

Missoulian

Forestry pioneer, conservation icon Bud Moore dies at age 93

By **ROB CHANEY** of the Missoulian | Posted: Monday, November 29, 2010 10:45 pm

Bud Moore once wrote about encountering a grizzly bear on a narrow trail when he was 12 years old.

That may seem inconsequential, unless you know a bit more about the man who knew the Bitterroot Mountains when they still had grizzlies, who earned an eighth-grade diploma from Woodman Elementary School and capped it with an honorary doctorate of science from the University of Montana, who ran his own timber mill and taught generations of wilderness lovers the intricacies of ecosystem management.

William R. "Bud" Moore died on Friday. He was 93 years old.

"The most wonderful thing about Bud was his storytelling," said Anne Dahl, whose 30-year friendship covered barely a third of Moore's living history. "You would go over there, have a simple idea of what you wanted to talk about, and find yourself sitting down to lunch hearing humorous accounts of all kinds of life experiences he had.

"It would be really hard to get back on your bike and pedal home. What was remarkable to me was a 12-year-old boy was self-sufficient enough to be hiking on his own, deep in the mountains, and encountering a grizzly bear."

Moore parleyed his story-gathering ability into a career that spanned running traplines in the Lochsa River country to running a major department in the U.S. Forest Service. He served in the U.S. Marines and as Powell District Ranger. In his beloved mountains, he herded sheep and college students to the choicest bits of land.

Bill Worf worked with Moore for years in the Forest Service. Both men served in the Northern Region headquarters in Missoula, where Worf was director of wilderness and recreation and Moore headed fire and aviation operations.

Together with Orville Daniels, they pioneered the first "natural fire plan" for wilderness areas in the 1970s. The revolutionary concept of exploring how unchallenged backcountry fires might improve the landscape helped transform Forest Service firefighting policies for decades.

"He was always standing in support of good, sound forest management," Worf said. "He wasn't a non-use kind of person. He believed the national forests were here to serve man, but he supported the wilderness. He recognized we had to have some places to look back on as a benchmark and see where man had done something that had an effect."

Outside the headquarters hallways, Worf and Moore were frequent hiking partners.

"The one thing I remember about Bud Moore in particular - he always had a notebook with him," Worf said. "When we'd stop and take a break, he'd have a drink of water and rest, and while he was resting he'd write."

Many of those notebook entries found their way to publication. Moore finished "The Lochsa Story - Land Ethics in the Bitterroot Mountains" in 1996. In it he mixed his personal history (seeing perhaps the last of the Bitterroot grizzlies, learning to run traplines as a Woodman Elementary School student) with his professional observations about beetle-killed spruce stands and what he called "the illusion of superabundance" in timber sales.

Swan Valley historian Steve Lamar recalled a story from Moore's journals that captured the man's perspective. Moore could interpret volumes from tracks in the snow, and he once saw spoor of three coyotes that had encountered his snowshoe trail. He noticed one coyote jumped over his trail, while the second walked in his footsteps for a bit. The third sniffed the human path and turned away.

Moore saw that same reaction in people when they encounter something new, Lamar said. They might all bring different perspectives and react in different ways, but they all deserved respect.

That attitude helped him forge consensus in developing the Upper Swan Valley Landscape Assessment. The multi-year project cataloged everything from the region's geological character to its wildlife migration corridors and commercial development.

Betsy Spettigue worked with Moore as his "administrative officer" (his term, she said) writing the assessment. She said someone planning a timber

sale on their own land could use the report to see how it might fit in with other projects, how it might affect the larger ecosystem.

"The Forest Service uses it extensively for work they do down here," Spettigue said. "It gave people an idea of the ecosystem from the ridgetop of the Missions to the ridgetop of the Swans, and all the different kinds of ecosystems between."

Moore kept track of his personal life with equal precision. Spettigue had the job of shifting Moore's bookkeeping ledgers from notepads to Excel spreadsheets.

"His columns always added exactly right," she said. "He had his lumber sales center that kept track of inventory - what was sold, how many board feet cut. We were computerizing all that, and it always just blew me away that it added up just the way he did. He also had a way of a backup system so he could demonstrate to the IRS how he did what he did. He kept track of it down to the toothpick."

In retirement, Moore started acting as a personal example that his ideas were right. He helped found the Northwest Connections education center in Condon with friends Tom and Melanie Parker, and was a frequent speaker and tour leader in its programs.

"Always at the end the day he'd be saying, 'I got more out of this than you did,' " Melanie Parker said. "He loved seeing them take it to the next level. He was the first person who really started talking around here about ecosystem management, about looking at land and community as a whole. It's not having a forester look after the trees and someone from fisheries look after the fish, but everyone working together, so you really understood the effects you would have tinkering with any one piece.

"Because he had seen people go from thinking of the land as a whole, to the mid-century when everyone was academic and specialized and pumped out of the universities, not looking across specializations. He really pushed us to think."

Moore put those principles to use setting up management plans for his Condon homestead and a parcel he bought more recently in Mineral County, near Lozeau. He transformed his forester's practice of timber-cruising into a new method of "eco-cruising." Daughter Vickie Moore explained it as a way of assessing all the properties of a piece of ground - not just the traditional timber value.

"Once we had the ecosystems marked with aerial photos, we ground-truthed it," she said. "You watch for connections, animal migration routes, everything. You keep your eyes open."

Moore did most the boundary marking himself, despite his growing years. Vickie Moore said it wasn't until he turned 75 that he slowed down enough for her to keep up with him on the trail.

Vickie Moore studied foreign languages and eventually went to work in France. But she said the sabbatical year she spent with her father packed in more learning than she'd had in the previous 20. The course in basic woodcraft included how to start a fire in the snow, how to recognize a trap tree even when two feet of fresh snow has erased all other landmarks, how to make a Lochsa hitch on a snowshoe, and the fine art of storytelling.

The one she remembered best was an encounter with a grizzly bear a few years ago.

"He was behind the main cabin in the Swan, hunting, at the age of 89," Vickie Moore said. "He was following deer tracks down a game trail, and heard something behind him. He turned around, and there was a big old male grizzly coming his way.

"The grizzly stood up, and they looked each other in the eye. That really impressed Pop - they had eye contact several seconds.

"Then it walked right around him about 50 feet away, and got back on the game trail. It never looked back. Pop was pretty convinced the bear knew who he was, that he's the neighbor who lives in that cabin and won't do me any harm. I think of it as two old grizzlies sizing each other up."

Reporter Rob Chaney can be reached at (406) 523-5382 or at rchaney@missoulian.com.