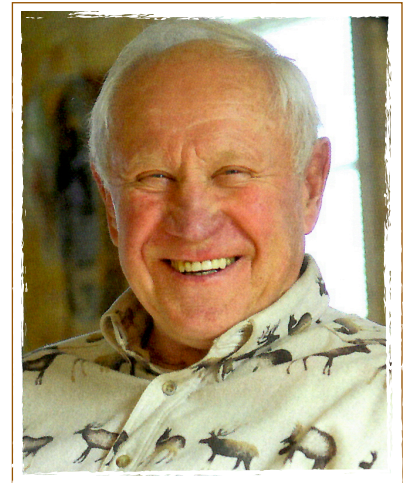


Jim Posewitz
1935-2020

We mourn the loss of the last of Cinnabar Foundation's founders, Jim Posewitz. Before he died on July 3, 2020, Jim looked back on his life with a sense of wonder and puzzled over how he could be so suddenly—or so it seemed—85 years old.

Before teaming up with Len and Sandy Sargent and Phil Tawney to create the Cinnabar Foundation and become its first executive director, Jim had earned a reputation as the environmental conscience of Montana's state government and modern green movement. Through his insightful, knowledgeable, and optimistic approach to the natural resource threats facing Montana, Jim won the trust and the ear—sometimes begrudgingly—of the state's highest ranking officials as well as its bureaucrats and lawmakers. He challenged them to honestly examine the facts before them and thoroughly consider how their decisions might affect the future of the state's environment.



First and foremost, Jim was dedicated to wildlife, a reverence that stemmed from growing up in Wisconsin where a once abundant game population had flatlined, and then coming west to Montana on a football scholarship and discovering seemingly endless herds of deer, elk and antelope. He parlayed his bachelor's and master's degrees in wildlife biology from Montana State University into a 32-year career with Montana's Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks where he enthusiastically tackled some of the most difficult challenges facing his adopted state with grace, humility, and deep passion.

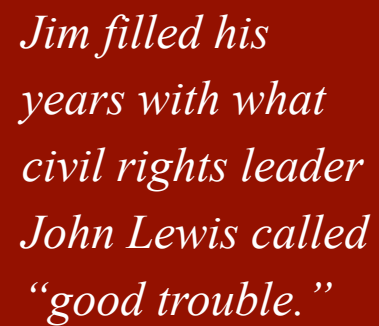
From the Cinnabar Foundation's beginning in the early 1980s, nonprofit conservation groups beat a path to his door. Not just in hopes of receiving funding, but to absorb Jim Posewitz's wisdom about issues concerning the wild lands, waters and wildlife of Montana and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Jim knew the history of those issues—all of them—because he lived it and, in many cases, helped create it.

After Jim retired from state government, in 1993, he began a vigorous second chapter of scholarship, writing, and unleashed advocacy. His creative spark launched a number of Cinnabar symposiums, including forums that examined challenges facing the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, stream preservation, private land conservation, endangered species, bison management, and fee-based hunting and the public trust. Jim's deep regard for history led to Cinnabar's first "request for proposal" – a book and school curriculum focused on the history of the Rocky Mountain Front — *The Making of a Masterpiece* — used in area middle and high schools as well as at the college level for teacher trainings, especially for science and history teachers in Montana. The book was also used nationally for a program called *Conservation Across Boundaries*.

Remembering with amazement how neither his classes at MSU nor his long career in a state wildlife agency ever explained how game populations were decimated and then restored, Jim launched Orion—The Hunter’s Institute, a nonprofit organization dedicated to wildlife conservation, and the heritage and ethics of hunting. Committed to education and communicating the tenets of wildlife conservation, Jim became one of North America’s most articulate voices speaking on behalf of wildlife resources and the role hunters have played to restore wildlife populations. To that end, he wrote five books: *Beyond Fair Chase*, *Inherit the Hunt*, *Rifle in Hand*, *Taking a Bullet for Conservation*, and his memoir *My Best Shot*.

Central to his reflections and research was President Theodore Roosevelt, and Jim never tired of reading, writing and talking about his hero. No Cinnabar board meeting or casual conversation was complete without at least one “TR” story.

In 2010, Jim retired as Cinnabar’s executive director and stepped down from the board, though he continued to participate in every meeting as board member emeritus. His input and insight were invaluable, especially as we reviewed and discussed more than 100 grant applications each year. His commitment to Cinnabar was boundless.



Jim filled his years with what civil rights leader John Lewis called “good trouble.”

Jim’s spirit was undaunted by the illnesses that plagued his last years. He continued to weigh in on critical conservation issues facing Montana, publishing his final opinion piece in the state’s major newspapers just two weeks before his death. Recounting the successful effort to protect the Smith River more than four decades earlier, Jim addressed the current fight to stop copper mining in the river’s headwaters:

“The greater lesson here is that the people, and not the river, will make the choice about what the next generation inherits...It is my wish that the new generation of Montanans become stewards for the Smith and continue its conservation legacy, leaving the next generation with the river’s bounty, as my generation has done for yours ... Between the peaks and the prairies, far off in the distance, we can see a horizon that we have not yet reached but continue to travel towards. As we cross the mighty Smith, we must be careful to leave it intact. We must show we have been worthy of its good fortune.”

Jim’s eldest son Eric preceded him in death. Jim is survived by his life partner, Gayle Joslin, his sons Brian, Allen, Carl, Matt, and Andrew, his step-children Annie Gassmann and Clayton DeSimone, seven grandchildren, and his brother John.