

NORTHWEST MONTANA LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION

*Dedicated to the preservation of forest fire lookouts
in Northwest Montana*



Fall 2022



Hornet LO

NOTES FROM THE BOARD

What an amazing fall we have had! One of the loveliest we can recall! And now it seems snow is settling in early and it is time to slow down a bit and enjoy the winter season. I hope you are savoring the change of seasons as we are.

Now is also a perfect time to celebrate all the great work our crew of volunteers accomplished this past summer in preserving lookouts in northwest Montana. This year dozens of volunteers worked from June to September on 5 projects and 6 assessments, contributing over 900 person hours and an in-kind value of more than \$31,000 to the Kootenai National Forest and Glacier National Park. Sit back and read all about our year in review!

Chuck Manning, Board Chair

LOOKOUT

**APPRECIATION NIGHT
DECEMBER 1 5-7 PM**

BIAS BREWEING

421 Main St, Kalispell

Join us for a free beer & to
share some lookout chat

Volunteers, members,
partners, and supporters are
all welcome!

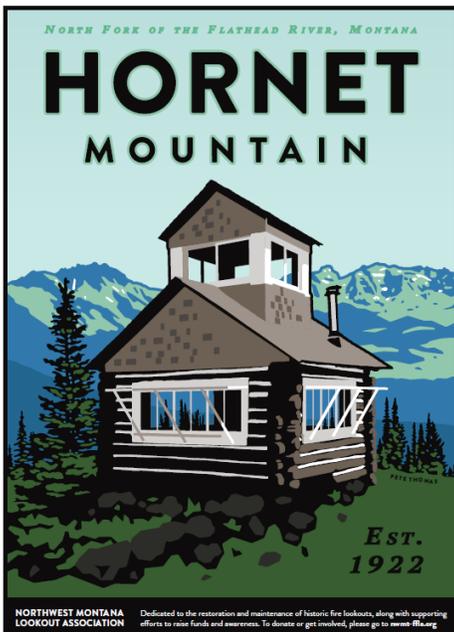
NWMTLA RECEIVES WHITEFISH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT



The Whitefish Community Foundation held its annual Community Grant Awards Presentation on June 7 and gave more than \$187,000 in grants and special awards to 44 nonprofit organizations representing projects and programs in Creston, Evergreen, Eureka, Somers, Bigfork, Columbia Falls, Kalispell and Whitefish.

The Northwest Montana Lookout Association was awarded a \$3,175 grant for meals to support volunteers on six restoration projects this summer. Due to scheduling changes and some personnel changes, not all of the funding was spent this summer. The balance of the grant will be carried over to 2023 to support volunteers on next year's projects. We are so grateful to the Whitefish Community Foundation for their continuing support of our work and our volunteers!

HORNET LOOKOUT CELEBRATES 100 YEARS



What do you have planned for your 100th birthday? Well, most of us probably haven't planned ahead quite that far, but on September 10th 2022, several NWMLA Board Members supported the US Forest Service's celebration of Hornet Mountain lookout turning 100! The Forest Service had wilderness trails staff to demonstrate the use of a crosscut saw, as well as a wildland fire engine, and of course snacks. The weather was also spectacular for the roughly 20 to 30 visitors that made the trek to the former Big Creek Ranger Station. The day also allowed NWMLA Board Member and Whitefish artist Pete Thomas to publicly unveil his Hornet Mountain poster, which can be found on our [website](#). With future preservation work planned at Hornet in the next couple of years, hopefully it will be around for decades to come!

Built in 1922, the cupola style is a classic example of early fire lookout structures that were built when the Forest Service regions, or districts as they were called at the time, were still standardizing their lookout designs. Specifically, Hornet lookout is constructed as a standard D-1 style cupola house constructed of logs obtained on site at a cost of \$719.38. Hornet LO itself was primarily in operation from 1923 to 1946 and then only sporadically after that. The style of Hornet lookout is a somewhat unique design not replicated anywhere else in the Northern Region and was designed by Dwight L. Beatty. During those early years of fire lookouts, the structures were simply a one-room log cabin used as dwelling while the actual fire observing was done outdoors. After many decades of sitting vacant, district and forest staff helped get the lookout listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.



2022 Projects

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

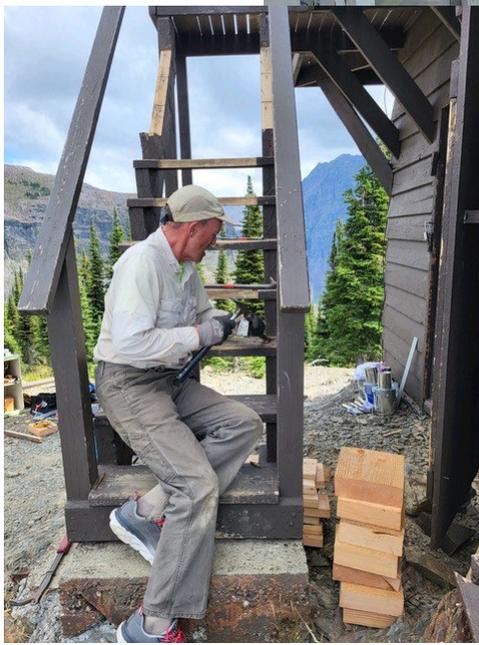


MOUNT BROWN LOOKOUT

Mount Brown Lookout is perched overlooking Lake McDonald in Glacier National Park.

This year volunteers added to past maintenance projects by taking on major stair repairs, replacing cracked windows and painting. Leanne Roberts, whose parents staffed the lookout (and honeymooned there) in 1956, joined the crew and shared many stories about their summer on Mount Brown with volunteers Bob Cowdrick (who flew in from GA) and Chuck Manning. Mike Barham hiked up to the lookout for a day's work at the end of the project to help with some end of the project tasks.

A special thank you goes out to Glacier Park for their invaluable pack stock support.



KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST

MEADOW PEAK LOOKOUT

Midway between Kalispell and Libby, Meadow Peak is a lookout awaiting summer visitors. If everything goes as planned and with a few more tweaks, it will be ready for the general public to enjoy as a cabin rental in 2023.

Throughout the summer and fall we continued to put finishing touches on Meadow Peak Lookout. Volunteers Deb & Bob Starling, Salena & Mark Beckwith, Troy Denman and Chris Beever extended handrails to meet OSHA requirements and devised a better way to secure the shutters during winter months. Thank you for your help in bringing this project closer to the finish line.





BIG CREEK BALDY LOOKOUT

Located on the Libby Ranger District, Kootenai National Forest – This lookout is off of the Pipe Creek Road north of Libby Montana.

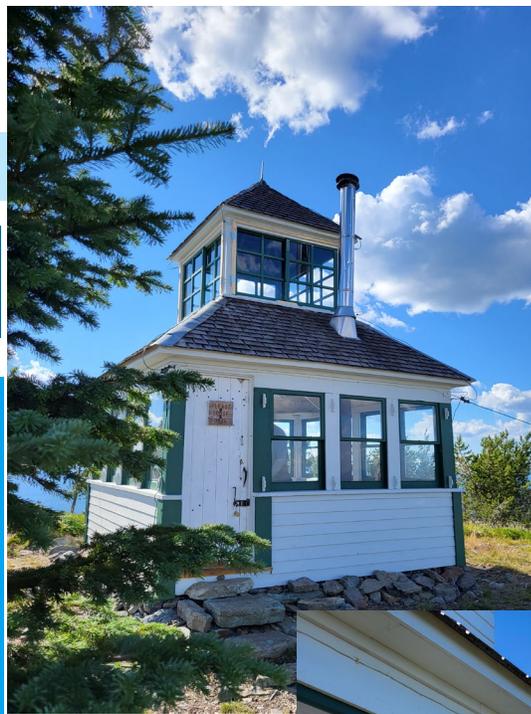
In June a crew of five lead by Jim Wehr of Roofworks, and Board member Troy Denman removed the current roofing. They managed to carry the new rubber membrane and needed materials up the steep steps! The new roof was installed and the lightning protection made functional. The crew put in a few long days! We utilized a specialized crew due to the complexity of the roofing need and required fall protection.

Big Creek Baldy LO has been used for spotting fires for more than 60 years, and is now part of the Recreation.gov cabin rental system. There was a 100% rental rate in 2021. It has fabulous views in all directions and can be accessed by car. Be prepared once you leave Pipe Creek paved road, you still have a bit of travel time to the lookout. The work NWMTLA accomplished this year will eliminate the constant roof leaks and need for repairs!



MCGUIRE LOOKOUT

McGuire Lookout, southwest of Eureka, is a 2 ½ mile hike and is a very popular destination lookout., part of the Forest Service Recreation.gov rental program for overnight stays. The FS removed it from the program during the first week of August so the NWMLA could finish some tasks that were not completed in our 2021 project . Our volunteers put the final touches on the shutters for both the lower and cupola windows. Volunteers Helen Tyree, Joe and Joann Schmidt, Rick Davis, Chuck Stearns, Chuck Manning and John Wilson worked tirelessly to accomplish what needed to be done. An outhouse pit was started and will be finished next year so the outhouse structure can be moved to a new location. The Youth Conservation Corp helped pack in supplies and water for our 5 day stay. Thank you YCC!



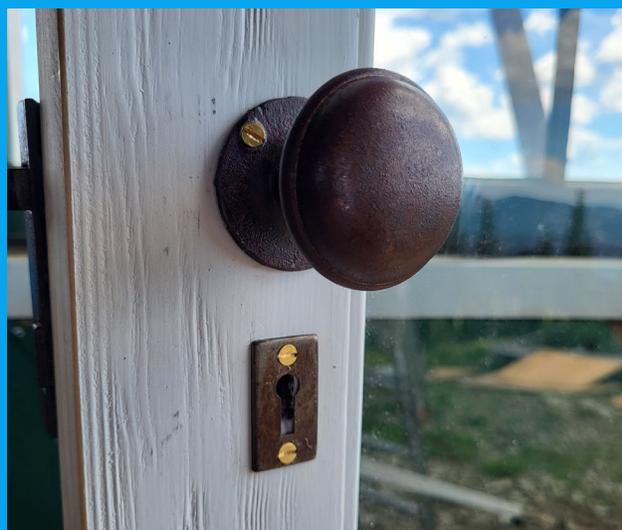


WAM LOOKOUT

The remote Mount Wam lookout sits above 7200 feet north of Fortine in the Ten Lakes Wilderness study Area. Our project there was delayed for two weeks due to late spring runoff preventing trail crossing across Clarence Creek.

The lookout door was flown out to be restored in 2021 and back in late spring to be reinstalled by Chuck Manning.

The lookout now shines with a new coat of paint thanks to Don Stolte and Karen Sheets who battled the mosquitoes to get it done. The Youth Conservation Corp helped pack in and out tools and food along with shovels and a rock bar which was needed to start digging a new outhouse hole. The Youth Conservation Corp is an amazing group of young people willing to take on any task. Thank you YCC!



2022 Assessments

Assessments are an important part of the overall work flow for both NWMTLA and our partner Agencies. They are done to a standardized format, with detailed photos, and help Agencies to set priorities among lookouts for when/if work will be done. NWMTLA can then use the assessment and photos to identify material needs and develop budgets seek out grant and partner opportunities, In other words, we can't do successful projects without good assessments!

We are working towards setting up a schedule with agencies so that lookouts with completed work can be visited for a follow-up assessment and routine maintenance on a regular basis.

KOOTENAI NF

ROBINSON LOOKOUT

Katie Marsonette, Terry Divoky and Dennis Divoky. and Donald Stolte made the hike into Robinson Lookout northwest of Eureka for a condition assessment. At nearly 7600 feet, they had a great view of our neighbors to the north in Canada, as well as glimpses of the past at a lookout site established a century ago in 1921, with the structure built in 1929.





STAR LOOKOUT

Northwest of Noxon, this area has been a lookout site since 1908, with the original stone cabin built in 1910, and an L-4 cab built on a stone base in 1930. Volunteers Bob Lambrecht, Katie Marsonette, Karen Sheets, and Greg Evans hiked to the lookout to thoroughly document restoration needs so that a restoration plan can be developed for the lookout over the next several years.



NORTHWEST PEAK LO

The last lookout assessment of the year was in the Yaak at Northwest Peak lookout, accomplished by volunteers Katie Marsonette, Terry Divoky and Dennis Divoky and Donald Stolte. This crew had done a standout job for us this summer and deserves our heartfelt thanks. NW Peak has been the subject of prior NWMLA restoration projects and was found to be in very good shape overall, but in need of paint .





GLACIER NP

APGAR LOOKOUT

Karen Downs, Kathy Butterfield, Mike Barham and Greg Evans conducted a condition assessment on Apgar Lookout in August. Kathy Butterfield led this year's assessment which is done every three years. The NMLA painted Apgar lookout in 2016 and it is still in good condition structurally but is already in need of a fresh coat of paint. Overlooking Lake McDonald and close to Apgar Village, Apgar lookout is accessed by a well-maintained trail and is a very popular hiking destination.





SWIFTCURRENT LO

Swiftcurrent Lookout, NW of Logan pass is the highest point accessed by trail in Glacier. Kathy Butterfield was the lead on this assessment and was joined by Chris Holdhusen, Molly Tingley, and Mike Barham. Swiftcurrent is a staffed lookout and is very well maintained. Molly Tingley reported weather August 10th at Swiftcurrent Lookout as being “51degrees and winds at 20-25 mph with gusts up to 31 mph.”



NUMA LOOKOUT

Overlooking Glacier National Park's Bowman Lake and the North Fork Valley, Numa Ridge Lookout sits at 6,960 ft elevation. Katie Marsonette was the assessment crew leader joined by volunteers Molly Tingley and Kip Melling. Numa Ridge is a staffed lookout and in good condition, however, the outhouse needs some help as it was flattened by last winter's snow



PRESERVING HISTORY -- WELCOME 'OLD BLUE'

NWMTLA has a new team member. We are celebrating our good fortune, acquiring an antique Osborne Firefinder at a recent estate sale. Our new member was last in service on Blue Ridge Lookout, 14 miles of Superior, MT. Blue Ridge was a 40' pole L-4 tower. Built in 1934, last staffed in 1955, and used for training purposes until it was torn down in 1979.

The Osborne Firefinder was created by W.B Osborne, a Forest Service employee, and has been in service in all staffed lookouts since 1915.

We've named our new member, Old Blue, and it will join our displays at upcoming informational and fundraising events. Stop by and have a closeup introduction and get a few tips on how it works.





Update from Forest Fire Lookout Association – National

2022 was another big year for FFLA filled with both highs and unfortunately some lows. It started with the election of the first new chairman of the board since the late 1990s. Keith Argow clocked in well over two decades at the helm of FFLA but with all good things, eventually the time comes to pass the torch. Luckily for us, Brad Eells, a longtime lookout advocate, enthusiast, and researcher accepted the challenge. Brad has worked on lookout projects throughout the west and was instrumental in starting a volunteer lookout staffing program in southern California at two separate lookouts. Brad brings tons of enthusiasm and has been actively working with the local chapters as well as affiliates to continue to strengthen the organization.

And speaking of growth, FFLA overall, continues to add members as well as new local chapters and at last report, the organization had over 1,350 members. There are also several new sub-chapters coming online in the very near future as well. But even more important, FFLA was able to host, after a two-year hiatus, a successful western conference in, and around, Enterprise Oregon. Nearly 60 people attended the three-day conference with many people staying for all the presentations and lookout visits. Everyone appreciated the opportunity to reconnect and there is even talk of a western Montana location for the western conference in either 2023 or 2024 so stay tuned.

While there were many ups for 2022, there was also some bad news with the loss of a handful of lookouts in wildfires. In particular, the loss of the Stormy Peak lookout from the Moose Fire on the Salmon-Challis NF in Idaho was very disappointing as it was an original 1928 lookout and had been the only building ever on the site. There were also many close calls with nearly a dozen lookouts wrapped this summer. Lookouts, however, luckily continue to benefit from a soft spot among many firefighters and fire management teams. As always, if you have any questions or would like to volunteer at the national level, please feel free to reach out to me or send us an email!

FFLA.org@gmail.com

WILDERNESS SPEAKER SERIES



SAVE THE DATES!

We will again be a co-sponsor of the popular Wilderness Speaker Series this winter at FVCC. Planning is still in the works. For now we can confirm the upcoming dates:

- *February 22 John Fraley*
- *March 22 TBA*
- *April 26 TBA*

WERNER LOOKOUT RAFFLE



Congratulations to Don Stolte, longtime NWMTLA member, volunteer and lookout supporter who won this year's Werner Lookout stay.

This Year's Werner lookout raffle generated \$850 for future lookout restoration projects.

A note from Don--



Raffle, Raffle, Raffle; Werner Peak here I come!!! I buy many, many raffle tickets each year; especially when I can support our Forest Fire Lookout Association. It had been 40 years since I had been to Werner Peak Lookout; never actually in the tower; that was about to change; thanks to the hundreds 🥰🥰 of raffle tickets I purchased! I now had a date with this most beautiful Lookout; August 1st; Me and a couple friends spent a most memorable night there; weather was awesome; sunset to die for. The lookout is in new condition; if only we could have had two nights; (maybe next year)??? The drive was a little challenging but would never turn down another trip there. I will be buying more raffle tickets for sure!!!!

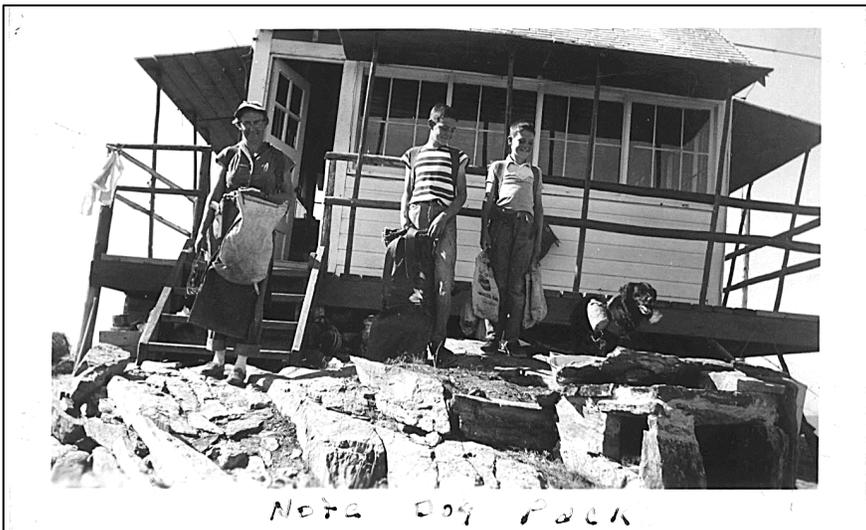
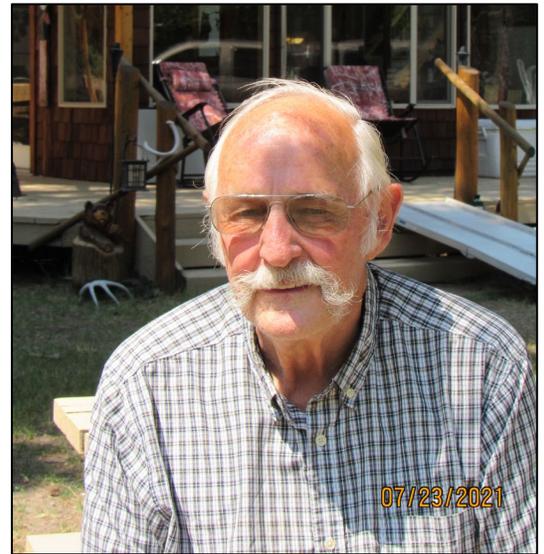


The Most Fantastic Times I Remember

By Ted Clarke

Ted Clarke was born in Eureka, MT but lived mostly along the west Kootenai. He went to the Rexford School, which was relocated when the Kootenai Dam went in. Eventually his family home was inundated by Lake Koocanusa. They relocated to the new Rexford town, and Ted's dad, Ed, worked as a school bus driver in the winter and for the Forest Service in Rexford in the summer.

Ed's first lookout job was in 1955 at Webb Mountain Lookout, above Eureka. For eleven-year-old Ted, this was a new experience that has stayed strong in his memory. It was his first time with pack trains, hauling water from a spring his dad developed a quarter of a mile below the lookouts, sleeping on the lookout's wood floor with younger brother Dave, and learning to help with lookout duties, like using the alidade, taking the weather, and watching for storms.



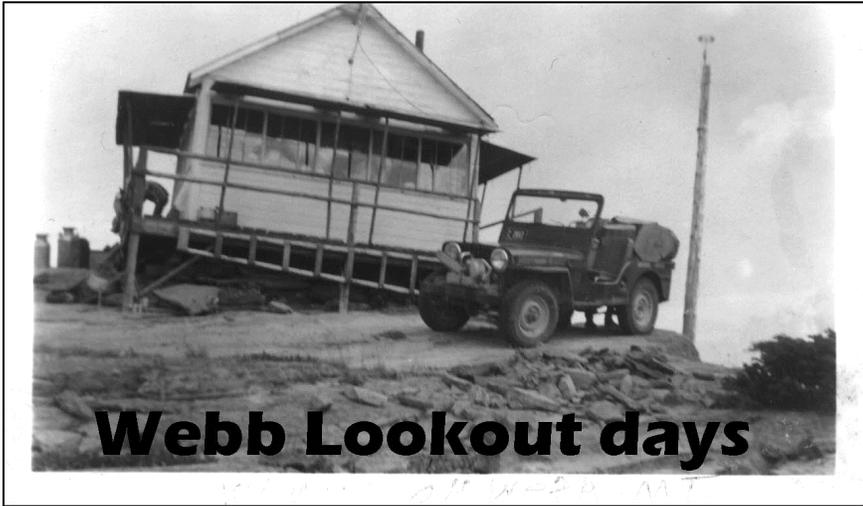
Mother Pearl, Ted, Dave, family dog with water packs, and homemade rock cooler

Ted remembers his dad building a cold storage box out of flat rocks with screens on two sides to store butter, milk, cheese, and other foods because they had no refrigerator. The box was still there in the '80s when Ted visited the lookout.

Ted and Dave spent much time at the lookout gathering huckleberries and morel mushrooms, making pets out of "chuckamucks"—golden ground squirrels, crows, learning to play pinochle, and playing with their dog. They also found many ways to keep themselves occupied. They always had slingshots in their pockets, and they fished Boulder Lake, near Boulder Mountain Lookout.

They also developed their own "slide." Said Ted, "One summer, I don't know which one, maybe in 1955, Dave and I made a slide out of some of the old #9 telephone wire strung through the trees and now abandoned. ..The single line ran down the east face of the lookout and somehow got to Rexford for the communication link. My Dad hiked the line for a while doing some repair, but found a bull moose had gotten tangled in the line and died during the winter or spring. In any event that was the demise of the #9 link. We began using a short-wave two-way radio from then on. A remnant 100' piece of #9 was salvaged and tied to a tree up hill and the other end to a tree downhill. Before attaching the wire, we'd run the wire through a piece of ½" galvanized pipe about 12" long...that was what we'd hang on to. By starting at the top of the slope and hanging on to the pipe we'd let gravity take over and slide the 100 feet, dropping into a pile of limbs at the bottom tree. If you dropped too

early you would fall in the rockslide and seriously hurt yourself. If you didn't drop into the brush pile at the bottom you would slam into the tree.... either the tree or the fall into the rocks would get you into the doctor. Fortunately, we were never seriously hurt and soon abandoned the slide, took it down and went on to other things."



In the three years their family were on Webb Mountain, they experienced some rainstorms that kept all four of them busy. One such storm demonstrated to young Ted the importance of the lightning protection on the lookout. "About noon one clear sunny day, not a cloud in the sky, the gable mounted lightning rods began to hum, soon getting louder and louder until they buzzed like a bad continuous electrical short. A few hours later thunderhead clouds began

Webb Mountain and Wimpy, the family Woody, from Ted's cover page of his memoirs.

to form in the southwest beyond Libby and the Cabinet Mountain range, and you could see an occasional lightning strike. The lightning rods began to form an electrical charge that soon became visible about the size of a volleyball. It was an iridescent gold color and made a noise you could hear from several hundred feet away. It would move up and down and horizontally along the rods, all the time being discharged through the 1/4" wire system. I remember Dad saying don't touch anything metal in the lookout. We knew we were in for an all-night lightning storm and recording of strikes. The clouds continued to form, more and more strikes could be seen but too far off for us to begin registering, being in the southwest districts of Libby and Idaho yet. As the storm system moved toward us, the discharging of lightning from the clouds must have lessened the charge in the lookout and the gold static ball left us alone, but now we began recording the strikes at hand. There were too many strikes for one person so each of us took one exposure only and that became our responsibility. There were so many strikes at the same time it was nearly impossible to record the altitude and we could only identify the azimuth before the next person had to record their azimuth in their exposure. The alidade wheel was constantly moving for several hours before the storm subsided. Several strikes were recorded that appeared to set fires."

When Ted was fourteen, his father got a job on Black Butte Lookout, where the family stayed until his dad died in 1964.

Later in high school, Ted worked for the Forest Service spotting and putting out fires. One memorable time, he and another firefighter got sent on a small night fire. After putting a line around it, they were too late to leave. "We only had one sleeping bag. It was a paper sleeping bag you know those things? They kept some of the breeze off you and about all it did. So, we were sitting around one little hot spot there that we can kind of stay warm. Finally, we got cold and we got tired and we both tried to crawl into that sleeping bag together. We made it but it was not very comfortable."

Later in his teens, the Forest Service wanted Ted to staff Pinto Point Lookout, but he was dating his future wife, Ina, at the time, and ended up on a brush and trail crew instead. However, he did work a short while on Red Mountain Lookout, which allowed him to go down at night and date Ina.

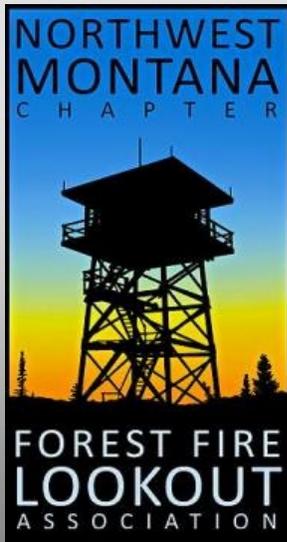
Today, Ted lives in Pleasant Valley and talks of returning with his wife and family to Webb Mountain, which is now a cabin rental. He enjoyed sharing his memories with his grandkids which, Ted says, "... I will NEVER forget."



Father, Ed Clarke, and granddaughter in 1960 at Black Butte Lookout

This article by Beth Hodder is based on an interview that is part of the NWMT-FFLA Oral History Project to preserve the stories associated with the lookouts (people and places) of Northwest Montana. This and other interviews will be archived at the University of Montana Library, and can be found online at <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/nwmt-ffla/>





To keep in touch, follow our active postings on
& our website: <http://www.nwmt-ffla.org>



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