum Board member and former Associate Chief. We so appreciate Brian's vital support, another important reason why the National Conservation Legacy Center is now a reality.

Our capital campaign fundraising for the Center is multi-faceted. To close the \$1 million gap we are focusing our efforts on companies and individuals that have an interest in partnering with us and the ability to be a donor-investor at the \$10,000 - \$250,000 level. We continue to work on prospects through 14 sectors (Timber, Tree-like Columns, Range, Wilderness, Water, Skiing, Technology, Minerals & Energy, Fire & Aviation, Recreation, Wildlife, State & Private Forestry, Research & Development, and Infrastructure), with a major focus right now on Fire & Aviation. We are also actively working on prospects in other sectors, including Minerals & Energy and Water, and appreciate the support from **Dan Nolan and the R-2/RMRS cadre**. On March 3 we will have a "roundup" meeting with all the sector leaders. The aim is to review our sector efforts over the past 2+

the Center's roof; this work is being done by Board member **Brian Leisz** and his company, Fall Creek Timber Frames, Inc. At his company yard in Troy MT, Brian has stored the timber beams that are made



Brian Leisz unloading an American elm log in his company yard. The log was recently donated to the Museum by a homeowner in Bozeman, Montana.

years and use that information to chart a path forward. We also have bi-weekly "Fast Track" meetings, led by Board member **Nancy Gibson**, where we consider other individual and company prospects.

We welcome your additional donations and any connections you may have (or people you know), who could introduce us to a company or individual that could become a major donor-investor.

Please contact:

Lisa Tate: lisa.tate@forestservicemuseum.org, or 208/484-6667

Tom Petersen: tom.petersen@forestservicemuseum.org; or call the Museum at (406) 541-6374.

Every spring the Museum holds an online auction to help us fund our operations (all programs other than the capital campaign for the Center). Your support is greatly appreciated! Auction is open for bidding April 1-21.

The National Museum of Forest Service History's
2025 Saving History Auction
April 1-21, 2025

Park City Mountain Resort

TRUE RANCH COLLECTION

Gift baskets from around the country

<https://givebutter.com/c/SavingHistory2025>
or scan QR below

A Look Back at 14 Years of Rocky Mountaineers' Travels

20 Rocky Mountaineer Trips in 36 Countries and 6 Continents (2010-2024)

By Johnny Hodges and Jim Thinnes

The Rocky Mountaineers were not incorporated until 2013, but some of us have been traveling together since 2010. Our first three trips were all with future RM members.

Peru & Ecuador, April-May 2010, with 13 Rocky Mountaineers. The highlights included Lima, Urubamba, Machu Picchu, Cusco, Quito, standing on the equator, and hiking, sailing, and snorkeling in the Galapagos Islands among its unique wildlife.

Tanzania Safari, March 2011 with 13 Rocky Mountaineers. The highlights included the Great Migration of wildebeest and zebras in the Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, Maasai people, incredible wildlife, especially the elephants and lions.

Rhine & Danube River Cruise, May 2012, through the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria with 10 Rocky Mountaineers. The highlights included a pre-trip to Belgium, castles and cathedrals, Amsterdam, Cologne, Heidelberg, Passau, and Vienna.

Beginning in 2013, all of the following trips were sponsored by the Rocky Mountaineers.

Russian Rivers and Lakes Cruise, October 2013 with 12 Rocky Mountaineers. This was our first "official" Rocky Mountaineers trip. The highlights included Helsinki, Finland and Tallinn, Estonia, St. Petersburg, and Moscow's Kremlin and Red Square in Russia.

2nd Peru & Ecuador, April-May 2014 with 16 Rocky Mountaineers. This trip was so popular when we first did it in 2010 that we did it all over again.

Australia & New Zealand, March-April 2015 with 7 Rocky Mountaineers. The highlights included a pre-trip to Melbourne, the Outback and Uluru, the Great Barrier Reef, Sydney, in Australia and Queenstown, Milford Sound, and Auckland, New Zealand.

Northern Ireland and Ireland, May 2015 with 40 Rocky Mountaineers. This was our first big group trip, and we had the whole bus to ourselves. From Dublin to Derry to the Giant's Causeway, Galway, Aran Islands, golfing in Connemara, Killarney, Ring of Kerry, Dingle Peninsula, the Blarney Stone (kiss, kiss!), Cobh and the Titanic, Kilkenny and hurling, Glendalough National Park, Dublin and the Guinness Brewery. We saw it all.

Iceland, August 2015 with 16 Rocky Mountaineers. The highlights included numerous waterfalls, hot springs areas, whale watching, fishing, the Golden Triangle, white water rafting, and the Blue Lagoon.

The Alps in Italy, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, and Germany, September 2016 with 37 Rocky Mountaineers. Another big bus trip. The highlights included Lake Como, Milan, Zermatt, the Bernese Oberland, Innsbruck, and Oktoberfest in Munich.

Grand Canyon Raft Trip, May 2017 with 24 Rocky Mountaineers. Highlights included spectacular scenery along 226 miles on the Colorado River from Lees Ferry to Diamond Creek. There were 95 named rapids, including Lava, Crystal, Hance, Hermit, and House. Exploring side canyons such as the Little Colorado River and Havasu Creek.

Chile & Argentina, November 2017 with 16 Rocky Mountaineers. The highlights included Easter Island, Buenos Aires, Bariloche, Osorno Volcano, penguins, Punta Arenas, Patagonia, Torres del Paine (and hurricane-force winds), Perito Moreno Glacier, and a post-trip to Iguazu Falls.

(Continued from page 16)

Rhone River Cruise in France, April-May 2018 with 24 Rocky Mountaineers. The highlights were Nice, Arles, Avignon, Lyon, and Paris.

Southern Africa Safari in South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Zambia, May-June 2019 with 16 Rocky Mountaineers. The highlights included a pre-trip to Cape Town, Kruger NP, Hwange NP, Lake Kariba, Chobe NP, Victoria Falls, elephant sanctuary, the varied wildlife including the Big Five (lion, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant, and African buffalo).

England, Scotland and Wales, August-September 2019 with 38 Rocky Mountaineers. The highlights included London, Oxford, Stonehenge, Bath, Wales, York, the Lake District, Edinburgh, and a post-trip to the Scottish Highlands.

Costa Rica, February 2020 with 16 Rocky Mountaineers. The highlights included a pre-trip to Corcovado NP, San Jose, Cane Negro Wildlife Refuge, Lake Arenal, zip-lining and suspension bridges in Monteverde Cloud Forest, Manuel Antonio NP, coffee and spice plantation, colorful and remarkable birds, monkeys, sloths, and more.

Gates of Ladore Raft Trip, August 2020 with 11 Rocky Mountaineers. Highlights included Dinosaur National Monument's fossils and petroglyphs, rafting 44 miles on the Green River from Gates of Ladore to Split Rock, rapids like Disaster Falls, side canyon hikes, and wonderful scenery and wildlife.

Finland & Norway, June-July 2022 with 35 Rocky Mountaineers. Highlights included Helsinki, reindeer farm, Hurtigruten coastal ferry through Norway's fjords, crossing the Arctic Circle, Bergen, and Oslo.

Croatia to Greece Small Ship Cruise, October 2023 with 10 Rocky Mountaineers. Highlights included a pre-trip to Lake Bled, Zagreb, Plitvice Lakes, Split, Dubrovnik, Kotor, Corfu, the Corinth Canal, Delphi, Athens, and post-trip to Olympia and the Peloponnesian Peninsula.

Japan, March-April 2024 with 15 Rocky Mountaineers. Highlights included Tokyo, Lake Ashi with views of Mt. Fuji, geishas, bullet trains, Kanazawa, Kyoto, bamboo grove and Japanese gardens, temples and castles, Sakura, and post-trip to Hiroshima.

Morocco, November 2024 with 10 Rocky Mountaineers. Highlights included Rabat, Chefchaouen, Fez, riads, medinas, souks, the Atlas Mountains, camping and riding camels in the Sahara Desert, Marrakesh, and Casablanca.

Are you tired yet? There are more trips to come. Join us!



This year's trips to Malta and Sicily and to Nepal are full; however space is still available for next year's **Danube River trip**. Join us and sail for 10 nights aboard the privately-owned, 162-passenger M/S River Aria or M/S River Adagio on a comprehensive four-country journey along the Danube. Witness the detailed Art Nouveau architecture of Budapest, explore Bratislava's quirky art scene, taste the local flavors of Vienna's famed Naschmarkt, and stroll along the fairytale streets of Old World Prague. All the details at <https://rockymountaineers.us/Travel/2026-Blue-Danube/DanubeRockyMountaineersBrochure.pdf>.

The Rocky Mountaineers will be traveling with Grand Circle Travel (GCT) on their river cruise - Romantic Blue Danube: Budapest to Prague in the summer of 2026. The base trip departs the US on July 10 and returns on July 24, 2026.

Northern Colorado Retirees



(left to right) Fred Winkler, James White, Leslie McFadden, Paul Langowksi, Steve Johnson, Kevin Johnston, Rieth Miller, Lenora Arevalos, Pete Blume.

Denver Retirees Gathering



Regional Forester Troy Heithecker joined a group of forty retirees for lunch in January at the Olive Garden restaurant in west Denver.



Regional Forester Troy Heithecker briefed us on his family history and career path which began in 1997 as a volunteer with the Pacific Northwest Research Station in Juneau, Alaska.

See You in September in Missoula, Montana



[ree-yoon-yuhn]

- A gathering of relatives, friends, or associates at regular intervals or after separation:
- A party attended by members of the same family, school, or other group who have not seen each other for a long time.

"The only thing sweeter than union is a reunion"

An Abridged History of Forest Service Reunions

1991 - The first reunion, as part of the Forest Reserve Centennial, was held in Glenwood Springs, Colorado in Region 2 and the main hotel was the Colorado Hotel where President Theodore Roosevelt once stayed.

1996 - The second reunion was held in Park City, Utah. Stan Tixier and the "Old Timers" of Region 4 hosted this reunion. A commitment was made to continue with another reunion in 4-5 years.

2000 - The third reunion was held in Region 1 in Missoula, Montana at the downtown Holiday Inn and Jim Freeman was the organizer. One outcome of this reunion was the formation of the National Association of Forest Service Retirees.

2005 - The fourth reunion was held in Portland, Oregon at the Red Lion Inn on the Columbia River. Bob Williams chaired this reunion for the "Old Smokeys" and Region 6 and PNW. This was the Centennial Year of the Forest Service and that was a big part of the focus. The Old Smokeys put forth \$5,000 seed money for continuing initial support of each future reunion.

2009 - The fifth reunion was held again in Region 1 Sept. 8-11 in Missoula, MT at the Hilton Garden Inn. Beryl Johnson and Dave Stack led this effort with a theme of "Where do we go from here?" The site was selected over a California bid because it was felt having it in Missoula would stimulate interest and donations for the Museum. A decision was made there to try and have "reunions" every three years rather than the four to five previously targeted.

2012 - The sixth reunion was held at Vail, Colorado at the Marriott and attendance was about 635. Tom Thompson chaired this effort. This "Rendezvous in the Rockies" was a highly successful reunion, and one result was the establishment of a Region 2 Forest Service Association (**The Rocky Mountaineers**) which has become a very successful retiree organization in a short time.

2015 - The seventh reunion, "Rally on the Rio" was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico again at a Marriott. The attendance was around 500. Lou Romero chaired his reunion committee

for the "Amigos" and Region 3. It was held in conjunction with the Albuquerque Balloon Festival.

2018 - The eighth reunion, "Reunion at the Cradle" was held in Asheville, North Carolina at the Holiday Inn. Dave Jolly and Sid Haggard were co-chairs of this reunion for Region 8. The attendance was close to 500.

2022 - The ninth reunion, was held in South Lake Tahoe after a one-year delay because of COVID. Nancy Gibson chaired the "Golden State Gathering with a Silver Lining" committee that planned this reunion and involved both Region 5 and Region 4. It was held at Harrah's Lake Tahoe at Stateline, Nevada.

2025 - The tenth reunion will be held Sept. 22-26, 2025. Hosted by the National Museum of Forest Service History. Lisa Tate is chairing the "A History Runs Through It" reunion planning committee and obviously the central focus is the culmination of the effort to develop the Conservation Legacy Center.

<https://2025usfsreunion.org/>

Ski Days 2025



*Back Row (L-R): Doug Laraby, Jim Thinner, Paul Langowski, Kristen Philbrook, Tom Williams, Patricia Hesch, Johnny Hodges, Ken Kowynia, Craig Magwire, David Loomis
Front Row: Dan Nolan, Cindy Dean, Melanie Woolever, Marilyn Orr, Wendy Magwire, Jim Bedwell, Brad Orr, Steve Johnson, Marty Dahl, Bjorn Dahl.*



The Rocky Mountaineers enjoyed their 12th Annual Ski Day at Winter Park on February 10. A foot of new snow had fallen the day before and with sunshine and uncrowded slopes it made for a beautiful day of skiing.

And over on the West Slope on February 12, eight skiers and boarders gathered on a chilly day with 4 inches of new snow to share the laid-back Sunlight Ski Area, Glenwood Hot Springs, and dinner.

Getting first tracks on the White River Trail was a joyful experience!

Glenwood Hot Springs was a great happy relaxed hour with all soaking up the new Yampah Hot Springs Pool additions.

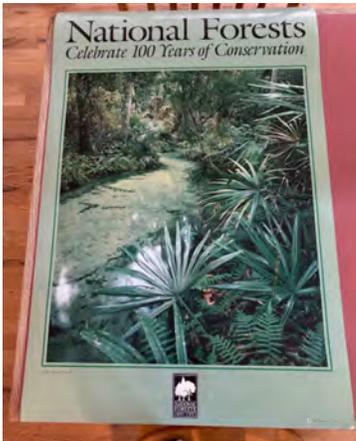
Fine Mexican dining after at Frida's was a delight as well!



What to do When You Retire

See Places You Always Wanted to See

By Mary Ann Chambers



Mary Ann's Copy of The Forest Reserves Centennial Celebration Poster

One thing my husband Carl and I talked about for a long time was finding the location of a photo used for a poster celebrating the centennial of the Forest Reserves in 1991. It was of a tropical looking stream on the Ocala National Forest. The photographer was David Muench. The poster number is FS-472. We found ourselves in Florida with a new canoe and decided to find it.

"Canoeing & Kayaking

Florida," by Jonny Molloy described a few places on the Ocala that fit the bill, but we still were not sure. We found a number for the Lake George District in Silver Springs, Florida.

I thanked the woman who surprised me by answering the phone. "How can I help you?" she said. Sheepishly I replied, "This may be a weird question, but there was this poster for the Forest Reserves Centennial that came out in 1991..." Before I even finished my sentence, she said, "I'm looking at it right now. It is hanging over my desk. It is Juniper Creek." I got the number for the concessionaire who run shuttles and asked how long it would take to run. We were set.

We also heard about Silver Springs State Park and the Silver River, another short and easy run for our canoe. We did that the first day. The water was crystal clear and the river was a beautiful blue color. It was an easy, thermal spring fed river. The Silver River lulled us into thinking that Juniper Creek would be just as easy. We were wrong.

In the thirty nine years that we have been canoeing together, on the Colorado, the Green and the North Platte, just to name a few, we had never flipped our canoe. That was about to change. Juniper Creek, just a few feet deep, runs through the Juniper Prairie Wilderness Area. Awe inspiring scenery surrounded us the whole trip. However, all that lush

vegetation that made for incredible scenery contained lots of hazards. There are a lot of large logs and many overhanging trees that make it way more challenging in a 16-foot canoe than the big unbridled water back home in Colorado. Some alarm bells should have gone off when the concessionaire told us they would give us a ride back to our car, but they did not pick up canoes. Also, at the put in, we noticed that they were renting kayaks, but not canoes. We did flip our boat more than once, but fortunately the water was warm and shallow, so it was easy to recover. We survived. After one flip, as we were righting the boat and



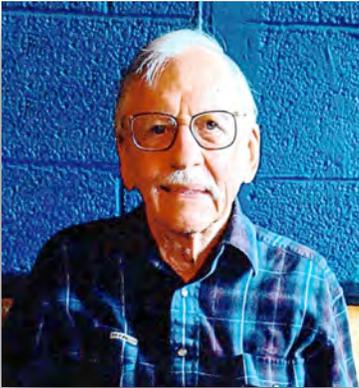
Juniper Creek photo by Carl Chambers

bailing it out, we saw a kayak glide right over the log that dumped us.

We made it through to the take-out point. As we were waiting for the shuttle, we met a couple from Madison, Wisconsin who had a much shorter canoe. They had done this run before, many times. The gentleman said he thought the short length of his canoe helped. His wife said that the concessionaire had stopped renting canoes, because they got tired of rescuing people. Juniper Creek looked just like the picture on the poster. I've never seen anything like it before. It was beautiful, a tropical paradise. The National Forests are a diverse lot. There are redwoods in California, Mountains in Colorado, Grasslands and this tropical prairie in Florida. I hope we get to try this again. Next time, I think we will Kayak instead.

“That’s the Way I Remember it”

Each newsletter we will be featuring a story about retirees from R-2



Frank in 2024

Frank Swancara Jr.

Retired 1995

25 Years of
Federal Service

The Rendezvous: Where were you born and raised?

Frank Swancara: I was born in March of 1935 and raised in Denver, Colorado at 285 South Pearl street in the Washington Park neighborhood.

TR: Tell us a little about your family.

FS: Although my parents were married in 1924, I wasn't born until 1935. I was an only child. My immediate family seasonally included my grandpa who resided with us after harvest time. He was a Kansas farmer, and my dad's father. All other grandparents, aunts and uncles died before I was born. Grandpa would sit on our front porch frequently smoking his pipe, and for hours on end he would relate his life stories to me. He was born in 1861 near what is now Prague, Czechoslovakia and came to the U.S. at age 3 with his family. They first settled near Lacrosse, Wisconsin. He told me that he played with the local Indian children, often having bow and arrow contests with pennies as the prize. Since the



Indians did not have pants with pockets, they put their pennies in their cheeks.

My dad grew up on a Kansas farm. He graduated from Irving Kansas High School and then went to business college in Grand Island, Nebraska, and got a law degree from the University of Kansas. He came to Buena Vista, Colorado in 1913 and got a job as deputy district attorney.

TR: What did your mom and dad do?

Frank: My mom was a homemaker. She was born and grew to adulthood in central Iowa and then came to Denver at the invitation of her aunt. Soon she met my dad and they married. For some ten years, dad was chief clerk of the Colorado Supreme Court. He left that job upon the death of the Chief Justice and joined a Denver law firm.

TR: Where did you go to school – early school and college - and what was your favorite subject?

Frank: I attended the Denver Public Schools, graduating from South High School in 1953. I had a great education. It was my South High western history teacher, Mr. George Cropley, who got me interested in archaeology. Early on I wanted to be a National Park archaeologist in a place like Mesa Verde, Colorado. I went to Colorado A&M as a freshman in pre-forestry on a scholarship, hoping to make a career with the National Park Service. My future wife was also in that class of about 100 students. She was one of only three females! I switched to the University of Denver with a bigger scholarship and majored in anthropology and botany graduating in 1957. I attended the University of Colorado archaeological field school at Mesa Verde National Park in 1955. I was a seasonal Ranger/Naturalist at Grand Canyon National Park in 1956 and a seasonal at El Morro National Monument in New Mexico.

I accepted a graduate fellowship in the Rocky Mountain Herbarium at the University of Wyoming and received my M.S. degree in botany in 1958. I then accepted a job as a season park ranger at Capitol Reef National Monument in Utah.

(Continued on Page 23)

TR: What jobs did you have before you got interested in a Forest Service career?

Frank: I worked many more seasons as a Ranger with the National Park Service, Chiricahua, Arizona, Great Sand Dunes in Colorado, and Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota. All seasonal jobs. I realized I needed a permanent career, so I went back to college and took courses to qualify for a teacher certificate, and landed a job with the Denver Public school system as a science teacher at Gove Junior High school. I married Barbara Tabb in 1960 and we resided in Littleton Colorado.

I was a member of the recreation crew, cleaning and maintaining picnic areas in campgrounds and collecting fees at certain campgrounds. My first season ended on Labor Day 1970 and I returned to my teaching in Denver.



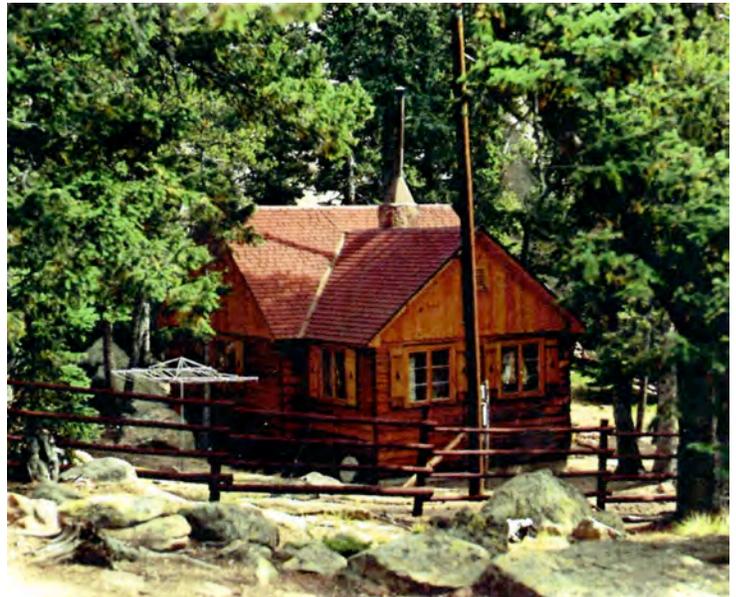
TR: How did you get interested in a job with the U.S. Forest Service and what were some of your first duties?

Frank: In June 1965, the South Platte River flooded and our Littleton home was inundated. During the rest of that summer we cleaned up, but it wasn't the same, and we started looking for another place to live. Eventually, a real estate agent showed us a home in Lost Acres, eight miles southeast of Bailey, Colorado. It was love at first sight. A nice

An NPS employee in 1956.

home on two acres within the Pike National Forest. Still teaching in Denver I commuted.

Then I thought why go away to work at a National Park for the summer? In January of 1970 I went to the Bailey District Ranger station, Pike National Forest and submitted an application for seasonal employment. In three days District Ranger John Burke hired me. Thus my new career began as a forestry technician. I reported for duty on June 19 1970, John Burke had retired and the Bailey District Ranger was now Kaye Luebchow. Things began to change. The Pike and San Isabel National Forests were administratively combined, and the Bailey Ranger District was dissolved with most of it becoming part of the South Platte District and western portions going to Fairplay. I was then calling my duty station the Bailey work Center.



The cabin at Devil's Head Tower.

I worked another three seasons. The fall of 1973, I along with my family, moved to the Devil's Head Lookout where I became the post-season lookout. We were there for two months until the first big snow came on Halloween.

I had already resigned from teaching. I had certainly taken a pay cut like going from a GS-12 to a GS-4 but my wife and I knew that this was meant to be. That fall, I could relate to a Merle Haggard song "If we make it through December." We did and in 1974 I got a career appointment as a forestry technician GS-5. Bailey remained my duty station. Essentially, I did recreation and lands. I attended a law enforcement one day training session on July 11, 1974. Regional special agent Wayne Cook was the instructor. I just sort of became a specialist in law enforcement as time went on. I became an instructor. At my own expense, I took criminal justice classes at Metropolitan College in Denver. I attended the federal law enforcement training center in Glynco, Georgia in 1979. Thus I was "full-range" level four law-enforcement officer. My LE duties were collateral with what I did as an outdoor recreation planner GS-9.

(Continued from Page 23)

I had my experiences in fire as well. My first "project fire" was in Wyoming in 1974. I became a part of the Rocky Mountain Incident Management Team about 1982. It was a resource unit leader in the planning section.



A newspaper article announced Frank's departure from the Pike San Isabel to Grey Towers.

I left the South Platte district in March of 1990 to accept a new job far away in Pennsylvania as the site manager for Grey Towers National Historic Landmark, the home and estate of Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the Forest Service. Early on I became involved in the planning for a multi-million dollar restoration. My boss was Edgar B. Bannon Jr. We had our challenges. We achieved our goal.

Working out of the Bailey work center, like many of my predecessors, I joined the Platte Canyon Volunteer Fire Department. That was to be more of a part of my local community. I then got involved in arson investigations. I took specialized trainings from the Denver Fire Department taking annual leave to do so. I became a member of the Metropolitan (Denver) Arson Investigator's Association, attending their monthly meetings. I took a Forest Service workshop and I was dispatched to a number of fires to determine their cause.

I retired from the Forest Service in 1995 taking advantage of a buyout. I thought this would pay my way back to Colorado. It did, and we found a home in Montrose, Colorado. We moved to Montrose in



Patrol duties on the South Platte Ranger District 1970.

1998. My wife Barbara, who I could not have accomplished any of this without her love and support, died unexpectedly in 2003 and I moved to the Cedaredge area in 2006 where I currently reside.

Of interest - I came full circle. I started out as a seasonal National Park ranger at Grand Canyon National Park at age twenty one and I ended as a seasonal Colorado State Park ranger at Sweitzer Lake State Park in Delta, Colorado at age sixty four.

TR: Tell us a little about your career and the different jobs you held.

Frank: All of my "bosses" shared their wisdom, and collectively it amounted to a lot. I worked under eight district rangers and a like number of recreation foresters. All good men, with different perspectives. My fellow employees were also great teachers, like Al Flynn, a knowledgeable pioneer in all things Forest Service. Steve Vest taught me most of all what I know about firefighting. He was also a neighbor in Lost Acres. After hours, upon receiving a smoke report, he would call me on the phone and ask me "Got your boots on? I'll pick you up shortly."



Frank and Barbara at the Park County Fair, 1978.

TR: What were the best and worst parts of your jobs?

Frank: The worst jobs had to do with off-road vehicles like jeeps and dirt bikes. It was a never-ending challenge to restrict their use in highly sensitive areas. We used physical barriers as well as signage, which was often vandalized. Impromptu high school graduation beer parties on National Forest land was a big challenge.

TR: What was the most rewarding part of your job?

Frank: Probably the on-the-ground stewardship of the Lost Creek and Mt. Evans Wilderness areas, which were congressionally designated during my time on the South Platte Ranger District.



Planning for a two week volunteer trail maintenance with the Sierra Club in the Lost Creek Wilderness - 1978

TR: Tell us about your love of archeology?

Frank: As mentioned before I had career aspirations in archaeology. I became a member of the Colorado Archaeological Society as a senior in high school and I'm still a member. I have always been enchanted by relics left by early human cultures. As a child I visited museums with my parents. I also love history. After retirement and moving to Montrose Colorado, my wife and I became volunteers with the Montrose County Historical Society.

TR: You are a member of the Rocky Mountaineers. Why did you join and do you think it's important for folks to join as well?

Frank: As soon as I learned of this group from another retiree, I joined. The value of membership is that I can stay in touch with what is happening and who is doing what. There are many important endeavors like the Memorial Grove and scholarships just to mention a few

TR: How do you think the current Forest Service is doing? Any thoughts?

Frank: I along with many of my friends and former associates say "we saw the best of times." The esprit de corps among employees has diminished. People are working remotely and thus are not in close touch with others in other disciplines. The parking lot at the supervisors headquarters in Delta, Colorado is pretty empty now compared to how it used to appear.

TR: Do you still stay in touch with some of your fellow workers?

Frank: After retirement and coming back to Colorado, I often attended the Pike employees reunions in Colorado Springs hosted by Dorothy Carver. When she decided not to do this anymore, I took over and hosted Pike NF retirees at my home in Cedaredge a couple of times, and became guardian of related correspondence, obituaries, et al.



Larry Gadt (left) and Randy Phillips (right) both former District Rangers on the South Platte Ranger District flank Frank Swancara Jr. at Grey Towers "Grand Re-opening" in 2001.

(Continued from Page 25)

TR: What advice would you have for a young person looking to start a career with the U.S. Forest Service?

Frank: Hang in there. Love and cherish the land you manage. Be accountable to the public. Don't hesitate to challenge bureaucracy.

TR: What do you fill your free time with?

Frank: For years I was active. I backpacked in Alaska and I rafted the Colorado River.

At 89, I no longer hike and ski as I once did with vigor. I'm a license plate collector and I have an extensive model railroad in my garage. I'm a good housekeeper and I try to maintain my 3-plus acres of pinion juniper woodland.

TR: Any final words of wisdom?

Frank: Appreciate life. Live in the moment. Cherish the past. Try to stay in touch with friends.

The Good Old Days - 1975



*Indian Creek Work Center - South Platte Ranger District, Pike and San Isabel National Forests
Left to right (rear) Bill Nelson, Paul Peck, Mike Edrington, Steve Vest, Grant Clark, Frank Swancara Jr., Bruce Thomas
(front) Jerry Dunn, District Ranger Jack Cameron, Margaret Ladely and Nick.*

Memorial Grove

**May 3, 2025
Monument, Colorado**



The 2025 Memorial Grove Ceremony will be held on Saturday, May 3, 2025, to honor thirty-three people who have recently passed away and spent most or all their Forest Service careers in this Region. (See listing below for the honorees who will be recognized this year)

Families have been invited to attend this very special Rocky Mountain Region ceremony at the Memorial Grove where trees have been planted since 1921. This century-old tradition is unique in the Forest Service and each year it provides an opportunity to recognize the great work and good people who have done so much in so many ways to “Care for the Land and Serve the People”. Over 1500 names are engraved at the Memorial and a listing of all of those who have been honored over the years is found on our website with the year they were honored.

The ceremony will start at 10 am and if you have never attended it is a very special program with music, flag ceremony, riderless horse, mounting of the brass plates with names of the honorees, and bell ringing. Each honoree is recognized, and a tree is planted in memory of all those being honored. After the ceremony lunch is provided by the Rocky Mountaineers. If you plan to attend, you are welcome to bring a salad or dessert to share and supplement the sandwiches and chips that are provided for lunch. Check the weather for the day and plan accordingly. Send Tom Thompson (thom46pson@gmail.com) a note if you plan to attend and he will send you a map, other details about the ceremony, and ensure there are plenty of lunches.

A workday is scheduled for April 23 at the Grove to do maintenance and

prepare the site for the following week’s ceremony. The work begins around 9 am and if you want to join and help, just plan to be at the Memorial Grove with your gloves and work clothes. The Pikes Peak Ranger District provides the tools and helps line out the work to be done. We are either done with all the work or tired out and ready for lunch by noon, so it is not a long day.

The Memorial Grove was first established to recognize five rangers who died while serving the country in World War 1 and District (Regional) Forester Alan Peck was instrumental in its establishment. The criteria that have been established and used to determine recognition at Memorial Grove are: 1/ Died while still working in the Region, 2/ Retired from the Region, 3/Worked in the Region and returned back to the Region after retirement, or 4/ otherwise determined by the committee to have substantial or exceptional connection to the Region.

Donations specifically to support Memorial Grove are welcome and help to provide funds for maintenance, brass plates, improvements at the site, and help to cover some of the costs of the ceremony. See our website for information about making a donation.



2024 Memorial Grove Honorees

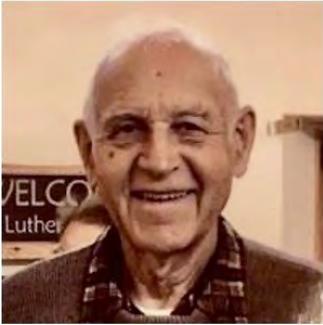
Rudy Karl Anderson	Black Hills N. F.
Margery Gene Baldwin	Black Hills N. F.
Gary R. Blyth	Bighorn N. F.
Sandra Campbell	San Juan N. F.
Lewis Junior Compton	Black Hills N. F.
David James Condit	PSICC N.F and N.G.
Bill Conklin	Routt, White River, Gunnison N. F. and R-6
Dave Cook	Shoshone, Grand Mesa, and San Juan N. F.s
Orval DeVere Elliott	Black Hills N. F.
Van Curtis Elsbernd	R-2, R-1, W.O.
Marvin Wallace Hammer	Black Hills, Arapaho-Roosevelt N. F.
James Richard Hillis	Rio Grande, Black Hills N. F.
Jim Holloway	Regional Office
Robert Lee (Bob) Kapushion	White River N. F.
Kenneth Lee Kane	Rio Grande, R-9, R-10 & FCCC
Frank Lee Leonard, Jr	GMUG N. F.
John Murphy	Black Hills N. F.
Mary Louise Nelson	Rio Grande N. F.
Linn Pettijohn	Routt, Rio Grande, White River and Kaibab N. F.s
Eufracio Cornelio (E.C.) Quintana	White River N. F., Arapaho-Roosevelt N. F.
Steph Marie Martinez Rocco	Grand Mesa Uncompahgre Gunnison N. F.
John Linde Sundberg	Routt N. F.
Forrest Henry Tellock	Bighorn N. F.
Jean Adele Gelvin Thomas	Arapaho Roosevelt N. F., W. O.
Guy Malcolm Virkula	Black Hills, SD
Gilbert (Gil) Walker	Bighorn N. F.

Not Forgotten:

Frederick J. (Fred) Backenstose	Bighorn N. F.	2023
Jim Fischer	White River, Shoshone, AR N. F.s	2023
Nick Gerich	PSICC, Leadville R. D.	2021
Esther Pauline “Polly” Hammer	GMUG N. F.	2023
Kyle Jamison Jones	Nebraska N. F.	2023
James Sosten (Jim) Lujan	San Juan N. F.	2023
Leroy Howard Self	San Juan N. F.	2023



Remembrances



Rudolph Karl Anderson

Rudolph Anderson, 93 years old, passed away at Monument Health on November 5, 2024, in Rapid City, SD. Rudy was born to Jack and Helen Anderson on May 19, 1931, in Whitefish,

Montana. The family returned to Custer, SD a year later, and Rudy spent most of his life in Custer.

After graduating Custer High School in 1949, he served two years in the Marines during the early 1950s. Due to his outstanding mechanical skills, he trained as a helicopter mechanic. Upon leaving the Marines, he used the GI bill to attend trade school in Springfield, SD studying auto body repair. While there, he met the love of his life on a blind date, Lois Stofferahn of Humboldt, who was pursuing her teaching certificate.

They were married on December 27, 1955, and lived in Sioux Falls for a short period before moving to Custer in 1956. They were blessed with two children, Jacklyn Helen and Edward Ray, and raised their family in the same home they lived in for over 60 years. With Rudy's skill and hard work, that home was remodeled from the ground up and was a home filled with grace and hospitality, enjoyed by countless guests.

For a short period Rudy owned his own autobody shop in Custer. In 1959 Rudy went to work for the U. S. Forest Service on the Bear Mountain Ranger

District. He spent 23 years working for the U. S. Forest Service. In 1970 Rudy was named Ranger of the Year, a national award for his work promoting Smokey the Bear. He later became a fire investigation officer, organizing and overseeing the coordination between Fire Districts in five states, as well as overseeing operations at the Helitack base in Hill City. His second career as a home remodeler and handyman started in 1982 and continued well into his 70s.

Rudy invested in his community as a Custer Town Planning Commission member, a Custer Lutheran Fellowship Council Member, a member of the Board of Directors of the Custer County Museum, an active member of the Custer Fire Department and Lion's Club. Rudy volunteered to help wherever there was a need, and left a legacy in his beloved hometown.

Known as a man of integrity, Rudy was wise, kind, and funny. He was a friend who would go out of his way to help others and assure them they were welcomed into the Custer community. He loved hunting, woodworking, playing cards with friends, and exploring new areas in the Black Hills.

He is survived by his wife Lois, children Jacklyn (Roland) Bauer, Edward (Shelly) Anderson, grandchildren Eric Bauer, Aaryn Spaulding, Jordyn Herra and Nikki Gardner, and great grandchildren Ollin and Myles.

(Continued from Page 29)

Margery Gene Baldwin

Margery (Brendmoen) Baldwin passed away on November 12, 2024. She was born to Oscar and Mabel (Hanson) Brendmoen on Sept. 12, 1927, in Webster, S.D. She was raised on a farm during the "dirty '30s" and often rode a horse to school.

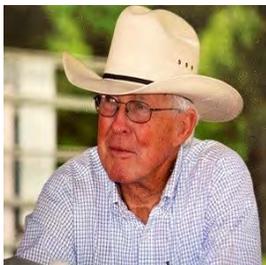
After graduating from high school in Pierpont, S.D., she married Leeland Baldwin in November 1946. Together they had five children. They moved to Custer, S.D., in 1953 where they raised their family and where she lived until her death. She and her husband were charter members of Custer Lutheran Fellowship west of Custer.

Marge worked for the U.S. Forest Service, Black Hills National Forest for 27 years as the

Administrative Assistant to the Forest Supervisor, retiring in 1994. She thoroughly enjoyed working for the Forest Service and the highlight of her career was meeting President George H. W. Bush and his wife Barbara. After retirement she worked for several years at Carson Drug.

She always welcomed friends and family into her home to sit and visit in her living room, or when the weather was nice, out on the front porch with her beautiful flowers. She was well known for her pies (apple, rhubarb, banana cream) and it was not unusual to hear someone exclaim that her pie was the best they had ever had.

Marge is survived by her son, John Baldwin; daughter, Carmen Anthony; 13 grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren, one great great-grandchild; and last, but not least, her beloved dog, Lexi.



Gary R. Blyth

Gary Blyth passed away on February 20, 2024. He was born on July 1, 1936, to Robert and Vera Blyth in Ogden, Iowa. He grew up a farm boy with a love for

horses. He learned to fix most anything with bailing wire and duct tape. WD40 and zip ties became favorite later in life. He graduated from high school in 1954 and attended Simpson College in Indianola, IA for 2 years and then enlisted in the Army serving time in Germany.

He married his high school sweetheart and returned to Germany. After his honorable discharge in 1959, he returned to Iowa and finished his degree in Civil Engineering at Iowa State University. For 7 years from 1962 until 1969 he worked for a dredging company and worked all around the world.

In 1969 he started his career with the Forest Service on the Carson National Forest, then to the Mendocino in California for a couple years, and then in 1974 he came to the Bighorn in Wyoming where he worked until his retirement in 1994. The next 22 years were spent with him and his horses helping out friends who needed his help. He had numerous trucks, horses, and a few good dogs. He loved the cowboy lifestyle.

He loved his family and the outdoors, camping, and riding horses all day and not seeing another soul. He had an impeccable memory, and his stories were legendary and true. He was a helper at heart and that and his wisdom will be dearly missed.

He is survived by his two children, Ann and Lance, their families including two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, a sister, a brother, and other relatives and friends.

(Continued from Page 30)



Remembrances



David James Condit

David Condit, 57, passed away on December 30, 2024, in Colorado. Born on August 9, 1967, he was the son of James Condit and Janet (Allison) Condit. David's life was dedicated to service. He graduated high school in Colorado Springs and completed

his undergraduate degree at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. An outdoor enthusiast with graduate degrees in psychology and outdoor leadership.

He served 30 years in the US Air Force and retired as Colonel. He served as Deputy Forest Supervisor

from 2017 through October 2020. He first connected with the USFS mission and people while flying Modular Airborne Firefighting System air tankers through the cooperative program between the DOD and USFS. In aerial firefighting, he worked at all levels from crew member to national program manager. He went on to command the Hurricane Hunters and was most recently assigned as Air Wing Commander in Alabama. After leaving the Forest Service he served four years in the US Custom and Border Protection.

David is survived by his wife Stephany Condit, his two sons Douglas and Justin Condit, his parents Jim and Janet Condit, and his sister Colleen Condit.



Dave Cook

Dave Cook died on November 12, 2024. He was born on July 21, 1939. He grew up in Steamboat Springs on his family's ranch on the Elk River. He graduated from Colorado

State University School of Forestry and worked as a Wildlife Biologist for the Forest Service beginning on the Shoshone National Forest in Wyoming, then on the Grand Mesa National Forest and finally on the San Juan National in Durango. Dave was an avid deer and elk hunter; he also loved to fish and hike and explore little used forest roads and game trails.

After retiring, he enjoyed working on the little farm outside of Greeley raising goats, rabbits, chickens and vegetables & taking care of horses and cattle.

He is survived by his wife Janet, son Mark, daughters Kay and Amy. He has 5 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren.

(Continued from Page 31)


Remembrances



Van Curtis Elsbernd

Van Elsbernd died on October 29, 2024. He was born on February 14, 1951, in Williston, North Dakota to Lois Elsbernd. Van grew up in Crosby spending summers working on the family farm and winters fighting off the harsh cold in North Dakota.

Van met the love of his life, Wanna when they were 15 in high school. After high school, Van and Wannie headed to Bottineau to attend college where a year later in 1970, they got married. Van finished his degree, a Bachelor of Science in Forestry, in Missoula, MT and moved to Dickenson, North Dakota to start his career in the Forest Service. Van and Wannie had two girls, Angie and Tessa, and moved to various places around the United States. Van worked for the Forest Service

for 33 years and after retirement he continued working as a consultant helping ranchers. He loved working and worked until his very last day.

Van was dedicated to providing for his family and loving his grandchildren. He loved giving his time and volunteered for 17 years at Fort Collins High School coaching track. His other hobbies included hunting, fishing, buying guns, building guns and reloading bullets. He loved watching his grandkids play soccer and golf and watching football on Sundays. Van loved making people laugh and fought cancer for six years with a smile on his face.

Van is survived by his wife Wanna, daughter Angie, daughter Tessa, son-in-law Chris, brother Steve, sister Pam, grandchildren Evan, Hannah, Payton, Raegan, Colten, and Broxton.



Esther Pauline (Polly) Hammer

Polly Hammer, 83, of Collinsville, OK passed away Monday, November 13, 2023 in Claremore, OK. She was born November 13, 1940, in Gravette, AR to Francis Emmett Hammer

and the former Leona Eunice Nickell. She served in The United States Army and also worked as a Archaeologist and was responsible for the heritage programs on the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests. She retired in 2001.

She moved to Oklahoma and lived there for several years. She was a dual member of the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary. She loved cats.

She was so funny, witty, and loving person and is missed by her family that survives her Donita, Dewayne, Jason, Jeremie, Michael and Matthew Sims, Oklahoma City, OK.

(Continued from Page 32)


Remembrances



James Richard Hillis

James Hillis of Alamosa, CO passed away on Friday, June 7, 2024.

Jim was born August 23, 1935, in Delhi, New York. He was the only child of Clark and Annis Hillis, who preceded him in death. He grew up in Upstate New York spending his childhood with many cousins and extended family. He graduated from high school at the Delaware Academy, attended Syracuse University and eventually graduated from the SUNY Ranger's School in Wanakena, NY. He worked for the U.S Forest Service as a Range Manager and Law Enforcement Officer. He took great pride in his work and worked in California, South Dakota, and several offices throughout Colorado including Saguache and Monte Vista. He retired as the recreation staff officer on the Rio Grande. He fought many, many wildfires throughout the U.S. and retired after 33 years of service.

While he was working in Rapid City S.D in 1966 he met and married Patricia (Williamson) Biggs. Together they had 4 children, Steven, Beth, Tim and Teresa. His kids were his pride and joy, and he spent many hours with them playing ball in the front yard, camping, fishing, hunting, traveling and attending their sporting events.

Jim loved to tell and laugh at jokes, make up stories about "side-hill gougers" and "Wampus cats"- all of which his children wholeheartedly believed! He loved to dance and spent several years taking country swing classes and ended up staying on as a fill-in dance partner. He was a loyal member of

the Sacred Heart Catholic Church and dedicated countless hours reading at Saturday night mass. For many years he sold Amway products and enjoyed the opportunity to travel on behalf of the company, making new friends and learning new sales strategies. He enjoyed being a member of the Alamosa Republicans, as well. The Brooklyn Dodgers were his favorite baseball team and he was so disappointed when they went to L.A. One of the highlights of his younger years was the opportunity he was given to briefly play minor league baseball. He was also one of the Alamosa High School's most devoted fans. He attended as many sports as he could, even if his kids and grandkids weren't competing. He loved to go to the Colorado State Wrestling Tournaments in Denver and showed up 31 consecutive years to support the wrestlers! When he was no longer able to get out of the house, he missed being able to go to the sporting events the most.

He is survived by his children: Steven Hillis, Beth Quinlan, Tim (Kristi) Hillis, Teresa Hillis (Chester Baker) all of Alamosa, his grandchildren Aaron Quinlan (Jenna), Corey Quinlan (Anne), Cody Quinlan, McKenna Quinlan (James Selman), Tayleur Hillis, Kolten Hillis (Liana), Kacey Hillis, Kennedy Hillis, Amanda Martinez (Gavin), WhitnKoeY Martinez, AJ Baker and his great-grandchildren Noah Quinlan, Makissa, Caysen, Brooklyn and Kjerstin Quinlan and Christina, Hamilton and Kaidon Selman.

(Continued from Page 33)



Remembrances



Robert Lee (Bob) Kapushion

Robert Kapushion, passed away October 16, 2024 at the age of 77. He was born on June 18, 1947, to John and Anne Kapushion in Crested Butte, CO.

Bob loved being outdoors and hunting with his brothers and family. He retired from the Forest Service in 2003. He was a devoted husband and father and always dedicated himself

to his family. He will forever be loved and missed. The family will have a celebration of Bob's incredible life for family and friends in the spring of 2025.

He is survived by his wife, Linda, of 46 years; daughters, Ronda, Lori and Kristen; six grandchildren; four great grandchildren; brothers, John and Marty; and many cousins. He is preceded in death by his son, brother, and parents.



Kenneth Lee Kane

Kenneth Kane, 84, departed this life on Sunday, Sept. 8, 2024. He was born Oct. 31, 1939, in Doniphan, Mo., to the late Earl and Lora (Hayes) Kane. Ken, a Certified Public Accountant, served in the Air

Force, as an Administrative Officer in the United States Forest Service, and in several civic-minded leadership roles. Enjoying a career of ever-advancing responsibilities, he and his family lived in ten different cities across four different states until spending his final 28 years in his beloved Missouri.

Ken's career in the US Forest Service included leadership on the Superior, Mark Twain, Chippewa, Tongass, and Rio Grande National Forests, as well as the Fort Collins Forest Service Computer Center, starting as an accountant in Duluth and working his way up to Administrative Officer of the Colorado Rio Grande Forest.

On Dec. 17, 1960, Ken married Carole Ann Wiley at the First Church of God in Doniphan. She preceded him in death on Dec. 29, 2009. Following Carole's passing, Ken wrote a book titled "The Love of My Life" chronicling her (and his) life journey - which included an incredible array of church and

community-oriented volunteer and fundraising projects in every city they called home.

In 2006, the Doniphan Chamber of Commerce honored Ken and Carole Kane as the "Partner Citizens of the Year" for their community efforts including leading Timberfest, American Cancer Society, Church Kids programs and several other events. Ken tirelessly wrote and fulfilled grant proposals including a handicapped accessible riverfront park, Food Pantry funding and a litany of housing projects for those in need.

His passion for the outdoors was evident through his love for hunting, fishing and ranching, and he faithfully supported young people's sports and music endeavors, often traveling for hours to enjoy basketball and band or music events. He had also been an active member of the First Church of God in Doniphan, with over 25 years of perfect Church attendance. Ken was a cherished member of the Doniphan community.

Surviving are his children, Kevin (Judy) Kane of Theodosia, Mo., and Kerry Kane of Phoenix, Ariz.; second wife, Jayne Kane of West Plains; grandchildren, Christopher Kane, Kyle Kane, Riley Kane, and Trevor Kane; and one great-granddaughter, Marceline Kane.



Remembrances



Frank Lee Leonard, Jr.

Frank Leonard, age 86, of Montrose, Colorado passed away June 16, 2024 at Gardens on Quail in Arvada, Colorado. Frank was born February 17, 1938, to Frank Lee Leonard Sr. and Eleanor Mae (Hipbshman) Leonard. He married Virginia Lee Schnelle on July 3, 1971, in Mariposa, California.

Frank was on the road maintenance crew on the Grand Mesa Uncompahgre, Gunnison N. F. and was trained and taught many the key to road maintenance success.

Surviving family members include brothers Towser and Bill Leonard and sister Mildred Card all from California; son Wayne Leonard and daughter Dannita White both from Texas; daughter-in-law Brenna Leonard; son-in-law Pete White; 6 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren.



Mary Louise Nelson (*amended version*)

Mary Nelson passed away on May 24, 2024, at the age of 61. She was born on February 11, 1963, in Price, Utah to Louis and Carol Christianson Nelson.

Mary was the consummate forester – fiercely dedicated to the health and future of our national forests through skilled and thoughtful forest management. She found her career mission in timber and took on the scientific and strategic challenges of timber growth and timber sales. She “bled green,” loyal to both the Forest Service and the people she worked with. She was a role model and mentor, ever aware of her legacy to the next generation of foresters.

While working towards her forestry degree at Utah State University, Mary worked as a seasonal forestry technician for the Ferron/Price Ranger District on the Manti-La Sal National Forest, Region 4 (1984-1987). After two seasons as a Recreation Crew Supervisor, maintaining recreation sites across the district, Mary transitioned to the supervisor of a Stage 2 Exam timber crew.

Upon graduation from USU in 1988, Mary started her forestry career with the Ouray Ranger District on the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests, Region 2, as part of a timber marking crew.

She advanced to crew foreman in 1989. In addition to her general duties, Mary took on administration leadership responsibilities and assisted other resource areas whenever she was needed.

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Mary Louise Nelson (continued)

In May 1990, Mary found her permanent home with the Saguache Ranger District on the Rio Grande National Forest, Region 2. As a forestry technician, she continued her work in timber management and resource database administration. She earned her GS-7 Forester appointment in 1991 and added contracts and NEPA analysis to her skillset. A GS-9 position followed in 1992 and a GS-11 Supervisory Forester position in 2004.

In 1998, Mary gained her qualifications as an expanded and initial attack dispatcher. Finding an affinity for dispatch, she happily provided support when called. She served as the District's collateral duty officer; a role she took seriously. She was also a strong proponent of the opportunities afforded by the Service First partnership between the Rio Grande National Forest and the BLM.

Mary entered the Forest Service at a time when there were few professional women in the agency. Never one to be dissuaded from a purpose, Mary leveraged her knowledge and skills in forestry management to gain acceptance in the timber industry and cross traditional gender boundaries in the agency.

Mary devoted her career to the Saguache Ranger District, retiring in February 2019.

Mary was resolutely independent, witty, compassionate, and loyal. And she loved The Valley. She was an active member of the Saguache Kiwanis Club, and organized innumerable holiday

celebrations, fundraisers, and community events. She served on the board of the Northern Saguache County Rural Fire District from

2004 to 2019. She was an ardent supporter of local artisans, of which The Valley has many. Mary also brought the Forest Service culture into the community. She participated in the local parades, once dressed as Smokey Bear. She also assisted in bringing the Smokey Bear hot air balloon and the R2 Pack String to the community.

Mary loved animals (of every kind). She adored her dogs, Picasso Moon and Chica, and her cats, Stella Blue and China Cat. She raised pigs, turkeys, and chickens, named each one, and took special care of her littlest chicken, Frederica. As a life-long Grateful Dead fan, Mary named many of her animals after Grateful Dead songs and lyrics (she also named more than one timber sale the same way).

Upon her retirement, Mary returned to Utah for a time to care for her elderly mother. After her mother's passing, Mary came back to The Valley, but continued to divide her time between Colorado and Utah.

Mary's love of the land, love of people, and love of life will be her enduring legacy.

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Remembrances



Linn Pettijohn

Linn Pettijohn of Meeker passed away on November 12, 2024. Linn was born May 24, 1951 in St. Francis, Kansas, to Alvin and Ellen Pettijohn.

He spent his childhood years on the family farm 25 miles northeast of Burlington,

Colorado, near the Kansas border.

Linn attended a country school through sixth grade and then Burlington schools for junior and senior high. He graduated from Burlington High School in 1969.

Linn received a BS in Forest Management Sciences from Colorado State University in 1973. He pursued this degree as he “always wanted to live in the mountains.”

Linn met his wife of 50 years, Deborah Baughman, while they were students at CSU. They have two daughters, Ellen and Katie, who were born at Pioneers Hospital in Meeker.

Linn worked for the USDA Forest Service for almost 40 years. During that time, he was stationed at

Kaibab, Arizona; Walden, Saguache and Meeker, Colorado. His Forest Service family was very special to him.

Linn lived a full life and the life he wanted. He loved his family and pets. He could be seen walking his Siberian Huskies daily. He was an avid outdoorsman. He loved trap shooting, hunting, camping, hiking and motorized recreation (dirt bikes, snowmobiles, ATVs, side-by-sides and street bikes). Linn was a good small engine mechanic. There were several times a snowmobile engine would end up on the kitchen table.

Linn was a member of the Rio Blanco Golf Association, Meeker Sportsman Club, White River Snowmobile Club and Wagon Wheel OHV Club.

Linn was preceded in death by his parents. He is survived by his wife, daughters Ellen (Andy) and Katie, grandchildren Benton, Brooke and Jordyn, older siblings Mary and Wayne, uncle, two aunts, cousins, nieces, nephews and good friends.

Linn will be missed and remembered with love by everyone who knew him.

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Stephanie Marie Martinez Rocco

Stephanie Martinez Rocco, age 62, of Cheboygan, died at home on Friday January 12, 2024, after a 19-month battle with pancreatic cancer. Born and raised in Williams, Arizona, Stephanie was the daughter of Victor and Sophia (Mascareno) Martinez. She

married Dale A. Rocco in Grand Junction, Colorado on June 4, 2006. They made their home in Palisade, Colorado where they built a beautiful house on the Colorado River. With Dale's connection to Northern Michigan, in 2019, Stephanie and Dale left Colorado to make their home on the Black River near Cheboygan after her retirement from the White River NF in 2019.

Stephanie made a career with the U.S. Forest Service working as a wildland firefighter. Her career began in Arizona but took her to Montana, Idaho, New Mexico, and then to the White River in Colorado in 2005 where she was a fire dispatcher. With her adventurous spirit and determination, Steph thrived in her job. She was a strong woman working in a career traditionally dominated by men and she excelled at it. She eventually attained the position of dispatch center manager with the responsibility of coordinating all logistics for fighting forest fires which included everything from making sure there was food and water for the firefighters to dispatching aircraft. Stephanie loved her work and

coworkers so much that after her retirement she returned each summer to work for a few months.

Steph enjoyed the nine winters she and Dale spent living in their fifth wheel RV in Quartzsite, Arizona. There she collected interesting stones, gems, and minerals which she cut, polished, and crafted into unique jewelry. She also attended the major gem shows held in Quartzsite each winter. She wove Southern Long Leaf Pine needles into beautiful, one of a kind, baskets that were true artistry. Steph also collected Southwest Native American Art including drawings and Navajo woven blankets and rugs. Stephanie had quite an eye for art, however she also was quite an artist herself.

Stephanie was a leader; she was capable, successful, and believed in herself. She was courageous in her vocation as well as in her fight with cancer. She was beautiful, gracious, creative, and dedicated to all her endeavors. Well-respected and well-loved, all who knew her will miss her wonderful sense of humor and her infectious laugh.

Steph is survived by her husband of 17 years, Dale Rocco of Cheboygan; brother, David Martinez (JT Keller) of Phoenix, Arizona; sister, Victoria (Gus) Phelps of Atlanta, Georgia; niece, Patricia; nephew, Victor; as well as stepsons, Evan Rocco of Tokyo, Japan and Drew (Kristin) Rocco of Palisade, Colorado and their children, Zoe and Delaney.

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Remembrances



John Linde Sundberg

John Sundberg, 89, passed away at home on November 1, 2024. John was the son of Linde and Lucille Sundberg. He lived almost his whole life in Hayden, having been born in the Solandt Memorial Hospital in Hayden. Growing up he helped his dad at Linde's Service Station. He always had lots of fun. He skied in the

winter and ice skated on the river after shoveling the snow off of the ice. He graduated from Hayden Union High School in 1953 and went on to attend Colorado A&M in Fort Collins, studying Forestry. He met his future wife, Beth Olsen, there and they were married in 1958. He served in the U.S. Army from 1958 to 1960 and was stationed in Augsburg, Germany. After the couple came home, he began working for the U.S. Forest Service. He had previously worked summers there as soon as he turned 16, in 1951. He was permanently employed there from 1960 through 1995. After retiring, he started a weed-spraying service and continued until 2023. He was an active member of the Hayden

Congregational Church from childhood and was a lifetime member of the Hayden Masonic Lodge AF & AM. He served many years on the Hayden Town Board and served as Mayor for several years. He also served on the Hospital and Library Boards and on the Babson-Carpenter Foundation, for many years. One of his main hobbies was wood working and he created many beautiful furniture and other items. He loved to tell funny stories about things that happened in the past. He and his wife enjoyed four wonderful trips to Alaska in their camper through the years.

He is survived by his wife, Beth, of 66 years, his sister Barbara Ledford of Arvada and brother Eric of Haines, Alaska, his son Jon Erik and wife Jean of Craig, son Sig of Hayden and daughter Kristen Miller and her husband Chris of Hayden, his grandsons Jon Wayne and wife Amanda of Hayden and stepsons Conner and Kale Johnson, grandson Evan and wife Katryna of Craig, grandson Erik and wife Jade and great grandson Luke of Craig, and grandsons Cole Miller and Kent Miller of Hayden, three nieces and brother-in-law Mark Olsen and wife Lois.



Forrest Henry Tellock

Forrest Tellock passed away on September 14, 2024, in Buffalo, Wyoming. Forrest's journey began on October 3, 1972, to Forrest and Virginia Tellock in the sweeping landscapes of White Sulphur Springs, Montana, where he attended both grade school and high school. As an avid football player and saddle bronc

rider, he was very successful at both. After High School, it was Laramie, Wyoming, where he discovered two of his greatest passions: his beloved wife Christine and his keen interest in auto mechanics. After obtaining an associate's degree in business management and automotive technology,

from WY Tech, Forrest married the love of his life, Christine, in 1993. Together, they embarked on a journey filled with adventure, commitment and starting their family together in Montana and Wyoming.

A true embodiment of the spirit of the West, Forrest was a man of many talents and an unwavering work ethic. He was deeply involved in his community, working on a local ranch, an auto mechanic, at the local feedlot, and at the Arctic Cat Store. His dedication to serving others was evident through his volunteer work with Search and Rescue, the local Fire Department, the seasonal Forest Service Fire Crew in the Lewis and Clark District, and as a Reserve Deputy with the Sheriff's Department.

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Remembrances

Forrest Henry Tellock (continued)

In 2004, Forrest's career took a turn towards public service when he joined the Douglas Ranger Service at the Medicine Bow Route National Forest. His leadership and expertise eventually led him to become an engine foreman in Wright, Wyoming. His commitment to protecting the natural world and ensuring the safety of his community continued to flourish when, in 2007, he took on the role of Forest Service Law Enforcement Officer in Buffalo, Wyoming, a position he held with honor until his untimely passing.

Forrest's love for the great outdoors was not just a professional calling but a personal one as well. An avid elk hunter, he was also deeply involved in shooting sports. He possessed a competitive spirit, which he expressed through racing his hot rod truck, his Trans-Am, his dirt bike, and his snowmobiles. But it was the tranquility of riding horses in the mountains with his family and friends that brought him the most joy. These moments amidst nature's grandeur were the ones he treasured most.

His legacy is carried on by his devoted wife, Christine Tellock, and their sons, Wyatt Tellock and

his daughter Paige of Buffalo, Wyoming, and Morgan Tellock and his wife Erin of Eschenbach, Germany. Forrest will be fondly remembered by his brother, Henry Jefferson Kinnick, and his wife Sabrina with their children Turner, Zander, Ariel and Zaphyra, and stepfather, Jeff Kinnick, both of White Sulphur Springs, Montana, His Mother-in-law Priscilla Foster and

Sister-in-law Stephanie (Robert) Forney and nephews CJ, Brayden and Daniel. Each of them will hold onto the memory of Forrest's boundless energy, his unwavering support, and his infectious love for life.

Forrest's life was a testament to the power of passion and the importance of community. His absence will be deeply felt by all who had the privilege of knowing him. He was a man who not only protected and served, but also inspired and brought joy. Forrest was a dedicated family man, a steadfast friend, and a true hero of the community. His spirit will continue to live on in the hearts of his loved ones and the countless lives he touched.

**Jean Adele Gelvin Thomas**

Jean Thomas, a devoted wife and mother, died on June 30, 2024. Jean was born in Wray, Colorado on June 4, 1954. Jean, the youngest of four siblings, grew up in rural Colorado. Her childhood surroundings shaped her love of nature and the

outdoors. Jean gave special meaning to the phrase, 'never leave a stone unturned' as she collected stones from wherever she traveled. Jean and Bill began their adventures together in the summer of 1974 in Yellowstone National Park. They married, studied at the University of Montana in

Missoula, returned to work in Yellowstone, then Estes Park, Fort Collins, Fairfax Virginia, and Windsor, Colorado. Jean graduated from the University of Montana with a Masters Degree in Geology with a specialization in Hydrology.

Jean worked for the U.S. Forest Service with an emphasis on water rights management beginning in 1984 until her retirement in 2016. Jean is survived by her husband, William, her son David (Noppy), her sister Judy (Kenny), brothers Ed (Nancy) and Les (Jeanne) and many nieces, nephews, and in-laws.



Remembrances



Guy Malcolm Virkula

Guy Virkula, 90, Spearfish, SD formerly of Lead, passed away Monday, November 25, 2024, at Fort Meade Veterans Administration Healthcare Center.

Guy Virkula was born February 13, 1934, at Lead to Edwin and Florence (Tripp) Virkula. Guy was raised in the Lead area, graduating from Lead High School in 1952. Following high school he joined the United States Navy, proudly serving from 1953 to 1957, including time during the Korean War. After

receiving his honorable discharge, he returned to Lead and attended Black Hills Teachers College for a year. He married Kay Buckmaster in Deadwood on October 19, 1958. Guy was then hired by the Forest Service, where he worked in timber management for over 30 years. After retiring from the Forest Service, he continued to work with timber management in the private sector for many years.

When he wasn't working, Guy enjoyed hunting, fishing and spending time with his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



Frederick (Fred) J Backenstose

Frederick Backenstose passed away on March 13, 2023. He was born June 4, 1931, in Romeo Michigan to Frederick and Pearl Backenstose. After serving in the Air Force, he met and married Mary Louise (Mary Lou) Cvetetic, his loving wife of 68 years. Together they

raised five of their six children in Almont Michigan. While in Michigan, Fred was self-employed in the excavation business. He enjoyed skiing and taught skiing at Mount Grampion. He received his private pilot license with his instrument rating endorsement.

Later they moved to Sheridan Wyoming where they lived for 30 years and raised their youngest son. While In Sheridan, Fred was employed by the United States Forest Service working in the Big Horn Mountains and after retiring worked at the Little Goose Ranch. Because of his love of flying and planes, Fred spent years building a KR-2 experimental aircraft, which is still flying today.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Mary Lou and leaves behind his six children, Rick, Julie, Mitchell, Sue Ann, Lisa, Kristofor and granddaughter, Annie.

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Remembrances



Nick Gerich

Nick Gerich passed away on January 21, 2021. He was born on April 20, 1954. Nick grew up in Ohio and came to Colorado and furthered his education at Colorado Mountain College.

Nick officially started with FS in Leadville in 1992 as a biological science aid and worked as temporary seasonal 0404 biological science technician for the next fifteen years (!) before getting his permanent Hydrologic Technician position in 2008. He worked on the Leadville District until his passing in Twin Lakes, 2021.

To start his Forest Service career, he received a Certificate of Merit for Construction and Maintenance of Irrigation Systems in 1992, his first

year as a seasonal. Then in 1994, he received the Taking Wing Award in the Leadership category. In 2003, Nick received a Certificate of Appreciation and a pin from the Forest Service Chief for over 1000 hours of volunteer service. In total, Nick contributed a whopping 5126 hours of volunteer service from 1992-2003, and continued to volunteer until he got his permanent position.

Nick was a trusted water rights expert for the district, but also excelled as a wildland firefighter, sawyer, and Contracting Officer's Representative. He had a mechanical mind and kept facilities going when budgets were slim and would say yes to helping whenever he could.

He is survived by a daughter who lives in Ohio,

The Last Word

Power vs. Pride

By Tom L. Thompson

For the last twelve years, as I have shared different thoughts and perspectives in this column, I have typically tried to place my ideas into some relevant historical context. Back in 2016 I wrote a piece for this newsletter entitled “Neither Left or Right: Politics, Perspective, and Patience” in which I tried to highlight the success that the Forest Service had achieved in its first hundred years in keeping the work of the agency above the political fray as much as possible. I also expressed worry about how politics had become so partisan, so, so, so, partisan, and how the repeated wider successive administration pendulum shifts complicate resource management in the long run.

But oh, how I wish we were back a few years or so now because what has unfolded in our country in the last month is so unlike anything any of us have ever witnessed in our government that I simply am baffled as to how to make a historic sense of it. Theodore Roosevelt, a president who is deeply admired still today for many reasons and is widely known as the father of the modern-day merit-based civil service, would be not only disappointed but shocked to witness what is happening in this country and what we have become.

In my opinion, one would be hard pressed to identify a time in the last hundred and fifty years where so much has changed so quickly and so dramatically shifted the cornerstones of who we are as a nation. As federal worker retirees, most of us understand how a change in administration every four to eight years usually results in a shift in emphasis, priorities, and even programs. And yes, there have been times when events, like 9-11, have brought sudden change and uncertainty but in most of these we saw a coming together of our nation as we responded to a crisis not a deepening of partisan division to the extent that it seems we no longer have a representative government.

I also know that there are probably some, even among us, who may be perfectly ok with what is happening and believe it is exactly what they wanted or expected to happen when they cast their ballot last November. I hope, however, that they too might be a bit concerned with how callous, vengeful, and disrespectful most of this transformation is being made. Without question there is a long overdue need for significant and lasting change in our country to reduce our growing deficit, but this should be done thoughtfully and with more respect and consideration for those who give so much and care so much that they have dedicated themselves to the work of the government.

Much of the focus thus far has been on the “federal employee” but there are so many different aspects of the situation we find ourselves immersed in. The who we are as a nation is being redescribed and recalibrated, with our foreign policy, our leadership worldwide in responding to global crisis, our credibility, our trust, our character as a nation, and how we are viewed by our friends across our borders or across the oceans.

My heart aches for those who are so personally and directly affected or will be eventually impacted in the weeks and months ahead both in our country and around the world. It especially hurts that so many of those fired already have been young folks with promising careers ahead of them who were full of hope and faith in their government. I also am embarrassed that my grandchildren are witnessing such hate, disrespect, or apathy from our nation’s leaders just four years after a shocking January 6 assault on our nation’s capital. I am saddened that some connections many of us have with family and friends are being stressed and jeopardized as we line up on different sides.

There is much being written on almost every forum and one gets the impression that most who are writing are at a loss as to either to make sense of what is transpiring or what to do about it. Congress seems to have acquiesced to a major shift in power to the executive branch and the courts are trying to sort out constitutional questions as to how much they can or are willing to do. Power has not only shifted but seems to me to be exponentially abused and to be largely unchecked.

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Never has a President shown so much disdain for his own workforce than we have seen in the first few weeks of this administration. For a leader to show such blatant disrespect for the people who carry out the essential business of the Federal government is very disturbing. His appointed director of the Office of Management and Budget has openly stated “We want the bureaucrats to be traumatically affected...When they wake up in the morning, we want them to not want to go to work because they are increasingly viewed as the villains ... We want to put them in trauma.” Can’t be clearer than that as the respect this administration has for the work of the federal employee.

So, my own frustration, disappointment, sadness, and even anger is frightening to me, but I am at least proud to say and know that making those who work for the government feel like villains will not be successful because of what they do and why. We, or they, can be made to feel disrespected by this president, but they cannot make us feel like villains. All of us, especially for those of us who worked for the Forest Service, understand that our choice to work for the “outfit” was not because of the money, the glory, or the status. We were proud to be carrying on the work that President Theodore Roosevelt and Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot started over a hundred years ago.

We chose this work because of the “mission” and the opportunity to yes “Care for the Land and Serve the People” and do what we could on behalf of the American people. And yes we experienced criticism for how we sought to balance use from politicians, from industry, from environmentalists, from ranchers, from loggers, from recreationists, miners, and on occasion even from our own employees, but in all of that we knew it was because people cared so much about the land and resources and their only disagreement was in how much of what and where things should be done.

I believe people who are still working for the Forest Service feel the same way we did and are doing what they believe is important work for the people and the resources entrusted to their care. They can be disrespected, and they can even be “fired” like those on the tv show, “The Apprentice,” but they are not villains, they are victims. History is likely to confirm that so many are in fact heroes.

Hopefully, out of this mess perhaps somehow, we can hope that we will become a stronger nation, but the “Fork in the Road” that has been taken is scary, chaotic, and treacherous. Never before has there been a more critical need for governors, congressional representatives, non-government organizations, and industry representatives from all sectors to make their voices heard and hopefully heed Gifford Pinchot’s advice from many, many years ago. “It is a far greater thing to be a good citizen than a good democrat or republican.” This is not just about firing federal employees, it is about the viability of the Forest Service as an outfit and the ability to use and enjoy the amazing public land we have today and in the generations ahead. How history looks back at this time in our history will be very difficult to understand and predict because as we experience it ourselves, we don’t understand it.

