WILLIAM "BUD" MOORE

AN APPRECIATION

A couple of issues ago, FHS President Steve Anderson wrote in his message that oral history interviews are important because when people die, they take a library's worth of knowledge with them. The institutional knowledge that any one individual possesses can exceed that of any physical library. Over the past two years, I have had the pleasure of conducting interviews with seven people, including long-time Forest Service employee and World War II veteran William "Bud" Moore. In June 2010 I spent two days with Bud at his cabin in the Bitterroot Mountains of Montana. It was an amazing, life-changing experience.

At age ninety-two, Bud was in the third year of what he called eco-cruising his newest property to assess the land for all its values—not only timber, but also mineral, water, wildlife, habitat, plant, and even historical values. He was taking a holistic approach to determining every way the two hundred-plus acres might provide an income stream and how he could do it on a sustainable basis. He was determined to do here what he had done on his Coyote Forest property in the Swan River valley beginning in the 1970s: leave an inheritance for his children and demonstrate to the world that there is a way to live close to the land in a manner that could be sustained for generations to come. Once he had assessed the land, he told me, he would use that information to develop his ten-year plan for ecosystem management, a practice he had adopted long before the Forest Service did.

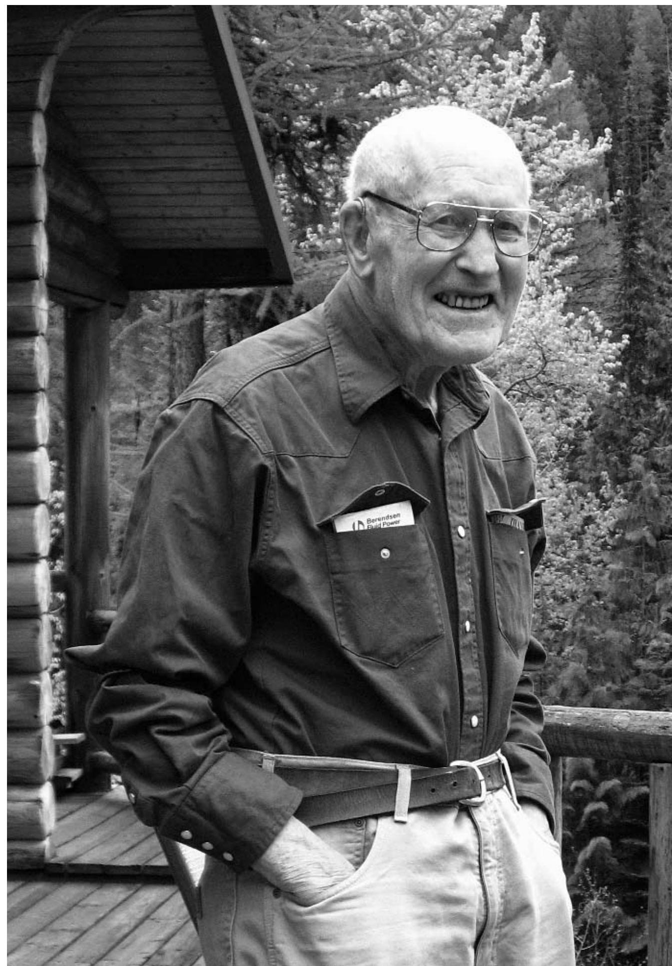
I had come to interview him about his past. He wanted to talk to me about what he was doing currently and what it meant for the future. The information gathered here and at Coyote would inform a manual on eco-cruising he intended to write so that others could do it too. His energy and enthusiasm were impressive and infectious. As we toured his property, he kept recommending books for me to study that provided the scientific foundation for what he had learned intuitively simply by "staying close to nature." He couldn't understand why the global economy and Americans in particular were driven by consumerism to such a degree; he thought that the world was consuming natural resources much too quickly and wastefully, and in the process had become disconnected from the land. We needed to stay close to nature, take only what we truly need, and look at land for all of its values—economic as well as aesthetic.

When I finally did sit down to interview him, returning Bud to his distant past (he retired from the Forest Service in the mid-1970s) seemed to quickly tire him. He would recover his energy when he'd reference his current work. It was clear to me that, for Bud, the past was something that informed his present, not something to dwell upon or ruminate over. He told of growing up in a frontier cabin in Montana's Lochsa region and how the family survived in part through hunting and trapping, something he turned to again in his seventies to help makes ends meet when the timber market collapsed. His numerous encounters with grizzly bears left me spellbound, his presence at so many turning points in fire management history left me agog.

Above all else, what left the deepest imprint on me was his fervent drive to demonstrate a different way of living, to help guide the world forward. He was living his land ethic. The stream running through his property provided fresh, unfiltered water and powered his electrical generator. He had no television or

BY JAMES G. LEWIS

radio nor need of either. He had a cell phone in this remote location only because his kids insisted on it. His was the very definition of a lone voice crying out in the wilderness. I understood then why several mutual Forest Service friends had said I must meet him, even if I didn't interview him. Here was Henry David Thoreau and Aldo Leopold rolled into one. Using his Montana experiences Bud has reinterpreted them for the twenty-first century in *The Lochsa Story—Land Ethics in the Bitterroot Mountains*, his account of the region's history, his life there, and his love for the land. From reading this treasure, you'd never know that he had only an eighth-grade education. This wonderful meditation on the place that taught him so much—and in turn can teach all of us—should be on bookshelves alongside *Walden* and *A Sand County Almanac*.



COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Bud Moore at his cabin "Castle Moore," on McFarland Creek in the Bitterroots, June 2010. In 2009, he told a reporter, "I've been thinking about the footprint we all leave. I want to make sure all mine are in order."

It was clear as I interviewed him that his summary of four decades of working in fire management was just scratching the surface and I'd never have enough time to capture all that history and knowledge. Besides, he had passed much of that down to his successors, who use it daily in the fire management and wilderness policies he helped shape and put in place. I was there, I realized afterward, to learn about living. I vowed to return in the fall and bring my wife because I felt that she, too, had much to learn from him.

When we arrived three months later, I found a very different man. The cancer Bud had been battling now had the upper hand. He was in bed eighteen or more hours a day, rising only long enough to take a meal before returning to his room where we would sit and talk with him. He used the mealtimes to explain his goals for the property and to discuss what his employee and friend, Warren Miller, had found during that day's eco-cruise. Bud had walked the perimeter of the rugged country himself to mark the boundary and knew the land extremely well. Together the two men had surveyed and mapped the old mining claim. Bud didn't need a map to know where Warren had spent the day.

It was clear from the questions he asked Warren that, despite his deteriorating health, he was still very much engaged in the project. If anything, his concern for transforming this remote, roughly handled corner of the Bitterroots into a model forest had intensified because of his illness. Friends reported that he retained that concern and engagement until his dying day on November 26, 2010.

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Bud closed *The Lochsa Story* (1996) with his account of a hike to a favorite remote overlook called Indian Post Office, which gave him a panoramic view of the Lochsa region. While there he reflected on the land and our relationship with it. To the south, "the wilderness remains wild, but elsewhere clear-cuts scar the landscapes" that had barely been touched by fire in his youth. Despite his misgivings about how the Lochsa had been managed over the last century, he leaves us feeling optimistic about the future.

> *Not many have touched the Lochsa and escaped the land's great spirit of place, and realization is growing that nature's ways have to be respected if we are to prosper very long. The quest for understanding nature can never end, for humans will never fully solve the mystery of it all. Everything in this land, including ourselves, is so intricately connected to everything else. The important thing is that while we continue to harvest the land's bounty, as we must, we keep on learning as we go.*
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> *We must take time now to deepen our understanding of the consequences of what we have done and are doing to the land. Within our reach lies untapped knowledge whose exploration, together with lessons drawn from the successes and failures of the past, offers us a remarkable opportunity to draw closer to the earth. By doing so, we of the Lochsa—and people everywhere, for that matter—can continue to live and prosper in harmony with the land.*
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> *Three young ground squirrels chased each other among the boulders. The clouds darkened. I saw a glint of lightning behind the crest of the Grave Mountains, far to the south. The land oozed life, and its fresh breath rippled the surface of the lake. I suppressed an urge to hike out along the ridge and beyond, into the depths of a new frontier. To do that takes more than one lifetime. A raindrop fell. I looked around at that great expanse, feeling the natural power that had shaped so much of what I am and what many others are. Then I lay down in the beargrass and listened to the wind.* □