

# Grey's Academy

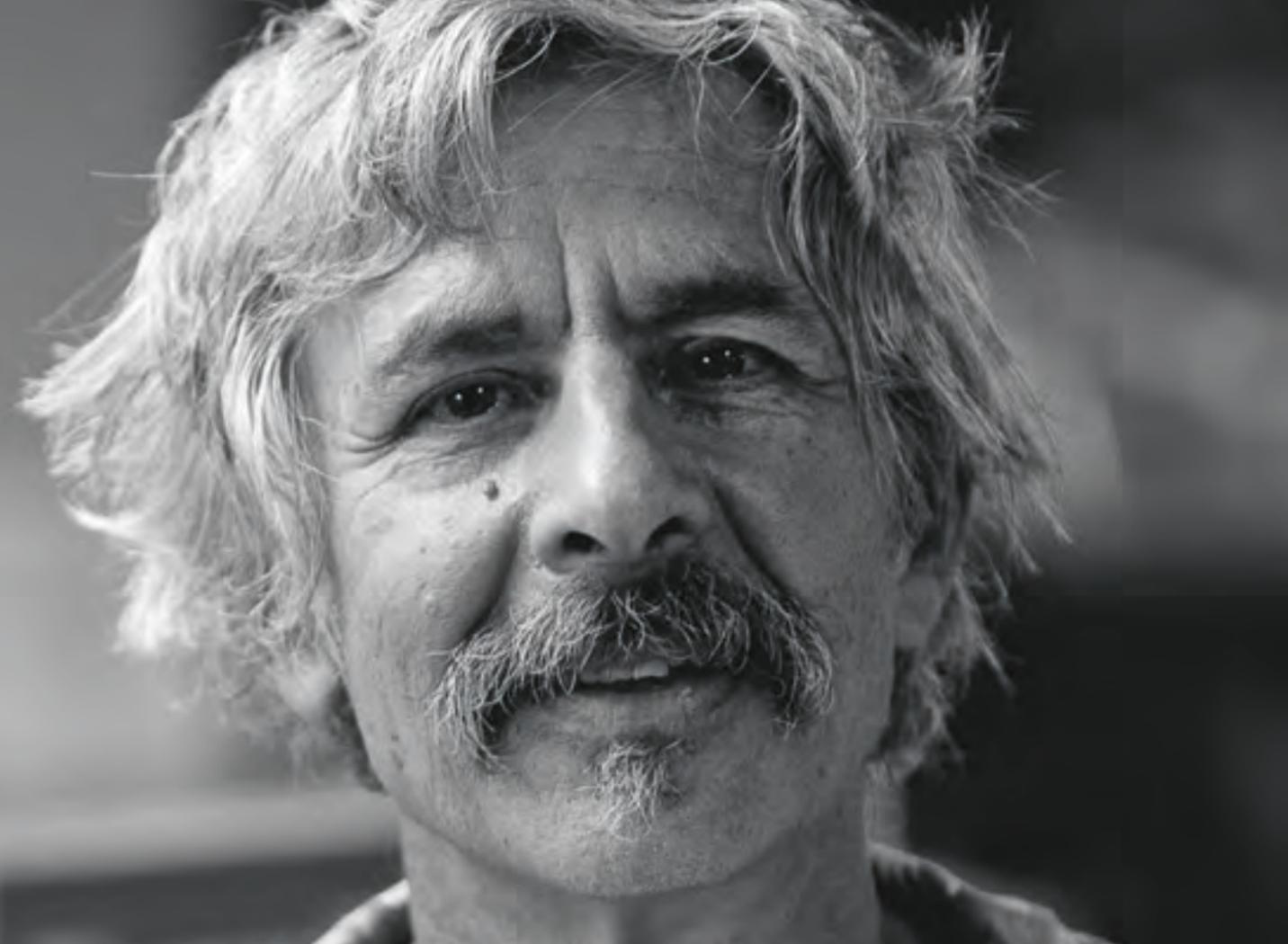
Meet six Kootenay elders who've got it all goin' on

By Chantal Tranchemontagne

IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY NOTICED, popular culture is having a senior moment. The hottest thing in Paris clubland is 69-year-old granmaster Ruth Flowers, better known as DJ Mamy Rock. Myrrha Stanford-Smith, an unassuming 82-year-old first-time British author recently landed the holy grail of publishing, a three-book deal. And who killed it in a Super Bowl commercial, slayed the crowd on *Saturday Night Live*, posed for a racy cover shoot with actor Tracy Morgan for *New York* magazine and is now entertaining offers from all corners of the entertainment world? Betty frickin' White, that's who. It's impossible to say exactly what has prompted this shift in our youth-centric society. The fact is the silver-haired set is demonstrating its spirit and spunkiness, wit and wisdom. And we're into it — perhaps in part because we aspire to be like them one day.

Here in the Kootenays, we have our very own special contingency of folks who have lived full adventure lives; they savour every ride and slide, seizing their passions with determination and humility. Regular *KMC* contributor Chantal Tranchemontagne interviewed some of our wise, fun-lovin' Kootenay elders about raging gracefully.

Photo: Ryan Lindberg



**"I WENT TRUDGING ALONG IN THAT DIRECTION VERY DILIGENTLY AND OBEDIENTLY WITH A FEW SIDE TRIPS LIKE, YOU KNOW, SEX, DRUGS AND ROCK AND ROLL." —JON TURK**

## Jon Turk, 65, Fernie, British Columbia, and Derby, Montana

My parents had great expectations for me. My father was a professor and my mother was a psychologist. They expected, as the normal course of events, that I would become some sort of scientist, professional or intellectual. I went trudging along in that direction very diligently and obediently with a few side trips like, you know, sex, drugs and rock and roll. Around 25, I had this opening of awareness where I realized that wasn't me. I didn't want to be a chemist. I never really looked back.

I'm an adventurer and I push myself because it's in my genetic makeup. It's who I am. I am really happy where I am. I'm 65 and making \$11,000 a year. Lots of my friends are all set up in their big houses. I look at that and think, "Oh well."

I know what I do is dangerous. The trick

is to look at the next two seconds and ask yourself, "Am I in danger now?" If the answer is "no," then don't bother being afraid.

Everybody makes stupid mistakes. But what happened in the past is in the past. One of the wonderful things about adventure is that it forces you to save your strength and your mental energy. Beating yourself on the head for doing something stupid five minutes ago is so counterproductive that you could die. Get rid of those emotions and live in the moment.

My first piece of advice to a young adventurer would be to keep your expenses low. The second is to follow who you are. Look inside yourself and strip away your ego and society's expectations. Once you decide what your passions are, pursue those at all cost. Go for it. If I followed my own

advice, I'd be a lot more together than I am now. I'm human. I stumble.

The secret to staying young is to look at young people. Young people are passionate. Old people are sometimes grumpy. Which would you rather be? I think passionate is more fun myself. Wrinkles are irrelevant.

*Jon Turk was born in Cumberland, Maryland. A professional adventurer, he has dogsledged across Baffin Island, skied backcountry peaks in Uzbekistan and sailed from Japan to Alaska, among other feats. He is also the author of three books including his latest, *The Raven's Gift: A Scientist, A Shaman, and Their Remarkable Journey Through the Siberian Wilderness*.*

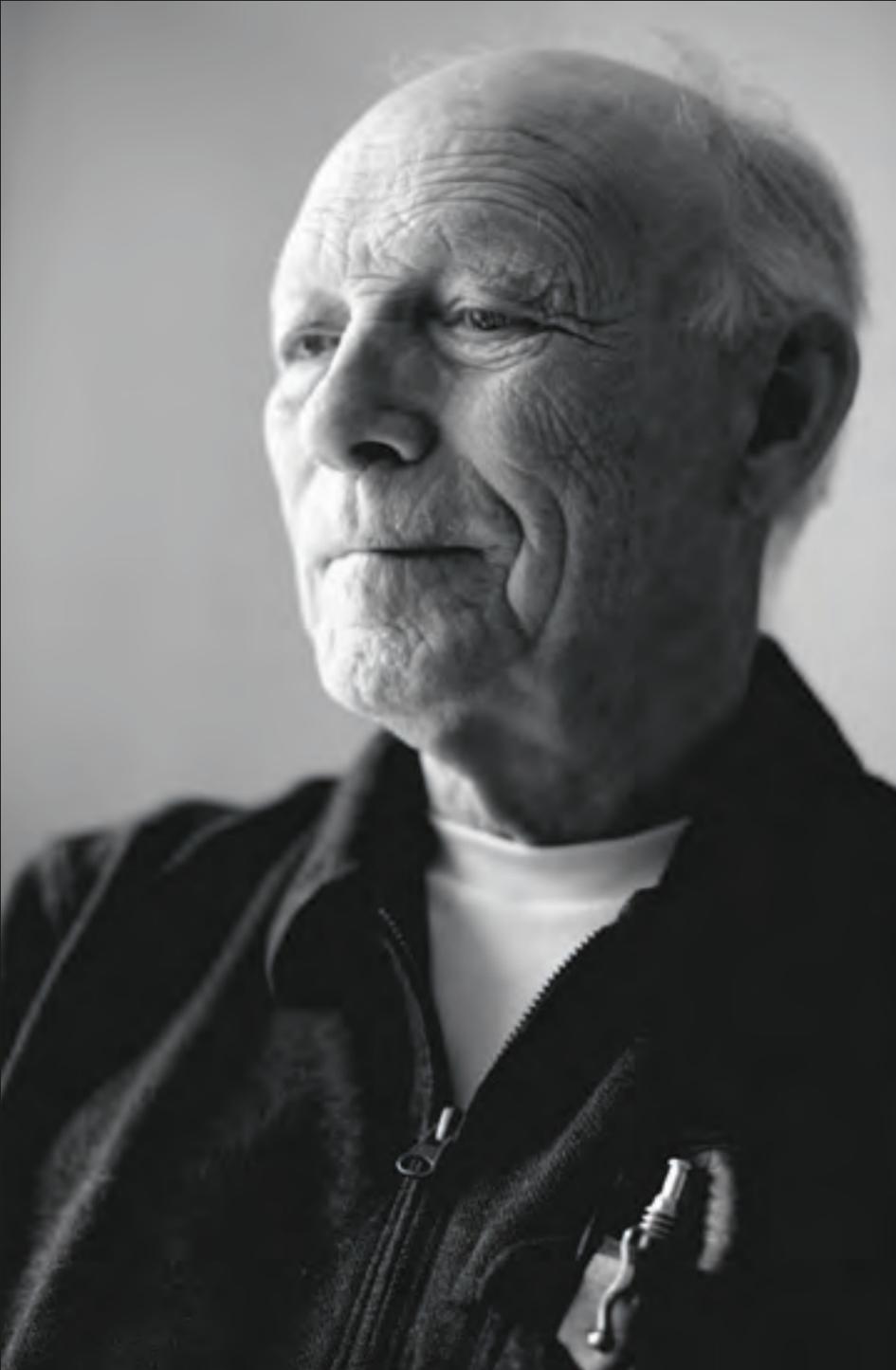


Photo: Adrian Marcoux

**Syd Feuz, 88,  
Golden, British Columbia**

Growing up in Edelweiss Village near Golden with my family, the Swiss guides, was a great experience. It was peaceful—and cold. We had to have lots of fires to keep from freezing to death. I was about six or seven when I started skiing. We built a ski hill where Kicking Horse is now and skied all winter long. Us kids were also fortunate because our fathers worked for the CPR and got us passes for the train. There were no cars back then. We would go to Lake Louise to ski and stayed at the guides' house. It's still there, right before you get to the lake from the parking lot.

I learned everything I know from my father and the other Swiss guides. At 16, I got my first guiding job at Temple Lodge [Lake Louise, Alberta]. My dad had sent my cousin and I there to dig up a frozen water-line. When we finished, Cliff White, the manager of the place, asked if I would consider staying because he needed a guide. I couldn't have been happier if I'd tried. From there, I kept moving up. Then I met Rudi Gertsch, a heli-ski operator, and he taught me most of what I needed to know to be a heli-guide. I worked for Rudi for 30 years. He finally kicked me out for old age.

Be ready. After being a guide, I know to expect anything at any time. Something can come along and give you a big wake-up call. Don't knock what happens to you in life. They're all good lessons. Everything will always work out somehow.

Today, I might hesitate to put on a pair of skis but I know everything is still in my head. I look up at the mountains; I've been on top of damn near every one in summer and winter, and I still want to go there. I need to do lots of walking. Especially uphill. That's the key. Never quit.

*Syd Feuz was born in Golden, British Columbia. He was the first Canadian-Swiss guide born in the area and has 200 first ascents to his name. His grandfather, Edward Feuz Sr., along with Christian Haesler, were the first mountain guides hired by Canadian Pacific Railway in 1889. Kicking Horse Resort's Feuz Bowl was named after Edward Sr.*

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—SYD FEUZ

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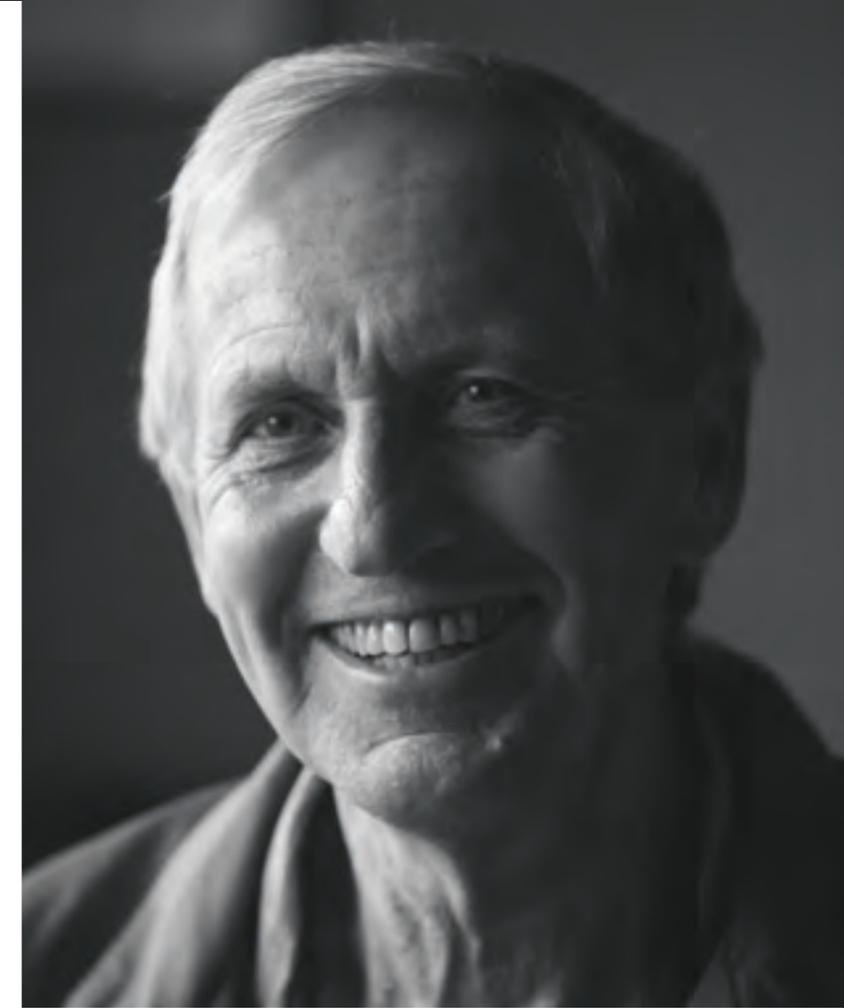
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**“IF YOU CAN’T SKI WELL, YOU’RE NOT COMING WITH US. WE’RE NOT A BABYSITTING SERVICE.”  
—BUD STOLL**



**The Silver Sliders, Nelson, British Columbia**  
**Bud Stoll, 67   Mary Woodward, 76   Ken McClelland, 70**

**Bud:** Our group got the nickname “The Silver Sliders” from the lifties at Whitewater because we all had silver Volant skis. After we’d all worn out our Volants and gone to other skis, they still called us that. But by then it was because of the colour of our hair.  
**Ken:** I started skiing at Whitewater over 30 years ago. Then Bud came along and showed me the best terrain.  
**Mary:** We all want to follow Bud.  
**Bud:** If you can’t ski well, you’re not coming with us. We’re not a babysitting service.

**Bud:** The Backside is five kilometres of skiing with 2,000 feet of vertical. There are no tracks. And even if there are, we just move over a little further.  
**Mary:** Maybe with the new lift, more people will understand why we go there. There’s so much area. I figure it’s time we shared.  
**Bud:** Change happens. And that’s good.  
**Ken:** Now that I’m older and I’ve been there and done that, I don’t have to worry or get caught up in the details. I don’t have to prove myself anymore. I just want to have fun.

**Bud:** Powder skiing is like a little kid jumping up and down on a bed only you can do it for kilometres and kilometres.  
**Mary:** I’m quite often afraid. But I conquer that. Sometimes in the mountains I think, “I shouldn’t be doing this.” But once I’ve done it, I’m so happy.

**Bud:** A few years back, we went up the mountain on June 21st — the longest day of the year — as we always do. A bunch of us, including Mary and Ken, went up and had champagne. When we started skiing down, I heard this scream from Mary.  
**Ken:** We knew it was bad because Mary never screams.  
**Mary:** We were way up the mountain, in Ymir Bowl, and on my first turn I tore my ACL. I put my arms around two people and came down that way for a bit. When it got too steep, around Goat Slide, Bud and Ken would put one of my skis in the snow and I’d slide down until I hit it with my good leg. That’s when my friends helped me out for sure.

**Ken:** No matter where you go, you need friends. Learn to appreciate them and look out for each other.  
**Bud:** Don’t forget that every day is beautiful in the Kootenays.

*Bud Stoll was born in Nelson and averages about 14,000 feet of vertical every winter day on the Backside of Whitewater Winter Resort. Mary Woodward was born in Canterbury, England, and she figures she gets out 80 days a year.*

*Ken McClelland was born in Kyle, Saskatchewan, and has skied at the hill since it opened in the mid-70s and also averages about 80 days per year.*

*The Silver Sliders — a collective of about 10 regulars — would like to “thank all the kind people who have picked us up hitchhiking over all these years.”*

*Chantal Tranchemontagne is a regular KMC Contributor.*

Photos: Peter Moynes



**“THE SECRET TO STAYING YOUNG IS SIMPLE: STAY UPRIGHT. DON'T BE A COUCH POTATO.”**  
**—RINO DEBIASO**

### Rino DeBiasco, 75, Trail, British Columbia

I started working at Cominco when I was 19. I was a lead burner, a dying trade now, and a pipe fitter. I retired after 40 years. I joined the ski patrol in 1955 at Red Mountain in Rossland. I don't remember my first day, but I do remember being excited. I still haven't retired from that. It's nice to be part of something.

I don't get scared much, but I was really scared when we had to train to repel off the Granite chairlift after it was built in '65. We were up about 80 feet in the air and we had to learn how to ride the cable to unload people in case anything happened. Working at the hill taught me a few good lessons. Be nice to people is number one. Don't take anything for granted. Enjoy every day.

When they named a run after me, I thought it was great. I didn't expect that. It's always nice to be appreciated. People come up to me and say, "Aren't you retired?" I say, "No, no, I'm there as a consultant now."

In the summer I like road racing. I don't like golf. I get frustrated. On a bike, I don't. I go to competitions like the Senior Games. If I win, I win. If I don't, I don't. That's the way I look at it. But it's always great to come home with a few medals.

The secret to staying young is simple: Stay upright. Don't be a couch potato. Until my body gives out, I'll keep doing what I do. Right now, I feel good. I'm 75 and still skiing. I can still do first aid. I just had a medical and everything's good. My family loves me and I love them. What else can I ask for? Life is good. I never forget that.

*Rino DeBiasco was born in Trail, British Columbia. He is a husband, father of three, grandfather of seven and ski patroller at Red Mountain, with more than 50 years of continuous service. In 2006, Rino's Run at Red Mountain was named after him.*

Photo: Peter Moynes



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