

# McClure was there for Church; who's there for him?

**Marty Trillhaase /Lewiston Tribune**

As former U.S. Sen. Frank Church was dying of pancreatic cancer in early 1984, his former seat mate, Sen. Jim McClure, introduced a bill renaming the massive 2.366 million-acre River of No Return Wilderness in his honor.

Church was a Democrat.

McClure was a Republican.

They didn't always agree.

But McClure recognized in his fellow Idahoan a man who was willing to risk his political hide to make a difference. Like McClure, Church was a true legislator - someone who paid attention to details. Both were men of purpose. They went to Washington, D.C., to accomplish things - not simply to occupy a suite of offices on Capitol Hill or cast safe votes.

McClure worked diligently. He introduced the bill in February. By March 14, President Ronald Reagan had signed it into law - just weeks before Church died at the age of 59 on April 7.

Fifty years after Church steered the National Wilderness Act of 1964 to passage, "the Frank" remains the monument that keeps his legacy alive.

McClure was there for Church.

Who's been there for McClure?

By the time McClure retired in 1991, he had completed one of the most storied political careers in Idaho's history - prosecuting attorney, state senator, U.S congressman and a three-term U.S. senator who chaired the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Joining Church and then-Gov. Cecil Andrus, McClure helped secure creation of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area.

Twice during the 1980s, he attempted to pass new Idaho wilderness bills, but ran into opposition from environmental groups who thought he had not gone far enough.

Some of those who fought him then say they regret it now - and in the repercussions, you can see their support for Republican Sen. Mike Crapo's Owyhee Wilderness package and Clearwater Basin Collaborative, as well as Congressman Mike Simpson's Boulder-White Clouds wilderness bill.

Three years after McClure died at age 86, it's time to ask: Who else deserves his name on the iconic peak that overlooks Redfish Lake in Idaho's Sawtooth range?

Certainly not Weldon Heyburn.

Leaf through Timothy Egan's "The Big Burn" and you recognize the namesake of Mount Heyburn as a tool of the mining interests and no friend of the public lands. He proved to be President Teddy Roosevelt's nemesis in the battle to preserve large swaths of the national forests from exploitation.

With Wallace burning down around him, Heyburn was more interested in saving his personal papers than in the public welfare. And when Heyburn died, he was buried not in Idaho but in his native Pennsylvania.

As political columnist Marty Peterson observed a year ago, naming one of Idaho's most majestic places after Heyburn is "a bit like naming a Catholic church after Martin Luther."

What better time than in the 50th year of the Wilderness Act to right that wrong - and give future generations something better to remember McClure by?

It won't happen on its own. There's research and shoe leather involved in preparing the documentation, then selling the idea to everyone from county commissioners to the Forest Service and finally steering it through the Idaho Geographic Names Board - which would then file its nomination with its national counterpart in Washington, D.C.

Nobody gives mountains away.

Time to get started. - M.T.