

A COMPILATION OF CANADIAN NATIONAL PARK WARDEN TONI KLETTL'S LIFE



The following is an account of the remarkable life of Toni Klett.
This wonderful tribute was presented at his celebration of life by Toni's
four children, Loni, Howie, Rob and Linda.

Photos courtesy of the Klett family.

Thank you to the Klett family for allowing the Park Warden Service Alumni Society to share this tribute.

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The Bad Years

The First 16 Years (1925 to 1942) by Howie Klettl

When going over Dads life it is essential to know that it had two very different parts. There was a bad part and a good part. We kids were not sure if we should even talk about the bad part today because it was so very, very bad. However, I feel we need to do so because Dad's greatest accomplishment by far was how he managed to become the man, husband and father he was given the suffering in his youth. To appreciate who Dad was you need to know what he endured before anyone in this room ever met him. The bad part is probably tough to listen to and it certainly is very difficult for us kids to talk about but I think it needs to be done. After we blubber through the bad stuff, we can then move onto all the good stuff and celebrate the happiness in Dad's life. So here goes, the bad stuff;

Dad was born in 1925 in a small farming town in rural Austria called Neukirchen. He was the youngest of 8 children born to Josef and Maria Klettl. Two of the children died early but 6 survived at least to young adulthood. To understand what Dad's life was like for those first 14 years one needs to understand the conditions that existed in Austria at the time. At the end of World War 1, the Austrian Empire was being dismantled and there was great upheavals happening across the country. At the war's end Josef and Maria were living in South Tyrol with their first 4 young children. Josef had a respectable career as a cheese maker and the family was doing fairly well. However at wars end South Tyrol was given to the Italy. Immediately all Austrian citizens were declared foreigners and expelled from the country. Josef and Maria were forced to leave their home with only what they could carry on their backs.

They and the children found their way back to Neukirchen. The conditions in Austria were desperate. There was no work and Joseph pick up what odd jobs he could milking cows and cutting hay in the alps but it was never enough to meet the basic needs of his family. To make things worse, the rampant inflation of the Weimar Republic in Germany and then the global depression hammered Austria. Money became worthless. As the desperation grew so did the hunger. Many times Dad remembers sitting down at the table and asking his mom why she was not eating. She would say she had already eaten, but Dad knew she had gone without so the kids could have more.

As conditions worsened, so did Joseph. His despair turned to cruelty and the man who once had been fun loving and happy became viscous and fanatical. Unfortunately Dad and his sister Rosa took the brunt of it. The beatings became so severe that Dad would hide in a neighbour's barn until his father was asleep before going home himself. I once asked Dad if he hated his father and he said "maybe at one time I did but I have forgiven him a long time ago. I never had to see my kids go hungry like he did, and until I do I will not judge him". I think if I had to pick one thing to provide a true window into Dads soul what he told me that day would be it.

Things reached a breaking point when Dad was 8 years old. In rural Austria at the time there was a practice called the 'AUSSTIFT CHILDREN'. If parents were unable to feed their children, they were taken from the home and sent to live on local farms. The understanding was that the children would work return for food, clothing and shelter. Dad remembered the look of agony on his mother's face as he and Rosa were lead away. He didn't know it at the time but that was the last home he would have until he made one for himself many years later in Canada. Dad's first reaction was to be relieved because by then he was so terrified of his father that he thought anything must be better. He was wrong.

That fall a new priest arrived in Neukirchen to teach the younger children. His first demand was that all the children must come to school for a 6:30AM mass. This was utterly impossible for the ausstift children because they were not allowed to leave their farms in the morning until all their chores were done. Dad would get up each morning at 4:00AM to milk and feed the cows and then run to school as fast as he could. But no matter how hard he worked or how fast he ran he would always be late for the mass. When this happened he would face the demonic wrath of the priest and it was soon obvious the man was a sadist. Whoever was the last child to class would be given a wooden cane and a crucifix that he had to carry with them all day. This meant that child would have to stay after class to endure whatever punishment the monster had devised. Since the farm where Dad worked was the furthest from school, it was very often Dad who had to face the storm. I won't describe the abuse he suffered but know that it was hideous and it was brutal. When the beating was done he would go back to the farm to finish the

rest of his chores and go to bed. The next day he would get up and face it all over again with no home or parents to buffer him from the trauma. As an 8 year old he had to face it completely on his own.

This relentless abuse went on for 2 years until the teacher's sadism and depravity became so extreme that not even his standing as a priest could protect him. One night he simply vanished from the valley. The rumour in town was that the church had secluded this beast in a monastery in Northern Italy where he was denied all contact with people except some fellow priests.

After this things got better for a while. From the age of 10 to 14, Dad would work on the various farms and in the summer he would be 'borrowed' by the owners of Alpine Huts. His job would be to carry supplies up into the Alps to stock a series of hiking huts. Though the work was hard, Dad liked these days because he would be out in the mountains where he had a sense of freedom and independence.

At the age of 14 Dad was sent to a Technical School in Vienna to study Radio Technology. It was the first time he had ever been out of the Pinzgau valley or in a city of any kind. At first he was very overwhelmed and lonely but that soon passed. However, it was not to last because the date was 1939 and the world exploded.

At 14 years old, Dad was too young to be drafted into the army at the start of the war. For 2 years he continued his studies in Vienna during the winter and worked on farms in the summer. When he was 16 everything changed. One day he was working the fields and a truck came down the valley. A man was yelling names out the window and Dad heard his name called. He put down his tools and got in the truck: he had just been called up for duty.

The War Years (1942 to 1949) by Rob Klett

It was January 12, 1980 when Big John Graves gave me the nod of approval and I walked into the Dead Dog Saloon. That was a very special day for not only was it my 18th birthday, but I was with my dad. We parked ourselves in a corner and ordered a couple of beers and looked around at the local fauna that gave the place that small town eclectic charm. My dad was often a man of few words but I could tell that he had something on his mind and eventually I had to break the ice. I tore my eyes away from staring at the table of French Canadian girls at the table across from us, closed my ears to the rising din of the Jasper Bongs celebrating another loss, looked at my dad and casually asked, "Dad what were you doing on your 18th birthday". If I live to be a thousand I will never forget the look that came to his face, it was a blended mixture of intense sadness, horror, confusion and pain. He reached across the table and pressed something into my hand which he held for a long moment, as words were failing him he just looked at me. Upon opening my hand a tremor ran up my spine as there in my palm was one of the two ugly dull black war medals that us Klett children growing up knew he had secretly kept hidden from us. When I asked him "What did you do to earn this", he kept looking at me with that haunting stare that seemed to tear right through me, and he simply replied. "I was luckier than all the others". There was something in those words and the look on his face which I later discovered to be the 1000 yard stare synonymous to the those combat soldiers who suffered so horribly during the Great wars. It prompted me to ask again, "Dad please tell me, how did you earn these medals, I need to know, so my children will know, I need the story. Please tell me." After a long pause, with sightless eyes and with a voice slightly above a whisper, he began to speak to the years which marked his passage from boyhood to manhood, 1942 through to the spring of 1949.

The year was 1938 and Nazi Germany during the Anschluss virtually annexed Austria under total military state control. Hitler's early campaigns in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and in West were stunning victories however Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union, in 1941 was a catastrophe. With the spring thaws Hitler resumed his aggressive campaign to destroy the Bolsheviks and crush Russia in a widespread massed invasion. With the endless stream of young men being sent to the Russian front my dad like so many others were pressed into the Arbeitsdienst, an under aged compulsorily work force who were used in non combative roles to carry supplies, dig trenches and graves from Hungary to the Volga River in Russia, a place called Stalingrad, where later the entire German 6th army capitulated, a quarter of a million men, an elite fighting force, was lost.

He was 16

The war of attrition continued in the East, and with the allied invasion of Italy, the might of the German army was dwindling and the need for new recruits was pressing. My dad was called up to active service and sent off to Italy for training. There on guard duty one foggy Mediterranean night he pointed his rifle at a lone figure garbed in grey that walked slowly towards his position, this solitary figure lifted his hand and waved then melted once more into the fog. The grey soldier was his older brother, Sepp who was killed that same day thousands of miles away in northern Norway. After only months of training my dad became part of the Elite 6th Mountain Division north, 2nd company, 4th battalion, a highly mobile mechanized unit of 1000 men capable of immediate response who were engaged in combat from the ruins of Monte Casino throughout Russia and the Ukraine.

He was 17.

With the catastrophic loss suffered at Stalingrad in 1942, followed by the crushing losses of both equipment and men in the wake of the great tank battle at Kursk, 1943 saw the height of Nazi Germany military control in the East begin to crumble. Sensing victory Joseph Stalin was willing to throw his entire Red army at the retreating German forces. Senseless, mindless slaughter took place all along the Russian front, and into this horror my dad's unit was thrown to act as rear guard to defend retreating German troops. The orders were simple, "Not a step backward and defend the line to the last man". In the Ukraine, at a place called Zhitomir, my father's unit was entrenched in ditches as the insanity of Stalin tactics deployed the human wave which ran oceans of men into their machine guns to be mowed down in the countless thousands. Artillery and rockets pounded their positions as the exhausted German forces stumbled on their own dead to hold back this human tide. Suffering from shrapnel wounds to the knees and with all officers killed my dad assumed command and held their defensive position. Of his company of 280 men, 60 survived. West of Kiev at Zhitomir, Toni Klettl was rewarded his first Iron Cross.

With the increasing losses of men, after only 3 weeks of recovery my dad once more was sent back to the Russian front. With battles raging all along the front his Korpuppe became involved in numerous other engagements. There was a hill he spoke of, Hand grenade hill, just another dot on a map they were ordered to defend. With only small arms, hand grenades, bayonets and trenching tools his unit managed to hold their position as once more the Red Army's human tide was ordered to flow over them. I will not speak to the horrors that took place there, but like Zhitomir, with all officers dead, my father assumed command and held the line. He was promoted to Captain and received his second Iron Cross.

He was 18

D-Day, June 6 1944 changed the face of the war in Europe. My father's unit was transferred from the Eastern front to France. His Korpuppe found itself just outside Caen; attrition in the East saw the unit now filled with kids, 15 or 16 years old with minimal training and no experience. Unlike Soviet tactics, the Allies valued human life and used continuous naval and air bombardment in conjunction with artillery. The effects were unspeakable as the unrelenting concussions drove the entrenched men insane. Often men would stand and run into the allies' machine guns to put an end to their suffering. Shrapnel wounds to the groin and hip once more saw my dad removed from the field to a hospital in Munich, where the surgeons managed to save his life. Upon leaving the hospital on leave back to Austria he heard the allied planes overhead on their way to level Munich. When he re-joining his old unit dad was horrified to see how few old faces were still left as the unit now was comprised mainly of boys, many from his home in the Pinzgau Valley. The responsibility of placing these boys into the front lines knowing that few, if any, would return weighed heavily upon him. This despite the fact he was only a few years older than them. The end of the war May 25 1945 found dad's unit of roughly 120 men in Czechoslovakia where they worked their way west and surrendered to the Americans. For these men hope began to creep in despite the fear of the unknown, the war was over and it was only a question of where they would end up. Nothing could possibly be as bad as what they already been through. However little known to them, the Malta agreement between the allies and the Soviet Union promised Stalin that a percentage of the German prisoners taken would be given over to the Russian Gulag prison system as slave labor. The men were loaded into cattle cars and instead of heading west to freedom, the wheels rolled eastward and the war for Dad continued for another 4 years.

He was 19

My dad never knew where the next 4 years of his life were spent; the cattle cars rolled eastward the men stuffed in like animals through the Urals and onward for weeks on end into the far regions of Siberia. Living on a meager diet of raw potatoes, dark bread and occasional cabbage soup he finally arrived at what was to be his home and about 8000 other prisoners for the next 2 years. The camp was simple, rustic barracks, three tiered bunks, large mess halls surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by Mongolians who were notoriously moody and best avoided. The rules were simple and brutal. The men worked in the fields 10

hour days 7 days week cutting hay, picking potatoes or carrots or cutting wood. If they failed to meet their requirements their food was cut. If their food was cut they became weaker, the weaker they became the less chance of meeting the quota. It was a vicious circle and after a year men began to die of starvation. Improvisation became survival; the ability to adapt and overcome separated those who lived from those who died. After two years on the state owned farm the men became virtually fatalistic and numb, with shaved heads and with beards never cut the men turned to the cigarette black market, where dad traded tobacco allowances for bread. The pursuit of numbness eventually led dad to start smoking.

If it was possible for things to become worse it happened. The survivors were once again shipped even further north to a camp of about 2000 men who were forced to work underground in a lead/zinc mine. Conditions were deplorable, around 20 men laboured in each shaft with my dad swinging a pick at the rock face. Quotas were strictly enforced; if each man of the crew did not meet the allotment food was cut for the entire crew. Many, many men died. In that horrible place at the edge of the world and human endurance, dad saw men kill each other for a scrap of bread, starvation drove men crazy. After enduring two years in this hellish place rumours began to circulate that soon they were to be released, however after many false alarms it was only another torture to be endured. When it did happen Dad believed it to be just another transfer, numb to the world, physically emaciated and in total disbelief that freedom was possible he found himself in a camp where Austrians were being collected to be freed and sent home. After 4 years he was finally able to shave off his beard, given some new clothes and given some food that was not the meagre diet of fish soup, cabbage and potatoes he had lived on for so long. After several weeks of being fattened up they were loaded once more like in 1945 onto cattle cars but this time shipped west. After two weeks westward bound on the Trans Siberia Railway they arrived outside of Vienna in a resorting camp. Once finally freed, Dad arrived home to the Pinzgau Valley and stepped off the train in Neukirchen with a small bundle which contained all of his worldly possessions, a razor, some socks and a pair of mitts. It was the spring of 1949.

Four years had passed since the end of the war, and Toni Klettl re-emerged from the dead as one of only two survivors from his original company of 280 men, as the other 278 had perished. Back from the dead and forgotten, the next phase of his life began.

He was 23

My father's dead, grey, vacant, empty eyes began to re-focus, the sounds of the saloon seemed to magically re-appear and my dad pressed the medal once more into the palm of my hand, "I was luckier than all the others", he repeated. At this point I realized that words were useless, I knew the story, but it was his story and it was a story he wished to forget and therefore we never spoke of it again. As we stood to leave I could not help but wonder, here was a man who the world had stolen his youth, his innocence, exposed him to horrors no one should ever see, inflicted on him pain, privation, starvation and misery. Yet despite all of that he had retained his dignity, his honor, the value of life, his sense of humor and most importantly his ability to unconditionally and unselfishly commit himself to his family, his friends and what he believed in.

These were the values he lived by and likely what had kept him alive when all hope was lost.

I know it now that Toni Klettl made his own luck.

He was 88.

The Good Years

From Russia to Canada by Howie KlettI

When Dad got back from the war the numbness lasted for a year during which he learned to live like a human again. One day in 1951 he saw a poster in Salzburg advertizing for immigrants to come to Canada and start a new life. It was obvious to him that there was no future for him in post war Austria, so he stepped into the office to apply. Three months later he was on his way with a promise from the Nipigon Timbre Company that a job was waiting for him in Northern Ontario. He boarded a ship in Bremerhaven and promptly found out that he was prone to horrendous sea sickness. The poor man barfed his way across the Atlantic and like so many other immigrants over the years, Dad got off the ship in Quebec City not knowing a word of English and with everything he owned in a small plywood suitcase.

The thing Dad remembers most about that first logging camp was the food. On the first day he walked into the cook tent and there was this mountain of food laid out before him, he had never seen anything like that. After he ate his first plate, he watched as other men stood up and got a second. He couldn't believe this was even possible.

That first winter in Canada was a good one for Dad. He got paid fairly for every cord of timber he cut and the company treated the men with respect. Once a little French Canadian taught him how to file a Swede Saw, Dad was off and running. After all those years of slave labour, to be paid for your efforts was something new. I asked Dad once if he ever experience any prejudice because he spoke German and it was so soon after the war. Dad said never, not once. Good job Canada.

In the spring of 1952 he and some other men from the camp decided to try their luck in Prince George. After working there as a faller for only a month he heard there was a pipeline being built from Edmonton to Vancouver and that jobs were available. He took the train to Jasper where the Comstock Midwestern Company was hiring for the construction. He sat on the steps of Whiteman's Bakery, it was May, the sky was 1950's blue, the mountains were covered with fresh snow but the valley was green and growing. Dad knew he was home.

Dad's first job in Jasper was as a powderman for the Trans-Mountain Pipeline. He spent the next summer in the Yukon as a blaster and a surveyor. That season he got another reminder of how tenuous life could be. He had just boarded a small float plane to fly out of the bush when his boss called him out saying he had to get back to Edmonton and Dad would have to catch a later flight. That plane crashed just after take-off and killed all on board, Dad had escaped death again.

From 1953 to 1957 Dad worked various jobs in Jasper from the express office of the CNR, to the gardens in town to a ski patrol at the Whistler ski hill. It was at the Whistler ski hill in 1953 that Dad's life got a whole lot better. One day he spied a sweet young lady who was having a terrible time doing a left hand turn so the Austrian Casanova Rico Suave'd his way over and offered to teach her. The lesson worked because they were married in November of 1954 and he started the grand adventure. In 1957 he became a Grade 1 Warden and he and Mom were shipped off to the Blue Creek District to raise their family and get on with living.

Introduction to: The Good Years by Loni KlettI

Now we get to talk about the good years and what good years they were! Canada, JNP and mom all opened their arms and enveloped dad in massive embrace, the past was closed, misery, horror buried underneath opportunity, peace, beauty and love. For the first time in his life, he was allowed to be his own man, in charge of his destiny. He flourished and thrived...

For the next thirty five years, from 1955 to 1985 dad was a Warden in JNP. He was a pioneer; stuffed full of innate initiative and made many innovative, long lasting contributions to JNP which have set the foundation for modern day practises in the way of mountain rescue, public safety, conservation and avalanche control.

We hope to be able to impress upon all of you ; what kind of dad he was, exposing the job through dad's eyes, the unique, incredible partnership he had with mom and how his many incredible accomplishments would affect, involve and improve not only our families lives but would have far reaching ripples.

It was the 1950's; mom and dad were newlywed's, looking forward with bright eyes and optimism to a long future together. JNP and Jasper in those days were a park and town with little restriction and much opportunity. They packed energy and the willingness to seek, explore into their rucksacks and headed down the trail to Blue Creek. They had no idea of what a wonderful trail they were about to ride on, where the trail would take them and what a legacy they would leave behind in the trail dust.

Here are some of their stories.

1: The District: Two Longs and a Short by Loni Klettli

The Cavell warden station was home to the Klettli family from 1960 to 1972 when the Districts became dismantled. During that time, Toni Klettli was the Cavell District warden, a term now that has been abandoned and likely soon to be forgotten. As kids, all four of us, we shared our early lives in that tiny house but really we lived and grew up as a part of something much bigger. The District.

It still holds a spell over us.

What is the District? Can it be put on a map, can it be googled and can it be defined or explained? Closing my eyes, I took a seat on the worn faded and crumbling front steps of the old district warden house and let my mind wonder back over four decades.

I'll get that!" yelled our mother as she ran from the garden slapping a combination of household flour and dirt off her apron. The screen door flew open as mom rounded the corner into small corner room we kids called 'the office' as it was off limits to our determined, creative, destructive, little hands. Taking a moment to compose herself, she held her hand to the receiver of the thick dark brown oak party phone which hung like a sacred artefact on the office wall. It came again, that miraculous mysterious ringing sound which we never fully understood, but well we knew the significance.

Two long rings, followed by a short. Our mother picked up the receiver and spoke into the mouth piece "Hello, the Klettli's, followed by short pause..."no Toni is not here, he is out on the District". How those few simple words defined an entire generation, encompassed a national philosophy and spoke to the pioneer families the Canadian Park Warden service was built around. Being out on the district was where the early park warden families lived raised their children and helped to create a very unique part of Canadian history. In the very long reaching and profound words of Chief Warden Mickey Maguire, "New hire wardens and their families were sent into the districts to see if they could hack it, if they could prove themselves with gumption, innovation and hardiness then they belonged in the warden service." His philosophy was simple, 'Build it strong, build it to last."

The district was not just a place or a period of time; it was more about accountability, pride, initiative, self-reliance, ownership, camaraderie, isolation, hard work, understanding, observation, creativity, hardship and wonderment. But also , the clang of bells and hobbling half broke green horses, frozen fingers and stiff rigging, slipped diamond hitches and repacks, long cold miles in soaking wet boots and heavy slickers, lame or lost horses, deadfall and washed out bridges, river crossings and undercut banks, food shortages from destructive black bears, rogue Old horn grizzlies with attitudes, letting the dog out first to provide safety for the kids, freezing blizzards to baking sun, horse flies to frost bite, severed phone lines to broken axe handles, illegal hunters to climbing fatalities, punkie kindling to mice in the cupboards.

However, the rewards were worth the work, sunsets over the Ramparts, knock kneed baby caribou in the pass, the feel of a good horse on the switch backs, pack horses that don't need nose bags or lead ropes, the smell of leather and horse blankets, gold, fossils and semi-precious jewel stones from hidden talus slopes, German Sheppard pup ears above the sleds gunnels and children's smiles, thigh deep snow falls to lupines of all colors, silhouettes of 11000 footers in the setting august light, magical name places like Little Heaven, MacLerrans diggings to the Ancient Wall, the first glimpse of the line cabin beneath a

rain-soaked Stetson, camp fire coffee from a chipped enamel mug, the aroma of bannock and Amethyst trout on the grill, the hum of the coal oil lantern while writing the daily journal, fire flicker off the smoke stained cabin roof, drying gear and the dog curled up by the stove, horse bells in the meadow, wash water, dry morning kindling and fire sticks, warm safe contentment within.

A horse fly who took a strong interest in my bare leg jolted me back to the present. Sitting there on that grey faded concrete porch I could not help be overwhelmed by memories. How many times did we kids sit on the same porch waiting for that brown ugly brown warden truck to pull into the driveway, with Dad's infectious smile partially hidden by his whiskers? Tearing at the wooden horse smelling treasure boxes to see what carvings he had made and competitively seeking that first hug and whisker rub. Mom would always seem to have made soup and fresh buns when he returned and despite eating being a serious business in the Klett house, we kids tore at him for his stories.

It is those stories which now are our memories that help keep this past alive. Best of all Dad, is that our own packs are now beginning to smell like you.

That was the district.

2: Avalanche Control by Howie Klett

Avalanches are a real problem, and for a long time it was Dad's job to try and keep them from ruining people's days in Jasper. It is kind of fun to recall the evolution of avalanche control over the time Dad was doing it. It started with Marmot Basin once it became obvious that the ski hill was getting bigger and more people were using it all the time. In those days, Dad simply threw some dynamite, caps and fuses on his back and humped them to the top of whatever ridge or slope needed the attention. He either planted or threw the charges and then got the hell out of there. This may have been fun but it was time consuming and exhausting work. It was also dangerous as you never really knew where the break was going to happen. On the Jasper Banff highway, most early avalanche control was done from a helicopter. This really made Dad uneasy as having the caps, fuses and dynamite in one small place with no escape route seemed like a recipe for disaster, especially with a smoke dangling from your mouth. He thought there must be a better way.

There was; introducing the Avalauncher air rifle. The Avalauncher was a gun which could fire a charge quite a distance using only compressed air. Its range was such that it could service most of the Marmot Basin and some of the Jasper Banff highway. It was far safer then walking up to the cornices. Well I remember Dad assembling the projectiles at home, putting the plastic fins, nose cones and fuses on the green and black bomb part. One good thing about the air rifle was that it was safe enough for me to go with Dad a few times. Watching those avalanches come down made such an impression; the whisper of all that snow sliding so fast scared the pants off me and cemented in my head a healthy fear.

However, by far the best thing about the air rifle were the duds. Those were shells that did not explode for some reason. Dad would carefully record where they were and then the next summer we kids would go up to Marmot with him to find them. It was pure heaven for any kid to be running all over the upper slopes and the peak looking for these bombs. It was the ultimate treasure hunt. When we found one, Dad would plant a half stick of dynamite on them and blow them to bits. Then off we would go looking for the next one, could there be anything more joyous in the whole wide world to do, I sure did not think so.

Then one dark day Dad came back from a course in Revelstoke with a whole new plan. It was called the howitzer 105mm recoilless rifle. That gun never fired duds so the great treasure hunts came to an end, damn 105. I know the 105mm was a much bigger gun and could fire a bigger charge much further. It could easily reach all the upper slopes on the Jasper Banff highway and not only that, the gun could be placed further from the avalanche slope. This made it safer for everyone concerned but I didn't care, there were no more duds. Dad had all kinds of grief when he was trying to buy the 105 from the Canadian military. The paper work and list of excuses stretched from here to Edson so he finally gave up and got it from the American military. They were more than happy to ship it up to Jasper, no questions asked. Dad's hearing probably took a real beating in the war, but it was most likely that the 105 that finished it off. That thing made a horrendous noise and ear protection was pretty sketchy in those days.

Avalanche control has evolved into a real science and has come a long way from when people like Dad were out chucking homemade bombs around the snowbowls.

3: Dads Tonquin Valley by Loni KlettI

In the 1960's, JNP's, Tonquin Valley was a happening place. The stunning but small valley was a summer home for three Outfitters and was also used extensively by the Alpine Club of Canada, the Iowa Mountaineers and the Skyline Hikers. Summer climbing and hiking groups with up to 200 people were common. Backpacking was also becoming popular and in the summer of 1969, 881 hikers registered at the Cavell viewpoint. The Ramparts and Mt Clitheroe would observe from the dizzying heights above; all the bustling human activity, deterioration of fragile lakeside and alpine soil, random, unsightly campsites, garbage and human waste. The rocks would sigh and say, "sure would be nice to have some peace and quiet; there are just too many people in this fragile, alpine valley, this valley needs some help".

Help came in the form of Warden T. KlettI...a man at the right time and place. He rode into the valley, comfortably astride a handsome sorrel mare with a white blaze. He surveyed the scene below...it resembled the morning after Woodstock... From 1960 – 1973, Warden T. KlettI was the Boss in the valley and he came up with a Plan. A tireless visionary; a one man show, an Austrian immigrant with a grade nine education that stuffed biology, ecology, land use management, trail crew, wildlife specialist, law enforcement underneath his Stetson with Badge 179. He was a constant presence on the trails, around campfires, lakeside and on alpine slopes.



Toni KlettI on patrol in the Tonquin Valley

Nothing escaped his eagle eyes... September was spent riding on a trusty horse for 10 -14 days doing his annual caribou count. Every nook, cranny and hidden side valleys of the Tonquin Valley were thoroughly combed, glassed; all caribou activity was observed and meticulous noted. He was the first to raise the alarm of the drastic decline of the caribou, which in 5-6 years had plummeted from 180- 190 to 60 -80 animals. Based on this alarming observation, he recommended, "a serious study by the Canadian Wildlife Service should be a top priority".

He wrote an incredibly insightful report about his concerns in the Tonquin Valley combined with intelligent recommendations to all the powers that be. He was commended for his report by Ottawa and in 1969; Superintendent J.C Christakos gave the stamp of beaver approval to:

1. Five designated camping areas with privies.
2. The pack-in-pack-out policy which would be enforced and plastic garbage bags would be provided.
3. All Outfitters using the Tonquin Valley must outfit from the lower end, Portal Creek and Cavell (take only the number of horses needed to transport the people and their gear).

All Warden Klett's recommendations proved to be valley changing, he made the first detailed trail map of the area and also developed the first hiker registration system which enabled JNP to finally get some idea of how popular hiking would eventually become.

Us kids didn't know much about this at the time, all we knew was that he was always handing out the yellow garbage bags. It had something to do with the Tonquin Valley and how excited we'd all be when we scampered and raced down the trail to meet him. Dad unloading pack boxes off Rusty, trout caught that morning in Amethyst Lake, trout so big the tails stuck out of the packbox. We didn't need presents, our treasure was in those boxes, fir needles, a pretty rock, and the Wardens Journal, meticulous observations, two weeks work wrapped in plastic, these treasures were far more magical and unforgettable.

I believe I have inherited dad's; insistence of what's right, challenging the impossible, love for trails, wild spaces and valuing the importance of a Plan. Dad, I know you have my back, and what's even better, my pack is starting to smell like yours.

4: Public Safety: I Was Checking the Equipment by Loni Klett

It became very apparent to the parks, in the mid 1950's the necessity of mountain rescue. Easier access to the parks, baby boom explorers, more leisure time...everyone thought they could climb mountains on their own. The parks found themselves inundated with keen but ill equipped, ill prepared users with no training or experience to speak of; there were many deaths on the mountains because of this. Parks found themselves somewhat behind the eight ball...no rescue system in place, no trained rescue personnel on how to get these injured and lost climbers off the mountain.

In the mid 1950's, a motley crew of Wardens from the Mountain Parks arrived at Flint's Park in Banff. They were ready and willing to take on this new challenge of learning how to climb mountains and practise mountain rescue techniques. Their instructor would be the very capable, ex- Swiss guide, Walter Perren. The majority of these wardens had come from a ranch, wrangling background...They secretly looked up with terror in their hearts at the seemingly straight-up rock face.

Dad, at least was a little further ahead of these men because of his climbing experience in Austria. He had also climbed numerous local mountains with his friend Charlie Dupre. He happened to look down at the guys feet standing next to him; their boots weren't sturdy climbing boots but cowboy boots and ordinary leather boots. Dad thought to himself, "Poor buggers, it will be the hand holds that get these men to the top, not the foot holds."

Dad found himself leading a pitch of Flint Mountain with Smokey and Larry on belay. All was going well, slow, steady and progress was made. They were on the last pitch and dad needed more rope to put in one more piton for the last belay. Dad hollered down to Larry to "give me more slack", he hollered back, "I don't have any slack". And then Smokey bellered from below, "I have two good handholds and I'm not going to give them up until I have a good belay from above." Tension on the rock face on Flints Mountain escalated; words flew back and forth, getting choicer all the time. All three men made it to the top on a current of grit, determination and swear words. Dad looked down at other men's boots, brown leather boots with curled up toes. No wonder they didn't want to give up their handholds!

It was from that first group of men, who had initially looked at the sheer rock face with terror, men that were totally out of their element. These men evolved into a highly trained and dedicated group of Park Wardens respected around the world in Mountain Search and Rescue.

It was 1972, the District System had been scrapped, the Klett family moved into Town. Jet, our wild German shepherd had to be tied up, and then died from a broken heart... From that year on until he retired in 1985, dad was in charge of Public Safety in JNP. Life for dad, mom and all of us kids then became very busy, mom somehow held the gang together, with the craziness of dad always on rescue, all our sports and ski racing. It was a very common conversation in our household for decades:

"Dad, where were you?

I was in the rescue room.

What were you doing there?
I was checking the equipment."

He took his role very seriously and expected the men he was in charge of to be as dedicated.

The next thirteen years of dad's warden career was somewhat of a dizzying, stressful whirlwind. At that time the public safety guys were still figuring it all out...allot of time it went like this:

"What, a climber is stranded where? How do we get them out of there."

"What? Another person just fell over Athabasca Falls?"

There were many involved in those years figuring it out, Gary Foreman from Yellowhead Helicopters, Todd McCready, flew many never-been-done-before missions with bravery and skill. The guys on the ground would be figuring out how to sling with harnesses, what knot? what piton?, what belay system?. What works best? What if it doesn't work?

The seventies were a busy time in the rescue world, they were called up again and again to perform rescues using helicopters/slugs, hovering over mountain ledges while rescue teams were lowered with slugs/stretchers , plucking the unfortunate injured or deceased off a side of a mountain with a looming storm coming in. Gary would say," Boys, get a move on, we're losing our window."

Many memories of these years; the call in the night, dad mounting touring skis in the basement, coming home with some weird piece of equipment, tinkering with it so it was more efficient, more reliable...safer. One tool in particular comes to mind. The call came in, "we have a climber on the Icefields, he fell down a crevasse and we can't get him out". By the time dad and the rest arrived, things were looking grim...he was wedged in; his body heat had melted the ice around him forming an ice coffin. He was also unconscious...the fellows worked and worked away, hope fading with the light...he finally was pulled from the potential icy grave. He never really recovered from that, spent many months in a coma. That incident really bothered Dad, there just had to be a better way to get a person out of a crevasse. His mind chewed and mulled on it; he drew it out and took his design over to PC machinists. With heads together the two of them created a machined chisel, drill hammer that could be used in really tight places. This was Dad...always coming up with solutions. We have no idea where that is now; someone probably threw it out in the purging of the 1980's.

Gary Foreman, from Yellowhead Helicopters told me this story one summer. At first he was somewhat reluctant saying, "well it's kind of guy story". I told him I was old enough to hear it and could handle it. It was yet another mountain rescue off Cavell, it never seemed to end. The climber was hurt very badly, so Dad decided that that both of them in a harness and sling would be transported straight to Jasper and land on the lawn in front of the hospital. Remember, it was the seventies...loose regulations. After, the patient had been safely deposited in Seton Hospital, Dad was still green around his gills and had a funny look in his eyes...he told Gary what happened. The flight from Cavell to town is relatively short, but the harness that was around Dad was being pulled up with the weight of the injured climber that dangled below him. The early harnesses were not ergonomically correct. Poor Dad, thank goodness he had all his children, he had almost passed out and said," that was the worst pain I've had in my life". I'm wondering if these sling harnesses have improved.

JNP has many lakes, waterfalls and rivers, that were starting to attract all sorts of water users. Dad was asked to write the safety manual for rafting the rivers, however, he asked Ron Steers to write it saying, "It makes more sense to have someone who is an expert to do the writing". It was even adopted at Nahanni. Dad fought and fought to have railings put up at Athabasca falls, there was an unacceptable amount of people that were going over the falls. In this one particular tragic story, the wardens were combing the river below looking for the last victim... No luck. Max Winkler came up with an idea of attaching bright ribbons to a dead bear, tossing it over the falls and maybe some light could be shed on where to look for the unfortunate soul. All that turned up was upset tourists and a mad boss.

Dad didn't talk much about the rescues, especially if they had gone bad. All rescues then and now are extremely stressful for all involved, Dad would tell us, "I'd be in the office, making the call...just eating cigarettes". Gord Anderson told us that Dad ultimately preferred the backcountry work to public safety. Knowing now his past war years, it all becomes clear. We now understand...he wanted, needed the peace.

In the early 1980's, Bureaucrats had snuck into PC with a large lid and seemingly overnight, smothering and suffocating him and others like him. He was a hand's on kind of guy, with decades of competence, innovation, and initiative under his uniform.

He was used to getting things done, making it happen. This new way, this new system did not appeal to Dad, he was frustrated and felt useless. Dad hung up his Stetson and badge 179 in 1985 and breathed a huge sigh of relief.

Mom and Dad headed west to Valemount, happily retired in their cabin in the woods.

5: Skiing...Early years at Whistler and Marmot by Loni Klett

Skiing was to be a huge part of the Klett's lives; Dad was a hot shot skier from the Austrian Alps who dazzled many with his skiing abilities including his new wife, Shirley. He had trained in mountaineering with the Austrian army and had volunteered with the Austria Bergwacht (mountain watch) and was exposed to some rescue work summer and winter. These skills would help him shape his career as a park warden.

Skiing in the 1950's was the must do, new activity and everyone wanted to be a part of the scene. Marmot Basin which had first been spotted by the ski savvy Joe Weiss in the 1930's and Whistler's Ski Hill gave keen skiers close to town variety and options. Mom and dad had many great memories and stories about the early years at Marmot and Whistlers.

There was a buzz around town in March 1954. An eight man ski-mountaineering group left the sawmill, near Moab Lake, for a 22 day, 200 mile ski trip. It's route was over glaciers and ice fields of the Alberta/BC boundry to Wapta Lodge near Field BC. There was much publicity, photographs ...this was not your average ski trip. After the original guide, John Dupre broke his wrist, Dad acted in his place. The enthusiastic party made it to the Hooker Icefields but a massive snowstorm (four feet overnight) and extreme avalanche conditions squashed all thoughts of continuing and they returned back to Jasper a disappointed bunch. But the seed was planted in the minds of others who wanted to ski the big, multi day traverses.

The Marmot Derby, which was recognized by the Canadian Amateur Association was held in the spring and participants competed in the giant slalom and downhill. The downhill was no slouch...approximately 5 miles long, it was a marathon of skills, daring and fitness. It started on top of Marmot Peak and swooped down over Knob Hill, Competitors then schussed past all spectators cheering and hanging out at the Martin Cabin, down Slash, over the sewage lagoons and then tested all resolve and leg strength in the thigh screaming outrun. In years with good snow, they would finish at Portal creek, on 93a. Cyclists know these trails as Scabies, Old Bus Road and Tattle or Old Man Downhill Trail. Twelve minutes was a good time! The entire run had to be sidestepped and slide slipped before racing. All involved loved it!!

Bill Ruddy ran the Bombardier snowmobiles, which took skiers, from Portal creek on 93a up a steep, twisty road, to the Marten Cabin (which was up on the Basin Run above the Paradise Chalet). They packed skis, lunch and gear into these contraptions which apparently were stinky, noisy, claustrophobic and terribly brutal if one had too many beers the night before. From the Martin cabin, the true Marmot Basin with its glades, bowls and alpine opened up and all enjoyed sun, powder, comradery and the long, long ski out at the end of the day. Sound familiar? We still feel the same today.

In the winter of 1955/56, Chief Warden, Brodie asked Dad if he'd go on ski patrol at Whistlers with Tom McCready. By then, the cabin from the Lower area, (down by Highway 16, near the Miette Bridge) had been moved up to the new area, upper runs had been cleared; a poma lift had been installed. Dad and Tom spent their day sidestepping up and slide slipping down. There was a strong insistence from some local skiers, (there were those, even back then), which was backed by Superintendent Dempster that moguls were not to be tolerated.

Marmot Basin

Marmot Basin opened fifty years ago. Picture Marmot in 1964...skiers with leather, lace up boots, long wooded, inflexible skis similar to 2x4's. There was a rickety but totally reliable T-bar where the Kiefer T-bar used to be and a small day lodge now the Paradise Chalet. The Marten Cabin which was on Basin Run was moved down and used as the ski patrol cabin. The really big difference from then to now is that parks were in charge of everything.

Dad had to oversee all the activities, from cutting out the runs to setting up and hiring the ski patrol to developing the avalanche control program. And to boot...organized the snow packing and the plowing of the road for the buses to get to the Upper Chalet. At times, there were five Marmot employees and eleven Parks employees working at Marmot Basin.

Dad taught St. John's First Aid Courses for many years and tested the Volunteer Ski Patrol who came from Edmonton on the weekends. Many of them still make the weekend trek from Edmonton to volunteer. They are a committed bunch and dad

enjoyed working with them. Dad also had the distinction of hiring the first woman ski patroller in the National Parks. He received much criticism, but he defended his decision by saying, "if they can do the job, they get the job". Plain and simple. The Bus Road up to Marmot...no one has fond memories of this especially me who is quite prone to motion sickness. You parked your vehicle at the top of Portal Hill on 93a and jammed skis and poles, mish-mash into ski racks which were attached to an ugly, uncomfortable beast called a bus. The road, was narrow, tight and steep, all corners had numbers and pull offs for meeting oncoming buses. A corroded metal frame with no suspension, seats that felt like plywood; this noisy, stinky contraption lurched, jarred, and belched its way around tight corners, gears screeching with agony and a black cloud of poor quality oil staining the pristine winter air. With head exploding with dizziness and vomit that was way too close for comfort, I would stumble out at the Upper Chalet and look at despair at the flat light. Dad, being the warden in charge, got to drive his warden truck up this nightmare, a total advantage for the Klettl kids, we didn't care how early we had to get up to get a ride with him.

Just like so many families then and now, Marmot was our second home and playground. Skiing, ski racing dominated, devoured, consumed time, years from first light to last light. Dad would be bombing the bejesus out of Charlie's Bowl, Marmot One, and every avalanche slope in between. Mom spent the majority of these years making lunches, or on the side of Show-off, gate keeping....or freezing in some dark, cold recess of the chalet tabulating ski results.

We figure it was mom's sandwiches consisting of liverwurst on dry rye and dad's ski sharpening skill that helped us all to become good skiers. We'd be in the dim basement trying to sharpen our skis for the upcoming weekend races. Dad's silhouette on the staircase and then, "let me help you". In one mighty pull of his carving forearm, he slid the file down the edge of the ski. We would watch in fascinating delight how the curls of metal edging would fall to the floor. Even though our legs were scrawny, our skis would never slip. Mom, we always wished there had been just a little more liverwurst on that dry Rye.

6: Carving: A Couple of Knives and a Stick by Rob Klettl

I think Brian Wallace said it best, "The pack box would open, out came a couple of knives and a stick of wood, and the next thing you knew there was a small grizzly bear on the cabin table". Well those small grizzly bears and numerous shapes and sizes of all sorts of animals eventually would come to adorn people's mantles from the Athabasca Hotel to the Vatican. Toni Klettl was a wood carver whose career stemmed from a humble origin in the late 1950's, and spanned over 50 years through to around 2006.

Like every adventure there had to be a beginning. It began out on the District, where what little precious spare time allowed to the back country patrol man was often spent alone in some very remote parts of our National Park. Seeing the hidden potential stored in pieces of Black Willow bark or in the kindling pile, our dad would square off a couple of sides with his jackknife, scroll a couple of pencil lines on them then proceed to cut away everything that did not look like what he wanted. The end result was a legacy of small bark figurines and bears that survived countless miles rolled up in pack boxes. As his skill grew so too did the inevitable demand for his hand carved figures, and soon he began to make them as a supplement to the meager wages paid to a Park Warden at that time. He soon discovered a new magical type of carving wood and shipments of Bass wood steamed west from the mills of Ontario. With increased demand for carvings so too did his array of whittling knives. What once was a pocket knife gave way to a canvas roll out of dozens of pouches each containing a unique and special tool.

There really was never a time the Klettl house was wood chip free. The band saw could be heard well after supper deep in the dark bowels of the concrete bunker of the warden houses, carefully cutting out the next order. Cut out shapes of Bear, Sheep, Cougar and Buffalo soon became a noticeable hindrance to the Klettl boys Hockey night in Canada rink space in the basement. The ever familiar sound of his footsteps coming up the stairs, then stomp, stomp, brush, brush at the top of the stairs signified he was done for the night. Despite these heroic efforts mom was still sweeping crazy amounts of sawdust up before the dog rolled in it and spread it around the entire house. The greatest mistake of his life was introducing his kids to downhill skiing. If he could go back in time he likely would have never started pulling us behind the old Bozak. The financial drain of putting four kids onto the Provincial, Can-Am, or National Ski Teams was a long exhaustive battle. As the skiing bills grew higher so did the pile of wood chips under the table each night. Carving became a means to an end.



Reflecting back it was the norm to see our dad at one of the table, outfitted in a homemade canvas bib, white muscle shirt, shredded muscular forearms bulging, faded green warden pants, cup of coffee partially filled with wood chips, myself and the dog parked at his feet under a more liberal coating of chips and our mom at the other end of the table reading to him from the National Geographic magazine. If mom was not there the German marching songs being played on the old turn table could be heard as far away as Hinton. Like a machine he turned out the carvings and the skiing bills began to go down. When finally the last of us kids packed in the old Rossignol 223's Dad was able to take a breather, but soon the chips began to fly once again. He simply loved it.

When our dad retired in 1985, they moved to Valemount and the financial pressure cooker was turned off. For the first time he was able to have a shop with natural light rather than working around laundry piles and the waxing bench with 1 watt bulbs for illumination. Yet still the carving took place at the kitchen table and continued for many years with our mom at the other end sipping tea and reading to him, this was just how they rolled. Finally he had the time to pursue other wood working ventures, and soon ornately carved mantles and furniture was finding itself into bedrooms and dining rooms from Vancouver to the Yukon. However, the waiting time for a carving order began to lengthen, as unknown to any of us, the Beast was beginning to take him. The wood began to get too hard, the knives just did not cut the way they should, the strength in his arms began to fail, the band saw became silent and soon the canvas carving bag with all its treasures remained unopened in the corner.

Of the many thousand carvings he made, many being shipped off to all corners of the globe in wood chip packed boxes liberally held shut with inches of packing tape and the promise of "I will send you a check in the mail", he was stiffed only once. That from a local business man in town, and I know who you are. The only regret he ever mentioned in his carving career was that Pierre Elliot Trudeau was given several of his pieces. So I believe it is obvious as to where dad's political opinion lay. It seems no matter where you go or with whom you speak a Toni Klettl carving is somehow brought up into the conversation, or is sitting on the mantle above your head, like the Big Horn sheep on display in the Vatican.

There will be no more, so for those of you that have one, treasure it.

7: Come and Get It by Howie Klett

Flour, potatoes, eggs, butter and cheese; those were the five magical ingredients that went into the cast iron frying pan and somehow a rainbow of ambrosia would come out; BrisCanadle, Horshnineeta, hoitzconackennocken, Muas, Stuff in the Pan, Pillows; they called it peasant food in Austria, and if that is true, I never want to be King. Dad could cook, not only did he like it, he was so very good at it. I'm sorry Mom, but when the kids saw Dad boiling a pot of potatoes, or throwing some butter in the pan, we became almost frantic with hunger. When we were out freezing all day at the ski hill and were so skinny that we were composed of a rib cage with two emaciated femurs dangling out the bottom, nothing could satisfy like the rib-sticking, butter soaked goodness of Dad's cooking. The first and most important words I ever learned of the Pinzgau dialect was shmoitz, and that means butter.

In rural Austria, there were very few ingredients available and over the centuries ingenious methods were developed to combine these five ingredients into a buffet of different dishes. I don't know where Dad learned to cook but there are 4 kids and a bunch of grand kids who are so glad you did. The young ones would be kicked out of the kitchen to pace on the porch until we heard the magic words; Come and get it. We would attack the food with all the table manners of piranhas on a bleeding cow. Whatever magic was in the pan was bifurcated with laser precisions and the hottest spot in hell was reserved for the kid who dared stray 1 mm over his line into someone else's glory. Dad you will be happy to hear that our kids treat your recipes with the same frenzy we did.

So many tastes and smells are chiseled into my memory; Mom's homemade bread, Aunt Dianna's icing; but Dad you are the champ, you taught me how to drool. Some people respond to the first haunting notes of an operatic aria, others to the sound of a finely tuned engine or the laugh of a child;....Me! I respond to the sound of butter sizzling in a hot cast iron frying pan. My belly and I thank you Dad.

8: Bears...True stories by Loni Klett

Surprisingly enough, in all the years' dad was out in the wilds of JNP; there were only two, way too close encounters with grizzlies and one truly annoying incident with a black bear. There were many bear incidences that our wildlife guys still deal with today, but in dad's day, there was a much bigger garbage problem and most bears had to be destroyed because of that.

A: Blue Creek Bear

September 1959, dad was surprised on two accounts, one good, one bad. There was to be another addition to the Klett Family, mom had left in August to visit her mom in Lamont, AB. Dad had been buzzing around preparing the cabin, packing in all the grub, \$860 worth, readying Blue Creek for a long winter with Linda and a new baby. The good surprise was there was only one baby but two...Howie and I decided to make it even complicated for mom and dad. Imagine all those diapers...Dad left his district to visit mom and us, thinking their home was secure, and provisions were well stocked.

Surprise number two was a darn black bear incident., When dad rode into the meadow at Blue Creek , looked at the cabin and thought, "Oh no..." A black bear had got into the cabin via the roof. He had ripped off most of the shingles on one side, dug a hole beside the roof drop and plopped inside to gorge himself on all the winter grub that dad had just packed in. He must have had a grand old bear time, sampling everything and anything, except the flour. Ate a blueberry pie right out of the pan.(we ate many more pies out of that claw marked pan) Made himself comfortable on the bed ,did not use the outhouse and left the way he came in.

Dad had to dig pretty deep; he now had to re shingle the roof and clean up the stinking mess. He slept two nights in the equipment shed under horse blankets because of the stench in the cabin. The biggest blow was the loss of the \$860, worth of grub. In those days, wardens had to pay for and supply all their own food in the backcountry. So, now dad had to go back to town (remember this was Blue Creek and winter was coming) it wasn't just going to the corner store and shell out another whack of money. The grocery store was kind enough to give him credit, the chief warden basically said, "tough, you are responsible for your own food".

October 1959 we all arrive at Blue Creek safe and sound. Life continued on in the baby cabin world. Parks refused to compensate for the loss of the groceries, so dad worked for free all winter. This is why he found it frustrating when a new generation of wardens could order boxes of steak and shrimp and it was all covered by parks.

B: Cavell Grizzly

Storm, earned his kibbles one evening at Cavell, mid 1960's. Larry Tremblay, another warden was over for supper. I was in the bathroom pulling up my pants. By chance, I looked out the window to see... a huge grizzly right there, at the bunkhouse, standing up on its hind legs. Ran out, and raised the alarm...we all went into the living room, and looked out the big picture window. Howie saw the bear with its cub in tow chasing Storm, around the corner of the house... Storms tongue was flying sideways.

Dad ran into office, grabbed his rifle and ammunition clip and as Louis Lamour says, "jacked a shell into the chamber" while hightailing it out the back door. The bear was still chasing Storm....until it saw dad! It skidded to a stop...swung her head around; razor beam eyes locked and loaded on dad. Bum dropped and she exploded; in a single jump, sod flying straight toward dad. Larry Tremblay grabs Howie by the scruff of the neck and yells to everyone, "get away from the window."

There was ear deafening bang, as if a huge balloon just burst. We felt the silence of horror...what happened to dad? Larry Tremblay went out to investigate, dad was still standing, rifle by his side, with a dead grizzly right at his feet, bullet hole right between the eyes. Dad told us, "All I can remember is the sound of her teeth clacking". We were all just little kids, it made a big impact on us, and the story was often retold. Howie went back years later and paced it out...the bear was only 6 steps away, our dad in a heartbeat... aimed, fired a deadly shot. Dad and Larry then had to go out and search for the cub...another ear deafening blast and a little body was added to the dead bear pile. That really upset us, we also avoided the blood stain on the gravel and the gravel pit where they were put.

For years after, I always looked out the window before going to the bathroom...

C: Old Horn Grizzly

One day, dad was riding into the Tonquin. Old Horn was a convenient and natural rest/lunch spot. In those years, there still was a cabin there. Dad was looking forward to a cup of tea and a salami bun, fresh baked that morning by mom. He was just about to tie his horse up to the hitching rail, when his horse snorted and looked to the cabin...a grizzly stuck his head out from behind the corner. The horse fled; showing the true metal side of his horseshoes... lickety split down the trail, stirrups flying up and down. From about 20m. away, the grizzly charged....dad, in a nano second got a foot up on the hitching rail and launched himself up the tree that was right there and climbed as high as he could to get away from the bear, that's only intent was pulling dad out of the tree.

The grizzly kept walking and walking around the base of the tree and gnawed a loaf size chunk out of the trunk in its frustration and anger. This went on for awhile...long enough that dad had to go to the bathroom. Anyone would have done the same...he pee'd in the bears face. You gotta have some payback and satisfaction if you are up a tree with a grizzly at the bottom. We figure it was a 1960's form a bear spray...the bear left and dad shinnied down, sprinted to the cabin and collected his nerves....Then he had to go out and find his horse...

Dad often told this story and his end comment was, "sure didn't notice the branches going up"

9: Horses...the Good, the Bad, Funny and Sad by Loni KlettI

Anyone that has worked dealt and relied on horses for pleasure or work can relate to this subject: they are; useful, necessary, stubborn, loving and frustrating 1000lbs time bombs. Highly addictive beasts of burden with endearing personalities that comes in a variety of body shapes and temperaments.

Dad, was a mountain man from Austria, horses were totally foreign to him. The majority of wardens were cowboys, old hands and wranglers who very familiar with horses. He received lots of sage advice, good and bad...he quickly realized that he saw this horse thing somewhat different than his instructors. He worked his horses with gentleness and by understanding their personalities he, his saddle horse and pack string were a comfortable union of man and beast on the trail.

Us kids loved the horses, helped out as much as we could... if hindrance could be considered help. The Cavell corrals were a particular favorite; not only was our dad home safe and sound, so were our friends, King, Old Joe, Rusty, Socks and Friendly. They would tolerate our exuberant excitement and mayhem with resigned acceptance, snuffling and blowing their sweet, grassy, warm breath on us. The smell of the trail; spruce, chainsaw and horse lingered in our nostrils, evoking images of wilderness, alpine lakes and mountains...we were so proud of our dad.

We only knew Rusty as a Roman nosed swayback, mild tempered fellow. He wasn't always so...Rusty was a wild horse that came from the Green Timber Area, near Hinton. Dad got him as a two year old at Blue Creek. Shoeing him was quite an ordeal, had to tie him down between two trees... on his side. He also had a nasty habit of pulling back and no one could break him of that. Miles Moberly said, "either to pour warm water or pee in his ear". We never heard which remedy was chosen, but it worked, Rusty was cured and became a solid, reliable fixture in dad's pack-train.



Dad was heading into the Tonquin in 1961 on a horse named Sally. She always felt compelled to rear up and fall over backwards. She did this to dad going up the rockslide at Old Horn and dad was hurt pretty bad. He somehow got back on and then tried to "ride the daylights out of her". Up to Amethyst Lake, Maccarib Creek, Meadow Creek, Mista Pass, Tonquin Pass, Maccarib Creek. Ten miles+nine+ten+ten+four+four. Then she reared over again, dad was ready and quick enough to get off. He told the barn boss, who said, "well you have a rifle", so dad took Sally into the bush and shot her.

Old Joe was a peaceful, old character who had spent his youth as a work horse building the first road to Banff in the 1930's. Dad trusted him with young Linda and Grandma...but for some horse reason, he hated the colour purple. Dad had to warn people on the trail if they were wearing purple. Tom Vinson, senior was the one of the Outfitters in the Tonquin in the 1960's. This particular trip, he was host to a bunch of women. There was a large woman, who was the daughter of a politician, had a butt; "an axe handle and a coke can wide," totally stuffed into a pair of purple pants. The troupe had stopped at Old Horn for lunch...Dad watched the whole thing unfold with wide eyed disbelief. The woman somehow managed to get off her horse with some assistance, she bent over..."oh no" thought dad. He watched Old Joe sneak up behind her, mouth wide open and bite her bum. Horse bites can be pretty painful; the the rest of her horse trip was probably pretty uncomfortable.

Horse travel isn't for everyone, especially in the mountains. Unpredictable weather, terrain; challenge, frustrate, exhaust man and horse. Dad, when in charge of the Tonquin and Whirlpool District, in the 1960's often logged four to five hundred miles a month on horseback. Howie and Rob helped Gunner, from the Astoria Outfitting on the South Boundary for twelve days this summer. This trip happened about a week after dad had passed, it was a trip they both unknowingly needed. They came back with a glassy eyed bush stare from all the wondrous sights they'd seen and a heightened sense of what dad must have experienced out on the trail. They both agreed on many things, how "after four days, the smell just goes away..." and that long horse trips are akin to the ultimate endurance athlete...always on the move, little sleep, constant motion, constant moving. Like dad, they loved it...

10: Dogs: Let the Dog out First by Loni KlettI

In our two district homes, Blue Creek and Cavell, mom always had to remind us, "Let the dog out first". We never knew what might be in the yard. We grew up with various German Shepherds; two of them were RCMP dogs that just didn't qualify for duty. We didn't care, they were our shadows; whether we were plunked in an apple box while mom did outside chores or on patrol with us wild things while we roamed the woods, and scampered up mountains. Our shadows were our friends, constant companions and protectors. Mom knew by the bark, was it a bear bark? Or stranger alert bark?



Toni and Shirley KlettI 1957 Leaving Willow Creek

Storm, was a pup, with big feet and huge ears when the family lived up at Blue Creek. As we all know, pups are prone to getting into things...rat poison is not the most ideal thing to ingest. Dad, somehow caught this in time and thought, "what do I do?" He poured salt water down Storms throat...again and again until the pup was vomiting over and over. Storm then disappeared for a couple of days. Mom and dad were worried sick and felt absolutely horrible. One rainy morning dad looked out and saw two ears poking up from behind a bush. Dad scooped up the hungry, bedraggled pup, dried him out in a warm cabin and he lived to be a ripe old dog. Dad told me this story a few years ago and it still bothered him. He loved his dogs...

While at Cavell, we had seven separate grizzlies pass through the yard in one week. Howie and Robbie's basketball, soccer and football were bitten to pieces. Mom's yard art suffered the same fate...biffed, mauled, bashed and chewed.

Dad, was often away from home for weeks at a time, patrolling his district...he knew that our sticky, panting, protective shadows were always close by.

11: Winter Travel: Getting There Can Be A Problem by Howie Klett

As anyone who has been in the back country of this park knows, it is big. When it has been snowing all night and you have a long way to go the next day, how to get there becomes the dominant concern. In the 1950's the tried and true method was snowshoes. The 72-12s were the weapon of choice because they could keep you up in powder but were not too big as to thrash your hip flexors in deep snow. When the trees are crackling, the sun is blinding and the tears are freezing on your face there is a hypnosis on the trail that only snowshoes can provide. Those first few winters at Blue Creek Mom and Dad figured out how to get from cabin to cabin. Dad would pull the sled with Linda and whatever else was coming along and Mom would come behind with a stick to push the sled when things got sticky. It worked but it was very hard labor. Dad wondered if there was a better way.

Dad figured he would try skis. One patrol he left Blue Creek heading for Topaz with his usual load on his back but a shiny new pair of skis on his feet. About half way he knew he was in trouble, the snow was piling up and he was sinking deep with every step. His hips were cramping so bad he fixed a rope to each ski tip to help pull it out of the snow. If the Topaz cabin had been a few hundred meters farther up the valley, in Dads words, 'They would have found me the next spring dead'. He crawled into the cabin and then his whole body seized so bad he could not stand. For two days he lay on the floor beside the stove unable to move. When he had to pee, he would barrel roll over to the door, then barrel roll back to the stove. From then on Dad always kept firewood on the floor because to reach up and get it from the box on the wall was agony. After two days when he was able to stand, the next thing to go into the stove were the skis. A bad idea from end to end.

All those long, lonely, cold days snowshoeing with big loads on the trail seemed to convince Dad that there had to be a better way. There was; and it was called the Bozak. The Bozak was one of the first snowmobiles made in Canada by a carpenter in Manitoba called Mike Bozak. Mr Bozak had been constructing his snowmobiles in his barn since the 1940's and by the early 1960's he had produced nearly 400 of these wonderful contraptions with ever changing design and materials. Well Dad heard about these machines and thought it would make back country travel easier and a lot safer for his rapidly growing family in the North Boundary of Jasper. He plunked down his down his deposit 90 dollars then paid the princely sum of 605 dollars upon delivery. Given he was making 3600 a year, this was a big deal.

The Bozak was a strange machine but it was every bit as much of our childhood as horses, elk bugles and moonlight. The engine was actually mounted behind the driver and had a 4 speed manual transmission, with the magic of a reverse as well. To change gears you had to stop and reach back to shift the gear shift sticking straight up from the engine. The engine itself was a little 4 stroke 10hp Koholar, and I really believed it never could rev over 10rpm. The sound it made is so imprinted in our minds, a little putt-putt-putt that just kept chugging along and never changed no matter the slope or snow depth. The track was made of rubber and canvas belting with angle iron bolted to it every 6 to 8 inches. It made a perfect shape of a loaf of bread in the snow and it was always fun to see all the loaves lined like a bakery shelf when the Bozak putted by. The thing was really was a snow mule and the usual sight would be Dad heading into the bush pulling a sled piled so high with supplies we couldn't see man or machine.

The Bozak not only pulled supplies, it also pulled us. The usual configuration was Dad at the front steering, pulling a sleigh piled high with kids, dogs and boxes of just stuff, with Mom being dragged along behind on skis. The Klett B-train heading up the trail. That machine was not only was our winter horse, it was our ski lift. We kids first learned to ski on the hills of the Tonquin valley bombing down the powder and getting pulled back up with the good old Bozak. At the time I am sure Dad had no way of knowing what that humble beginning would lead to.

It was also a sense of security. I remember a trip into the Tonquin when I was a very little kid and as usual I was hidden under a pile of blankets and dog hair with my siblings and the sound of the engine had lulled me to sleep. When we broke tree line at Surprise Point a winter storm hit us and the wind began to shriek like a banshee. I woke very afraid. However, I soon heard the reassuring putt-putt of the engine and looked up to see Dad, immobile against the white, his shoulders hunched against the winter. I knew everything was okay, it would always be okay when Dad was driving us with the Bozak.

12: Mt. Athabasca, JNP 1952 by Loni Klettli

It was a fine summer's day in 1952; Toni received a phone call from his good friend, Charlie Dupre. "Hey, Toni, want to go for a climb tomorrow?" Toni was all over that like burrs on sock. "You bet Charlie, I'm in. What mountain?" "Athabasca" was the reply over a scratchy phone connection.

The two men set out at the usual early, early morning time from the Columbia Icefields. Remember in those days the road was a winding, ribbon of gravel with no Chalet and much more ice, glacier and snow... Bolstered and confident with the energy, fitness and the "sure whatever," attitude of youth they probably felt like they could conquer the world and most defiantly Mt. Athabasca.

Hours later they found themselves at the top. Gazing at the expanse of the Columbia Icefields below and all the other mighty peaks, they sat in unified comradery ; sharing slabs of cheese and salami while reveling in past many hours it took to reach the summit. Over three hundred ice steps had been kicked and hacked out of the north face of Mt. Athabasca.

The two friends then packed up their rucksacks, hightailed off the peak, made it back to the car in one tired piece. They probably "had a few" when they got home to Jasper and chalked up the climb to a "great day" and carried on with life.

It wasn't until many, many years later that Barry Blanchard, climber and author was writing an article for a climbing magazine about the history of ascents on Mt. Athabasca. He had heard a light buzz on the Alpine Climbers pipeline that 2 fellows back in 1952 were the first ones up the north face of Mt. Athabasca. He set out to set the record straight, heard the whole truth and nothing but the truth from Toni. Charlie Dupre and Toni Klettli were given the credit for the first ascent of the north face.

March 11 1956. Toni receives another phone call, "Toni, Charlie has been buried in an avalanche up at Marmot Basin, we need you!" Many exhausting, gut, heart wrenching hours later, Toni and the rescue team finds Charlie's body buried under meters of snow at the bottom of the bowl now named in his memory, " Charlie's Bowl". He then vowed that he would learn all he could about snow, avalanches and how to make skiing safer.

Dad, Happy Fathers Day. This story is for you. Even though you are in a place where you don't remember much and all days pretty much blend into the next, your family has never forgotten all your lifelong contributions to this park, all the wonderful adventures and stories ...what a great Dad you still are.

The Old Days are Gone by Loni Klettli

The Mountain parks are losing their old-timers, pioneers and legends. Their accomplishments formed the backbone of human spirit in the Mountain Parks. What is it about the Rocky Mountains? They inspire men and women into visionaries, innovators and drive them to perform incredible feats of fitness, illumination and awakening. They all contributed, impacted and made a difference. We all know the stories, we never tire of them; they capture our imagination, hearts and souls. The stories take us into the wind, swooping and diving up and over mountain peaks, racing with icy speed over glaciers, swirling and teasing turquoise blue lakes to finally sifting down to quietly rest beside a creek.

These pioneers had their own share of frustrations and challenges; anything that is worthwhile can't or should not be easy. Is it an advantage to be raised with a disadvantage? Soon the days we're living in will be the old days. What will our stories be? What legacy will we leave behind? We spoke about the treasures in the pack boxes, bark carvings, fish and fir needles, the other treasure is intangible. The lid would open and we should breathe in deep, in a fierce addiction to wilderness and space. We inhaled qualities like resilience, resolve, self-confidence, and self-reliance. As Mo, Howie's wife said, you Klettli's are such a rebellious lot".

Dad, you overcame, forgave much in your life, our family had an incredible up bring but it was mom who we orbited around.

Partnership and Valemount by Linda Klettli

Although this is the celebration for Dad's life, from the time Mom and Dad met, their lives were woven together, a team... pulling together side by side, taking on the joys and challenges evenly, taking care of each other, sharing, dreaming, planning, together building their lives.

At some point in their lives, they reached the ultimate pinnacle of couple-dom... they reached 'un' status. They moved from being Toni and Shirley to being Toni-un-Shirley. This very elite and rare status means that the world saw them as a unit, two sides to one coin, two halves of one brain. Still unique individuals but woven together, each joy and challenge strengthening the 'un' status. Toni-un-Shirley, Mom-un-Dad. The status is very rare, but there are others... Betty-un-Sid, Gordy-un-Sharon, Elfie-un-Bert (etc).

And then retirement - all the years of work drawing to a close and a whole new life-style opening. Valemount was a brand new experience – buying the house – up to then it was government rentals – building, landscaping - no need to factor in work – or the kids – when planning the days. Their lives became deciding each day which trail to take Ferdl the four-wheeler up, where to pick up old cow patties for the garden, how many pails of berries to add to the already full freezer of berries, which logging road to explore, which friends to visit, travelling, planning, music, laughter . Like a warm cozy blanket, Valemount surrounded and welcomed mom and dad and their last years there were filled with joy.

But the good times and days together weren't to last. Mom was diagnosed with stomach cancer. It, of course, was one of those incurable kinds and demonstrating his resolve and commitment Dad cared for her at their home in Valemount till the end. her wonderful spirit left us in October 2000. Our world fell apart...it knocked the stuffing out of dad. As usual, the wonderful community of Valemount provided support and caring during this devastating time and our family will always be very grateful to the Robson Valley people.

When mom died, the light left dad's eyes, his face rarely lit up with his old smile, grief, Mom's strength and love had kept the shadows away. When she died, cracks started appearing...old hauntings, anxieties and vulnerabilities crept in. A goofy miniature dashchund called Spook did his best to help but it was too much loss to overcome.

It was with heavy hearts we realized that dad was struggling and needed to move from Valemount back to Jasper. The Demon, Parkinsons Disease, had taken over dad's life and he suffered terribly those last few years. Cruelly robbing him of his ability to move, communicate, eat, Parkinsons slowly stole all dad's basic human pleasures and quality of life.

For the next few years he lived at the Pine Grove Manor, then Alpine Summit to finally the Designated Assisted Living centre. He needed much care in the last year of his life and our family learned first hand how lucky we are in this town to have the facilities and caregivers we do.

We cannot thank enough all the nurses, doctors, caregivers who looked after dad – you are true angels.

The Wind from the West by Loni Klettli

July 12, 3:22am; the phone rang with incessant, alarming urgency. It was that phone call...the phone call that I anticipated, dreaded, but ashamedly hoped for. The message, "Toni passed away peacefully in his sleep at 3:07, I am so sorry".

3:27 am; I am out of the house in a flash, grab my bike, leaving the gate wide open and swinging in my haste. Nearly lose it on the sketch in the gravel alley. Trying to focus; pedaling is easy, my night time riding rule ringing in my head , "two hands on the handle bars, two hands on the handle bars".

The wind from the west is lambasting me on Geikie Street., a cold, gritty wind, I'd expect when you get off the Paradise Chair up at Marmot Basin. My eyes are watering and my ears are cold. When suddenly, by the school yard, everything changed...a warm breeze was playfully tossing my hair. I stopped pedalling and coasted, the breeze turned into a hand, then strong arms and I was pulled into a hug smelling of horse, spruce and trail travel. A whiskered face was next to mine; I once again was a little girl skipping carefree down the trail wearing a pop top and shorts. The moment was fleeting, so brief, I was still coasting by the school yard, Cleansing wave after another kept washing over me, engulfing me. It was the wave of relief...

The wind from the west then turned north over Pyramid Mountain and headed up the Snake Indian River. It dipped down at Willow Creek Cabin, dallied around the tack shed and woodpile as if checking the supplies for the long winter ahead. Gathering strength, the wind then turned west, blowing trees down in its haste to get to a cabin in a field. Blue Creek Cabin, smoke curling out of the chimney from a well tended fire. My mom, Shirley and the German Shepherd Storm, were waiting on the front porch. Mom opens the cabin door and says, "Toni, come on in. I've been waiting for you".