

Volume 11 — Number 3

# Closed!



Forest Service Office - Idaho Springs, Colorado. 10.13.25.

(Continued on page 2)



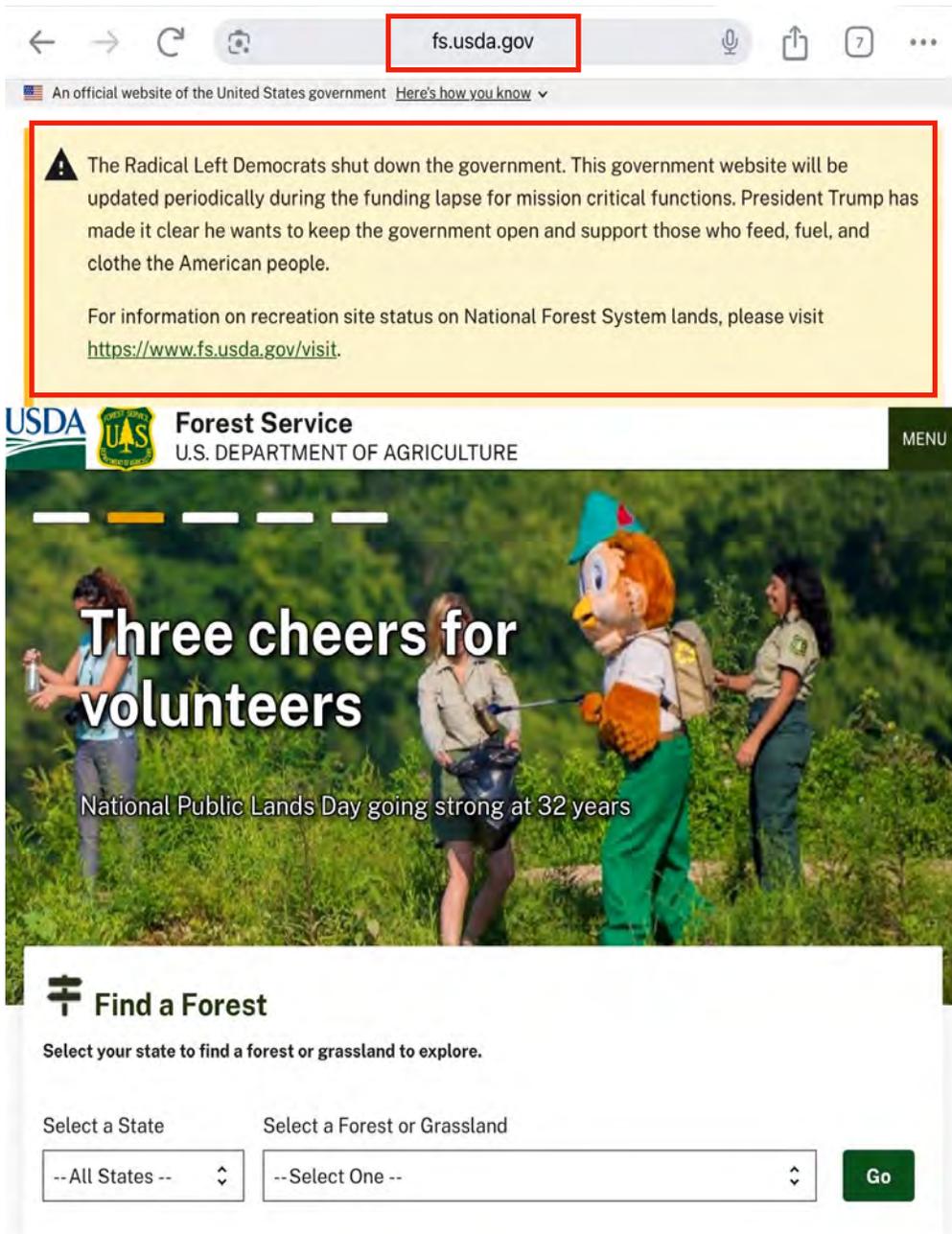
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“The official newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Forest Service Association, the Rocky Mountaineers.”  
Editions are published Fall, Winter, and Spring and posted on-line.

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# Been to the Forest Service Web Page Lately?



## The Hatch Act A refresher

The Hatch Act restricts the partisan political activities of most federal employees and some state and local government employees to prevent improper use of government resources or authority.

It allows these employees to participate in politics during off-duty hours, provided they do so away from the workplace and using their own resources, though employees in certain sensitive positions are subject to greater restrictions.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) enforces the Act by investigating violations and providing guidance on what activities are permitted.

The Act generally prohibits political activities that are:

- **Partisan:** Directed toward the success or failure of a political party, candidate, or partisan political group.
- **On Duty:** While an employee is on duty, using federal property, or in a federal building.
- **Improper Use of Authority:** Using an employee's official position to influence the outcome of an election.

Hatch Act Hotline:  
 (202) 254-3650 or  
 (800) 854-2824  
 Hatch Act Fax:  
 (202) 254-3700

## 'The Public Is Losing Out'



Elizabeth Stewart-Severy,  
Aspen Journalism - October, 2025

for decades. “One of the things that has bothered me the most about the last nine months of working here has been the lack of respect for continuing to serve everyone in our community, no matter their background, no matter their ethnicity, their gender identification, race, sexual orientation, whatever it happens to be,” Warner said.

In September 2024, the White River National Forest won the U.S. Forest Service’s Cultural Diversity Award for its work — with partners at Wilderness Workshop, the Aspen Institute and the city of Glenwood Springs — on Latino Conservation Week and efforts to boost Latino participation in outdoor recreation. In 2025, Latino Conservation Week [went unrecognized](#) by the White River National Forest.

“I’m really, really proud of the work that we’ve done with our local Latino and Latina community and to see those things and our ability to engage in that same way be restricted, doesn’t align with my personal values and makes it really hard to continue to work in this particular work environment,” Warner said. “I know that because of the rhetoric that’s out there, there are folks in our communities that feel less comfortable going out and using their national forest lands. And to me, that just doesn’t align with my values. That’s tough.”

Officials with the White River National Forest did not respond to requests for comment prior to the federal government’s partial shutdown on Oct. 1.

Warner is the fifth top-level land manager — called a line officer in forest service lingo — to leave the White River National Forest since January. The forest also has lost its longtime supervisor, Scott Fitzwilliams; the deputy forest supervisor, Heather Noel; the district ranger for the Dillon Ranger District, Adam Bianchi; and the deputy district ranger for the Dillon district, Amanda Wheelock.

[MORE]

[https://www.aspendailynews.com/news/the-public-is-losing-out/article\\_f15faa98-b880-4044-a026-b0f3851a43c5.html](https://www.aspendailynews.com/news/the-public-is-losing-out/article_f15faa98-b880-4044-a026-b0f3851a43c5.html)

After 24 years at the U.S. Forest Service, including nine months working two high-level jobs and trying to maintain morale while top federal administrators encouraged mass resignations, cut funding and pushed back against long-held values, Aspen-Sopris District Ranger Kevin Warner is leaving the White River National Forest.

Warner, who has accepted a position as Pitkin County’s construction and assets director, started working for the White River National Forest in 2001 and spent the last five years as the top land manager for the busy Aspen-Sopris Ranger District. Since December 2024, Warner also headed up the White River’s engineering department.

Yes, he said, working two full-time jobs was taxing, and it’s true that the federal government pays far less than local governments in the same resort communities. But the real push to leave the agency came from Washington.

“It’s just the absolute disrespect for the employees that make up this hardworking organization, that has come from the people that we work for, the administration at the highest levels,” Warner said. “That’s really, really difficult.”

Warner saw it in the mass firings of probationary employees on Feb. 14, which did not take job performance into account, and in the [wording](#) of Trump Administration’s deferred resignation program that encouraged employees to move from “lower productivity jobs in the public sector to higher productivity jobs in the private sector.”

And he saw it in a steady erosion of the values of inclusion and respect that he and others at the White River National Forest had been working on

(Continued from Page 3)



Happy Birthday Woodsy! First appearance was September 15, 1971.

Mr. T. First appearance was May 21, 1952.

[https://foresthistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2012-Spring\\_Woodsy-Owl-at-40.pdf](https://foresthistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2012-Spring_Woodsy-Owl-at-40.pdf)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mr.\\_T](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mr._T)

### 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  
**Debbie Gardunio**, Pueblo West, CO

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

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Tom Thompson, [thom46pson@gmail.com](mailto:thom46pson@gmail.com), 303-552-1711

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

## A message from the Chair

By Dan Nolan



Hi Everybody,

A big shout out of thanks to Lisa Tate and her crew for the awesome 2025 National Reunion. A few highlights for me were the panel of six former Chiefs sharing significant aspects of their terms in the hot seat, a tour of the National Conservation Legacy Center under construction (this will be an amazing facility), and a field trip to the Nine Mile Remount Depot that supports the Northern Region pack train and provides training in traditional skills.

But the biggest highlight was the opportunity to see and share memories with former coworkers from many years ago.

*Dan Nolan, Chairman of the Board*

Speaking of many years ago, our visit to the Nine Mile Remount Depot west of Missoula was just a few miles from where I had my first job with the Forest Service on the St. Regis District of the Lolo National Forest. That was in the summer of 1966.

I rode out from the University of Massachusetts with two other forestry students who dropped me off and then went on to their own Forest Service jobs in other states. My job classification was Forest Worker at \$2.05 per hour. Work consisted of piling logging slash, timber stand improvement, assisting with timber cruising, and fire patrols.



*My home, summer of 1966.*

In retrospect that was near the end of an era for the Forest Service before the many environmental laws of the 1970s were passed – NEPA, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, NFMA, and ESA - and changed how we did business. At the end of the summer, I decided to hitchhike home; got as far as Chicago and took a bus the rest of the way.

I imagine my story is similar to thousands of Forest Service people over the years. I look forward to seeing the completion of the National Conservation Legacy Center which will capture the essence of our collective experiences.

Happy Trails,

Dan



# Membership and Finance Report

October, 2025

By Ellen and Johnny Hodges

## Membership

We have picked up six new members since mid-May, giving us a total of **483**. We remain tantalizing close to breaking the 500-member barrier, but we can't quite get there.

You can help us recruit a few more members. Remember dues are complimentary for the first year and it is easy to sign up on our website. Forest Service retirees and current FS employees are eligible for membership.

### *Here is a list of our newest members –*

**Kevin Colby**, Ft. Collins, CO  
**Ed Leblanc and Krista Crabtree**, Nederland, CO  
**Rick and Rachel Oberheu**, Delta, CO  
**Frankie Robbins**, Delta, CO  
**Brenda and Roger Winfrey**, Grand Junction, CO  
**Corey Wong**, Delta, CO

## Finance

Next month we will begin collecting dues and donations for 2026. We will send out occasional reminders. If you want to make a donation before the end of the calendar year for tax purposes, add it to your list of things to do. The Rocky Mountaineers are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Instead of paying annual dues of \$25, you can buy a Lifetime Membership for only \$250. Our 190 current Lifetime Members can't be wrong. Bet on a long life and buy yourself a bargain!

### *Our new Lifetime Memberships for 2025 –*

**Dave Clement** – Arvada, CO  
**Steve and Patricia Deitemeyer**, Wheat Ridge, CO  
**Richard and Candice Edwards**, Timnath, CO  
**Steve and Michele Johnson**, Ft. Collins, CO  
**Cindy French**  
**Kathy Hardy-Ungari and Bruce Ungari**, El Dorado Hills, CA  
**Dawn Heiser**, Cedaredge, CO  
**Rick and Patricia Hudson**, Custer, SD  
**Marsha and Randy Kearney**, Albuquerque, NM  
**Martha Moran and Jim Kirschvink**, Carbondale, CO  
**Al Martinez**, Loveland, CO  
**Bradley and Marilyn Orr**, Ft. Collins, CO  
**Telca Paprocki**, Hot Springs, SD

## Musical Chairs In Case You Lost Your Scorecard

Dan Nolan is our current Chair of the Rocky Mountaineers and his term expires at the end of 2025.

Paul Peck will serve as Chair beginning in 2026 and serve a one year term.

Bill Ott has agreed to run for the Chair-elect position on the Rocky Mountaineers Board of Directors. We will hold a "vote by email" election next month and we'll notify you by email and on the web site.

If any other candidates would like to run, please let us know by the end of October and we will add you to the list. The person who is elected will serve as Chair-elect in 2026 and then as Chair in 2027.



Bill Ott

*[Bill Ott submitted a brief bio so that our membership can know more about him].*

Over the course of his career Bill Ott has been involved with natural resource-dependent communities throughout the west and in Latin America and the Caribbean. He has over 40 years of public service in natural resource management, primarily on National Forests throughout the western United States.

Prior to that he served in the Peace Corps in Honduras as a field forester. Most of Bill's experience in the National Forest System has been on Ranger Districts in the Rocky Mountain, Northern Rockies, and Intermountain Regions, including two tours as a District Ranger.

Bill wrapped up his career as the Deputy Director for Fire and Aviation Management in Region 2 and as the Senior Advisor for Workforce Development and Training for the National Interagency Fire Center. Bill has been a member of the Society of American Foresters for nearly 50 years.

In retirement Bill is active in social justice issues. Additionally, he is a certified teacher of English as a Second Language and has taught both locally and abroad. Next summer he will be teaching English in the Western Highlands of Guatemala.

Bill and his wife Barb have traveled abroad with the Rocky Mountaineers and will be joining them for their upcoming trips to Australia, New Zealand, and Africa. Their son Jonathan works in fire management out of the Tres Rios Field Office in Dolores, Colorado and their daughter Amanda lives near them in the Denver area.

The Rendezvous Fall 2022

**“That’s the Way I Remember it”**

*Each newsletter we will be featuring a story about retirees from R-1*

**Bill Ott**



My biological dad died in July 1959 while working as a range and wildlife staff on the San Juan National Forest. He died in the line of duty while working on horseback north of Dolores, Colorado, when his horse was hit by a logging truck. My mom, Mary Ann, remarried to Jack Ott, a forester on the Mancos District and the two of them raised a family of seven children there. I became exposed to and interested in forestry through the 4-H program where my dad was the adult leader for the forestry club.

Barb spent her formative years in Custer, SD. After her dad, Francis, retired from the USFS in 1967, he went on to be a county commissioner for Custer County and had the memorable experience of escaping from the Courthouse when AIM (American Indian Movement) came to town and attempted to burn it down in the mid-1970s.

Barb Ott, TEAMS Planning Director, Jonathan Ott, Recreation Tech, Boulder Ranger RD-ARF (currently Engine Captain, BLM, Dolores, CO), Bill Ott R2 Deputy Director FAM/OSH, 2012.

**TR: Tell us about your kids.**

**Alert readers remember when The Rendezvous featured Bill Ott in a retiree article.**

**Click below for the story.**

Fall, 2022 Issue of The Rendezvous - Page 29

<https://www.rockymountaineers.us/Newsletters/2022/2022-Fall->



## A Good Read About Public Lands

*Adam Auerbach is a conservation non-profit leader with a background in public lands management, partnership development, and collaborative conservation. He worked at Rocky Mountain National Park from June 2016 until October 2019.*

...does it seem like these firings don't make sense? They're not supposed to. What they are meant to do is to traumatize our hardworking civil servants. Russel Vought, a primary architect of Project 2025 and the current Director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget is quoted as wanting to break the spirit of our civil servants. "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." This is the real reason for these reckless, illegal, and unwarranted firings; to traumatize those who remain.

This is almost certainly part of a concerted effort to sell off our public lands, our wondrous shared natural heritage. A right-wing fringe agenda has long been transferring our federal public lands to the states and in turn to private interests. The best tactic for furthering this goal is to cripple our public lands agencies by depleting them of staff and funding to the point where the public is convinced the government cannot tend to these places and they simply must be privatized. Continue to watch this one very closely, there has been momentum building around this previously fringe agenda in Utah and Wyoming in particular of late.

This is the most insidious piece, and one I have not seen acknowledged or written about anywhere else: gutting our public lands agencies is part of the ongoing project of re-shaping the American mind and values. A recent executive order seeks to remodel how we teach history in this country, and limit discourse on America's past and present to only acknowledge the patriotic and good. The powers that be are seeking to prevent us from telling the many painful stories that also make up the fabric of our country: genocide and the theft of land from Native Americans, the enslavement of Africans, the internment of Japanese Americans, the quest for civil and human rights for so many marginalized communities. Not so coincidentally,

these are all stories told in our national parks. Moreover, I have seen how time in our national parks, and particularly how experiences facilitated by rangers like me, can in fact foster within people a suite of values that is antithetical and dangerous to everything the current administration is trying to accomplish: empathy, wonder, connection to one's fellow human and creature, compassion, stewardship, care for the natural world.

Vought, Musk, and Trump want to traumatize our rangers, but they will find that we are a much more resilient bunch than they could have ever imagined. But we need your help. And we need your help today. Everything I hear suggests that, without action, things may well get worse in short order through further attacks on our civil servants, so the time for mass mobilization is now.

### Do these things:

- Call your congressperson and senators.
- Tell your friends, family, and neighbors of all political persuasions what is being done to our parks, forests, and their protectors.
- Donate money to advocacy and stewardship organizations if you can.
- Be good responsible stewards of the land when you do visit our parks and forests going forward; there may well be no one to clean up after or rescue you.
- Volunteer through a reputable stewardship organization. Do not however volunteer for a job a properly trained ranger used to do.
- Thank and be kind to civil servants. Vought wants them to feel like the enemy; don't let that happen.
- Share this and/or any other coverage of this issue far and wide. Mass public awareness and media coverage of this issue is critical to prevent any further attacks on our parks, forests, and their stewards.

[\[MORE\]](#)

<https://www.nationalparkstraveler.org/2025/02/former-ranger-joins-protest-over-cuts-national-park-service>

# The Annual Gathering

## Delta - August 14, 2025

By Steve Ambrose

It was hot in Delta, over 100 degrees on one of the bank's temperature signs. The hot dry weather didn't dampen the spirits of the 50 attendees (mostly from the Western Slope) who enjoyed a tour of Fort Uncompahgre, a great meal, lively conversation and a very informative business meeting.



Over fifty folks showed up for the annual gathering in Delta.

The event kicked off in the morning with a tour of Fort Uncompahgre where participants learned Fort

Uncompahgre was a fur trading post constructed in 1828 by Antoine Robidoux, a trader based out of Mexican Santa Fe.

The picnic was held at Cleland Park in Delta where Rocky Mountaineers Western Colorado Representative Martha Moran had reserved one of the main shelters that comfortably seated all participants.

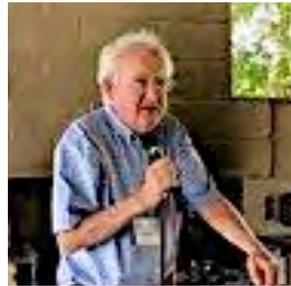
Dan Nolan, Rocky Mountaineers Chair, described many of the activities and accomplishments of the Rocky Mountaineers including awarding \$1,500 scholarships to each of four senior high schoolers; awarded a \$3,000 grant for watershed improvement to the Med Bow/Routt NFs; conducted the Memorial Grove Ceremony last spring; organized international trips to Sicily and Nepal in 2025 by Jim Thinnies; supporting



Great exhibits and information for us.

employees who are affected by the recent personnel actions by the administration.

Tom Thompson, Representative for the National Museum of Forest History, gave a status report. He conveyed Regional Offices have many



Tom Thompson gave a museum update.

artifacts and with the mention of closure of Regional Offices by the Administration the Museum is on the lookout for historical items.

As part of the Museum activities, Dan mentioned that the retirees are involved in the ranger roll call listing all the district rangers that have served

on the districts in the US.

He mentioned that the Ranger Roll Call Interim Report and Challenge for Region 2 is available through the Rocky Mountaineers' website.

Johnny Hodges then gave an update on the issues that the National Association of Forest Service Retirees is working on. Membership is now over 1100, with 24 members on the Board including all the emeritus Chiefs of the Forest Service.

Johnny encouraged people to visit the NAFSR website (<https://www.nafsr.org>) for an excellent rundown of activities that are being actively monitored. The top issues that NAFSR is working on include firing of Forest Service Employees, selling of 3 million acres of National Forest Land and BLM Lands (provision has been pulled out of the bill for now), moving all the Forest Service firefighters into one agency (that legislation has been killed for now), consolidation of Forest Service Research Stations and removal of 9 Regional Offices.

Dan adjourned the meeting at about 2:30 p.m. and folks headed out to get peaches or corn, spent the rest of the day recreating or headed home.



Martha Moran was our host for the event.



# The National Museum of Forest Service History

## Sharing the Rich History and Stories of America's Conservation Legacy

By Andy Mason

Museum Update - October, 2025



Museum President **Tom Thompson** opened the 10<sup>th</sup> National USFS Retirees Reunion in Missoula, Montana.

As Museum President Tom Thompson opened the 10<sup>th</sup> USFS Reunion, September 22-26, Missoula, Montana, he addressed nearly 500 attendees and said, "I see dedicated people who have given so much of our lives to taking care of the land and resources of our great country and who have served the people faithfully and thoughtfully..."

And...videos of many of the programs that were presented will be available soon from a link on the Museum webpage – Stay tuned.

**What a great Reunion it was!**



The Leisz Leadership Award was presented to both Lynn Sprague (center-left) and Jim Caswell (center-right) at the Reunion awards ceremony on Thursday evening. This prestigious award recognizes individuals with distinguished USFS careers and outstanding leadership as volunteers with both the National Association of Forest Service Retirees (NAFSR) and the National Museum of Forest Service History. NAFSR President Steve Ellis (far left) and Museum President Tom Thompson (far right) presented the awards to Lynn and Jim.



**Lisa Tate** wears many hats! Museum Exec. Director, Reunion Chair, and more! Here Lisa leads another tour of the National Conservation Legacy Center.

**Lisa Tate**, Reunion Chair (& Museum Exec. Director), and her Reunion Team did an incredible job of planning and implementing all the programs and activities at the Hilton Garden Inn, as well as five off-site excursions. Moreover, attendees had the opportunity to tour and learn about the ongoing construction of the **National Conservation Legacy Center** on the Museum's 31-acre campus. We look forward to seeing many of you at the Grand Center Opening, tentatively early summer 2026. Stay tuned for more details!

Please enjoy this update and a very few Reunion photos, which include a small sample of the awards that were presented, special programs, and fun activities.



Of course, Smokey joined us at the Reunion. Here with Cindy Drolet, who, with Doug Pumphrey, arranged for the fun cartoons encouraging us to come to Missoula. Only you...



The Region 2 gang up in Missoula. People walked and drove and flew in for the big reunion. With Photoshop, you didn't even need to be in the photo to be in the photo. If you can name everyone in this photo the editor will send you a prize.



Jane Leche, our Forest Service minstrel, storyteller, comedian, actor, hostess, and meeting manager was everything, everywhere all at once.



Region 2 royalty was there with an appearance from Patty and Pat Lynch.



Pam and Lyle Laverty were in the house at the Reunion.

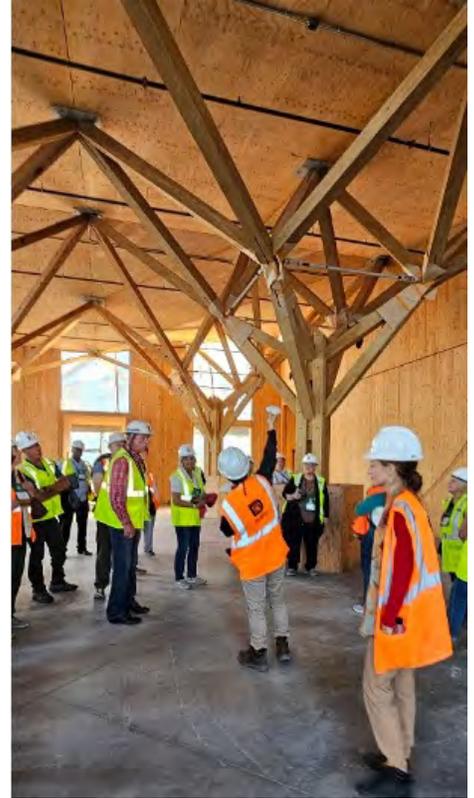


Left to right - Bernie Weingardt, Onno Wieringa, Susan Alden Weingardt, Tana Wieringa, and Patty Grantham.

(Continued from Page 11)



Former Chief Bosworth interviewed current Chief Schultz on a variety of topics.



Reunion attendees tour the lobby of the Center, admiring the tree-like support columns and the solid wood roof panels, all donated by forest product companies, individuals, and other organizations. Our Center will be beautiful, functional, and truly a testament to the sustainability of America's forests! Wood is good!



Excellent SWAG (stuff we all get) at the Reunion. Programs and magazines and dining guides and road maps and souvenir posters; a fan, a list of attendees, a Western Heritage pin and a cool bag to put it all in.



Sue



A rare appearance by six former Chiefs. Left to right are moderator Orville Daniels, Mike Dombeck, Dale Bosworth, Gail Kimbell, Tom Tidwell, Vicki Christiansen and Randy Moore. Chief Dale Robertson appeared via Zoom from his home in Colorado.

### Featured Videos From the Reunion now on You Tube

- **Recognition of Retired Chiefs**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=orbi-SdLg-I>
- **The Proud History of the Agency and What Happened Yesterday**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tp8WSvbsvo8>
- **The Tuskegee Initiative: A Historic Forest Service Partnership**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siHtFWAV8bo>



Madison Wisconsin is the chosen location to represent the 11th Retiree Reunion. The timing could not be any better to take advantage of the colorful 2028 Fall season.

There has never been a reunion celebrating our beautiful Eastern Region. Focusing on “the lands that nobody wanted”, the eastern region is a patchwork of natural geologic beauty, the world-famous Forest Products Lab and the miraculous rebounding resilience of the land.

Plan to join your friends and colleagues from around the nation for this exciting reunion.

Check out our introduction video at:  
<https://2028.usfsretireereunions.org>

# Museum Still Has Work To Be Done

## DONORS, WE STILL NEED YOUR HELP!

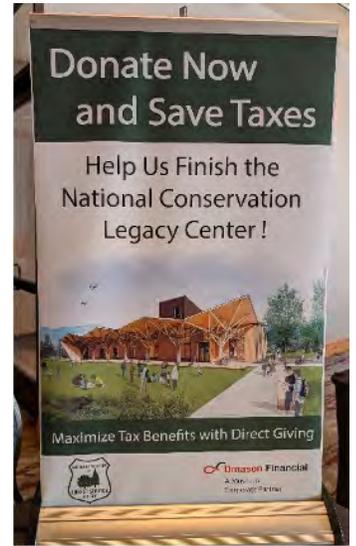
As of 9/22/25, we were still short, about \$700,000...BUT WE HAD INTEREST FROM MANY REUNION ATTENDEES. Those that toured the Center were surely impressed! They also had the opportunity to learn about tax saving opportunities if you donate now.

We are absolutely making progress on the Capital Campaign, thanks in very large part to the generosity of USFS retirees! THANK YOU, Reunion attendees, for the donations you made or committed to in Missoula. We are still tallying those donations, so stay tuned for updates. Attendees also viewed our new video, "Be Like Teddy Roosevelt," a must see:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdGZF4HVi6I>



*Dave Stack, the Museum's volunteer curator, in the Center's future repository. Our amazing collection will be moved here in 2026. Contact Dave if you know of historical items that need safeguarding. [dave.stack@forestservicemuseum.org](mailto:dave.stack@forestservicemuseum.org)*



### We still have some great sponsorship opportunities for donors:

Debbie Mason, Certified Financial Planner and educator in financial literacy, answered questions from Reunion attendees about how to donate to our capital campaign and SAVE TAXES. (Debbie is the wife of Board member Andy Mason).

NEW! - Brick pavers in the National Conservation Legacy Center orientation plaza will welcome all visitors to the Center.

Join in the welcome, with your customized brick – for you or to honor a loved one, a special colleague, or your entire family.

#### Pavers range in size and price (all are 2-3/8" thick):

4" x 8" – 3 lines of text -- \$250

8" x 8" – 6 lines of text -- \$750

6" x 9" – 4 lines of text -- \$500

12" x 12" – 6 lines of text -- \$1,000

Some exhibits in the Center's opening exhibition are still available for sponsorship!

For more information on any of these donor-sponsorship opportunities, please contact Tom Petersen at 406-541-6374, [tom.petersen@forestservicemuseum.org](mailto:tom.petersen@forestservicemuseum.org)

## Odds And Ends To Make You Smarter

### A Forest Roomba?

BurnBot is a huge, Zamboni-like vehicle that executes precisely controlled burns of flammable grass alongside buildings and roadways.

It's designed to create fire breaks - lines of charred land - that keep flames from spreading. With almost surgical precision, it can kill the flammable brush sitting within feet of homes and highways on even the hottest and driest days and with virtually no safety risks or disruptions to daily life.

<https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2025-09-05/burnbot-roomba-for-the-forest-wildfire-weapon-southern-california>

### Our Common Legacy - Chief's Video

Seven of the former U.S. Forest Service Chiefs tell the 40-year story of how conservation has been continuously evolving, with each Chief's shift building on the one that came before.

This careful layering of progress is how public lands endure. So, take a walk through time with us as we use lessons from the past to ready ourselves to stand up for public lands like never before.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoQqsnDShUU>

### Read Along with Smokey Bear

Meet Smokey Bear and some of the people who work with him to prevent human-caused wildfires! This video is based on our Reader publication series, which is written for children from kindergarten through 2nd grade.

Download the publication for free on our website. It includes colorful photos and illustrations, questions to spark conversations, a glossary of new vocabulary words, and a fun activity.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyUddQAgG3s>

### Pando Update

In the Wasatch Mountains of the western US on the slopes above a spring-fed lake, there dwells a single giant organism that provides an entire ecosystem on which plants and animals have relied for thousands of years.

This single genetic individual weighs around 6,000 metric tons. By mass, it is the largest single organism on Earth.

<https://www.sciencealert.com/earths-largest-organism-slowly-being-eaten-scientist-says>

### The Grand Ring

The Grand Ring is the symbol of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan and expresses the concept of "Unity in Diversity."

It is constructed using a fusion of modern construction methods and traditional Nuki joints, such as those used in the construction of Japanese shrines and temples. The Grand Ring was recognized by Guinness World Records on March 4, 2025 as "The largest wooden architectural structure."

<https://www.expo2025.or.jp/en/expo-map-index/main-facilities/grandring/>

### Intelligence and Communication in Trees

Spruce trees don't just react to solar eclipses—they anticipate them, synchronizing their bioelectrical signals hours in advance in a display of forest-wide coordination.

This discovery reveals a level of intelligence and communication in trees that rivals animal behavior. Remarkably, older trees lead the charge, hinting at environmental memory being passed down through the forest.

<https://scitechdaily.com/forests-talk-before-a-solar-eclipse-study-reveals-mysterious-electrical-communication/>

# The Wit and Wisdom of Eddie Brannon

By Ed Brannon

In over 40 years working as a Forest Service employee, I never met any employee who was political except the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary. Below that level was the professional service. We have not had an attempt to corrupt the civil service since the passage of the Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act of 1883. Wikipedia states the act mandates that most positions within the federal government should be awarded on the basis of merit instead of political patronage. The law ended the spoils system and built a professional non-political workforce. Steve Bannon labels it the “deep state.” I label his approach “the shallow state.” Trump’s class bully - one of many.

According to the New York Times, 25% of federal employees are eligible for retirement. Others can easily move to a private or NGO job – MD’s, PhD’s, experienced managers, lawyers, and even a job like Supervising Food Inspector. I can go into a supermarket and pick up a pack of Tyson’s chicken and never think about it. That’s because a federal employee is reviewing, testing, working with the processing plant.

What the agencies could potentially be left with, if they succeed, is the bottom 50%. Much of the experienced staff would be gone. National Hurricane Center, research at NIH, NPS wildlife biologist, food inspectors and on and on. It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to see this. Oh wait, this approach was orchestrated by a rocket scientist!

The approach is right out of Musk’s playbook. This is what he did to reduce staffing at Twitter. But if Twitter tanked, who cares other than Musk and his investors. Nothing happens. It impacts no one that matters. He did attempt to sort out his key staff. But Twitter is so freaking different from messing with the entire Federal Government. Such a crude approach. The main impact is to weaken the government and, therefore, degrade the services provided by every agency.

I pray that our elected officials have some sense of the impact and stop this lunacy. Beating up the civil service will have negative impacts that will last decades.

I was working when the Forest Service was forced to hire women into leadership positions. Now leadership is roughly 50% women. Having worked closely with line officers, the transition was not perfect, but it worked. They significantly strengthened our agency. By the end of my career, the best of the best were more than 50% women. Common sense tells us that if you increase the pool of candidates by half again, you end up with a stronger organization. The same is true for the efforts to attract a diverse group of employees. Equally important to me. What we have now is an effort to put Trump’s Brown Shirts in charge. I believe Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts will and do make a positive impact and only strengthen the civil service. Yes, you can find over the top things, but they are so minor and really are not a major problem.

In my opinion, we have a petulant 15-year-old leading our country. Name calling, petty revenge actions, removing security details on people and their families who have had their lives threatened. It is shocking how weak and unqualified his proposed Cabinet Secretaries are - child molesters, ideologues, people who support white racist groups, and being ok with people who chant “Jews will not replace us.” Disgusting to anyone who has a shred of integrity.

I remember a quote from Gifford Pinchot (founder of the Forest Service and governor of Pennsylvania) when he was President of Republicans for Roosevelt. Wendell Wilke, a businessman, was the Republican candidate for President. Pinchot summarizes it this way, ‘Business is about getting, Government is about giving.’ Running a business is to me so much easier because you have a clear purpose – making money. I don’t have a problem with that, but the federal government is NOT like a business. We serve all Americans.

I hope all Americans who voted for Trump are having second thoughts. Evangelicals line up behind Trump and claim to be devout Christians. I remember a time when fundamentalist Christians wore a bracelet that said, “What would Jesus do.” I hope they take a look in the mirror and ask themselves that question.

**Ed Brannon**

“Retired Civil Servant”



## Where in the World is Jim Thinnes?

### Gorillas in the Mist & More

by Jim Thinnes,  
Rocky Mountaineers Travel Coordinator

Six intrepid Rocky Mountaineers traveled to Rwanda, Uganda, and Kenya in late July and early August of 2025. Paul and Robin Langowski, Sharon Kyhl, Ann Marie Verde, Cindy Dean, and Jim Thinnes began their adventure in Kigali, Rwanda.

On our first day we visited the colossal Kigali Market and the Kigali Genocide Memorial. Over 250,000 victims are interred at the Memorial, which also describes the events of the 1994 genocide when 800,000 Tutsis were killed by Hutus.

We headed to the Rwanda/Uganda border where we changed time zones and switched from driving on the right to driving on the left. We continued to Mount Gahinga Lodge, where we were treated like royalty for the next three days. The following morning, we drove to Mgahinga Gorilla National Park, which is bordered on the south by Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda and on the west by Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo. We hiked for about an hour to see mountain gorillas in their natural habitat. The habituated gorilla group had two silverbacks, three adult females, and four juveniles. This is what we came for, and boy did it deliver.



*Mack, the silverback.*

We returned to a different section of the national park the following morning in search of golden monkeys. Our hour-long trek led us to a troop of 60-80 monkeys who were feeding in the trees and on the ground.

We took a boat safari along Lake Naivasha where we saw several groups of hippopotamuses and dozens of bird species including an African fish eagle and a huge great white pelican that stood nearly 5-feet tall. We stayed in cabins along the lake with warthogs, monkeys, and hippos as

neighbors. We hiked up Mt. Longonot, a dormant volcano crater, with giraffes, zebras, and elands grazing in the distance. We rode bikes in Hell's Gate National Park alongside grazing zebras and relaxed in a geothermal spa.

Our next stop was Bomanoma Eco-Lodge nestled in the heart of the Great Rift Valley. Brian and his wife Selena, along with their 4-year-old daughter Suri, hosted us.

We visited a nearby farm where we learned about the Maasai culture. We continued to the Masai Mara National Reserve with Moses who led us on a traditional African safari. We enjoyed the vistas of grazing animals including wildebeest, zebras, elephants, giraffes, impalas, gazelles, topi, elands, warthogs, and mongoose. Moses provided excellent views of lions, cape buffalo, leopard, cheetah, hyena, crocodiles, and hippos. We also saw lots of bird species including ostrich, storks, vultures, eagles, and hornbills.

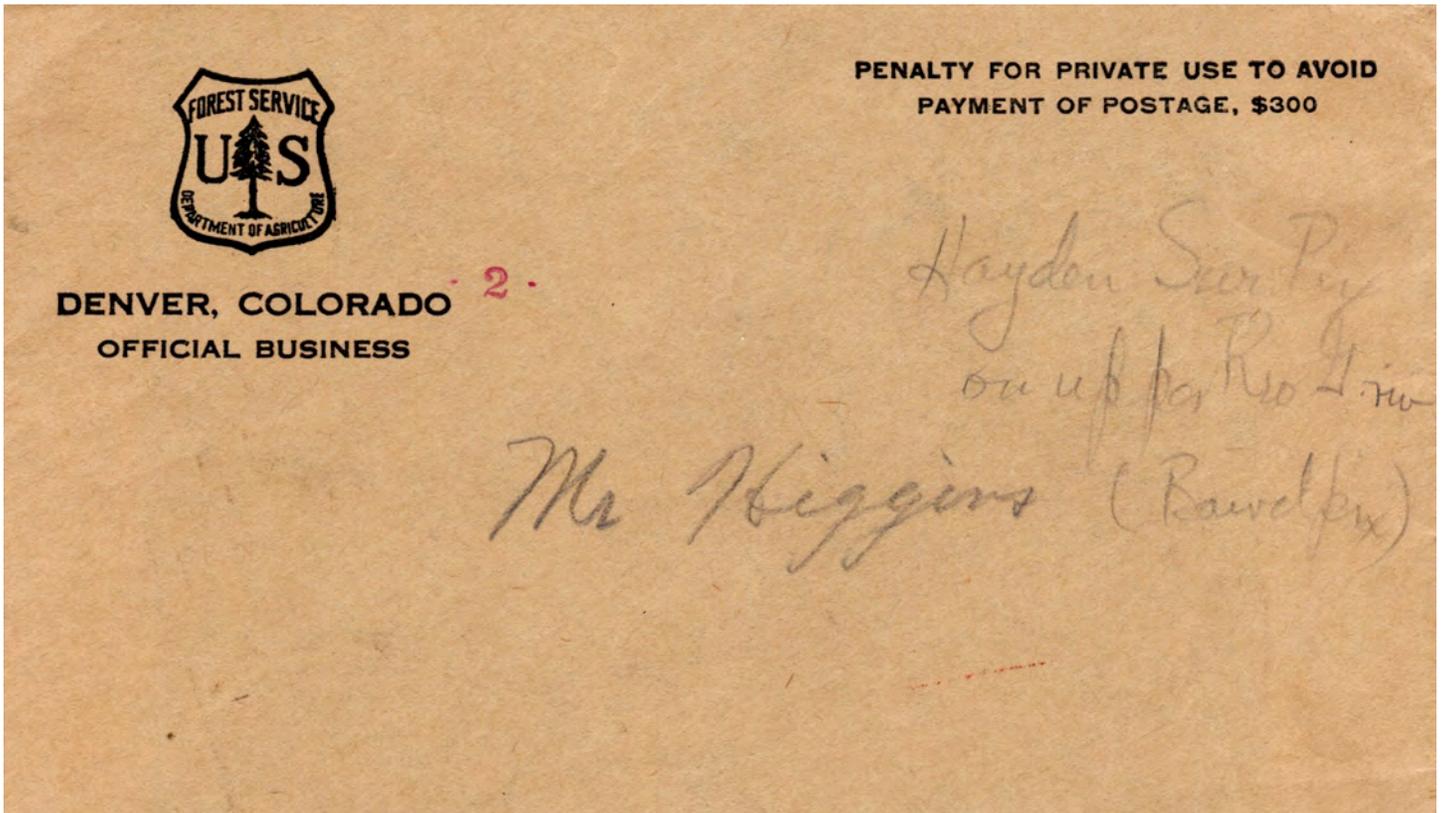


*Selena shares her experience growing up as a Maasai woman.*

Space is available for our Danube River trip from Budapest to Prague departing the US on July 10 and returning July 24, 2026.

The Ultimate Africa Safari in 2027 is full, but I am starting a waiting list. Send an email to [jimthinnes2@gmail.com](mailto:jimthinnes2@gmail.com) if interested.

## Forest Service Ephemera



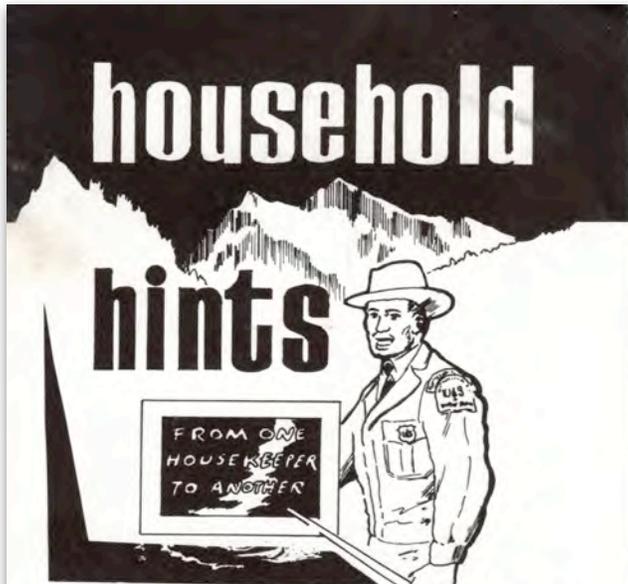
Found this in the basement files and sent to the Forest History Museum in Missoula. Anyone have a little history about these cool little envelopes?

A note from retiree Mary Ann Chambers:

*"The North Park District, now the Parks District, in Walden Colorado never threw anything away. When I worked there in '83-87, they had those envelopes, boxes of them, with the rest of the supplies. We sent maps, photos, computer printouts and all kinds of stuff using those envelopes and added postage on top of the warning. I asked about the note on there and was told that in days of old, before the post office became a separate entity from the rest of the Federal government, federal agencies did not pay postage. Hence the note warning people not to use the envelopes."*

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## Some Old Fashioned Household Tips



They call him a "Ranger" and he ranges and roves over the biggest backyard you ever saw: 187 million acres in 42 states and Puerto Rico.

Water from this forest irrigates millions of agriculture acres and is used in hundreds of cities. Timber from the forest is made into 5,000 products sold worldwide. Millions of big and small game, birds and fish, 1,300,000 cattle and 2,600,000 sheep live in this backyard.

Besides this, he has lots of company dropping in every day for scenic drives, wilderness travel, picnicking, camping, hiking, skiing, swimming, boating, hunting and fishing.

If you think "picking-up" the living room after a family weekend is a chore—multiply your problems and he has similar ones.

Do the kids leave their plates and glasses lying around after lunch? Do they miss the hamper with that dirty sock and litter the house with bits of paper and food? If you think your kids are messy, take a good look at any Forest Service Campground on any summer Monday morning and measure the mess in tons and man-hours of clean-up instead of pounds and your aching back.



Did you ever get your dander up and chalk rules and regulations on the kitchen blackboard to keep the kids in line and the house straight for company? Well, Rangers have blackboards too . . . . . Flip this page and you will see—

**It's A Small World After All!**



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

• FOREST SERVICE



. . . for the proper use, management, government and protection of, and maintenance of good order within Developed Recreation Sites and Areas of Concentrated Public Recreation use.

### The Following Acts Are Prohibited



- ◆ Failing to dispose of all garbage including paper, cans, bottles, waste materials and rubbish by removal from the site or area, or disposal at places provided for such disposition.
- ◆ Draining or dumping refuse or waste from any trailer or other vehicle except in places or receptacles provided for such uses.
- ◆ Cleaning fish or food, or washing clothing or articles of household use at hydrants or at water faucets located in rest-rooms.

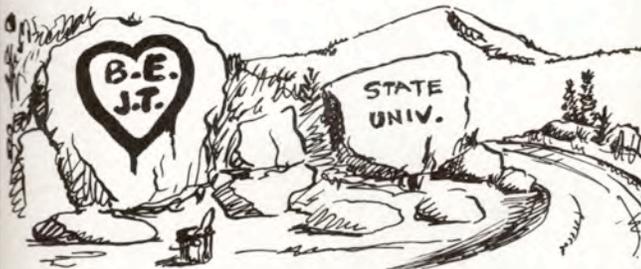


- ◆ Polluting or contaminating water supplies or water used for human consumption.
- ◆ Depositing, except into receptacles provided for that purpose, any body waste in or on any portion of any comfort station or any public structure, or depositing any bottles, cans, cloths, rags, metal, wood, stone or other damaging substance in any of the fixtures in such stations or structures.
- ◆ Using refuse containers or other refuse facilities for dumping household or commercial garbage or trash brought as such from private property.
- ◆ Inciting or participating in riots, or indulging in boisterous, abusive, threatening or indecent conduct.

(Continued from Page 19)



- ◆ Destroying, defacing, or removing any natural feature or plant.
- ◆ Destroying, injuring, defacing, removing, or disturbing in any manner any public building, sign, equipment, marker, or other structure or property.
- ◆ Selling or offering for sale any merchandise without written consent of the Forest Service.



- ◆ Distributing any handbills or circulars, or posting, placing, or erecting any bills, notices, papers, or advertising devices or matter of any kind without the written consent of the Forest Supervisor.



- ◆ Discharging firearms, firecrackers, rockets, or any other fireworks.



- ◆ Operating or using any audio devices, including radio, television, and musical instruments, and other noise producing devices, such as electrical generator plants and equipment driven by motors or engines, in such a manner and at such times to disturb other persons.

- ◆ Operating or using public address systems, whether fixed, portable, or vehicle mounted, except when such use or operation has been approved by the Forest Supervisor in writing.

- ◆ Installing aerial or other special radio-telephone or television equipment unless approved by the Forest Supervisor in writing.

### Prohibited In Developed Sites

- ◆ Occupying a site for other than primarily recreation purposes.

- ◆ Entering or using a site or a portion of a site closed to public use.

- ◆ Erecting or using unsightly or inappropriate structures.

- ◆ Occupying a site with (types of) camping equipment prohibited by the Forest Supervisor.



- ◆ Building a fire outside of stoves, grills, fireplaces or outside of fire rings provided for such a purpose.

- ◆ Camping overnight in places restricted to day use only.

- ◆ Before departure, failing to remove their camping equipment or to clean their rubbish from places occupied by the persons or persons.



- ◆ Pitching tents or parking trailers or other camping equipment except on places provided for such purposes.

- ◆ Camping within a campground for a longer period of time than that established by the Forest Supervisor.

- ◆ Leaving a camp unit unoccupied during the first night after camping equipment has been set up, or leaving unattended camping equipment for more than 24 hours thereafter, without permission of a Forest Officer. Unattended camping equipment which is not removed within the prescribed time limit is subject to impoundment.



◆ Failing to maintain quiet in campgrounds between the hours of 10 p. m. and 6 a. m.

◆ Entering or remaining in campground closed during established night periods to persons other than those who occupy the campground for camping purposes or persons visiting those campers. (This will be posted if applicable.)



◆ Bringing a dog, cat, or other animal into the site unless it is crated, caged, or upon a leash not longer than six feet, or otherwise under physical control at all times.

◆ Bringing animals other than seeing-eye dogs to a developed swimming beach.

◆ Bringing saddle, pack, or draft animal into the site unless it has been developed to accommodate them and is posted accordingly.

◆ Driving motor vehicles in excess of posted speeds.

◆ Driving or parking any vehicle or trailer except in places developed for this purpose.



◆ Driving any vehicle carelessly and heedlessly disregarding the rights or safety of others, or without caution and at a speed, or in a manner, so as to endanger any person or property.



◆ Driving bicycles, motorbikes, and motorcycles on trails within developed recreation sites.

◆ Driving motorbikes, motorcycles, or other motor vehicles on roads in developed recreation sites for any purpose other than access into, or egress out of the site.



◆ Operating a motor vehicle at any time without a muffler in good working order, or operating a motor vehicle in such a manner as to create excessive or unusual noise or annoying smoke, or using a muffler cutoff, bypass or similar device.

◆ Excessively accelerating the engine of a motor vehicle or motorcycle when such vehicle is not moving or is approaching or leaving a stopping place.

(Regulations 36 CFR 251.90 thru .96)

Violators are subject to a fine of not more than \$500 or imprisonment for not more than 6 months, or both.

The term "areas of concentrated public recreation use" means those areas identified by a posted map delineating its boundaries. The word "areas" refers to areas of concentrated public recreation use.

The term "developed recreation sites" means all improved observation, swimming, boating, camping and picnic sites. The word "sites" refers to recreation sites.

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION**  
Denver, Colorado  
U. S. Department of Agriculture — Forest Service

GPO 842 - 545

## Let's Do Lunch!



A big thank you to Lynne Larsen and Joy Armbruster for coordinating our next Denver retiree luncheon.

The gathering will be **Wednesday October 22 at 11:30** at Nicolo's Chicago Style Pizza (serving Chicago tavern-style pizzas, fresh salads, pasta, and more...).

They are located at 7847 West Jewell Avenue, Lakewood, CO 80232 (Wadsworth & Jewell, behind Wendy's). We will have a separate room and individual checks.

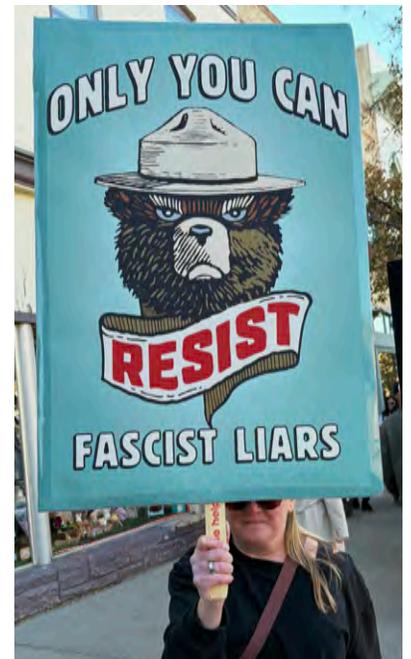
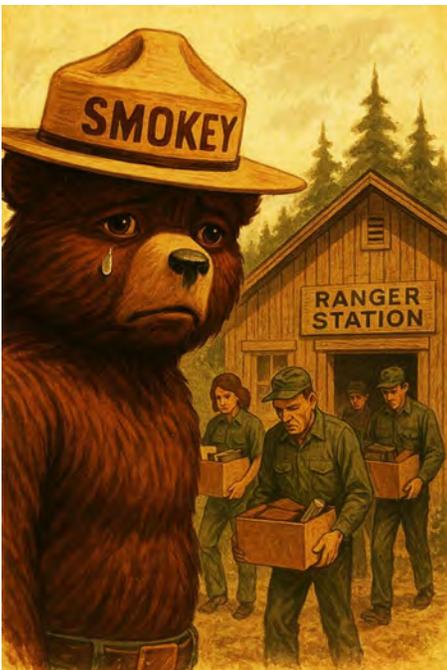
Menu and other information is available at <https://nicolospizzalakewoodco.com>

Please let Jim Thinnes know if you plan to attend. I hope to see you there.

[jimthinnes2@gmail.com](mailto:jimthinnes2@gmail.com)

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## Art and Memes Found on the World Wide Web



## Food Glorious Food - On A Fire

*Remember the food at fire camp? It might have looked like the C-Rations pictured below. Just this year new catering rules and regulations have been published and it's a whole new world out there. Bon appetit!*

### Steak Requirements (Dinner)

- Steak nights required: At least once every 5 dinner meals, a grilled or pan-seared steak must be offered.
- Meat type: Must be USDA Choice or higher grade, beef steak cuts only (e.g., sirloin, ribeye, New York strip).
- Portion size: Minimum of 6 oz. cooked weight per person.
- Preparation: Steaks must be grilled or seared on-site; precooked or reheated steaks are not acceptable.

**Vegetarian substitution:** A comparable entrée (e.g., marinated grilled portobello or tofu steak) must be available for non-meat eaters.



*Vintage 1960s U.S. Military C Ration Meal Combat Individual B1 Unit. Chicken and Noodles in Original Box White Bread*

- Minimum Components Required:

- Base greens (2 types minimum):

- Must include a blend of leafy greens such as romaine, spinach, spring mix, or kale. Iceberg lettuce alone does not meet requirements.

- At least 4 vegetable toppings from the following (must rotate):

- Cherry tomatoes, Cucumbers, Shredded carrots, Bell peppers, Red onions, Mushrooms, Broccoli or cauliflower.

- 1–2 protein toppings:

- Hard-boiled eggs, shredded cheese, beans (e.g., garbanzo or kidney), sunflower seeds, or tofu

### Egg Requirements (Breakfast)

- Eggs must be freshly prepared, not pre-cooked or powdered unless explicitly approved.
- Minimum quantity: 2 large eggs (or equivalent) per person, three if scrambled.
- Preparation: Scrambled eggs are the default, but fried eggs or omelets must be provided periodically or by request.
- Substitutes: Liquid egg substitute (cholesterol-free) must be available for those requesting it.
- Rotation: Eggs cannot be the sole protein at every breakfast—alternating with ham, sausage, bacon, or vegetarian options is required.

### Salad Bar Requirements (Dinner Meal)

- Mandatory at all dinner meals unless otherwise directed by the COR (Contracting Officer's Representative).

- Common standards: Ranch, Italian, Balsamic Vinaigrette, Oil & Vinegar
- Croutons or crunchy toppings: Must be stocked and rotated
- Fresh fruit or fruit salad: May be provided alongside or as a salad bar component

### DIETARY ACCOMMODATION STANDARDS

- Vegan and gluten-free options must be clearly labeled and available at every meal.
- Allergen labeling now mandatory for the top 9 allergens (e.g., peanuts, shellfish, dairy, etc.).
- Menus must be posted daily on-site and include ingredients and nutrition info upon request.

**DINNER MENU CHANGES**

- Minimum of two entrée choices required nightly, with one being vegetarian or vegan (not just meatless).
- Starch sides must rotate between mashed potatoes, pasta, rice, couscous, or grain medleys.
- Vegetable requirements now specify “two hot vegetables” plus salad bar with a variety of toppings and dressings.
- Expanded salad bar expectations: Must include mixed greens, spinach, toppings (e.g., carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes, beans), and 3 dressing options.
- Desserts must now include fresh fruit daily alongside baked options.
- Gluten-free and dairy-free meal options required by default (not by special request only). Upgrade to paid



**SACK LUNCH CHANGES**

- Main item must rotate (e.g., sandwich, wrap, burrito, rice bowl).
- Protein content increased: Minimum of 3 oz. of protein (meat or vegetarian equivalent).
- Snacks must include one high-protein item (e.g., jerky, protein bar, trail mix).
- Hydration item now must be included: Electrolyte drink or mix packet (e.g., Gatorade or Liquid IV-type product).

- Shelf-stable fruit (like apple sauce or dried fruit) required in addition to fresh fruit. (More more apples)

**BREAKFAST MENU CHANGES**

- Protein options now specified by name and type (e.g., scrambled eggs, sausage links, Canadian bacon) rather than generic terms.
- Expanded starch variety: Now must rotate among hash browns, home fries, grits, or rice.
- Mandatory inclusion of cold cereal and hot cereal each day.
- Fresh fruit servings increased, and fresh cut fruit or whole fruit must now accompany all breakfasts.
- Milk types expanded: 2%, 1%, and non-dairy options (e.g., almond, oat) are now required.
- Beverage additions: Coffee must be served with decaf and regular options. Tea now must include herbal options.

- Vegetarian and Vegan Meal Requirements Availability
- At least one vegetarian or vegan entrée must be offered at every meal (breakfast and dinner).
- These options must be available at the same time and with the same quality and presentation as meat-based meals—no special request or delay allowed.

## Robert Redford 1936 - 2025

“I think the environment should be put in the category of our national security. Defense of our resources is just as important as defense abroad. Otherwise what is there to defend?”

– ROBERT REDFORD, YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK DEDICATION IN 1985,  
SAVE THE MISSION TRAILS



*Undated photo of Robert Redford on the Holy Cross Ranger District, White River National Forest.*

*(Anyone have additional information about this image before we send it to the Forest History Museum?)*

“Robert Redford was the forerunner of Leonardo DiCaprio and others of later generations who embraced environmental activism. Like Earth Day itself, his legacy stretches back to the roots of the modern environmental movement. There will never be another like him, one of the last great stars of the old Hollywood system, using the full weight of the power available only at that time and place in support of saving the fragile ecosystems of our one and only planet.

May we be inspired by his memory and the gifts he gave us in so many forms to continue the fight and to remember that the river will continue long after we’re gone, as long as we steer clear of our worst tendencies and extend our generosity to future generations and all the world’s creatures.”

- Jonah Baker

# Remembering Charles Lennahan

## Office of General Counsel



**October 23, 1937**  
**May 23, 2025**

Charles Basil Lennahan was born in Washington, D.C. in 1937 to Charles M. and Cravella Lennahan. He grew up in Arlington, Virginia, and spent his teenage years rowing on the Potomac River with his high school's varsity crew team. Upon graduation he

attended Rutgers University where he majored in geology. After receiving his B.A. in 1959, Charles enlisted in the Army and primarily served at Fort Knox in Kentucky. Knowing he wanted to continue his education but unsure of whether to pursue an advanced degree in geology or study law, Charles took a job as a general factotum with a law firm in Washington, D.C. In 1961 Charles enrolled in the Washington College of Law at American University, where he edited the law review.

Charles's first job after law school was at the U.S. Department of Justice, where he met Rebecca Cassity, his wife. They married in 1967 after six months of dating. The couple moved to Colorado in 1968 so he could pursue his interest in natural resources law.

Charles worked as an attorney for the state department of social services and represented the state board in a case before the U.S. Supreme Court. He returned to federal service in the Office of the General Counsel of the Department of Agriculture. His primary client was the U.S. Forest Service, and he devoted much of his time to helping that agency accommodate new environmental laws. He retired in 1997.

Charles loved reading, woodworking, travel, and spending time with friends, his dog Dusty, and most of all his family. Charles and Becky have two daughters, Claire and Debbie.

Charles was preceded in death by his parents. He is survived by his wife Rebecca; two daughters, Claire Muller (Daniel) and Debbie Smith (Tracy); three grandchildren, Maryellen Ampersand (Quentin), Owen Hinken, and Andy Smith; and his sister, Ann Powers (Joe).

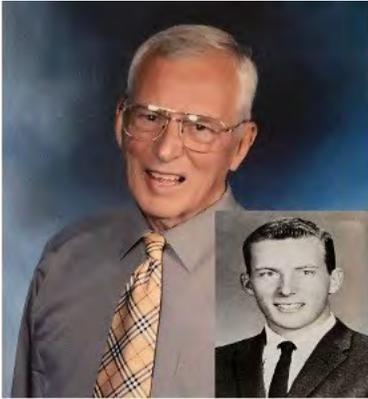
Charles had a witty sense of humor and a genuine love of learning. Charles was an endless source of knowledge. For things he knew little about he dove in headfirst to learn more. Whether it was how to build a bookshelf or which car to buy, Charles was always available to talk things through and offer advice. He believed that from every mistake, you learn something new.

Charles Lennahan will be missed by many people, and for many reasons. Charles cared deeply about the people around him and greatly impacted their lives. Charles had a talent for making people feel special and important. By selflessly supporting and encouraging his family, friends, and colleagues, he helped them overcome challenges and achieve outstanding things. Charles was always in your corner. Charles was your biggest fan.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to Humane Colorado (formerly the Dumb Friends League), an organization Charles wholeheartedly supported, and which assisted in placing cherished pets in his home.



## Remembrances



### Clarence Newton Carleton

**Clarence Carleton**, affectionately known as Newton, passed away on August 21, 2025, in Cedar City, Utah, leaving a profound legacy of faith, family, and kindness. Born on November 25, 1936, in Kingsland, Georgia,

to Clarence Cecil Carleton and Anna Isobel Clark, Newton faced early challenges. His father died of throat cancer when Newton was 20 months old, leaving his mother, Anna, a registered nurse, to raise him and his infant sister, Ella Marion, with support from their aunt, Alice Clark. The family moved to Jacksonville, Florida, and after Anna's remarriage to Royal Swasey Jr., relocated to Molen, Utah, in 1946, later settling in Ferron and Price, Utah, where siblings, Annette, Frances, Wayne, and Beverly joined the family.

Newton's work ethic was evident from childhood. At eight, he shoveled irrigation ditches; as a teen, he sacked grain and worked on a dairy farm. From 18 to 20, he managed the family farm, later taking jobs in Price detailing cars, at a service station, and with the Bureau of Land Management survey crew. In 1960, he served a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Great Lakes Mission, covering Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and Michigan. In 1961, after serving as a National Guard mail clerk, Newton's prayers for employment were answered with a 30-year career at the US Forest Service, retiring in 1993.

On November 25, 1964, his 28th birthday—Newton married his eternal companion, Ella Dean Powell, a date chosen to ensure he'd never forget their anniversary. They raised six children: Lee, Connie,

DeAnn, Jed, Janna, and Joy. Newton balanced roles as a bishop, dairy farm owner in Wellington, Utah, and Forest Service employee. The family moved to Alamosa and Delta, Colorado, to pursue Newton's farming dreams, but later relocated to Cedar City, Utah, sacrificing the farm to secure in-state tuition for their children's education. All six children earned bachelor's degrees—four at Southern Utah University, two at Brigham Young University—with four in education, three earning master's degrees, and one a doctorate.

Despite health challenges, including Parkinson's for Newton and heart issues for Ella, their devotion endured. They returned to Wellington in 2008 to be near siblings and moved back to Cedar City in 2023 for family support. Newton's kindness was boundless, always offering a "Thank you" and sharing his cherished sweets—pie, brownies, ice cream, and candies—from a constant candy jar and Kool-Aid pitcher. In his final years, despite physical limitations, Newton's focus remained on Ella, assisting her with tasks like putting on her shoes and constantly seeking her presence.

A faithful servant, Newton served as bishop of Wellington 2nd Ward, in four other bishoprics, and as an ordinance worker in the St. George Temple. He loved reading Louis L'Amour novels, raising sheep and cows, and farming alfalfa.

Newton is survived by his beloved wife, Ella Dean; children, Lee (Connie), Connie (Corey) Beck, DeAnn (Earl) Sevy, Jed (Janece), Janna (Trevor) Bundy, and Joy (Nick) Sorenson; 18 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; and siblings, Marion (Gary) Bowie, Annette (Chall) Cook, Frances Swasey, Wayne (Earlene) Swasey, and Beverly Fryer.

*(Continued from Page 27)*


## Remembrances



### **Cirilia J. (Lila) Coca**

**Cirilia Coca** passed away on August, 16, 2025, in Laramie, peacefully after a courageous battle with Parkinsons. She was born in Laramie on July 9th, 1955, to Cora and Jerry Coca. She was thrilled that Laramie threw her a Jubilee Days parade that her mom watched from the old Ivinson Hospital. She

was the third child of eleven siblings.

She graduated from Laramie Senior High in 1973. She played volleyball and was a talented violinist as well as a bright student. She and her sister Mary Ellen and friends were instrumental in establishing the first girls' varsity volleyball team sporting homemade jerseys. Prior to graduating. She began a student internship with the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest. She was hired as a full-time employee on June 21st 1974. She was an exemplary and far too dependable employee. She worked tirelessly and many extra hours to ensure all her tasks were done to her meticulous standards. She started in the mail room and worked all the way up to Human Resources Specialist. Her career spanned 43 years, and she retired in 2017. Her Forest service career culminated in a 1950's themed party that she insisted on planning herself. She then directed others to make it happen and dress accordingly. She volunteered for many committees for parties and played on several co-ed softball, soccer and volleyball teams. She made

many batches of enchiladas and other dishes to share. She took her younger siblings and later nieces and nephews to their legendary Christmas parties where "Santa" gave the best presents. After her mother died in 2006, she further filled the role of "mom" making sure that everyone was taken care of and was doing what Grandma Coca would have wanted. She was an incredible motherly role model for her entire family.

She was an avid athlete, playing softball, soccer, volleyball, and bowling. The pins screamed when she bowled and heaven help the baseman who was on the receiving end of one of her super sonic throws, or line drives. Later she faithfully attended her nieces and nephews (and great relatives) sporting and school events no matter the weather or how far she had to travel. She had a lovely singing voice and was a talented cake decorator, event planner, and rosary maker. She watched every episode of Gunsmoke, Murder She Wrote, and the Rifleman at least 10 times.

She is pre-deceased by her mother, Cora Coca, brothers Tony Sisneros and Jerry Coca, infant sister Francis, and God daughter Jessica. She is survived by siblings: Treece Bailey (Torn), Elauteria (Teri) Frazier (Jeff), Mary Ellen (Mark) Earnhardt, Rock (Julie), Jeff (Juventina), Anthony "Christy", Laurence "Lencho" (Alanna), Julieann (Jay), God daughters: Louisa Lopez, Ariel Earnhardt, Jessica Coca, Bianca Coca, Sarah Dobkins, Shelby Wright, and Anabel Coca.

*(Continued from Page 28)*


## Remembrances



### Philip Norman (Phil) Geenen

**Philip Geenen**, 79, of Custer, SD passed away March 21, 2025, at his residence in Custer, SD with his family by his side.

Phil was born in October 1945, in Chicago, IL, to George

and Frances (Wnukowski) Geenen. He graduated from Fenger High School in 1963 and attended Chicago State University on the southeast side of Chicago. He received his bachelor's degree in college for Biology and Education.

Phil met the 'love of his life' at an A&W Root Beer stand in Blue Island, IL. He pulled up in his 1964 GTO, and a 57-year romance began.

Phil was drafted into the United States Army, July 1967. Before leaving, to go to Vietnam, Mary Ann and Phil were married on July 26th, 1967. When Phil started Basic Training, a pregnant Mary Ann, loaded up the GTO and drove to San Antonio, TX to be by his side until he left for Vietnam. He was an Army Medical Corpsman. Phil never mentioned much about his experiences while there, but his family is so grateful he returned safely. He was Honorably Discharged April 1969.

Phil went to college on the GI bill and started helping his dad, George, with his floor sanding business, Monarch Floor Sanding. Once he got his degree he started teaching Biology, Driver's Ed and coached at Brother Rice High School.

A vacation to the Black Hills of South Dakota changed their city life forever. Phil and Mary Ann decided to pack up their two daughters, Ellie and Carrie, a dog and two cats and moved to Custer, August 1978.

Phil's first job in SD was working for Job Service of South Dakota, helping other people find jobs. He then moved onto working for Burlington Railroad fixing tracks between Hot Springs and Edgemont. He then applied for and was hired by Custer County Sheriff's Office in 1981. He found his new passion,

was darn good at it and was considered a Gentle Giant. He enjoyed busting parties, interacting with the tourists and loved protecting the people of Custer County. In 1986 he decided to run for Sheriff. After losing the election by six votes he decided to move on. He then worked for Outlaw Ranch, Box Elder Police Department and then got his foot in the door with the Federal Government when he was hired to work at Nemo Job Corp where he worked for about a year before being hired into the Forest Service Law Enforcement. Phil made drug busts on the forest, solved major crime cases and took a class on Wildland Fire and found his calling. He solved the cause of the Jasper fire the day it started and other fires in the Black Hills and surrounding areas. Phil retired in March 2009.

Phil was very active with the Jaycees, was on the Custer Volunteer Ambulance Service, sold Shaklee products, had a satellite business with Joe Steichen and sanded the floors in the visitor's center of Crazy Horse. In his later years he was instrumental when Operation Black Hills Cabin was getting started, still investigated fires when needed and took care of his wife until the day she died in February 2022.

After Mary Ann passed, he bought a 1974 Bricklin, which was in very bad condition. He then found and purchased a 1966 GTO, that needed some work and a new paint job. Once he and his son-in-law, Jeff McGraw, got it running and had a Black Cherry paint job done on it, Phil could be seen driving up and down Main St and back and forth to Deadwood.

Phil loved fishing in the beautiful lakes the Black Hills has to offer. He mainly caught trout up at Sylvan Lake where he loved having a young passerby reel in his catch.

Phil is survived by his daughters, Ellie (Jeff) McGraw of Custer, Carrie (Wes) Wood of Belle Fourche, grandsons Corbin Bowker of Rapid City, SD, Zach Douglas of Brookings, SD, Quintin Gilg of Chadron, NE, and granddaughter, Elise Wood of Belle Fourche, SD, brother Jerry Geenen (Sharon) of IN and their family, brother-in-law Roger Weber of Custer, sister in-laws Joellen Toth and Mindy Weber of Custer and his little dog, Mork.

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# Remembrances



## Wyoma Jean Hansen

**Wyoma Hansen, 72,** Passed away peacefully at home surrounded by family after a long battle with cancer. She fought bravely and with dignity while never losing her positive attitude and sense of humor.

Wyoma was born in Loveland, CO. to George W. Skinner and Ruth Skinner.

This was shortly after a move from Wyoming, which is how she got her name. She was the fourth of five children. Three sisters and one brother. Her childhood was spent in Leadville and Salida before moving to Saguache in the sixth grade. She graduated from Mountain Valley High School in 1970. After graduation she worked for the FBI for a short time in Washington D.C. She then worked for the Flash Oil in St. Louis. After returning to Saguache, she worked at the Baca Land Co.

On the bicentennial anniversary of America, July 4, 1976, she married Ron Hansen. They shared, one month shy of forty-nine years together. The union produced two sons, Steven and John. She worked several jobs including Bank Teller, Attorney

Assistant, and finally a career with the US Forest Service. After retirement, she was active in the community. She served two terms as Saguache trustee and one term as Republican Chair for Saguache County. Travel was also fun for her. Wyoma had many hobbies over the years including fishing, hunting, boating, and snowmobiling. She also shot in rifle and pistol competitions. Wyoma also loved to walk. She knew almost everyone, and she loved them all and they loved her back. She was devoted to her family and grandchildren and always had a nugget of advice, whether you wanted it or not. After becoming ill, she moved to Canon City to be closer to medical care.

She was preceded in death by her father George W. Skinner, mother Ruth Skinner, and oldest sister Wilma Schaffer. She is survived by husband Ron Hansen, son Steven Hansen, son John (Jonice) Hansen, sister Winnie (Steve) Eubanks, sister Wanda (Tony) Harrison, and brother Elton Skinner. Also 3 grandchildren, 1 great grandchild, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Wyoma was an amazing, caring person, and will be missed by all who knew her. **GO WITH GOD!**



# Remembrances



## Charles J. (Chuck) Hendricks

**Charles Hendricks** of Lakewood, Colorado passed away, May 30, 2025. He was born on August 29, 1932, to parents Pete and Marian Hendricks. He was their only child. Due to family

and economic circumstances, he was raised by his maternal grandparents Charles and Olga Collin in the small rural community of Lake Preston, SD. As a teen he worked summers operating many types of farm machinery involving mowing, raking and baling of hay. In high school Chuck played trumpet in the band. He attended Boys State in 1949 and met his future wife Donna Reetz who was serving his dining table.

Chuck enrolled in the school of engineering at South Dakota State University in the fall of 1950. While home for the holidays in 1952 he received his U.S. Army draft notice. After basic leadership training at Camp Roberts California, Chuck was on orders for combat in Korea. Days later a cease fire agreement was signed, and his orders were changed to state-side duty. Upon discharge in 1955 he returned to SDSU graduating with a degree in agricultural engineering in 1956. Chuck and Donna were married after a six-year courtship on June 1, 1955. They lived in a university owned farmstead working off some of their rent by making improvements to the property while Chuck finished his education.

In 1958 Chuck joined the U.S. Forest Service working on engineering assignments throughout the west. He advanced into management in 1964 and served in positions at Clear Creek Job Corps Center in Carson City, NV; Superior National Forest in Duluth, MN; Shawnee National Forest in

Harrisburg, IL; and Caribou National Forest in Pocatello, ID. He retired in 1992 after serving as Director of Mineral and Water Resources for the Rocky Mountain Region based in Lakewood, CO. He continued working for several years as a consultant navigating federal land easements for individuals and businesses.

In the early 1960s, Chuck purchased the family farm originally homesteaded by his great-grandmother near Lake Preston, SD. Over time he acquired additional farm property, actively managing the business along with the Tolzin family as the farm operator partner. This partnership continues and has been conducted on a 'handshake' agreement over two generations.

Chuck and Donna made many lifelong friends over the years. Always an involved church member in every community where they lived, Chuck sang baritone in church choirs and was a frequent session member. He was a handy-man extraordinaire for their home, neighbors and friends. Chuck rebuilt five classic VWs starting with his daughter's first car, a 1965 VW convertible. Chuck and Donna traveled abroad with friends, participated in many National Association of Forest Service Retirees events, and enjoyed jazz and symphony concerts. They frequently traveled back to SD to visit family and friends, attend high school reunions, and check on the farm.

Chuck's wife of 69 years, Donna preceded him in death by six months. Chuck is survived by daughter Cheryl, son Lane (Julie) and grandson Michael.

Over the 40 years as residents of Lakewood, Chuck and Donna were active members of 1st Presbyterian Church of Lakewood and later St. Andrew Presbyterian Church of Denver. A service will take place when Chuck and Donna are laid to rest at Lake Preston Cemetery later this year.

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## Remembrances



### Ross Alan Moncrief

**Ross Moncrief** passed away quietly on March 6, 2025. He was born in Aberdeen, WA, and his family made their home in several places including Japan as he grew up. Ross attended Flathead Valley Community College, the University of

Montana/Missoula, and worked on the elite Hot-Shots Wildland fire crew during the summers. He graduated in Forestry and joined the U.S. Forest Service as a Fire Management Officer.

Ross and wife, Elizabeth Shaw, met in Utah while with the Forest Service, and they worked for the agency on several different forests in the Rocky Mountain area. He retired in 2005 as the Fire Management Officer for the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest and a team member of a Type II National Wildfire Incident Management Team.

They moved to their retirement home in Skagit Valley, WA in 2014 where he appreciated the peace and slow pace of the area. His family will plan a small gathering in the coming months to say their goodbyes.



### Wayne Maurice Quade

**Wayne Quade** died on July 4, 2025. He was born to Francis and Virginia Quade in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, on March 22, 1941, and grew up in Wausau, Wisconsin. He was a lifelong member of the Christian Science Church.

Early in his youth he became passionate about Boy Scouts, becoming an Eagle Scout in 1958, and later an Explorer Scout. Wayne graduated from Leelanau Boarding School in Glen Arbor, Michigan, and attended the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point, graduating with a B.S. degree.

After graduation, he served in the U.S. Air Force for four years, working as a technician on Air Force bombers at a U.S. base. He then attended the University of Montana and graduated with a M.S. Degree in Natural Resource Management.

He started his 37 years of service with the U.S. Forest Service in Alaska, Montana, and Colorado. After retirement, he continued to advocate for natural resources locally with the Parks and Recreation Districts and traveled to Washington, D.C., on several occasions to lobby Congress on their behalf.

He was a passionate outdoors adventurer and natural resource advisor, and leader in Boy Scouts of America. He recently received a 70-years of Service to Scouting Award. He attended four World Jamborees, four National Jamborees and was a dedicated educator at Philmont Camp.

He was decorated with the rarely awarded, Daniel Carter Beard Medal in 2016, and is only the eleventh person to receive the award in Colorado. This award was created to honor Masons committed to bringing the ideals of scouting to young men. He was a 32nd Degree Mason, member of the Scottish Rites, and the Eastern Stars.

He was co-founder of the Montrose Citizen's Climate Lobby and a board member of the Friends of the Himalayas, and strong supporter of the Ute Indian Museum along with several conservation groups.

He is survived by his sister, Marilyn Siems, of Georgia, and his brother, David Quade of Massachusetts; nieces and nephews, Christine, Charles, Allison and Jonathan; four great nieces and five great nephews.

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## Remembrances



### Robert (Bob) Eugene Russell

**Robert Russell**, 91, of Spearfish, South Dakota, passed away peacefully and went to rest with the Lord on Friday, September 26, 2025, at the VA Community Living

Center in Fort Meade, South Dakota.

Bob was born at the Fort Meade VA Hospital on June 21, 1934, to Hamilton (Rusty) Russell and Helen Lydia (Larson) Russell. After his mother passed away when Bob was three, he and his sister, Betty Lou, were raised by their Grandmother Vikki, in Lead, South Dakota.

Bob attended Lead High School, where he met his future wife, Marrison Mueller. He graduated in 1952 and soon enlisted in the Navy, proudly serving his country for four years of active duty. His tour of duty took him across the Pacific on three different mine sweepers. His stops included the Marshall Islands, Hawaii, the Philippines and Japan among others. He was honorably discharged as an E-6 Petty Officer First Class earning the Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, The Korean Service Medal and The United Nations Service Medal. He continued his service with the South Dakota Army National Guard until 1978.

On December 16, 1956, Bob married Marrison, the love of his life. Together they began raising their family in the Lead/Deadwood area, where Bob worked at the Homestake Gold Mine before beginning his education at Black Hills Teachers College. While in Spearfish, Bob attended classes during the day and worked nights at the Spearfish Sawmill. During this time they welcomed their first three children, Valorie, Wanda, and Mark. He earned his bachelor's degree in education in 1962 and went on to work at the Plankinton State

Training Center and with the South Dakota Forest Service during the summers.

Bob joined the Nemo Job Corps in 1964, which brought the family back to the Black Hills where their fourth child, Rebecca and their youngest, Scott, were added to the family. After the devastating Rapid City flood of 1972 destroyed their home, Bob moved the family back to Spearfish, which became their permanent home. He retired from the Job Corps as the Recreation Director in 1989 after 25 years of service. He concluded his career as the Recreation Director at the Student Union at Black Hills State College.

Bob loved fishing, camping, hiking, and driving in the Black Hills. He enjoyed carpentry, sports, and, most of all, time with his family. He never missed a chance to support his children and grandchildren—whether they were playing or coaching. His family cherishes the countless memories, lessons, and love he gave so freely.

Bob was a man of many lives. After losing Marrison in 2012 he survived several medical scares and close calls. Bouncing back every time and making numerous friends with his care-givers of whom the family deeply appreciates. We will remember the twinkle in his eye, his smile, his chuckle that shook his body, his growl, his dozens of one liners and nicknames that let you know he really cared about you and appreciated you. Dad, we know you are just “resting your eyes.”

Bob is survived by his five children: Valorie (Tom) Olson of Bennington, NE; Wanda Russell of Spearfish, SD; Mark (Stacey) Russell of Spearfish, SD; Becky (Steve) Harshman of Casper, WY; and Scott (Annette) Russell of Casper, WY. He was blessed with 13 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, his Grandmother Vikki, his sister Betty Lou Moore, and his beloved wife of 56 years, Marrison.

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# Remembrances



## Gerald Dean Scott

**Gerald Scott**, 91, of Custer, SD, passed away August 7, 2025.

Gerald Dean Scott was born August 18, 1933, in Edgemont, SD, to Ralph and Madge (Robison)

Scott. He grew up in the Minnekahta Valley on the family's ranch just north of the Fall River/Custer County line. He graduated from Edgemont High School in 1953. That November he was inducted in the United States Army taking his basic training at Ft. Riley, KS. He was transferred to Ft Baker, CA where he served with the 561st Engineer Port Construction Company. He was honorably discharged on February 21, 1956. He began working with the US Forest Service on a temporary ten-month basis; then be "laid off" for at least two months before he could be rehired. This process went on for several cycles before a "Permanent" position opened up.

During one of these "lay-off 's he enrolled in Hanson Auto Diesel School in Fargo, ND. After completing his training, he came back home to work for Wing's Auto Service in Edgemont for two years before "trying again" with the Forest Service. It was then

that he met his soul mate, Kathleen Brown. They were married on February 21, 1962, and made their home in Custer, SD. where they raised their three children. When his current ten-month status was up he went to work for Campbell Chevrolet in Custer from 1962 -1967. He went back to the Forest Service for two more "ten-month hitches" before being offered a permanent position which he held until his retirement in 1994. During his 30 years he worked as a heavy equipment operator, involved in building roads, small dams, blasting, brush disposal as well as fire-fighting. After his retirement he and Kathleen started a craft business out of their home making trophies and plaques for a number of organizations and businesses including many county fairs in South Dakota and Wyoming.

After Kathleen's death, Gerald became interested in beekeeping. He had several hives and could often be seen peddling his honey around town.

Gerald is survived by his daughter, Cynthia (Steve) Bostrom of New Effington, SD (who he stayed with this past year); daughter-in law, Denise Scott of Newell, SD; five grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; brother-in-law, Dennis (Betty) Brown of Spring Hill, FL; three nieces; two nephews; and several cousins.



## Frank S. (Stan) Vallejos

**Frank Vallejos**, 70, of Pueblo West, CO went to be with the Lord on December 3, 2024. He was preceded in death by his parents, Simplicio and Agnes Vallejos; and brother-in-law, Jerry Avila. He is survived

by his loving wife of 49 years, Melinda Vallejos; sisters, Elvira and Margaret (Leroy) Chacon; his beloved fur babies, Aubrie and Zoe; numerous

nieces, nephews, extended family and friends. Frank was a range management specialist on the Rio Grande and then on the Pike San Isabel Cimarron Comanche NF and NF. until his retirement.

He was an avid outdoors man. He loved spending many wonderful hours at the family ranch but most of all he loved spending time with his family. He enjoyed going out to eat, his favorite part of the meal was dessert. Frank will be deeply missed by all who loved him.



# *The Last Word*

By Tom L. Thompson

## **The Last Word - Power vs. Pride: Take 2**

Eight months ago, I wrote a piece for this “The Last Word” column entitled Power vs. Pride. I have reread that article quite a few times since then just to try and calibrate my brain with what has happened since then in our country with months of incessant attack on the fabric of our constitution and democratic republic. What we witnessed in the first month or two of this MAGA administration was disturbing, but what has happened and continues to play out in so many ways is even more than disturbing, in my opinion it is downright scary.

It is important that I make it clear right here that I am not a “left wing radical”. I am not even a Democrat. I was too young to vote for John F. Kennedy, but had I been able to, I believe I would have voted for him as he was such an American inspiration. I could not vote in 1964 as I was just 18 years old and the 26th Amendment of the Constitution, changing the voting age from 21 to 18, did not pass until 1971. I wanted to vote in 1968 but on election day I was on a month detail to remote Yakutat, Alaska working in the dark of winter putting a boundary around an 8.75 billion board-foot timber sale. I think I would have voted for Humphrey as he seemed like very reasonable dedicated leader. When I became registered as a Republican I do not remember, but in 1972 I know I voted for Nixon and believed he had done a good job in a troubling time for our nation. He was obviously a disappointment to our nation, but I was so impressed with Gerald Ford when he took over in 1973.

I am proud to have voted for Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, George W. Bush, John McCain, and Mitt Romney and indeed thought their ideas of how to lead our country were aligned with my values. I met four of those six and respected them greatly, especially for how they tried to bring us together as people with different views of the world. I believe Ford, for a second term, McCain, and Romney all would have been very good presidents. Even though I didn't vote for Carter, Clinton, or Obama...in retrospect, I think they all were honorable in their intentions to respect our democracy and did what they thought best for the country. I respect them for their leadership, honesty, and sincerity. None of these were perfect but all were respectful, honorable, and caring.

I rather doubt I will ever vote again for a Republican candidate as the stain that continues to envelop the Grand Old Party will likely never be removed, at least not in my lifetime. I now find myself labeled as “the enemy within.” Strange how those of us who don't kneel to this administration are now “enemies”. That just doesn't align with who we have been as a nation for two-hundred and fifty years. I have grandfathers and family who fought in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, the First World War, the Second World War, and the Korean War. I am shocked that the freedom that so many gave so much to preserve over so many generations is being taken away so insidiously from within.

The strategy of this MAGA version of the Republican party is not to lead a democratic nation but to transform it to what appears to be a non-democratic nation, no matter what the consequences of accompanied hate and disrespect. As I said back in February, “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.”

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I ponder why this has happened to a nation as special as the United States of America and continue to be puzzled. The answer I suppose lies in the words like deception, divisiveness, deceit, extreme “partisanship”, irresponsible leadership, lust for power, and finally intimidation, retribution, and reprisal. There is a lack of respect, trust, care, integrity, or honesty with this administration.

The renowned moderate conservative author and journalist David Brooks recently asked “How is it that half of America looks at Donald Trump and doesn’t find him morally repellent? He lies, cheats, steals, betrays, and behaves cruelly and corruptly, and more than 70 million Americans find him, at the very least, morally acceptable. Some even see him as heroic, admirable, and wonderful.” This is indeed reflective of the division that exists in our society and who we individually blame for that division. The right blames the left, and the left blames the right, but it seems we should all pause and acknowledge that we are all humans who are trying to deal with the uncertainties of a world that is not the same as we are used to. We just don’t seem to want to trust others as we have in the past. Too many only think of themselves and their own self-interests today and have lost their dedication to country that our forefathers and mothers exhibited for generations.

So many, many people understand the gravity of the situation we face as a nation, but there are questions as to whether there is any chance to fend off the assault on the “who we are as a nation.” Perhaps it will likely take a generation or even several generations of Americans to measure up to this challenge. The powerful young brain trust of Miller, Vought, and maybe Vance who are from all indications leading the MAGA takeover and setting the example of what they want America to be...a divided nation. But we can fight back. We can write letters, like the one about the poorly-thought-out plan to reorganize the Forest Service; we can call or write to our members of Congress; we can talk to our friends about why we think what is happening to the FS and the nation is wrong; people can quit the Republican Party! These things do get noticed and may make it possible for a new leader to emerge.

We can show up for protests, write letters, speak to friends and neighbors; educate people about the impact to their interests they are unaware of. Most have no idea of the impact to the Forest Service for instance. We all must show up, speak up and influence where we can. Now is not the time to give up.

The question is whether our nation will have the patience and quiet but effective persistence to resist in every possible way to forestall the extreme adverse consequences that are out in front of us. My Republican party is an embarrassment. My trust in our system of checks and balances is fractured. I have lost all respect for so many of our elected leaders across the country who have chosen to support such a dreadful administration’s quest for power and seem content with a divided nation.

My hope is that those who understand and choose to help stop this assault will not be afraid to do something. My hope is that those who feel trapped because they voted for this because they didn’t like the alternative are willing to recognize how wrong this turned out not just for the Forest Service, but for nearly every aspect of our beloved country. My hope is that we survive this very difficult time in our nation’s history and learn how to respect and trust each other much better than we have demonstrated recently. My hope is that a new leader steps forward and instills a vision of America coming together again rather than being consumed with tearing us apart.

And that is perhaps my “Last Word”.

