



THE WILDEST PLACE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SELWAY BITTERROOT FRANK CHURCH FOUNDATION



SPRING 2020

SPRING 2020

STAFF

SALLY FERGUSON
Executive Director

TORI ARNSPARGER
Program Director

SUE WEBSTER
Communications/
Membership

KRISSY FERRITER
Volunteer Coordinator

COURTNEY WALL
Training Liaison

CONNOR ADAMS
Lead Wilderness
Steward

JOSH PAGE
Frank Church Lead
Wilderness Steward

Due to the COVID-19 virus the start of our season has been delayed. We are working closely with our Forest Service partners to determine start dates and we look forward to introducing you to all seasonal staff and Wilderness Ranger Fellows soon!

BOISE OFFICE
322 E. Front St., Ste. 420F
P. O. Box 1886
Boise, ID 83701
208.373.4381

**WESTERN
MONTANA OFFICE**
120 Hickory Ave, Ste. A
Missoula, MT 59801
406.880.1927



SELWAY BITTERROOT
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**CONNIE SAYLOR
JOHNSON**
2006 - 2018

The Wildest Place is the membership newsletter of the Selway-Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation. With the support of members, local businesses, and generous grantors, the SBFC is committed to connecting citizens and communities to assist in the stewardship of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness, and surrounding wildlands.

EDITING: Sue Webster

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The Selway-Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

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FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

The greatest influence in my young life was growing up as a Girl Scout. I had the same scout leaders from age 7 through age 18. The Girl Scout motto is "Be Prepared....Willingness to serve is not enough; you must know how to do the job well, even in an emergency".



With the COVID-19 emergency upon us I think back to those words. Sally Ferguson is a strong leader and a shining example of service. Sally knows how to do the job better than well, and is constantly adapting as this fluid situation continues to change. In this season of unprecedented challenges, I feel confident that we are prepared from all angles.

The financial impact on non-profit organizations has been significant. Sally and the SBFC board take the fiduciary responsibilities seriously. Both board and Sally develop budgets to actively build and preserve the financial resources necessary to support the accomplishment of our short and long-term mission. While our margins are small, we have been able to build cash reserves, which are crucial in times like these. It is also a time when the support of our financial donors, members, and partners is so critical. The SBFC is a circle of friendships and support, united by a commitment to Wilderness stewardship.

To you we say, Thank You. We are full of gratitude and here for the long haul. Wilderness is important, our work is important, and you are important.

Yours in Scouting,

NANCY FELDMAN
Board Chair

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Let me describe my "environment". It's probably a lot like yours. I'm sitting in front of my laptop, at my desk, in my home. My connection to co-workers and my SBFC community is through a little black screen. Our lives have been turned upside down by an organism we can't even see. It's just not a fair fight!



This spring is different from any other. How do I tell our story this season? Our story is about community. Our story is about the extraordinary people that come together to treat Wilderness to one long spa day. Right about now we would be heading to Powell Ranger Station for two weeks of Wilderness Skills Institute training with staff and Wilderness Ranger Fellows. We would be gathering with our Wilderness community of FS partners, volunteers, SBFC board members, and supporters to launch our Wilderness Stewardship season.

After reading DJ Lee's new book, **REMOTE** (see story page 4), one line in particular rang true with me. DJ said, "I've come to know in my bones that protecting the wilderness is about much more than preserving natural environments. It is an ecology of stories that connects us all."

It's our community connection, our "ecology of stories" that is so precious to everyone linked to SBFC. This edition's cover is reflective of that sentiment. I wanted to pack our cover with people and memories, with our Wilderness community. I guess I just wanted one big giant hug from everyone. This cover surrounds me with reassurance. It reminds me that Wilderness is forever, and that we will continue to connect through stewardship in the months and years ahead.

We will learn from this and we will be stronger for it. We're all in this together. We are a community. I'm certain we are all grateful for that.

Be well!

SALLY FERGUSON
Executive Director

2020 CHAIR, BOARD, & STAFF UPDATES

We are pleased to introduce our new Board Chair, **Nancy Feldman**. Nancy has served on the board for 3 years and will be replacing outgoing Chairman, Ed Krumpke. Ed will continue to serve as Past Chair. Jim Heidelbergger has stepped into the Vice Chair role. Welcome Nancy.

We are excited to announce the addition of three new members to the SBFC Board of Directors: **Bob Beckley, Carlos Diaz, and Deb Gale**. They all bring a new and unique skill set and background to the table. We are looking forward to collaborating with them and taking the Foundation to the next level. Welcome Bob, Carlos, and Deb.

A warm welcome to **Tori Arnsparger**, SBFC Program Director, who joined SBFC in January. Tori brings with her a wealth of Wilderness experience and fresh ideas. Tori works in the Missoula Program office and is eager and prepared to get staff, Wilderness Ranger Fellows and volunteers out on the trails when it's safe for all. Welcome Tori.



NANCY FELDMAN – SBFC BOARD CHAIR – BOISE, ID

Nancy attended the University of Idaho to study Wildland Recreation Management. After graduating, a series of jobs landed her in the field of International Logistics which she loved until deciding to spend full time raising her boys, who are now grown. Nancy has spent the past 27 years volunteering thousands of hours in the Boise community. She is excited to be Involved with SBFC, an organization that brings her back to the field she studied in the early 80s.



BOB BECKLEY, BOARD MEMBER – MISSOULA, MT

Bob's first job was with the Nez Perce National Forest in Grangeville. He attended the University of Montana during his off seasons. Eventually Bob transferred to the USFS Missoula Technology and Development Center where he worked as a project leader with an emphasis on traditional skills. Bob has written, and continues to develop, the training curricula for a variety traditional skills disciplines. He has a passion for teaching traditional skills and maintains his Crosscut Saw "C" Evaluator status.



DEB GALE, BOARD MEMBER - CORVALLIS, MT

Deb recently retired from the Forest Service, where she worked on the Bitterroot National Forest. She spent 32 years involved in Recreation, Timber, Trails, Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Special Uses, Minerals, and Lands in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. Deb's academic background includes degrees in Forestry and Resource Recreation Management. She spent her college summers on trail crews and as a Wilderness Ranger.



CARLOS DIAZ, BOARD MEMBER – MCCALL, ID

Carlos has been living in Idaho for the past 34 years, the past four of them in McCall. Carlos is a retired Business and Information Technology executive with a BA in Finance, and an MS in Organizational and Human Resource Development. His love and spiritual connection for the mountains and wilderness were the driving force for deciding to move to Idaho.



TORI ARNSPARGER – PROGRAM DIRECTOR – MISSOULA, MT

A warm welcome to Tori Arnsparger, SBFC Program Director. Tori brings six years of on-the-ground experience working in the Selway-Bitterroot and Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness areas. She worked three seasons on the Bitterroot National Forest's trail crew and obtained her degree in Environmental Studies at the University of Montana. Tori also served as a Wilderness Fellow with the Montana Wilderness Association where she led community outreach and advocacy efforts..

REMOTE

FINDING HOME IN THE BITTERROOTS



DJ with her mother in the Selway Crags 2008

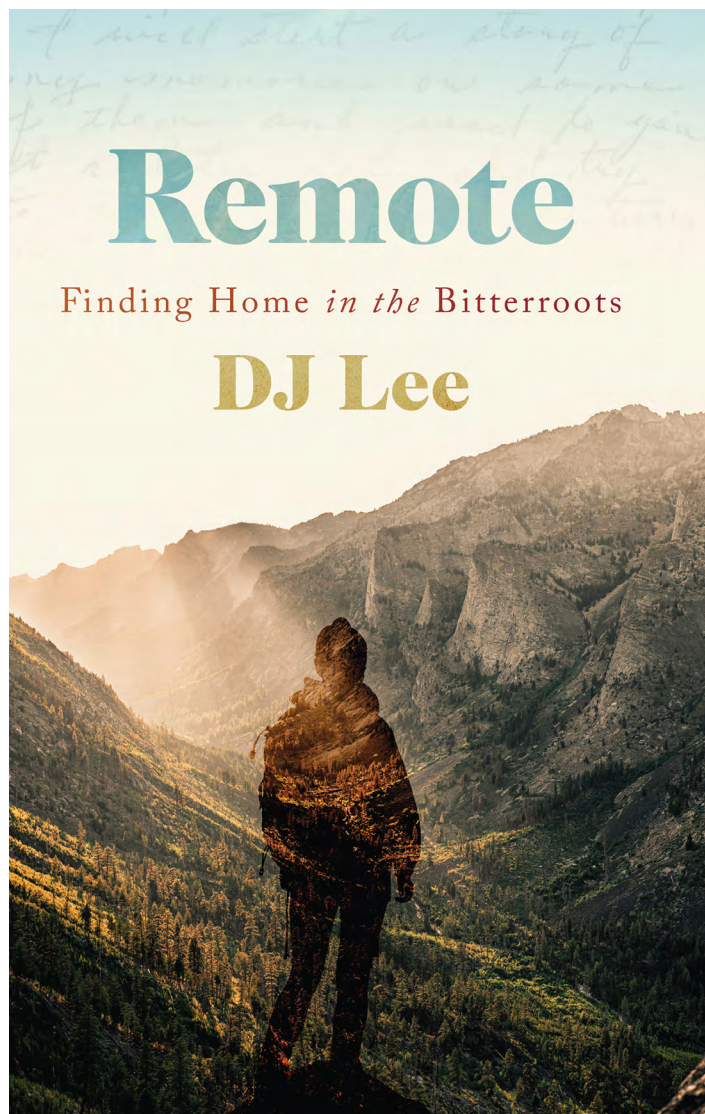
This is a story about author DJ Lee's quest to uncover her family's troubled history in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. **REMOTE** was published in March 2020 and just recently won first place in the Memoir category of the 2020 Idaho Writer's Guild Writing Contest.

DJ Lee is a former SBFC board member and currently a Regents Professor of English at Washington State University where she teaches literature, creative writing, and experimental courses. Her creative work includes over thirty award-winning non-fiction pieces in magazines and anthologies. Lee has published eight books on literature, history, and ecology, most recently *The Land Speaks*. She's co-director of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness History Project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and a scholar-fellow at the Black Earth Institute. Her book **REMOTE** is based on 15 years of research and on-the-ground travel in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness as well as memory and family lore.

In 2018 DJ's good friend and mentor, Connie Saylor Johnson, went missing in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. DJ made repeated visits to the area to remember Connie and connect with her spirit. Although Connie was never found, DJ's frequent visits to the Wilderness became the conduit for her to make sense of her own past, and the challenges of growing up in such a remote place.

Throughout her years, Lee struggled with wild animal encounters, dangerous river crossings, bush plane flights in fog, and people who had come to the mountains to seek or hide. Yet she realizes that what she learned about the life cycles of salmon and wolverine, the regenerative role of fire, Nimípuu land practices, and wilderness history from Connie is all she needs to embrace the land and her family's past. Told in a nonlinear narrative structure, the book engages with dreams and ghosts, the familiar and the uncanny, as well as questions of history and memory. The 28 black and white photographs sprinkled throughout the book act as a complementary visual narrative. Lee's memoir is an engaging contribution to the growing body of literature on women and wilderness and a lyrical tribute to the spiritual connection between people and the natural world.

REMOTE is available at several regional independent bookstores. DJ is scheduled this fall for book talks at Rediscovered Books in Boise and Caldwell and Barn Owl Books in McCall. Watch for dates and times on the SBFC Facebook page. **A portion of the proceeds from sales at Rediscovered Books and at the "book talks" go to the Connie Saylor Johnson Wilderness Education Fund.**



Author: DJ Lee



Connie at Moose Creek RS 2009

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



This is the eighth installment of interviews collected from our past Fellows.

Established in 2009, the SBFC Wilderness Ranger Fellow Program is our signature program. SBFC provides a high level of training and guidance for university-level students who have coursework in wilderness, environmental studies, or recreation management.

COLLEGE CREDENTIALS

Western Washington University – Major: Outdoor Recreation/Minor: Education and Social Justice

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR CAREER PATH THUS FAR?

I interned with the SBFC during the summer of my junior year of college. After graduation I applied for Wilderness Ranger positions throughout the west. I ended up landing a job with Olympic National Park as a Wilderness Information Assistant; this role was a mix of wilderness ranger and permit distributor. I found that while I loved working for the National Parks, I missed the physical nature of trail work and the direct connection I gained with the landscape. The following spring I got a position with the Washington Trails Association (WTA) as a Youth Trail Crew Leader. After a season in that role I got the position of Youth Programs Assistant. I worked in the field leading day and week-long trail work crews, as well as working in the office coordinating trips and leading trainings. After several outdoor jobs, I have again pivoted and I'm working in public high school as an Educational Assistant in the Special Education department.

WHAT WAS THE MOST POIGNANT EXPERIENCE YOU HAD AS AN INTERN?

The entire summer was filled with life changing experiences and constant learning. The community is what I cherish most about that summer. Spending long days working with others in the endless pursuit of maintaining wilderness trails is a special bond, one that I've experienced working on numerous forests throughout the west. Getting to know my co-workers on a deep level and knowing their backgrounds, motivations, and life experiences has influenced my



decisions about my own future. That summer at the SBFC was special for me because my co-workers were so passionate and knowledgeable about the history of the Wilderness Act, ecology, fly fishing, and all things trail work. Being able to learn in a tight knit trail community while doing good hard work taught me more than most of my college classes.

HOW DID THE SBFC INTERNSHIP PLAY A ROLE IN LANDING YOUR FIRST JOB OUT OF COLLEGE?

SBFC taught me strategies to use when applying for federal jobs which gave me a huge advantage in the application process. Doing campsite inventories, maintaining trails, and interacting with visitors gave me the experience and skills I needed to excel at my job at Olympic National Park.

HOW DID THE INTERNSHIP HELP YOU IN YOUR COLLEGE WORK?

My summer at the SBFC directly affected my senior year of school. I started school with a stronger work ethic and was far more motivated about my classwork. Also, I could speak to Wilderness ethics and land management issues based on my experience. I've often thought of the teamwork and communication skills I gained during my summer at SBFC.



WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN FIVE YEARS?

It's hard to say where I'll be at in five years, given how I could have never guessed where I'd be right now. I know that whatever I do, my experiences working in the woods, and particularly my formative experiences with the SBFC, will influence my work and life forever.



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PLATE FUNDS SUPPORT SBFC AND THE WILDERNESS WORK WE DO.



Mine Shaft

THE STORY BEHIND THE PULASKI

VERNON FELTON

The Pulaski is not an elegant object — half axe, half mattock — it chops and cleaves, it excavates and grubs. It is, above all, a workhorse, just like the man who created it. You may have never hefted one, but odds are you've ridden a trail that was shaped by a Pulaski or walked beneath trees protected by it. That's because the Pulaski is the first tool trailbuilders reach for when constructing new trail and the one tool you'll always see firefighters carry into a wilderness inferno. It's been that way for more than a hundred years now.

THE LEGEND

They called him "Big Ed" Pulaski and when he was hired by the fledgling Forest Service in 1908 as an assistant ranger the 40-year old woodsman had already spent the previous 25 years rambling the west as a miner, ranch hand, railroad worker, and part-time blacksmith. The summer of 1910 found Edward Pulaski overseeing a group of firefighters near Wallace, Idaho. They had their hands full. It was bone-dry that summer—it hadn't rained since May—and firefighters across the west were battling thousands of small fires. But on August 20, everything suddenly went to hell. On that day, a rare hurricane-force windstorm, known as a "Palouser," united scores of smaller fires into a conflagration that within just two days devoured three million acres of forest—an area about the size of Connecticut. The inferno consumed

towns completely and left 86 people dead—78 of them the largely untrained firefighters who battled the blaze with nothing more than shovels, axes, and buckets of water.

They didn't have a chance.

Today that particular fire is known as "The Big Blow Up" and "The Big Burn." Many experts believe we haven't seen a more devastating wildfire since. Even with today's advanced tools and training, many firefighters today would have been forced to cut and run—which is exactly what Pulaski and 46 of his men found themselves doing until they realized they were surrounded.

Remembering an abandoned mine from his prospecting days, Pulaski led his men inside and ordered them to lay down on their stomachs on the mud. Throughout the night, the fire raged outside. It was so hot inside the tunnel that the support timbers caught fire—sucking oxygen from the air and creating conditions so hot that some of the men's clothes burned off. Panicked, some of the men tried to run out of the tunnel, but Pulaski, knowing it was certain death outside, pulled out a revolver and kept his men safe, albeit at gunpoint. Throughout the night Pulaski kept the heat at bay by dousing the mineshaft timbers with hatfuls of water he collected from a seep inside the tunnel.



Ed Pulaski



THE SBFC TOOL CACHE HOUSES 25 PULASKIS THAT ARE WELL USED AND WELL LOVED.

Original Pulaski-Mining Museum Wallace, ID

THE TOOL

The next day, Pulaski and his men staggered back to Wallace—40 of them had survived, though they were all in bad shape. Pulaski himself spent the next two months in the hospital. He would never be the same—the severe heat and smoke inhalation blinded one of his eyes and decimated his lungs. Pulaski, however, stayed on the job another ten years. One of the first things he did after the blaze, in fact, was build a better tool.

If Pulaski had learned one thing from The Big Burn, it was that you needed to be fast on your feet. Dragging armfuls of tools around was not only impractical when fighting fires; if it slowed you down, it might also kill you. Working in his backyard forge, Pulaski combined two of the most important tools—the axe and the mattock, a kind of lightweight hoe.

When Pulaski presented his invention to his superiors in the Forest Service, they were initially unimpressed. To be fair, the tool is an ungainly-looking mutt. What Edward Pulaski's creation lacks in finesse, however, it more than makes up for in sheer utility. The hybrid axe-hoe has an excellent balance to it, you can swing it all day and, with the flick of your wrist, you can go from chopping through roots to digging

trenches. Firefighters in the field immediately took to it and by 1920 the Forest Service was issuing thousands of Pulaskis to their crews.

Edward Pulaski and his tool have become iconic—symbols of sacrifice and hard work. Unfortunately, while headlines lauded Pulaski as a hero in his own time, he died an impoverished and physically beaten man. Pulaski was unable to patent his tool within two years of forging it (he was denied a patent in 1914); thus, while his tool entered widespread circulation within his lifetime, Pulaski himself never earned a cent from it.

Firefighters aren't the only fans of the tool that bears its creator's name. Today, trail builders the world over consider Pulaskis invaluable when it comes to laying the foundation for any trail. I've built singletrack in Colorado, North Carolina, Upstate New York, and the redwood forests of Northern California and while the Pulaski isn't the only tool I drag to the trailhead, it is the only one I consider absolutely indispensable. If you've mountain biked, gone trail running, or hiked a lonely bit of singletrack anywhere in North America, rest assured, you've traveled trail touched by the hero's tool.

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THANKS TO OUR MOUNTAINFILM CREWS

Our 2019/2020 Mountainfilm season has come to a close. We were fortunate enough to host Mountainfilm in McCall and Cascade the weekend prior to the new social distancing regimen. Boy how things changed the week after Mountainfilm. We thank all those who attended and all those who volunteered in McCall and in Boise last fall. We appreciate your support year after year. As Mountainfilm launches their new 2020/2021 season over the Memorial Day weekend, (normally hosted in Telluride, CO), they will be opting for the web-stream strategy in order to keep everyone safe and healthy. It is our hope that by our October 16, 2020 Boise Mountainfilm date everyone will be able to enjoy the films with a Payette brew in hand and seated in our very special Egyptian Theater.

BOISE 2019

Dina Garshak
Joanne Temple
Jodi Marvel
Joni Stright
Justin Marvel
Kathy Stearns
Maddie Gummerman
Maddie Simon
Michael Christie
Nancy Feldman
Pam Bond
Tricia Kennedy

MCCALL 2020

Bill Thomas
Eddie the lighting dude
Jackie Rubin
Jerry Randolph
Joni Stright
Larry Swan
Lindsay Hickman
Lynn Lewinski
Murray Feldman
Nancy Feldman
Nancy Randolph
Wendy Swan
Banyan's on the Green



Selway-Bitterroot Foundation INC
 PO Box 1886
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR GIFT

REMEMBER THE SELWAY BITTERROOT FRANK CHURCH FOUNDATION IN YOUR ESTATE PLANS

We hope you will consider the Selway Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation in your estate planning. Memorial gifts and bequests are placed in a special fund so that these gifts can permanently support wilderness protection in the Selway-Bitterroot and Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness areas. We welcome your inquiries about bequests and other kinds of giving. Please call or email Sally Ferguson, 208-871-1906, sferguson@selwaybitterroot.org.

If you wish to make a provision in your will, we suggest the following general language:

"I give, devise and bequeath to the Selway Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation, a Montana non-profit corporation (Federal tax ID# 27-2868220) located at 322 E. Front Street, RMRS Ste. 401, PO Box 1886, Boise Idaho, 83701, the sum of \$_____ or _____% of the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate [or \$_____ if specific amount]."