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**RURAL ENERGY ENTERPRISES**

[Body of beloved Dawson-area prospector revealed by receding flood](#)  
by [Tristin Hopper](#) Friday May 15, 2009 »

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*Michael Gates/Yukon News*

Receding floodwaters on Bonanza Creek have revealed the body of Jerry Bryde, 57, a beloved local prospector.

Bryde had been missing since May 1, when he was seen leaving his home on a red ATV.

For 27 years, Bryde had worked Claim 33, located at the top end of 7 Pup, a tributary of Bonanza Creek.

"He was one of the area's greatest prospectors," said friend and local resident Veronika Brown.

Bryde was a witness at the wedding of Brown and her husband Tom. He was also godfather to their children.

"He was a great part of our life," she said.

Locals and visitors alike knew Bryde as a fervent collector and restorer of antique mine equipment—an obsession that soon transformed Claim 33 into an impressive showcase of vintage machinery.



Jerry Bryde during the Yukon Goldpanning Championships in Dawson City in 1989.

"I love all aspects of old iron—from the mining of the metals to casting, fabrication, technology changes, history, search and recovery," wrote Bryde in a 2002 edition of *Gas Engine Magazine*.

"If this old iron was left to the elements, it would all eventually end up as it started, part of the ground," he wrote.

Tourists were welcome guests at Claim 33, where they could get the true feel of early 20th-century placer mining.

"Jerry has added his own style to an old business," said a Dawson City Chamber of Commerce citation when Bryde was awarded the Seasonal Business of the Year award in 2006.

"Part museum, part cafe, part souvenir shop—scattered with mining equipment, workshops and old storefronts, all gathered with a magpie eye and a particular affection for ancient machinery," wrote *South Africa's the Star* in February 2008.

Living much of his life on permafrost gave Bryde a particularly youthful appearance, he joked to a writer for *Reader's Digest* in 2000.

"Stick some meat in the fridge and see how long it keeps—it's the same principle," he said.

Bryde regaled the visitor with a story of getting snowed in, and being forced to remedy a tooth cavity by tying his tongue to his ear and going at it with a chainsaw file.

A master of wilderness knowledge, Bryde long predicted that Bonanza Creek would face a calamitous breakup.

The normally shallow creek swelled to several meters high, washing out portions of the Bonanza Road.

Five days after he went missing, Bryde's ATV was found mangled on the banks of the creek.

Canadian Rangers were dispatched to conduct a search, but it was soon called off based on claims that the water level was too high.



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The Rangers left at precisely the time the water was starting to lower, wrote local resident Tom Morgan in a letter to the News.

It was Morgan who discovered Bryde's body.

"Instead of intense searches of both sides of the road and both banks of the creek, they covered a few metres here and there, driving more than walking," wrote Morgan.

Occasionally, the Rangers would fire three shots into the air, and then wait for a reply from a man who had already been missing for more than a week, he wrote.

Morgan found Bryde's body only 200 metres from the wrecked ATV.

"Clearly visible" footprints of the rangers could be seen only 100 metres away.

Morgan criticized reports that rescue officials had to work through "conditions of water levels" to get to where the body was located.

"Would any of us want to lay our lives or our dignity ... in the hands of these Rangers?" wrote Morgan.

"Or would we wish for search-and-rescue professionals with a few trained dogs that would find us before wild animals would?"

Contact Tristin Hopper at

[tristinh@yukon-news.com](mailto:tristinh@yukon-news.com)

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