

2000
By Dave Campbell
West Fork District
Ranger

Doris Milner – A thoughtful advocate for wild places

I met Doris Milner for the first time within a week of arriving in Sula as the new District Ranger in 1990. She came to the office with several people to talk about a concern over management of Forest Service land in French Basin. This was to be the first of many conversations with Doris over the next 18 years or so. It was later that I came to know just how big a part Doris played in the establishment and the expansion of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. As a young (well at least younger) District Ranger, I came to seek out and rely on Doris' wisdom. She took part in field trips and offered advice carefully. More than once I heard her say "I need to know more about that" before commenting. She made sure she knew what she was talking about and consequently her advice and opinions were always valuable. I recall sitting with her on the deck behind her house, shaded by a magnificent old Ponderosa Pine with a view of Blodgett Canyon to the west and asking her what she thought about management of our wilderness and our roadless lands on the forest. Her insights helped me in a number of decisions that were controversial. I treasure a letter of support she wrote for the controversial Tolan Creek Timber sale. The project had been opposed by the Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks and others but by working with the department and people like Doris we were able to turn that opposition into support. Her advice was key in making that happen.

Later after I moved to the West Fork District, I again sought out Doris' advice on issues concerning her beloved Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. She had worked hard to see the wilderness expanded in the Central Idaho Wilderness Act to reach the Magruder Corridor. I recall a field trip to discuss graveling a portion of the Magruder corridor road to reduce impacts to the Selway River. It was clear she cared about the fishery and equally clear that she knew the road was to be maintained in a primitive state and was ready to quote from the legislative record if need be.

She was very concerned about more than wilderness management because she recognized values and preferences of others and took time to understand them. This balanced and thoughtful attitude made her a true opinion leader, whether the issue at hand was wilderness, fire management, fisheries or endangered species. She was a key supporter of the wilderness fire program that got a start in 1972 on the Bitterroot National Forest. Along with Orville Daniels, Bob Mutch, Dave Aldrich, Bill Worf and Bud Moore, she was honored as a "wilderness fire pioneer" for her support on the 30th anniversary in 2002.

She worked with the Bitterroot National Forest to acquire lands logged over by Darby Lumber Company by hosting meetings at her house with elected representatives, conservation organizations, and anyone else necessary to get the job done.

In 2004 when we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the wilderness act, National Public Radio looked for a citizen activist to talk to and of course that was Doris. The crew rafted part of her beloved Selway River and traveled the Magruder Corridor that she worked to protect and of course she was interviewed beneath that grand old pine tree. You can hear her interview still on the NPR.org website by searching for Selway-Bitterroot in the

archives. It's easy to recognize the passion for wild places and to get an idea of what a formidable foe or a powerful ally Doris was by listening to her. Those of us who knew Doris will miss her wise counsel, her wit and sense of humor but can witness her legacy anytime we gaze upon the western skyline of the Bitterroot valley and remember her words.