

August, 2003

From the President's Corner

This has been another hot, dry summer. The "No Open Fires" law is in effect now. So, please take heed!!

For those of you who weren't at the annual meeting (the minutes will be sent out very soon), we extended the "No Cows Moratorium" from 2 to 4 years. This was necessary to give the Ranch more time to heal from the current polarization regarding this issue.

We have kept the dues at \$100/lot, which will bring in enough revenue to cover our normal expenses. We have approximately \$28,000 in reserves. Last year we committed to installing an automatic gate at the lower entrance. We are in the process of purchasing and installing the gate at an approximate cost of \$7,000., which will have to come out of our reserves. In the interest of not depleting the reserve funds any more than necessary, we set up a "Lower Gate Fund". Four have already contributed to the fund. All you fisherman, let's pitch in - any amount would be greatly appreciated! Send to Madison River Rch, 1903 Lake Heron Ln. Boise, ID 83706.

Thank you, Jeanne

On-The-Scene Report

Dave and I were on the scene for a month from late June, just before the homeowner's meeting, until almost the end of July. It was hot and dry every single day! But in typical Montana style, every night cooled off to a comfortable sleeping temperature. Cliff Lake was my cool-off method of choice.

I broke my finger this summer, just about one year to the day from when Dave broke his last summer. No, this is not a tradition we plan to keep up. I got the pins out today, and will need 4-6 weeks of physical therapy to get it limbered up again. What a lot of trouble one little finger can cause!

Without the cattle there, the grass was high so we rented a tractor and mowed our field. There were some fires while we were there in the general area, but none really very close. We spent a day in Yellowstone and saw a fire along the western edge late in the day. I think it was controlled within a few days, at least I didn't hear any more about it.

We are lucky to have two new columns starting in this newsletter from homeowners who have agreed to share their knowledge with us. Mike Wells has sent in a column on fly fishing, and Barclay VanDoren on Real Estate on the Ranch. Two subjects that I know are of interest to most of us.

Wildlife

We saw lots of wildlife both on the ranch and in the surrounding areas. We saw antelope, deer, Sandhill Cranes, moose, and in Yellowstone we saw all those, plus elk and bison. The big treat in Yellowstone, though, was that we saw a wolf! It was feeding on a carcass out in a field, and was causing quite a stir. The owls, eagles, osprey, and other predatory birds were in evidence too, as well as the many other beautiful smaller birds like the Mountain Bluebirds, Western Meadowlarks and woodpeckers. No rumors of bear sightings this year, but I have to get a book to identify animal droppings, because I saw a few I thought were suspicious.

Thought for the day:

"If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there." I don't know where this

came from, but it's Dave's current favorite saying, since it describes us so perfectly!

Ranch Recipes

Buttery Plum Tart

I got this recipe from a great cook, my sister Mary Scherzer. Since it's plum season, give it a try. It's a delicious and attractive dessert.

Cinnamon Pastry

1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
1 stick margarine or butter, softened
1/3 cup sugar
¼ t. ground cinnamon

Filling

1 ½ lbs. purple plums
½ cup sugar
2 T. all-purpose flour
½ t. ground cinnamon
¼ t. almond extract
¼ cup slivered blanched almonds (optional)
1 cup heavy cream, whipped (optional)

1. Prepare Cinnamon Pastry dough: Into med. Bowl, measure flour, margarine or butter, sugar and cinnamon. With fingertips, mix just until blended.
2. Press pastry dough onto bottom and up side of 9-inch tart pan with removable bottom.
3. Preheat oven to 375 F. Prepare filling: Cut each plum in half and remove pit; slice plums.
4. In large bowl, toss plums, sugar, flour, cinnamon, and almond extract.
5. Arrange plum slices, closely overlapping to form concentric circles in tart shell.
6. Evenly sprinkle slivered almonds, if used, over plum slices.
7. Bake 45 min. or until pastry is golden and plums are tender. Cool tart in pan on wire rack.
8. Carefully remove side from tart pan. Transfer to serving plate.

To serve, cut into wedges. Top with whipped cream if desired.

Book Pick:

I've been on a mystery kick lately, and one author I've found to write wittily, with characters you want to hear more about, is Martha Grimes. Her "Richard Jury" series offers some fun reads, and even though a series, you don't have to read them in order. These are not new books, so your library should have a good selection.

Fishing with Mike Wells

Our ranch is located in one of the premier fishing destinations in the world. For more than a half century this area of southwest Montana, northwest Wyoming and northeast Idaho has been a Mecca for anglers. The area attracts a significant contingent of the angling population due to the overwhelming volume of fishable water and the deserved reputation of having some of the largest, most beautiful, hardest fighting fish anywhere. Combine that with some of the most spectacular landscape in the Rocky Mountain West, the chance to regularly fish with wildlife as your only companions and the experience can definitely be awe-inspiring!

I've been asked to contribute a regular fishing article/report to the Ranch Newsletter based

on some people's observations that I spend more time on our section of the Madison River than anybody else from our ranch. Whether this is true or just a diabolical plot to discover the secrets to my fishing success is up for debate. Actually, my fishing success is debatable and I'm really only secretive when I'm not successful! So, those of you who know better know who you are and those of you that don't shouldn't take any of this as gospel.

There is so much to write about that this is nearly or perhaps more daunting than the first time I fished the Madison at the \$3 Bridge some fifteen years ago. I will try to approach it the same way that Craig Matthews of Blue Ribbon Flies in West Yellowstone so willingly advised me to approach the river at that time, which was to break it down into smaller sections and explore those thoroughly.

Let's begin in our 'neighborhood' of the Madison River, which I'll define as the section from Quake Lake to the West Fork. This section is open from the third Saturday in May through the end of January. I flyfish almost exclusively here so most the information will be from that perspective. If you fish lures here, I would appreciate hearing from you. I know some folks that do and they do very well.

Early season means a lot of lead slinging for flyfishers and almost exclusively sub-surface fishing. There are sporadic hatches of Blue Wing Olives, Midges and Golden Stones but you will mainly need Blue Wing Olive, Midge and Stone fly nymphs. Occasionally, Worm and Egg patterns will produce as well. I always fish a two fly rig whether on or under the surface. I figure it doubles your chances to hook up and it helps determine what the fish are looking for a bit quicker. Remember that the Rainbows are spawning and be careful not to wade/walk in those areas. Also, keep in mind that they are trying to procreate and re-stock the river ultimately for your enjoyment, so it is in your best interest not to fish to them.

In June the water and air starts to warm up and the insect activity does too. By the end of June, around the time of our Annual Ranch Meeting, the evening Caddis hatches start coming on and the infamous Salmon flies begin their migration up the river. During the day most action is still sub-surface with Caddis, Midge, Baetis, Stone fly and Salmon fly nymphs but you can bring some of the more eager fish up to dry versions. Usually by July 4th the river resembles bug soup. The Salmon flies have arrived (along with the hordes of anglers that can't resist seeing big fish move great distances to gorge themselves on the 3"-4" dries), several varieties of Caddis are present and the action can be hot and heavy all day and past dark if you're adventurous. There have been nights when blinded by darkness, hunger burning a hole in my gut and visions of cocktails dancing in my head, I couldn't stop fishing because every time I would toss the flies into the black stew I would catch a fish. Those are the times when everything in the Universe seems to line up and give you that rare glimpse of absolute perfection and joy.

As the area starts to react to prolonged dry spells in August and September the insects become less prolific. However, the fish are still active and all the usual suspects work below the surface but we now have the bonus of an extended period of fishing large Hopper dries and a variety of Attractor patterns. I understand the Hoppers but the Attractors somewhat confound me. I guess a certain percent of fish are impulse buyers. You can also expect some good bank action with Ants, Beetles and Crickets.

Late September, October and November is a magical time in our neighborhood. Thunderstorms and snow squalls roll through, foliage changes bring incredible color, the angle and clarity of light enhances everything, wildlife start moving again in earnest and fishing brings more solitude and peace due to the absence of the fair weather fishers and tourists. Although the weather is cooling, the fishing remains hot because the fish know the long, cold winter is near. Big underwater bugs and bait fish or minnow imitations are worth a try, especially if you're looking for big Browns. Standard nymphs will be the most effective on a regular basis and we're back to sporadic hatches of Blue Wing Olives and Midges. The Browns are spawning in late October and November so be conscientious of where you wade/walk and again, maybe don't

fish to them at all.

December and January fishing is generally tough if you can't handle some intense cold and equipment malfunctions. Lines freeze in the guides, hands freeze in the air and water, feet freeze because you're brain is too cold to keep them moving, but you can catch fish. They will be a bit lethargic, maybe skinny and not so pretty but they are fish. Carry a good selection of Midges and you should hook up. Land and release them as fast as possible. It is best for the fish and you can stuff your hands back into your pockets, stomp your feet around and maybe pump blood back into your brain which would probably be good for you too. There are ways to compensate for the extreme cold but clothes, equipment, etc., will be another article/report.

Recent local fish tales: John Clark and his sons reported excellent fishing around the first of July. The boys were having some great times with large dries and large fish down below the Oxbow. Our resident 'Mad Scientist' or 'Great Innovator' (whichever you prefer) John Legler shared his recipe for success on Wade Lake during the same time frame. It entailed lashing a folding beach/picnic chair to his ancient flat bottom pram for various, strategic reasons to toss a Hopper and dropper combo around with great results. The results were corroborated as Dave Schmidt of the Wade Lake Resort said others were having similar success with the combo flies. However, I'm sure this 'John- boat' is somewhat unique to this area and sounds like something I need to see live and in person for the full color effect.

Questions or comments?

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Thanks and see you next time!

I thought about shortening this, but it seems like so much good information an angler would want, I didn't have the heart!

Ranch Real Estate

Barclay Van Doren

While the quality of life on the ranch is all-important, each of us has an important interest in the value and salability of Ranch properties. Thanks to Dave Clark of Madison Valley Real Estate, LLC in Ennis, I think I have information that should give us each a good fix on what's for sale and at what price. Also, he provided me with a couple of recent sales. Specifically, he reports that the average sale's price of sagebrush lots in 2002 was \$37,450 and treed lots \$73,250. Additionally, there have been two sales of treed lots in 2003 with an average sales price of \$84,000. (Hustle out and plant trees!!!!) As you probably know, comparables is what drives the real estate world. Dave has agreed to provide similar data in the future. Thanks, Dave. Here are the **current listings**:

<u>Lot Number</u>	<u>Price</u>
10	\$ 30,000
12	29,000
31	215,000 (includes a structure)
51	40,000
64	1,995,000 (includes homes, cabin, barn)
70, 71 & 72	1,500,000 (includes homes and structures)
77 & 80	40,000 @ (80,000 for both)
75 or 78	42,500
99	395,000 (includes a home)
103	100,000

With these recent actual sales and the current listings you should be able to ballpark your own

property.

In the near future I hope to interview several of our members who have built recently and report on their experiences. My wife and I built our home recently. More through good luck than knowledge, our problems were few. However, others may have a different story to tell or may have tips that could be helpful. Let me know, if you have something to add, either on- or off-the-record.

The Ranch is a natural wonderland. Aren't we fortunate?

Hoolan's History

Instead of history, Bill sent an article this time on spending a winter on the ranch, a romantic idea I know at least some of us fantasize about. I thought since it describes last winter in particular, and in that way is time sensitive, this might be the best time to use this one. He also sent a riveting article about the Sheepeater Indians, which, in the interest of brevity, I will save for next time. Thanks, Bill.

A WINTER ON THE RANCH

Sandra and I have been asked many times what its like living on the ranch all winter, so here are some of the things we found interesting. As I reported in the Feb. newsletter " Big winter has not come to the ranch yet", well it never got here, except for one real cold spell, -35 below for a few days, most days were 20 degrees and the nights, zero. The snow amounted to only 15 or 20 inches on the ground at any one time. Still enough for some great snowmobiling and cross country skiing. Several land owners showed up this year, things are starting to liven up around here in the winter. Normally the deer leave these parts around mid February because of the deep snow, but this year they just stayed on, it was fun having them around the house for the whole winter.

We were able to drive to our place until mid January (a record) after then and until mid April its snowmobile. Let me tell you the novelty of starting and ending any trip from home with a 5 mile snowmobile ride wears thin by mid April, though the dogs just love it. Two of them ride in a tag –along sled, but one insists on riding on the seat in front of me looking over the windshield and at exactly 20 mph her long ears start to fly straight out from her head like wings, so funny to watch.

When the snow starts melting off the roads in April is doesn't do it evenly. For about 2 weeks half the road has snow and half is bare ground, and you end up not being able to drive or snowmobile the entire way. This year we could drive as far as the old town, then snowmobile to within ½ mile of home where we transferred to bicycles to finish out the trip on dry ground. It was on one of those last leg bike rides we just started laughing so much we couldn't ride, so we pushed our bikes along side by side, making believe we were having fun. It's such a great day when we could drive all the way home!

There was a meeting in mid April to discuss Grizzly Bears in the Madison Valley, It was held at the Howling Mad Moon Resort (formally the Sagebrush) and one of the main speakers was Lance Craighead, a very famous Grizzly expert. His family has been in the bear business for fifty years or more. He tells of collared bears wondering all around us during the summer. This we know, two summers ago several people saw a grizzly on the ranch walking around in the middle of the day and last summer the same thing again. Many animal sightings in the area were discussed, wolves, mountain lions even wolverines. It's neat to know that all the animals still live around us

A big event here is when the raptors and ducks all come back in April for the summer. Bald and golden eagles, two or three different kinds of hawks and falcons and the most noisy of all the Sandhill cranes and all looking for a place to raise their young. The commotion on the river

and around the area is non stop, squabbling and fighting over turf, chasing and diving on one another especially the red tail hawks. The thugs are the biggest birds, the Bald and Golden eagles, they pester the osprey full time. When they see an osprey dive into the water and catch a fish, when the osprey tries to fly away, they chase it until it drops the fish ,then they dive down and catch it mid air. Once the chase begins the only way we've ever seen the osprey keep his fish, is by catching an updraft, they seem to be able to gain altitude faster than the heavier eagles. But it is the falcon that gets the most respect, even the largest give this medium sized bird a wide berth. We've seen these falcons catch swallows in mid air. I could go on and on about these falcons,

they are all business, when they are flying around the neighborhood all other birds leave or land.

The elk have migrated back through the ranch, they came in groups of 50 or so, coming up from wall creek game refuge. I guess we saw a thousand or so cross the ranch during the daytime, probably a lot more cross at night. They will be back next December and January moving down the valley. Four or five years back, one could see hundreds at a time in December grazing on the ranch and hanging around a month or so eating. But lately they just pass through, some of us think it's the size of our cow herd that gets most of the eats. It will be interesting to see, with the 2 year "no cow grazing" if the elk stay longer in the fall.

In November we saw river otters on the big bend of the river for the first time, although the locals tell us they are always around, just rare to see.

In closing, any of you that have ever dreamed of spending a winter out in the wild, try and do it just once. It was a little unnerving for us that first year, so quiet, I mean no sounds, except for the coyotes howling! The moonlight walks with your sweetheart, to sit in your hot tub (a must) at 10 below with air so clear the stars just explode from horizon to horizon some nights you can count up to 10 or 15 satellites in one hour. One can actually get a fleeting taste of serenity and you certainly get caught up on your books and movies. The snowmobiling and cross country skiing are second to none and when it's just time to get back to civilization for a few days your car is waiting for you at the highway.

PS; our local ranger thinks the elk herd will surpass nine thousand this spring (wow)

Misc.

Mike Wells told me about a website you can go to and see a live picture from Reynolds Pass. I thought that would be fun to do any time you want a taste of what the weather's like, especially in the winter. I think there's an easier address than this, but this will get you there:
rwis.mdt.state.mt.us

Many thanks to Bill Hoolan, Mike Wells, and Barclay Van Doren for their great contributions. As always, please send or email me anything you think would be of interest to your neighbors, whether it's family news, reports from the ranch, stuff for sale, letters to the editor, etc. I really enjoy hearing from you!

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