

**PARK WARDEN SERVICE ALUMNI SOCIETY
SOCIÉTÉ des ANCIENS des GARDES de PARC**

Summer 2026 Newsletter

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**Membership: Open to all former park wardens and all those supportive of
the Alumni Society and its work**



Our New Mission Statement

Approved by the Board January 12th, 2026.

The mission of the Park Warden Service Alumni Society (PWSAS) is to “Maintain a communication link with former Park Wardens, Park Naturalists/Interpreters, Resource Conservation Section personnel and other staff who were involved with visitor safety, backcountry management, natural resource management (i.e. wildlife, vegetation, fire, aquatics), cultural resource management, law enforcement and communication and education duties and other related duties by fostering fellowship and comradery through PWSAS communications, volunteerism, extensions, oral histories and social activities.”

SALMON ARM MINI REUNION

Alan and Lisa Westhaver were the driving force - again - in making this re-union a terrific success! They had lots of volunteer help which made the event run smoothly. It was an eminently successful re-union and the weather couldn't have been better. As in the past it was held at the well-equipped Salmon Arm Elks Campground. The Elks Cub and their campground hosts provided us with wonderful support. There was a larger turnout than in the past which was heartening, so word must be getting out that this is the place to be in Spring! Reunion participants were well fueled with coffee donated by Cheryl Sheehan during the entire 4-day event. As in the past there was a breakfast of bacon, eggs and pancakes to kick things off. Ten dozen fresh eggs were supplied by Evelyn Gilmar and you could taste the difference between them and store-bought ones. There was a potluck supper only this time with more attendees there was a larger variety of dishes and no shortage. That was on the last night of the reunion and it was followed by a lively performance by “The Wardens” in the Elks Hall. During the break, drinks and merchandise, including PWSAS shirts were on sale. Rob Kaye's book Born to the Wild: Journals of a National Park Warden in the Canadian Rockies was selling very well and one purchaser was heard to say “*I didn't know wardens did all those things,*” referring to what she had seen on the band's background slide show. So, the message is getting out that the “old time” warden life is worth knowing about! It was sad to have to pull up stakes the next morning but . . .

Good weather, Good times and Good company - sums it up!

Oral Histories on Whyte Website

The Whyte Museum is storing all the oral history materials that the PWSAS sends them BUT they are not digitally searchable at the individual or topic level. Cliff White is taking the lead in exploring the possibility of a project with the Museum to post perhaps 10 - 20 interviews produced in a similar but much shorter format than Chic Scott's "Fireside Chat" interviews, possibly using a combination of still photos and short interviews from the individuals or close associates. This would give the public a taste of the material and draw them in to look at the larger collection of interviews not yet digitally searchable.

This is preliminary work at the present but it has promise - for the PWSAS and the Whyte Museum.

When Cliff updated the board on this work two suggestions popped up, both concerning northern parks:

1. A talk with Ron Chambers who has a family connection - a hereditary Tlingit chief - who charged tolls (or something similar) to Chilkoot Trail gold-rushers. Also of note: Ron was the first Yukon First Nation person to summit Mount Logan in 1975 (or thereabouts). An elderly and practical native woman asked him why he climbed it if there were no sheep or goats there.

2. A talk with Ron Chambers and Peter Perren about the rescue Mount Logan - from Ron's perspective of being on the rescue team and Peter's from being rescued along with Tim Auger.

Musical Notes from 'The Wardens.'

"The Wardens" started off 2026 with a tour of Vancouver Island, the Sunshine coast and the lower mainland. Highlights included Errington Hall in Parksville as well as our third time at the Powell River performing Arts Centre. You can watch one of our full shows from that tour, this one at Ladner, on YouTube - just search "The Wardens" at the Bez Arts Hub.

We put on some performances in February at the Maclab Centre in Leduc, The old Church Theatre in Okotoks, at the Calgary Bluegrass Club and at the Bow Valley Music Club; Calgary's biggest folk club.

Ray and Scott co-wrote a song about Kathy Calvert which was played at her memorial at the Seniors' Centre in Canmore. We recorded that song in an Edmonton studio: it will be on our fifth album - look for it this coming fall.

A highlight for us was performing at the Warden Alumni reunion in Salmon Arm. Of course, we knew a lot of the people in the audience. Thanks again to Al Westhaver for putting the band up at his house. The next day we performed in Invermere as part of the "Wings Over the Rockies Festival" to a sold-out crowd of 270. The night after that we performed to another sell-out crowd in Cremona.

We are taking a break this summer as Ray is up north - stationed in Fort Simpson and working in Nahanni Park. This fall we have several shows in Northern B.C. but the highlight will be a performance at the Margaret Greenham Theatre at the Banff Centre on October 30th in conjunction with the Banff Mountain Film Festival. This will be our first local performance in three years!

The P.W.S.A.S. newsletter is published 2 or more times yearly for members of the society. Articles, membership enquiries and other matters may be sent to the society at the addresses top of page one.

Executive:

President - Dave Reynolds

Vice-President - Cliff White

Secretary-Treasurer - Marie Nylund

Membership - Marie Nylund

Directors: (2 & 3 year terms)

Dale Portman

Jim Murphy

Scott Ward

Colleen Reynolds

Alan Westhaver

George Lukiwski

Brian Spreadbury

Perry Davis

Regional Representatives

Mountains - vacant

West Coast - Pete Clarkson/Bob Hansen

North & Yukon - Tom Elliot

Prairies - vacant

Ontario - Allan Gibbs/Dan Reive

Eastern Canada -

Anyone interested in serving as a Regional Rep. please contact the society



Salmon Arm Reunion Photos

The following is a list of those who attended (apologies for anyone whose name has been missed).

Alan & Lisa Westhaver, Brian & Eileen MacDonald, Larry & Sharon Harbidge, Jackie & Greg Keesey, Eric & Wanda Bell, Brian MacDonald, Ed & Cheryl Abbott, Tom Elliot, Ivan Phillips, Cyndi Smith, Peter Achuff, Edwin Knox, Brian Spreadbury, Patti Brososki, Pete Clarkson, Jen Scott, Jane Emson, Sylvia Forest, Julie Timmins, Todd Golumbia, Adrienne Mason, Bob Hansen, Cliff & Johanne White, Bill Thorpe, Shawn Cardiff, Evelyn Gilmar, Ed & Cheryl Abbott, Perry & Heather Davis, Scott & Wanda Ward, Cheryl Sheehan, Hal & Janice Morrison, Will & Susan Devlin, Ed & Marie Robert, Douglas Wilkinson, Joanne Williams, Jim & Patsy Murphy, Sue Wolf, Bill & Deb Browne, Doug & Faye Burles, John Flaa, Ray Schmidt, Brian Wallace.



The above photos are from the reunion in Salmon Arm. Cliff White and Bill Thorpe are on kitchen duty while Perry Davis mans the merchandise/membership table selling PWSAS Polo and T-shirts.

Getting older - and better?

Ev Gilmar turned 90 recently. Congratulations! She has still a few years to go to catch up to Peter Fuhrmann who is now 92. He is doing small stain-glass pictures - many of mountain scenes. I wonder if keeping chickens may be more work.

Some News of Executive Doings

The Membership form is being updated to make clearer (and broaden) the criteria for membership. The form will be finalized at our next board meeting. All members are encouraged to bring new members into the corral. On our Facebook page we have almost 300 members; it is a very active site as well.

Oral History Project.

We are now entering Phase 15 with Brian Spreadbury coordinating this project which, by the way, is adequately funded for this year. Leah Pelletier is doing the interviews and the executive - which includes Brian - is searching for more interviewers.

Leah has interviewed Terry Willis, George Lukiwski, and Murray Hindle. She will interview Todd and Linda in order to get Lance Cooper's story. With more interviewers more could be done - obviously. The list of interviewees is long.

Some very heartening news - Susan Forest is working on finishing up the book that her sister Kathy Calvert was writing on Peter Furhmann. No date of publication yet - this coming Christmas would be good.

MURAL IN MEMORY AND HONOUR OF KATHY CALVERT

The PWSAS has received \$2,000 in donations in memory of Kathy Calvert. Alan Westhaver has kindly agreed to lead the project and has met with Kathy's family (the Forest family), who are very enthusiastic about commemorating Kathy's leadership as one of the first women to serve in the Warden Service through the creation of a mural. Alan has also consulted with the managers overseeing Jasper's community mural initiative, a project that has been underway for several years. Following the wildfire, the initiative has gained additional momentum as part of Jasper's recovery efforts. The project managers were very supportive of the concept of a collage-style mural depicting a variety of scenes that reflect Kathy's life, career, and legacy. The Town of Jasper has a number of designated mural locations on buildings, making it a fitting place for such a tribute. Sponsorship will be required to bring the project to fruition, as the estimated cost of a mural ranges from approximately \$10,000 to \$30,000.

Over-Crowding in the Mountain National Parks.

Your editor and his wife recently had guests from England. We recommended that they avoid Lake Louise but if they really had to see the lake they would **spend their day** taking the shuttle bus at the off-site parking lot into town, getting a seat (if any were still available) on the bus to the lake, squeezing into the crowd of selfie-takers at the lakeshore (backs to the mountain scene) and then reversing the process to get back to their vehicle. They went to Emerald Lake instead and while parking was busy there, they got to see the lake and mountain landscape and had an enjoyable day!

The Town of Banff has cancelled future skijoring events after January's boondoggle - traffic gridlock in and outside of town, unruly behavior, extensive littering, etc. Heads Up Parks Canada: last year the park had to deal with a record number of visitors - 4.5 million. What's coming this summer?

Days of Yore

This is a weekend 'living history' event at Heritage Park, Calgary involving re-enactments by historic groups throughout Alberta. Re-enactments can range from jousting knights on horseback, W.W. II German soldiers attacking British troops, Scottish soldiers in kilts parading with flintlocks, field hospitals taking in wounded soldiers and fur traders showing their wares.

Board member Perry Davis is looking into what the requirements are for the PWSAS to participate. A canvas wall tent is available, campfires are allowed (charcoal) but fire-wood could be piled on site and a table with warden paraphernalia could be set up. The critical item though is enough retired warden volunteers to man the site, meet visitors and tell them about the general duty warden life (stretching the truth will be allowed) throughout the weekend. This year's event is scheduled for the weekend of August 1 & 2. More information will be coming.

Government of Canada announcement June 30th, 2026

In the summer of 2024, Jasper National Park and the town of Jasper were hit with a devastating wildfire that burned approximately 32,700 hectares and destroyed 30 percent of structures in the town. A significant portion of the park's infrastructure was also damaged or destroyed. Since then, in partnership with the Government of Alberta, the Municipality of Jasper and local stakeholders, the federal government has supported residents, helped restore services, and rebuilt infrastructure. Over the past two years, the federal government has delivered more than \$385 million in Jasper wildfire response and recovery efforts. This has helped expedite reconstruction efforts, provide interim housing for over 415 families, remove debris on 100 percent of affected lots, and advance rebuilding, with construction actively underway at 118 properties. Building on this support, the Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Finance and National Revenue, announced \$520 million in additional funding to help accelerate rebuilding of Jasper National Park and ensure the critical repairs are completed efficiently, including by continuing to provide interim housing for displaced residents. The wildfire is estimated to have damaged or destroyed 20 per cent of total assets in the park, including front country campgrounds, staff housing, grounds, utilities buildings, highways, and roadways. The funding will support rebuilding efforts for these essential assets, provide interim housing for displaced Jasper residents through March 2028, complete townsites and perimeter fire risk reduction, and expedite reconstruction efforts. The goal is clear: rebuild stronger, safer, and ready for the future.

PWSAS T-SHIRTS AND POLO SHIRTS

Park Warden Alumni Society T-shirts and polo shirts were sold at “cost-recovery” at the reunion. There is still a supply of both polo and t-shirts available in a variety of sizes.

- Polo shirts: \$35.00
- T-shirts: \$25.00

If you are interested in purchasing a shirt, please contact Marie by email at parkwarden2008alumni@hotmail.com.

Please note that a shipping charge may apply if the shirt cannot be picked up in person.

ANN DIXON'S MILESTONE BIRTHDAY!

Last and certainly not least – Ann Dixon celebrated her 100th Birthday on April 17th with a gathering of family and friends. Throughout her long life, Ann has possessed a wonderful spirit full of strength, endurance and a warm sense of humour. Ann's connection with the Warden Service began in 1954 when her husband, Fred, was hired as ranch hand at the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch working for ranch foreman Lloyd Waikle. Fred and Ann moved to this remote area of Alberta with their two very young daughters, Connie who was four years old and Peggy who was one. Groceries were purchased “on the cuff” from Knott's Trading Post in Sundre. Winters were long, and Ann recalls one winter they were trapped for almost four months after a bad winter storm and saw not a single soul during that time.

Ann loved the Ya Ha Tinda, especially in the spring when the valley came alive with newborn foals and the wildlife babies. When Lloyd Waikle retired Fred had become both foreman and ranch hand and was effectively the entire staff at the ranch—a great deal of responsibility for one man but had the help of his silent partner, Ann. Life there was seldom dull. Each spring, Ann cooked for the horseshoers who spent two weeks at the ranch shoeing the horses before they were trailed to Banff. She also earned extra money by recording the daily weather and calling the report into Banff each day on the wall mounted magneto-crank telephone. At another time, she cooked for a survey crew, adding a little more to her savings. Ann would often joke, “*I had all this money and nowhere to spend it!*”

Fred became a park warden in 1957, and Ann continued to be his “silent partner” a role she played throughout most of Fred's career. His first posting was in Banff National Park at Saskatchewan Crossing, a remote district

where the family lived in a small two-room cabin with no running water and no electricity. A small generator was available, but it was reserved strictly for the two-way radios. The lone outdoor privy had to be shared with the seasonal staff—how Ann envied the engineers at Silverhorn road camp who enjoyed the luxury of an eight-hole toilet. The family's move in 1961 to British Columbia to the Leachcoil Warden Station in Yoho National Park gave the girls their first opportunity to attend regular school after six years of correspondence lessons supervised by their mother. Ann was delighted to have neighbours and even a store just seven miles away in a small community. After so many years in remote postings, this felt like real civilization.

Fred and Ann's next move took them to Manitoba to Riding Mountain National Park in 1971 where Fred was stationed at Heron Creek. By this time, Connie and Peggy were both married. Ann quickly noticed the sharp contrast between the landscape there and the mountain parks they had known. The winters were bitterly cold, with heavy snow often whipped by the wind into hard drifts. Winter patrols were carried out using a Bombardier snow machine. In 1974, Fred was transferred once again—this time back to Alberta to Elk Island National Park to the Tawayik District. While stationed in Elk Island, a freak accident occurred in which Fred was gored by a buffalo bull. This was indeed a stressful time for Ann. Despite the severity of the wound, and through a fortunate series of circumstances, Fred survived and spent only ten days in hospital in Fort Saskatchewan.

In 1982, after 27 years in the warden service Fred retired. It was a sad day for Fred and Ann. Ann stated in her book, *"When the ties that bound Fred and me to the wardens' way of life were finally severed, it represented a drastic change in our lives. We realized, we were no longer a vital part of that closely knit dynamic unit."*

In 1985, Banff National Park—Canada's first national park—celebrated its 100th anniversary. That same year, Ann published her book *Silent Partners: Wives of National Park Wardens*. The book shares personal stories of the women who truly were the silent partners behind the wardens' work and is beautifully illustrated by her daughter Peggy. As Ann wrote in the introduction: *"Since the beginning and down through the decades, the wives of National Park Wardens have played a very important role in Canadian history. They, along with their husbands, were the pioneers who opened up and settled the virgin land composing National Park territory."*

Maybe because the Ya Ha Tinda was Ann's first experience with national parks, or perhaps because the wonder and splendor of the Ya Ha Tinda became embedded in her spirit, she always held the ranch close to her heart. Whenever there was a warden service reunion at the ranch, Ann was there. She was determined to attend the 100th Anniversary of the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch in 2017, and despite cool temperatures and poor road conditions, she made the trip. Compared to the roads and travel conditions she had experienced in the 1950s while living at the ranch, traveling in a warm vehicle on a well maintained road with no creeks to ford would have seemed luxurious. The past few years Ann has made her home in Milk River and continues to enjoy life and all its blessings.

HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY ANN!

From your Warden Service family.