

Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs 2008 Resolutions

RES. NO. 19: IN REMEMBRANCE OF CLIF MERRITT

RESOLUTION: The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs notes with sadness the recent passing of Mr. Clif Merritt. Clif was one of the greatest friends of wilderness the Northwest and Northern Rockies ever had. Because of his tireless determination to fight for the wild places he knew so intimately and loved so well, more millions of acres are now protected than when he began his career.

Clif grew up loving the wilderness of his native Montana, and began his long quest to better protect it in the 1940s, long before most others were aware there was a problem.

Perhaps the best way to describe Clif's character is with a single word: perseverance, which is another way of saying courage in face of great odds. By the early 1960s, Clif had already initiated (but lost) a struggle to protect the splendid forests of the Bunker Creek region, adjacent to the Bob Marshall Wilderness -- a loss he grieved over the rest of his life.

But Clif kept on, because he possessed other special qualities -- perhaps above all, the capacity to conceive a grand vision: Clif dreamed of a truly expansive wilderness system throughout the Rocky Mountain states, and he never wavered in the pursuit of this dream.

That quality, plus a talent for inspiring others to share the same vision, has left its permanent mark on our Western landscapes. Just a few successful examples of his wilderness vision include Montana's Lincoln-Sagegoat, Mission Mountains, Absaroka-Beartooth, and the Great Bear Wildernesses, plus the Missouri Scenic River and in Idaho, treasures such as Hells Canyon, and the Sawtooth, Selway-Bitterroot, and River of No Return Wildernesses. Each of these treasured places, and many others, bear Clif's mark; all are living evidence of, and testament to, his powerful vision and his determination to make it come true.

All his life Clif was both a man of action and a visionary in pursuit of the highest environmental goals, with achievements to match. He has, literally, made environmental history across the American West, and that stunning network of beautiful protected wild places across the Interior Northwest are his permanent legacy.

Submitted by Brock Evans.