

# History of the Henry's Fork Foundation

By Dr. Mick Mickelson

*Excerpts from his historical account as written in 1994.*

## Alpha-Bill

In the beginning there were gasses and solids, water, rain, volcanoes, finally trees, a river, fish (cutthroats), Native Americans, settlers, ranchers, loggers, recreationists, and finally—Bill Manlove. Bill, the Henry's Fork Foundation founder, according to the stories he told me, first visited the Henry's Fork in the 1960s after having read about it in an outdoors article. He was an avid fly fisherman and cared a great deal about the environment. His professional background was illustrious: a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, a decorated flier in World War II, and afterwards a career with the U.S. Air Force designing guidance systems, and finally, teaching at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. He retired after a short involvement with private research, and then built his home on the Henry's Fork with his lovely wife Rita. While living on the river in North Pinehaven he became concerned about the rapid degradation of the stream by cattle. This insult to his beloved river was the battle cry that resulted in the organization of the Henry's Fork Foundation.

## Founding of the Henry's Fork Foundation

One evening in 1983 while meeting at a cabin belonging to Jim and Joan Lansche, Bill and Rita Manlove, Jack and Cookie Thomas, Jim and Joan Lansche, Jimmy Gabettas, Jack Griffith and Mick Mickelson decided that an organization was needed to protect the river. Several of us had been involved with, or were aware of, a successful environmental fight to stop a large dam project at Eagle Rock on the Snake River below American Falls. It seemed indeed that finally Goliath could be fought successfully. Bill incorporated the Foundation as a nonprofit organization in the State of Idaho in 1984 and began a membership drive.

The initial organization was structured far differently than it is now. Bill knew from his dealings with the military bureaucracy that the best way to get something done was to have "a few good people," each with an area of expertise, in a loose knit organizational structure. At that time our bylaws provided for a decision-making Board of Members of approximately fifteen individuals, all with various connections and areas of expertise. Our constituency was small and the democratic process somewhat abridged, which resulted in criticism that we did not represent the entire community of all concerned. Our philosophy, which worked for that stage of development, was that we needed to establish credibility as an organization with a core of hard working proven individuals.

## The First Battle 1984

The worst cattle damage to the river's riparian system occurred on Harriman East. The Foundation, through Bill's efforts, launched a barrage of media information. The Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands responded favorably. We were able to work with their outstanding executive director Sharon Hubler, and board chair Hope Kading to arrive at positive solutions for a devastating environmental problem. Two of the best men that I have had the pleasure of dealing with helped us reach this positive solution for Harriman East. Bill Platts a retired U.S. Forest Service biologist, and Ed Chaney, a true friend of many rivers and a well-decorated champion of many environmental wars, helped us design a fencing system. Herb Pollard and Steve Elle of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game were instrumental in helping organize the first solar fencing project.

After many backbreaking hours we constructed nearly seven miles of solar electric fence to protect the bank of the river while still allowing for optimal grazing in this area. Now, eight years later, the riparian zone has shown dramatic improvement.

## **Growth of the Foundation 1986-1992**

The organization continued to grow with increasing members and political clout. Unfortunately, in the early years Bill Manlove succumbed to a lingering illness, but he left us with a solid pedestal from which to work, and left all of us a legacy of principles, leadership, and courage. The river was threatened by numerous hydroelectric projects from Island Park to Ashton. We were successful in getting Senator James McClure and his gracious wife Louise to help us with major federal legislation to protect the Henry's Fork from any further hydroelectric dam development. This legislation will probably be recognized as the most significant action to save this fabulous stretch of river. Can you imagine a turbine on Mesa Falls? Senator McClure was also able, through senate appropriations, to finance the fishermen's access site at Last Chance after a visit to that area.

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