





Gail wanted to be sure  
you knew Dad is gone, and  
thought you might enjoy  
seeing this. He certainly  
enjoyed his friendship  
with you over the years.  
And the books, of course!  
He had them all and read  
and shared them with  
delight.

Take care,  
Carol Engler



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Painted hills

Photograph by Ric Ergenbright

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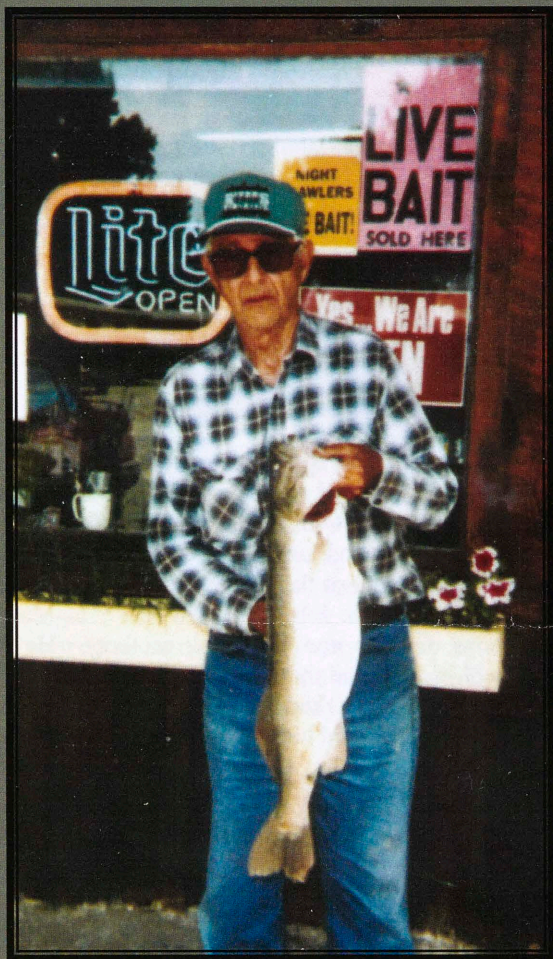
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In Loving Memory  
George Nicholas Engler

June 23, 1919-June 12, 2011



A Celebration of a Life Well Lived

“ I wouldn’t be surprised if my obituary referred to me as an avid fisherman. I’ve been paying attention to the obituaries lately, in fact, ever since I turned eighty a few years ago. Anyway, it’s surprising how many of those old guys are identified as “avid fisherman”. That’s not all bad. In fact, it’s probably worth some points on the Lord’s ledger as some of his prime helpers were fishermen.”

George Engler



## Program

Greetings, Welcome, and Thank You's	Family
Blessing	Jeff
Military Honors	Marine Corp League, Det. 688 US Marine Honor Guard
Memories/Stories	Family
Memories/Stories	Friends

Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,  
And afterward receive me to glory.  
~Psalm 73:24

George was born in Underwood, North Dakota on June 23, 1919. He was the ninth child of Nicholas Engler and Anna Lund. His twin died when they were born, but there were two sets of twins left in the family. George is the last one of the immediate family. He and his sister went to live with their Uncle John Engler and his wife, Nancy, when their mother died when he was about a year old. He always talked of Uncle John and Aunt Nancy as Mom and Dad, and considered their sons, Gordon and James, as brothers. He graduated from Yakima High School in 1937 and then attended the University of Idaho, where he majored in Forestry. He worked his way through, so he didn't graduate until 1943, although he considered himself a member of the Class of '42.

When he graduated he went into the Marine Corps, where he served until 1946. He said he was following an older brother, Irvin, a "lifer", who was taken prisoner the first day of the war and was a Japanese POW in China and Japan. George served in the 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Division and was present during the April Fool's Day landing on Okinawa, and then was on Guam, Guadalcanal, and finished his hitch in Tsingtao, China. He didn't talk much about his service until later years, but was very proud to have been a Marine, and even now would be telling us, "There's no such thing as an ex-Marine!" Apparently NCIS has that right! He always said he had a "good" war, he guessed. He came home.

He and Laurene Ploss were married in April of 1943, before he graduated. After the War, he returned and they started his career in the U.S. Forest Service in Naches, WA. They came to Montana in 1948 and he served the rest of his career in Region One on the Helena, Custer and Lewis and Clark National Forests. He was stationed in Lincoln, Townsend, Red Lodge, Fort Howes, Helena, briefly in Spokane, WA, Missoula, and retired in Great Falls, MT. Someone in the Regional Office told him in the days of clear cutting that he had a reputation as a preservationist, as if that was not a particularly good thing. His reply was that "somebody has to!" He completed his service as the



Supervisor of the Lewis and Clark Forest in Great Falls, MT. He once said retirement was the best job he ever had. He managed to stay very busy participating in local conservation groups, writing frequent letters to Montana's Congressional delegation regarding the many conservation and environmental issues he constantly monitored. He contributed many stories to the *Montana Senior News*, writing about his youth growing up in Yakima, poking fun at his fellow senior citizens, and about his family and career in the Forest Service. He was co-founder, with Margaret Adams, of the Upper Missouri Breaks Chapter of Audubon. He also founded the Great Falls Conservation Council which has been meeting for over 27 years. The organization provides a forum for people from different government agencies and conservation groups to come together and collaborate and discuss local and regional conservation issues. A George Engler Conservation Award is presented annually to an individual who has made significant contributions to the local conservation effort. He served on an advisory council for the Bureau of Land Management, and received a Spirit of the Land award from the BLM. In 2008, he received the Conservationist of the Year award from Montana Audubon and in 2009 he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Montana Audubon. He was an active member of the Great Falls Rotary until the last couple of years. The River's Edge Trail in Great Falls was dear to his heart, and he was instrumental in planning and helping get that established, and then used it a lot, walking or biking. He helped Marcus train for marathons on it. He'd ride his bike and Marcus would run.

He and Laurene had six children along the way. He taught us a lot about life and living in his own way, lots of it by example. He taught us to do the right thing, long before Wilfred Brimley started the oatmeal ads. He was proud of his Norwegian heritage, and doing things the Norwegian way became a joke with him and some of his kids. That means you'd probably thought, and rethought, and then done things the hard way, but it sure would be done right! The day he died, he told Marcus he didn't think there was much wrong with Norwegian humor. Mother says to say he was very proud of all his children. He often told people who asked him about his kids that they must be doing OK, because they didn't write home for money. On the other hand, they didn't send any, either!

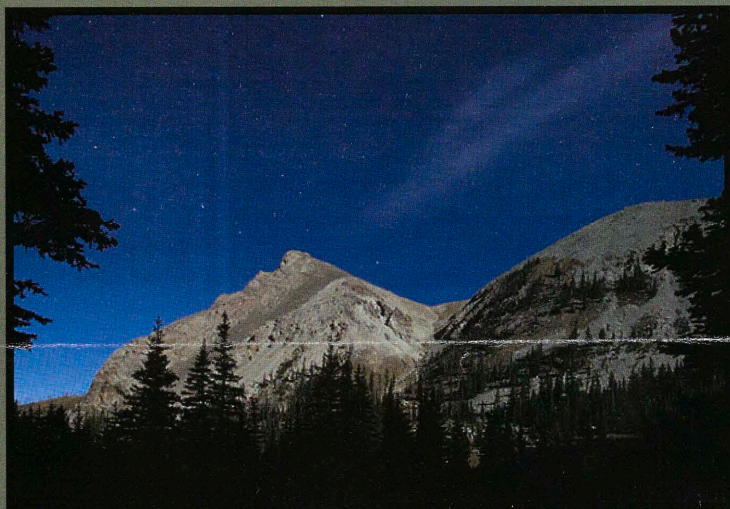
He was always interested in conservation and environmental issues and current events. He was a voracious reader, and taught his children to be, too, starting by reading stories to his children and grandchildren, and then by example of the wide-ranging books and magazines he always had around. Some of his children have carried that trait to a perhaps ridiculous extreme. He loved to hunt and fish, and loved telling the stories associated with those joys. Sometimes he'd get to laughing so much it was hard for him to get to the end of the story. His two younger daughters, Gail and Shelly, were able to teach him that girls could do those things, too, and moreover, they could have their own fish poles! He was willing to learn those facts, too.





His legacy will live on through the lives of those he has shared his life with: his beloved wife of 68 years, Laurene; his six children, Nick, Carol, Jeff and his wife, Sheryl, Gail, Marcus and his wife, Erin, and his baby, daughter who is a grandmother, Shelly; his eight grandchildren, Jake (Kate), Jennifer (Wes), Jessie (Meagan), Caleb (Michelle), Brynn, Macrae, Nicole (Jake), and Andrew; and nine great-grandchildren, Cody, Grace, Sam, Ellie, Soren, Bowen, Alanna, Ian, and the newest addition, Gabriel; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, friends, and acquaintances.

If you feel inclined to make a memorial donation, they could go to the Upper Missouri Breaks Chapter of Audubon, the River's Edge Trail, or Preservation Cascade.



Headquarters Pass, Bob Marshall Wilderness

"We should be grateful for the unique opportunities we have to enjoy the out of doors and its resources here in the state of Montana. Now....is an appropriate time to count our blessings and to give thanks for what we have. I hope we have the wisdom and the will to maintain it for our grandkids."

George Engler, Dec. 1994

*To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die.*

*Thomas Campbell*



Great Falls, MT  
16 February, 1984

Friend Ivan,

The terms in respect to permittees, allotments etc are right on. Allotments used by sheep were further broken down in to Camp Units. The area that could be grazed from one setting of the wagon or base camp was referred to as a Camp Unit. This enabled the ranger to give a little more specific instructions on how the range should be grazed. Similarly cow allotments were broken down in to distribution units. Thus the ranger could indicate how many cows should be distributed to the smaller areas. Salt grounds were also designated by location. Not that you want to put any of that in your book, but just for your own amazement!

We're having a mild winter here after a couple of short, very bitter spells. Being in the chinook belt it's difficult to keep ice on the lakes. I have a vested interest in ice, being a rather avid ice-fisherman. A couple of weeks ago I was on Canyon Ferry lake near Townsend, where the ice was still ok. I enjoyed the vista across the valley towards Grassy Mountain, Big Baldy, Mount Edith and others. I recalled some of the pleasant memories of inspecting Sheep ranges on Grassy Mountain back in my early rangeling days. Donohue owned the Castle Mountain Livestock Co. and was a sheep permittee on Grassy in those days.

It was always interesting trying to locate the herder when you went on the allotment. They had a pretty set routine; if you understood it you knew about where to look. The trick was to catch him at the wagon so you could get a cup of coffee. The herder was supposed to sleep in the teepee tent that was always located near the bed ground. When the sheep moved off the bedground at daybreak he headed them in the direction he wanted them to graze that day. They usually fed up till around ten O'Clock in the morning when the herder would have them in the timber or atleast in the timber's edge so they could shade up. He would then go to the wagon and cook up his main meal for the day. That was the time to catch up with him.

After his meal and a rest period he moved back to the band and when they resumed feeding in the afternoon he would again keep them headed in the right direction. He would then move his teepee to the new bedground location. The sheep got to know the routine of course and they knew they were expected to bed near the teepee. The herder also had the salt distributed before their arrival. Bedgrounds were usually along the ridges and ideally on knolls that sloped away in all directions. They were less susceptible to the predation of bears and coyotes in such locations.

Herders had a tremendous responsibility considering the investment that a band represented. He was judged by how minimal the losses to predation and the weight of the lambs. In those days eighty pound lambs seemed to be the standard, that is when they came off the range in the fall.



There aren't many sheep left in the mountains anymore. Skilled herders are almost a thing of the past and the economics of sheep x ranching are not all that good. Hard to compete with the Australians and New Zealanders. Plus farm flocks have become more practical to handle.

It's kind of a shame to see them go out of the mountains. A part of our range history will be gone. Today, when you go to the mountains, you can still tell where they once grazed by the artifacts they left behind. The tepee poles can still be seen propped against a tree. Some of the springs, cribbed up <sup>by</sup> the sheep man or the herder, are still visible. And the rock cairns on ridges and mountain tops are still evidence they were there. The cairns were usually on the allotment boundaries and served to separate the territories of the various bands. More permanent than the boundary markings of the wolf!

Another dead give away that you are in a sheepherder's territory, either current or historical, is the cross carved in the bark of the larger trees. They were distributed quite regularly around the allotment. I assumed they fulfilled a religious purpose. Most of the herders I knew were of Basque or other European heritage, almost all of the catholic faith. Someday, when folks see these crosses, healed over in the bark of the tree, they may wonder who and why they were carved there. They probably won't know they were a passing phase in the history of the western range.

Forgive me for rambling. It was <sup>an</sup> opportunity to dredge up some fond memories!

Best Regards,

*George E.*

George N. Engler  
2412 5th Ave. South  
Great Falls, MT 59405



20 Feb. '84

Dear George--

I'm about to go to Wyoming to do some talking in public--we'll see if I bring on the big blizzard of '84--but first I wanted to say thanks for the perimitee/allotment info. I'll check back through my manuscript, to try be sure I get it right.

And I was quite taken with your memories of visiting the herders, etc. Some of that lore I knew, but other bits were ~~new~~ new, such as the crosses on trees. George, if you ever have the time and interest, it would be historically useful if you'd write a few pages about the specific herders you knew. Those guys are fading unrecorded, except in the memories of those who knew them. Who they were, what their habits and/or quirks were, incidents, any of that is useful stuff. Anything you'd care to set down probably would be welcomed by either the Special Collections at the MSU library in Bozeman--Minnie Paugh is the person in charge--or the archives at the U. of Montana library in Missoula, Dale Johnson archivist. Or I'll eventually be passing along my gatherings to an archive, one of those two or some other western one, and I'd gladly add anything into my "sheep" file.

The Castle Mtn  
Livestock files  
are here,  
given by Mrs.  
Donahue

This is just a thought; but you do recall so well and put it into words so exactly that you're a prime source. Anyway, I hope the ice fishing is good. I hope to make it to Gt. Falls this fall when this book comes out.

all the best

*Alan*



BY IVAN DOIG  
by Ivan Doig  
BY IVAN DOIG  
by Ivan Doig  
BY IVAN DOIG  
by Ivan Doig

**Ivan Doig**

17021 Tenth Avenue N.W., Seattle, Washington 98177  
(206) 542-6658

George N. Engler  
2412 5th Ave. S.  
Gt. Falls 59405

May 29, '81

Dear Mr. Engler--

You may recall that when we met at Readers World, I threatened to pester you sometime for background material about the life of a ranger. I'll be in Montana this summer for a month or so, starting toward a novel about a ranger's family in the summer of 1939. Will you be in Gt. Falls, and come to talk to me for an hour or two, on June 29, 30 or July 1? What I'm after is details of the job of ranger-- nothing personally incriminating!

Hope to see you. Best,

*Ivan Doig*

*As far as I know now I will be  
available and pleased to visit w/ you.  
For the past several summers I have  
worked w/ a consulting Forester but we  
have no contracts lined up this year-yet.  
Have marked the dates on my calendar.*

*Regards-*

*G. Engler*

*452-2125*

*old hi school*

*6/3/81*



21 August 00

Friend Ivan,

Thought you might be interested in the Montana fires, particularly the Maedlow-Toston fire. Think its almost to Ringling - a lot of Charlie Doig's Country - Haven't heard yet whether the Toston ranchers saved their cattle.

I see that Wall Mountain was involved so I expect the Doig Homestead may have gotten singed too.

From the accounts it sounds like this fire season is much like that of 1910. Its interesting to read to days (this years) accounts and compare with the reports of 1910 on similar dates.

There will be a helluva lot of Monday morning quarterbacking after the smoke clears but I think the Grevs have handled things pretty well. Doesn't appear to be any panic and no lives lost. Couldn't say the same for 1910?

Regards to you and Mrs D -

George E.

2412 5<sup>th</sup> Ave S

Gr Falls 59405



3 Feb, '00

Friend Ivan:

Thank for the note re the volume 3.  
Its nice to get some feedback as you  
well know - I appreciate the kind remarks.

I was especially interested in your  
Comments about the Forestry alums.  
I agree, they (we) probably are a dull  
lot - except when we get in a bull  
session and get to talking about our escapades  
and exploits in the woods. Nothing like  
the good old days.

I was also especially interested in your  
reference to Nevan McCullough, because  
he was ranger on the White River  
District when I was at Noches around  
the late thirties and early forties. I  
recall him telling about firing a young  
guy one day when his work wasnt up  
to snuff. He told the guy to get on  
down the road but Nevan didnt think  
he moved fast enough so he ran up  
behind him and kicked him in the ass.  
And told him to move it. He was a  
pretty straight forward kind of guy.  
Thank again for your note.  
Regards - George E.



19 Jan. '00

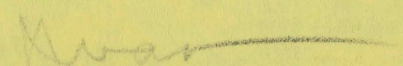
Dear George--

More "Meanderings"! I'm really glad to see you're still in the essay business, and thanks for thinking to send me a copy. I do get a great kick out of your stuff (you, sir, are a pretty damn good writer) and I'm probably not the only one. Keep it up.

Your latest arrived at a good time, because it reminded me that I wanted to tell you about my experience of talking to the University of Washington forestry alumni. All last fall I trudged the bookstore trail for Mountain Time and did some speaking engagements that had piled up, and so after I'd done about 40 events and was congratulating myself on having whipped all that and being able to get back to writing, a neighbor who is a UW forestry alum cornered me about talking at their annual dinner, when they all hit town for Homecoming here. I knew that this neighbor would ask me every year for the rest of both of our natural lives until I agreed to do it, so I decided OK, I'd just get it out of the way. That meant writing an entire speech, because I didn't have any material ready for such a group, but I grumbled and did the writing, and here came the night of the dinner at the UW Faculty Club. Now, I wasn't so big a fool that I didn't realize a lot of these guys would be forest products types, so I laid off some of the Bob Marshall material. But that forestry school does call itself "forest resources" now, and so I thought, hell, the USFS-connected interviews and research I've done for my books ought to interest them. George, the foresters were wooden! I got a little rise out of them when I told about the Region One fire researcher Harry Gisborne's habit of writing in the margins of Major Kelley's memoes, "damphool" and "this idea is whores de combat," and a little more of a rise when I told them about talking to you and inflating one of your stories to the packhorse Bubbles going off the trail with Jick in English Creek, reading them a couple of pages of that. But it was hard sledding with that audience, I just could not get a reaction out of them, so I told a few more incidents about talking to retired rangers, including one out here named Nevan McCullough, and shut up and sat down. Afterward, here came a swarm of the damned alums, half a dozen of them at once, all saying: "Nevan McCullough! I worked with him!" Evidently anything they could put a face to was just fine, and all the rest of forest history was literary prattle!

Well, I just wanted to pass that along and wish you and Laurene a happy new year. (Glad to have shaken the hand of Gail at my booksigning in Missoula, too.) We'll see if we can come by and give you a bad time, at some point of this year. Keep writing, keep fishing, keep watching those birds.

best wishes,





30 Dec '99

Friend Ivan,

I put together another volume of the Senior News essays - just for family and friends - to be read w/ tongue in cheek of course. But, I expect it does reflect a bit of my skeptical view of life.

You had quite a dust-up in Seattle over the WTO exercise. Our local conservation groups were really activated - in opposition. Looks like a bold move by the mega corporations to become sovereign entities w/ power over all producer nations; pretty scary. Hopefully the public sent a strong message it won't be tolerated.

Closer to home the big issue is how to manage the Missouri River that Lewis & Clark travelled in Montana. It's become the locals vs the national interest; cowboys vs recreationists; County Commissioners vs. the feds, and ad infinitum. I'm not a Computer nerd so I'm mostly a spectator in the fray. Palmer method is not legitimate communication style anymore.

It's dry as hell here? Winter wheat looks pretty peaked. A reminder that we're semi-arid?

Regards.

George E.



10 Oct '96

Friend Ivan,

My apologies for being so slow in responding to your 5/28 letter. When you get old everything is about half speed. I still have wood cutting to finish up, leaves to rake, and I'm behind on my fall fishing and grouse hunting. Guess I'll have to put on more help.

I'm glad you've got another book in the mill and the Wilderness theme sounds interesting. I have a definite prejudice in favor. Our civilized demands are gobbling up the mountains too fast. Too many folks think our mountains should be like Disneyland. If we can't get there on roads then get in to every nook and cranny with HTVs or whatever! We're developing a mind set of contempt for the mountains. I say, get people off their seat cushions and make them walk. There are far better uses for the relatively scarce resource of oil. I like Hegn's philosophy re Wilderness; "Wilderness represents a part of our geography of hope."

I don't know that I have enough smarts or experience in wilderness hikes to give you any useful pointers but there are a few things that have been helpful to me. Your comment about your Albuquerque friend and his "rest-stop" technique is valid. In 1946, after I came home from WWII I was a smoke chaser



in the Cascades on the Snoqualmie Forest. Somewhere I had learned that if you coordinated your breathing with your stride it tended to lift your body and lessen the burden. I was fire boss on a fire in the Bumping River drainage and had to hike a Cascade mill crew, along with some Seattle "skid row" pick up fire fighters, from Chinook Pass, down the Cascade Crest trail, then across country to the fire. I "instructed" them on how to coordinate their breathing with their striding. They thought I was nuts but it worked for me and some of them admitted that it did help. I find that in climbing particularly, it is helpful. I inhale as I lift my right leg; exhale over the next two or more steps. The steeper the slope the more frequent the breaths. With practice you get in to a natural rhythm. Also, in respect to breathing; I find that frequent, short stops are better than longer, set-down stops, when you're laboring up hill. By short I mean 10 seconds or even less; just time to catch a deep breath or two then move again. I always use a walking stick, or staff, when I hike in the mountains. I like it to be as long as I am tall. When I make those short, stand up rest stops, I lean forward on the staff. Its surprising how much lighter your pack is.

Some other small tricks I've learned:

- lace your boots loose when going up



- hill so your ankles can flex. Lace your boots tight when going down hill so your toes don't jam.
- Stream crossings with rocky bottoms. Remove socks and insoles from boots - put boots on and cross - replace insoles & socks, put boots on and proceed.
  - Keep some fire starter in pack in case of wet weather. You can usually find pitch sticks in old stumps. Keep some in pack so you have it when you make camp.

Joan, the best man I know to get information from on Wilderness survival is Bud Moore of Condon, MT. Bud is a Forest Service alumnus who started trapping in the Bitterroot-Lochsa Country when he was 12 years old. He worked for the FS all the way from laborer to Asst Director of fire control in Washington, D.C. After retirement he again took up trapping and sawmilling in the Swan River Country. In his mid-seventies he spent the month of January camped in the Bob Marshall running a trapline, crossing the Swan Range on snow shoes. He has just completed a book, published by Mountain Press, called The Lochsa Story; A Wilderness Ethic. I contacted Bud by phone recently and asked if he would be willing to share his Wilderness knowledge w/you. He said he would be glad to.

His address: Wm R. (Bud) Moore (call him Bud)  
PO Box 1070                      ph. 406-754-2473  
Condon, MT. 59826                      (over)



I hope you can hook up w/ Bud. He would be a good resource for you. I recall that he told me one time that if we averaged 8 miles a day with a heavy pack that was a reasonable expectation. Back in 1965 I took my 3 boys for an 8 day hike in the Bob, mostly in the South Fk of the Flathead. They ranged in age from 8 years to 15. The 8 year old could carry his bed and not much else, while the 15 year old could carry as much as I and he could travel faster. We did 15 miles one day but that was far too much; 8 would have been about right but we had a schedule to meet. The North Fork of the Sun River was one of our favorite places because of the fishing.

Don't know if these comments are appropriate to what you're looking for but would be glad to respond further if I can be of help.

Respectfully

George E.

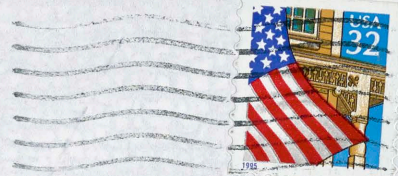
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