

Stewart Brandborg Bio

By Keith Hammer

Stewart Brandborg was born in 1925 into a family dedicated to the conservation of America's public lands and wild backcountry. His father was Forest Supervisor of the Bitterroot National Forest for half of his 40-year career with the Forest Service. Stewart would meet the likes of Gifford Pinchot and the legendary Bob Marshall as they visited his father at his childhood home.

Stewart studied wildlife, earning his bachelor's degree from the University of Montana in 1947 and his master's from the University of Idaho in 1951. But it was in recognition of his life's work of conserving wild land that Stewart received an honorary Doctorate degree from the University of Montana in 2010.

Stewart moved to Washington, D.C. in 1954 to work briefly for the National Wildlife Federation. He then sought and won a job with The Wilderness Society as an assistant to Howard Zahniser, who had written the earliest version of The Wilderness Act and gotten it introduced into Congress. Stewart worked alongside Zahniser for eight years, working on successive drafts of The Wilderness Act and developing the grassroots support needed for its passage.

When Zahniser died in May of 1964, the job fell to Stewart and The Wilderness Act was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson four months later. But Stewart new better than anyone that the initial 9 million acres designated Wilderness by the Act was just the beginning and he dedicated his life to getting more wild country designated.

Stewart went to work for the National Park Service in 1977 and helped secure protection of over 100 million acres of public lands in Alaska under the pen of President Jimmy Carter. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 doubled the size of America's National Park and Refuge systems and tripled the amount of land designated as Wilderness.

Stewart returned to the Bitterroot Valley in 1986, where he continues to light a fire under successive generations of wilderness advocates and works tirelessly to further increase today's 110 million acres of America's public lands designated as Wilderness.