

# Bishop Mule Days celebrates Smokey Bear as our 2019 Grand Marshal

Submitted by Jennifer Roeser

**F**or the golden anniversary of the Bishop Mule Days Celebration we wanted to welcome back a Grand Marshal from 1980, Smokey Bear. He holds a special place in all our hearts and shares our love of the wilderness and all that is found there. He helps remind us to be stewards of these special places and to teach the next generation to care for the wilderness as we all pass through.

Celebrating this beloved icon at this year's New Year's Day Tournament of Roses Parade was a special occasion as Smokey brought his famous mules with him. Smokey's message of fire prevention is just as important now as it has ever been in the west, and standing right beside him on the lines with firefighters are his trusty mules who pack supplies, equipment and tools into remote locations for the fire crews who hold the lines on wilderness fires. The entry, titled "US Forest Service Pack Mules celebrate Smokey Bear's 75<sup>th</sup>" was a hit all the way down Colorado Blvd in Pasadena and at the annual "Equestfest" held at the Los Angeles Equestrian Center. Watched by nearly a billion people worldwide, the excitement of crowds who sang "Happy Birthday" or chanted "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires" was electric the entire six miles of the Parade. Quite a birthday celebration!

Smokey Bear probably needs no formal introduction but for those who might not be familiar with this beloved icon, in the spring of 1950 a fire was reported in the Captain Mountains of New Mexico. As firefighters fought the blaze they received reports that a lone bear cub had been



seen near the fire line. Battling on, firefighters fearing for their own lives could only hope the cub's mother was nearby and would get him to safety. The cub was later found, once the fire had been brought under control, clinging for his life to a burned tree. He suffered burns to his paws and legs. The fire crews, locals and Department of Fish and Game worked to get the cub medical help. The story for the little lost cub soon became national news and an icon was born. The cub was named Smokey and he became the living symbol for conservation and wildfire prevention. The American public took Smokey into their hearts sending him so many letters he had to have his own zip code.

Although no one bear can live forever, the Icon of Smokey Bear has en-

dured for 75 years. He has helped young and old care for his forest home and his animal companions that live there. He helped everyone care for the wild places that need human intervention to survive impact and use. Smokey Bear has the heart of a mule packer and the love of the high places touched by sunlight and God. Surely every mule packer has a little Smokey Bear in their heart as well. We all share the love of the quiet places broken only by the splash of a jumping fish or the call of a Mountain Chickadee.

We welcome you back to Bishop, Smokey Bear, to remind us why we love our pack mules and why we enjoy the high places our mules take us on steady hooves.