

THE EAGLE OF SUPERSTITION MOUNTAIN

By Tom Kollenborn © 2000

The stories of the Superstition Mountain and the Lost Dutchman Mine continue to conjure up tales of death, deception and greed. Yes, I am sure there are individuals who contribute to such stories. However, the majority of people who visit the Superstition Wilderness do it to enjoy the beauty and solitude of the region. There are those who search for gold and follow a dream, and some of these individuals are real American heroes. One such individual is Ronald A. Rousseau, better known as Ron Eagle de Andre II.

Born in Concord, New Hampshire, Ron Eagle arrived in the Apache Junction area in 1974. He had served as a member of the 1st U.S. Army Air Cavalry Division Medcap Unit in Viet Nam and had been severely wounded. Ron wanted to forget the war in "Nam" and he immediately began to pursue the treasure legends of Superstition Mountain with a couple of his Viet Nam buddies.

When I first met Ron Eagle he was exploring the area around Coffee Flat and Miner's Needle in 1974. Clues and other information finally led him to the northwest end of Superstition Mountain by 1977. He established Camp Eagle on U.S. Forest Service land near the Lost Dutchman State Park. Ron and his friends searched, dreamed and thought about the weeks, months, and years that lay ahead. Ron organized Atlarep Inc. and a non-profit organization he called the Superstition Wilderness Research Foundation to preserve all historical artifacts found for future generations to enjoy.

While conducting his research on antiquities and treasure in the Superstition Mountains, Ron found time to be patriotic and support the role of veterans and service men throughout our state. He was involved with 187th ARCT (Airborne Regimental Combat Team) color guard with some of his friends. The unit has marched in dozens of parades since 1986. He has carried the plight of Viet Nam veterans to all levels of government, which

eventually lead to him becoming commander of the AmVets. He was actively involved in the fund raising for the Arizona Viet Nam Memorial in Phoenix. He has worked diligently in many organizations to achieve equally for all veterans.

Ron is a very sincere, gregarious individual when it comes to the legends and stories of Superstition Mountain or the rights of Viet Nam veterans. He served three tours of duty in Viet Nam and received three Purple Hearts and numerous other decorations for his service to this country. While recuperating from wounds received in combat, he served as an advisor/trainer for the filming of the "Green Berets" starring John Wayne. I recall sometime ago perusing a photograph of Ron standing next to John Wayne during the filming of this motion picture. Ron helped train actors for the motion picture at Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1967.

I may not agree with all his stories about Superstition Mountain, but he has every right to stand up and be counted. No one can deny the sacrifices he has made for all of us, and he has certainly earned the right to search for the gold he believes lies in the Superstition Mountains.

This story brings together the legend of the mountain and the life of a man filled with so much patriotism that we should be proud to know him. During the mid 1970's Ron was known for his prospecting camps near Superstition Mountain where the American flag always flew high above his camp. Since I have known Ron, he has always advocated patriotism in some form or fashion whether it was popular or not. Ron Eagle has always flown his American Flag and proclaimed his love for the American way of life. I cannot judge how successful he has been with his advocacy for veterans, but I do know he has always been dedicated to veteran causes and he loves the stories and legends of Superstition Mountain.

Ron Eagle epitomizes those many men and women who are willing to sacrifice their lives for our freedom and safety. We must remember it takes all kinds of personalities to protect our rights and freedom from tyranny.



FROM THE S.S. GERONIMO TO THE DOLLY

by Tom Kollenborn (c) 2000

Often we ask ourselves, what is there in a name? “Geronimo” was a common term used by airborne divisions as they jumped from aircraft during World War II. The term was accepted to mean a total defiance to danger and the origin of the name was the Apache Chief Geronimo.

He led his band of warriors against the United States Army from 1867-1886. Geronimo was outnumbered twenty to one and eventually surrendered to the Army at Skeleton Canyon in 1886, ending hostilities and creating a legacy.

The infamous Chirichuaha Apache war chief “Geronimo” has lent his name to many landmarks in Arizona. The name appears on landmarks in the Superstition Mountain area, including Geronimo Head and Geronimo Cave. Near the base of Superstition Mountain a street is named Geronimo.

The construction of the Mormon Flats Dam between 1923-1925 led to yet another interesting use of Geronimo’s name when the first tour boat used on Canyon Lake was named the S.S. Geronimo in 1925.

One of the most beautiful lakes in Arizona was formed with the completion of Mormon Flats Dam on January 12, 1925. The dam stood 225 feet above bedrock and was 25 feet thick at the base and 12 feet thick at the crest. The dam was 320 feet long and 160 feet about the streambed. Mormon Flats Dam required 44,000 cubic yards of concrete to complete and the dam was capable of impounding some 98,000 acre- feet of water. The lake filled rapidly during the late winter and summer of 1925.

Local businessman George Moody soon recognized the business potential as the beautiful lake rapidly filled just east of the Salt River Valley. Moody, with the help of Ben and Jess Cramer, built a launch capable of transporting fifty passengers and a crew of five.

The S.S. Geronimo was thirty-five feet long and had a ten-foot beam. It was powered with a thirty-five horsepower engine and could cruise at about fifteen miles per hour. The S.S. Geronimo was launched on October 3, 1925. The launching of the Geronimo required the building of a short rail system to get the launch from the road to the lake. This was the introduction of tour boats to Mormon Flats Lake, known today as Canyon Lake, and Moody was the man most responsible for changing the name.

The tradition of tour boats on Canyon Lake continues today with the Dolly Steamboat. Drive up the Apache Trail and enjoy the beauty of Canyon Lake, have lunch or dinner at the Lakeside Cantina, ride the Dolly Steamboat or rent a boat from the Canyon Lake Marina.

Whatever you do— enjoy the beauty of this desert lake created by man some seventy-five years ago. C.C. Cragin once said of Mormon Flats Lake, “What a beautiful paradise of stone and water.”





S.S. Geronimo, Canyon Lake, November, 1925
Photo courtesy of Az. Historical Society



cave



g-head