



2022 INDUCTEE

HARRISON G. FAGG

1931–

Harrison Fagg, a fiscal conservative, and a staunch Republican, was a leader on environmental issues in the Montana House of Representatives from 1968 through 1984, serving as majority leader in 1981.

In 1970, Harrison and his family of outdoor enthusiasts began a backpacking trip into the Beartooth Mountains. But unfortunately, the expected scenic trail that led to an alpine meadow was no more. What remained was a demolished bulldozed road.

Up the gouged path, the Fagg family saw no luscious meadow but rather piles of earth and oil spills. Harrison called it “hit-and-run” mineral exploration.

Aghast at the damage, Harrison ended the trip.

Once home, he contacted three Montana government agencies to see if Montana’s laws had the teeth to require a better way of exploring for Montana’s minerals.

Finding none—and unwilling to accept a study that might take years—he searched for a better idea.

With the help of Jim Posewitz (MOHF 2016) and Don Aldrich (MOHF 2014), Harrison decided to seek outside experts.

He encouraged Montana Fish and Game to find an environmental attorney from the U.S. Department of the Interior and another recommended by the National Mining Association.

For Harrison, the gloves were off. He virtually locked the lawyers in his legislative office until they produced a respectable proposal. The none-too-happy lawyers roughed out Montana’s first hard-rock mining reclamation standards.

Harrison, facing direct threats to his political career and ferocious opposition from the Anaconda Company, was undeterred. He unapologetically put forward a bill to stop the unnecessary ravaging of the land, but that did not eliminate all hard rock mining in Montana.

In the process of getting the bill passed, Dorothy Bradley, an equally staunch progressive from Bozeman, was the bill’s first Democrat co-signer.

With an amendment that excluded small miners, the Hard Rock Mining Reclamation Act passed both houses of the Montana 1971 Legislature. It was signed into law by Gov. Forrest Anderson.

A *Billings Gazette* editorial celebrated the bill’s passage stating that it had broken the “Copper Collar.”

The new law forever changed The Anaconda Company’s power over Montana business and the environment.

Although a conservative business owner, Harrison was often at the conservation vanguard during his 16 years as a state representative. He endured death threats and the torching of the family cabin near Nye, ostensibly due to his support for various conservation issues.

Harrison has championed and explored Montana’s outdoors for six decades. With his son, Grant, he climbed every Montana peak over 12,000 feet, becoming one of the first to do so. Then, at 87, he kayaked 60 miles of the Smith River.

Through it all, if one asked Harrison what he’s most proud of, he wouldn’t hesitate: “Getting everyone to work together.”

