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Emil Keck, Nezperce National Forest,

Shares USDA Superior Service Award

With His Wife, Penny Kummrow Keck

WASH., D.C.--Emil Keck, Grangeville, Idaho, Moose Creek Ranger Station forestry technician, Nezperce National Forest, this week received the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Superior Service Award.

In making the award in a special ceremony in the Dept. of Agriculture auditorium May 25 in Washington, D.C., Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz cited Keck for his "extraordinary performance in accomplishing a trail bridge construction program, development, and use of tools and techniques especially adapted to wilderness, and training employees in woodsmanship skills."

Don Biddison, Supervisor of the Nezperce National Forest, in nominating Keck for the honor award, said, "This award should include two people. Emil and Penny--Mr. & Mrs. Keck--work as an inseparable team. They share work and hardships equally. They are equally capable and skilled. Any honors should be shared. Since Penny and Emil are married, existing nepotism laws do not permit Penny to serve as an employee. She has signed on as a volunteer, and for 8 years has worked without financial compensation from the Government."

The USDA Award was made for their "construction and

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design of trail bridges, utilizing native materials at a fraction of normal costs; development and use of tools and techniques especially adapted to the wilderness environment including cable rigging and winches, low impact camping and hand tools; and training of young and inexperienced people in woodsmanship including wilderness survival, low impact camping techniques, fire control, and the use of hand tools including the ax and crosscut saw."

Keck, a native of Washburn, N.D., is a veteran of 19 years with the Forest Service. He worked as a logger in the Northwest and after various temporary appointments, from 1932 to 1945, with the Kootenai National Forest, Bureau of Plant Industry, Bureau of Entomology & Plant Quarantine, Cabinet National Forest and Clearwater National Forest, he accepted an appointment as a forester on the Kootenai National Forest headquarters, Libby, Montana where he served from June 1945 to September 1946. He worked as fire control officer on the Selway Ranger District of the Nezperce National Forest during 1962. Later he held a similar post on the Moose Creek Ranger District from November 1964 until January 1972. He is now a forestry technician (construction & maintenance assistant) at Moose Creek which includes much of the roadless 1.2-million acre Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.

Penny Keck, a native of Sherwood, Oregon, holds a physical education degree from Portland State University. She worked as a lookout on the Moose Creek District in the summer of 1967. Emil and Penny were married the following fall. Since her marriage, Penny has worked as a volunteer with no financial

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compensation. She has become a skilled firefighter, blaster, trail bridge designer, packer, rigger, and supervisor.

"The Kecks have an uncompromising work ethic," Biddison says. "Each spring they train new employees in the use of tools, fire suppression and detection, and woodsmanship. They supervise trail crews and lookouts while doing heavy maintenance themselves.

"When fall arrives, Emil and Penny winterize the Ranger Station and set up their winter tent camp at a remote trail bridge site. During the winter months they build a bridge, breaking the routine with an occasional trip to Moose Creek to shovel roofs and unload suspension bridges."

They have constructed bridges that vary from suspension spans to short stringer structures. Their current project is a 265-foot span that will take 4 years to complete. They work alone, using cable, winches, and tackle to move and place heavy components. When they depart from a bridge site, they leave only the bridge, no evidence remains to show that two people spent a winter there.