



Ellsworth E. "Whitey" Berg

August 1, 1919 - September 4, 2010

Dust Rising

E. E. "Whitey" Berg, a native son of Eastern Washington, has moved on to the wide open spaces of Heaven. He was born in Entiat, on August 1, 1919, to Edward and Gertrude Berg, at the family homestead on the Entiat River. The fifth of seven lively siblings, he was always the rebel of the family, and for most of the ninety-one years he favored the world with his presence, he lived a varied and vigorous life. From his earliest days, he loved the rugged beauty of the Entiat Valley; it seemed to those of us who knew him best that he was familiar with every tree, rock and flower that decorated the valley's steep sides. On those rocky slopes and on the banks of the Mad and Entiat Rivers, he enjoyed a childhood that was carefree and fraught with mischief. He told many a yarn about his career as an ornery, tow-headed kid; one particular favorite involved some needles he filched from his grandmother's gramophone. After inserting the needles, pointed end out, in the heels of his boots, he proceeded to get astride one of his grandfather's workhorses, and, with his little sister on behind, spurred that horse to an amazing show of speed, while his grandmother stood on the porch and shouted for them to return. A great part of intelligence is the ability to mold the materials at hand to fit the requirements of the moment! He was a talented student, but he felt hemmed-in at school, especially when he could see, through the windows of the one-room schoolhouse, a sight that drew him like a magnet: the local wild

horse herd—the Wild Bunch—grazed nearby. He left school at fourteen, when the county was in the depths of the Great Depression, in order to work and help support his family; the Wild Bunch, however, had an attraction that was far greater for him than earning ten cents an hour, and so began his adventures as a horse wrangler, cowboy, and sometime rodeo bronc rider. Much of his time, spare and otherwise, was spent up the Muddy Creek, tending the cattle of a curmudgeon named Bill Brannigan, or chasing, corralling, and trying to break the unlucky members of the Wild Bunch who fell into the clutches of Whitey and his gang of horse-crazy friends. The endeavor, though usually painful and often downright dangerous, was more successful than most of them thought possible. Successes included Pear, a raw-boned bay mare who outran every horse for miles around and who lived to train the next generation of kids, and a black horse named Dick, who, some twenty years down the road, became the property of two little girls. Whitey was a natural horseman, so it was a logical next step for him to try his hand at rodeo, riding saddle broncs. Bucked off, kicked, broken and bruised, he nonetheless had more wins than losses. Times, however, were changing, as the county slowly emerged from the Depression, and the wages being paid for government work were difficult to turn down. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) had come into being as a means of providing employment to some of the many Americans who needed work. Whitey went to work for the CCC, joining many other young men who created mountain trails, built irrigation flumes, and worked at other jobs that improved the infrastructure of the country. After a sojourn in the CCC, he went to work for the US Forest Service, manning the lookout on Tyee Mountain, and later transporting fish up the Icicle River via pack strings made up of wayward horses and stubborn mules. The fish were to be stocked in lakes high in the Cascades. Unfortunately, the water in the lakes was so cold that it killed the fish, but Whitey went on to pack into the mountains many times, hauling supplies and people (including, in the spring of 1941, his new wife) who wanted a firsthand look at the forbidding, magnificent Cascade Mountain country in the days

when the only way to see it was to hike it on foot or travel on horseback. Part of one trail was so rugged it was called the Devil's Backbone. Holden Mine was his next place of employment. The newlyweds lived at Lucerne on Lake Chelan. The country was gearing up for war, though, and there was money to be made harvesting the timber that was then so plentiful in the mountains surrounding the Methow Valley. In 1942, Whitey went to work for Twisp Wagner Lumber Company, first as a faller with a cumbersome power saw that was powered by a Caterpillar engine and had to be operated by two men. He quickly became the woods foreman for the company, a job he held for sixteen years, with a two-year break for Army duty. In 1956, he patented his "Quick Change Receiver," a device that helped revolutionize the way logs were attached to the Caterpillars that brought them out of the woods. From 1960 until his retirement, Whitey held various positions in the lumber industry, including a stint in helicopter logging and work for Morrison-Knudsen that involved a year in Africa. He retired from Louisiana Pacific in 1989 and moved to Amanda Park on the Olympic Peninsula, where he stood tall among the massive firs and cedar giants that fill the park. But through all the years and all the changes, his heart was rooted in the rocky soil of the Eastside, and always, in his memories, that Wild Bunch moved in a shining mass of bodies, hooves thundering, tails streaming as the herd headed up the next rise. He came home to Eastern Washington in the spring of 2003, living first in Loomis, and then in Omak. He gathered his reins, mounted, and hit the trail again on September 4, 2010. The dust rolled in a mighty cloud as he left, until it was hard to discern if he was the dust, or the dust was he. Behind him, the cloud scattered, its sparkling motes landing gently on each and every person and place he held dear. Ahead, against the waning moon, wisps of dust came together, forming at last into the shapes of wild horses, running forever free, heading for the next rise. Preceding Whitey in his journey was his beloved wife of fifty years, Pearl Lillian Berg. He was also preceded in death by his siblings: Lloyd, Ross, Fern, Leonard, Pearl and Jeanette. Also preceding him in death

and listed in the order that they were lost to us are his son-in-law, Jim Yount, grandson David Yount, and grandson Hoot Beeman. His dear, life-long friend, Haven Stanaway, also preceded him in death, as did many other cherished friends. He is loved and mourned by his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We are listed in the order by which we appeared in his life: Karmen (Jack) Beeman, Loomis, WA; Sandra Yount, Lemoore, CA; Timothy Berg, Kirkland, WA; Mary (Mark) Kirkham, Tacoma, WA. Shauna (Ryan) Marchant, Sarah (David) Grooms, Melanie (Mitch) Modlin, Jackie (Devin) Richter, Lindsey Kirkham, Dustin Kirkham; James Yount, Melissa (Robert) Buyense. Kile Geiss, Winston Grooms, Kailee Grooms, Mitchell Modlin, Riata Marchant, Martin Grooms, Blake Richter, Hannah Beeman, Chance Richter, Bode Grooms, and Aubrey Grooms. He is also mourned by his sister-in-law, Barbara (Leonard) Berg, by numerous nieces and nephews, and by legions of friends. In his life, he loved us all. Services for Whitey Berg will be held Saturday, September 11, 2010, at 10:00 a.m., at Jones & Jones~Betts Memorial Chapel, with Interment to follow at the Entiat Cemetery. Visitation will be Friday, September 10, 2010, from 1:00 to 7:00 p.m. Please express your thoughts and memories on the online guest book at jonesjonesbetts.com. Arrangements have been entrusted to Jones & Jones~Betts Funeral Home, Wenatchee

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP **10.** 1:00 PM - 7:00 PM (PT)

Jones & Jones ~ Betts Funeral Home
302 9thStreet
Wenatchee, WA 98801
(509) 662-1561
dante@jonesjonesbetts.com

Service

SEP **11.** 10:00 AM (PT)

Jones & Jones ~ Betts Funeral Home
302 9thStreet
Wenatchee, WA 98801
(509) 662-1561
dante@jonesjonesbetts.com

Tribute Wall

FB

“ Thanks for teaching me so much in steilacoom. Floyd Braun your friend and hired hand

Floyd Braun - June 25, 2025 at 07:20 AM

CG

“ I'm so sorry to say that I only met Whitey Berg one time. That was back in 1980's when I worked at the Entiat Ranger Station. One day someone came into my office and said that someone was there to see me. I came out to see and meet Whitey. He said, "I heard we're related. My mom was a Murdock." Wow, yes. I am a Murdock too, from Cashmere. We visited for a while and I thought he was a delightful character. I just wish I would have had an opportunity to get to know him and his family better. He didn't live in the valley at that time and was just passing through.

I hope to attend his service Saturday and I will bring a wonderful story written by my great aunt Fern about Uncle Siah (Whitey's grandpa) and the Entiat.

Blessings - Carmen (Murdock) Gamble

Carmen Gamble - September 10, 2010 at 10:16 PM



“ Uncle Whitey, as I recall from my youth, was always loving and kind. He was soft spoken to his sister (my mother Fern Anderson), Daddy, and me. It was as though we were made of something special that needed soft/kind words, gentleness. And yet, he was well known as a real man's man, a tough competitor and hard worker. We heard from others how people loved to work for or with him, how he set an example of hard work and smart thinking. I heard these things over many years of listening to people around Wenatchee and the Methow Valley. He was one of the (many) relatives who made me glad to be a Berg. I always felt there was something genetic, that came down through Grandpa Edward Berg, then through the next generation... that also put an adventuresome spirit into my cousins, me, and my two sons, Doug and Adam. We have not been afraid of the twists and turns of life. God has been good to all of us.

In later years when I was a grandmother and Whitey was in the assisted living facility, he was exactly the same uncle as when he was young and I was a little girl. He still spoke gently and lovingly, he still deeply appreciated flowers outside his window and his new friends in the home...residents and staff. Right up into his 90s he kept his boots shined and wore his cowboy hat every time he went out the door. He didn't know how to be lazy or sloppy that's for sure. This man considered everyone a friend. He shook hands to a fare-thee-well, then a sincere smile and a big hug finished off every greeting. He lived his life to the fullest and will never be forgotten because he was a loving man. Thank you Uncle Whitey! And thanks so much to all who took care of him in his old age!

Parry and Linnea Walden - September 08, 2010 at 08:33 PM