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John Gibson grew up in northern California
near the Klamath River, which he described
as an excellent salmon and steelhead stream.
Angling is a vital part of his life.
When his U.S. Army service ended in 1955, he
returned home and scaled logs at Happy Camp, California. There he met Carol, back for another summer from college to compile timber-scale data. Like John, Carol was intelligent, musically talented, and a hard worker. And, “She could !sh,” John told The Fairbanks Daily News in 2018, “Don’t sell that short.”
They were soon married, spent time in
Alaska then moved to Montana with the !rst
of three daughters. After John earned a degree in forestry from the University of Montana, they remained in Montana working with the U.S. Forest Service.
When they settled in Billings in 1975, John and Carol’s interest in preserving the natural world began to "ower. Carol was a teacher in various communities and later served in the Montana Legislature. Together, they were a force behind the Public Land/Water Access Association’s mission to help hunters, anglers, and others !ght privatization of public land and waters and initiate legal action to get access restored.
John served as PL/WA’s president for more than 20 years. Together or individually, the Gibsons were active members or o#cers of the Montana Wildlife Federation, Billings Rod & Gun Conservation Committee, and the Montana Fish & Wildlife Trust.

But it was public access that animated the Gibsons’ efforts most of all, especially access to Montana’s rivers and streams. With Goetz Law Firm (Jim Goetz MOHOF 2016) as legal counsel, PL/WA made nearly every bridge on a Montana county road a legal stream access point. “Some might recall,” John wrote in a letter to the editor, “the lawyer for the landowner testify-ing…that his client owned the bottom of the river, the water in the river, and the air above the river.” One could anticipate the anger building, but
in typical John Gibson fashion, he returned a zinger, “The court told him he was all wet (with public water).”
John still strums his ukulele and writes songs. Music and song came hand in glove with access activism and outdoor enthusiasm in the Gibson household.
One memorable tune takes some liberties

with Woody Guthrie’s American anthem, “This Land is Your Land.”

Guthrie writes, “As I was walkin’ – I saw a sign there/And that sign said “No trespassin”/But on the other side…it didn’t say nothin!/Now that side was made for you and me!”
And John Gibson sings, “As I was walkin’ that mountain highway/I saw a sign said ‘Private Driveway’/But on the other side said ‘National Forest’/These lands belong to you and me.” John and Carol were inseparable for 61 years. Carol passed in 2017. John retired from the U.S. Forest Service in 1987 and remains active in Montana’s conservation community. ✮

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2020 INDUCTEES

John Gibson 1932–

Carol gibson 1937–2017