

January, 2004

Edited by Martha Crawley

From the President's Corner

by Jeanne Loughrey

It's not yet time for our "official" meeting notice, but for planning purposes, our annual Homeowner's meeting will be at a new location. It will be held at the Howlin' Mad Moon Resort on Hwy. 287 near the turnoff for our ranch on the last Saturday in June, the 26th. I hope many of you can make it.

Thought for the day:

"From what we get, we can make a living; what we give, however, makes a life." Arthur Ashe

Ranch Recipes

North Country La Bamba Casserole

- 1 can (5.25 oz.) whole green chilis, drained
- 1 lb. ground turkey breast or ground beef
- 1 c. chopped onion
- 2 t. chili powder
- ½ t. ground cumin
- ¼ t. salt
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 (10 oz.) can diced tomatoes & chilis (Ro-Tel), undrained
- 2 c. frozen whole-kernal corn, thawed
- 1 (16 oz.) can fat-free refried beans
- 1 ½ c. (6 oz.) shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 c. chopped tomato

- ½ c. chopped green onions

Preheat oven to 375. Cut green chilis in half lengthwise and place in bottom of 8X8 casserole that has been sprayed with cooking spray. Saute meat, onion, chili powder, cumin, garlic, and salt. Add Ro-Tel tomatoes and cook 5 min. till liquid evaporates. Spoon meat mixture over chilis, top with corn, spread beans over corn. Sprinkle cheese over. Bake at 375 for 30 min. Let stand 5 min, top with tomato and green onion. 6 servings.

Fishing with Mike Wells

Pulling in to the parking area by the rock outcropping just past Cabin Creek I was vacillating between actually gearing up to fish or just crawling back under the covers in my bunk in the RV. Glancing over at my brother-in-law, riding shotgun, I marveled again at his ability to drink a couple super-sized mugs of hi-test coffee and still catch a nap on the short drive from the Ranch over to below the Hebgen Lake dam. It was early May and we were honing our skills so we wouldn't completely embarrass ourselves in front of the guide I had booked to float the Yellowstone in a couple of days. The float was a birthday present for Tim who I've fished with for twenty years, and who introduced me to the 3-Dollar Bridge. It would be only the third time I had hired a professional but I figured Tim had earned it putting up with my idiosyncrasies all these years.

The fishing below the dam had been good the last couple days. Not many folks around which added to the enjoyment and seemed a bit unusual since this was the only open stretch of the

Madison for miles. We were hooking up a lot of feisty Rainbows, the occasional Brown and mass quantities of the inevitable Whitefish. A squadron of Osprey and a pair of Bald Eagles had been patrolling the river and doing as well or better than we had. They had much better technique than we did, and for a moment I wondered if I could compete on their level if I didn't use a rod, stripped off my Gore-Tex bag and my voluminous layers of clothing and just dove in!

Making my way down to the run below the rock outcropping, the numbing cold erased any thoughts other than to keep moving to try to stay warm. The mercury had not reached thirty any day yet and was stuck on twenty-five again today. I moved into position at the top of the riffle that ran back into a long wide glide and began the rhythmic casting of my midge nymphs, working them through the slots created by rock that had crumbled into the riffle. I was working too fast, trying to keep the line and guides from freezing and my muscles from seizing up but got into some small to medium Rainbows right away. As time and the river floated by I became comfortably numb and regained a more natural fishing pace. I lost a big fish when the line got fouled up in my damn open fingertip gloves. I cursed them repeatedly, threw them on the ground but welcomed them back with open hands after about five minutes.

Bigger fish seemed to be lurking in the calmer water where the riffle flattened out into the long, wide glide so I started letting my flies run a little further out and dangle longer at the end of the drift. I released several large Rainbows over the next hour using this method. They seemed to really like the Zebra Midge, a fly I'd picked up in the Grand Canyon while fishing around Lee's Ferry. Noticing a subsurface boulder about mid-stream I summoned my best guide-impressing casting skills and managed to drift my rig numerous times in front of, around both sides and behind the fishy spot. I was patting myself on the back for being such an adept fisherman when my flies snagged the rock. I yanked, I pulled, I moved upstream all to no avail. What a Bozo! Then the rock started pulling back slowly, yet deliberately toward the far bank! What the ??? There was no need to set the hook or tighten the line. That had been taken care of by whatever was trying to haul my gear across the river. I obviously was not in control of this situation but instinct took over and I began to slowly engage the fish in what started out to be a one sided tug of war. Unaware that I had already moved fifty yards down from the point of impact I quickly assessed my surroundings and formed my battle plan. I put more pressure on, the fish slowly finned toward the far bank again and rolled several times on the surface. At mid-roll I really stuck it to him and started the crank and pump technique I'd learned while deep-sea fishing. Man, that sucker was big!

Time was warped, space was warped and I was getting warped. At some point the fish moved into the middle of the river again. Whether I influenced this, I couldn't tell for sure but I chose to think I might be gaining on him. Oh God, I really love these gloves! Wow! What's that? He's giving up!? There he is just out of reach of the net. Don't blow it now. Not now! I got him! Oh no! I can only get his front half in the net and he's got the leader wrapped around his head four or five times from all that rolling. Great, my biggest trout ever and my knees are Jell-O, my fingertips are frozen and I have to perform leader surgery to release him. Stumbling, bumbling, fumbling and there goes 32" of the most magnificent Brown trout I've ever seen! I feel great! I feel terrible for hog-tying him and leaving leader lines on his head! I feel great! Wow, that was really something!

Walking back I wonder if that fish will remember me? Will Tim really believe me? Does it matter?

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Ranch Real Estate

By Barclay Van Doren

This is the first in a series designed to evoke discussion between those who have built and

those who are planning to build on the Ranch. I also have included the latest info on real estate activity. I thought it best to begin at the beginning: contracting for the work, but even before signing a contract you should line up construction money, mortgage money and fire/earthquake insurance. Mortgage money is a bit of an issue on the ranch because of the winter closing by Madison County ordinance of the Wade/Cliff Lake Road. This closure shows up on title searches and is a condition which prevents mortgages from being bundled and sold, thus making it impossible to get mortgages from the usual suspects. There are, however, sources for mortgages including the Montana Board Investments, which holds its own mortgages. However the last time I checked the Board did not issue loans for more than 20 years and had a slightly higher rate. Also, some who have built recently have had difficulty in obtaining insurance – and, of course, mortgages require the mortgagor to maintain insurance. Talbot Agency in Ennis may carry available lines. I got my insurance through the Bissell Agency in Bozeman which carries Farmers Union Mutual Insurance. I am sure there are others, but you may find it most fruitful to pursue local agents.

The first issue builders face is whether to contract with a general contractor or whether to serve as one's own general contractor. This is a non-issue for most of us for two reasons: First, it takes more onsite job oversight than an absentee owner can usually provide. Realistically, it will usually take more than one building season to complete construction of a house with utilities, water and heating. Moreover, efficient construction takes advantage of late falls and early springs and adjusts for precipitation. Most of us cannot do this from a distance. Second, critical subcontractor specialties are in heavy demand in this area. Most subcontractors give preference to general contractors with whom they have dealt and expect to deal with in the future. So, for almost all of us, we must rely on a general contractor.

Most who have built in this area will tell you that the most important decision you will make is your choice of contractors – more important than whether the contract is fixed price or cost-plus. A good contractor will not only do good work himself, but knows and is able to marshal the best subcontractors, and will make the best of the unexpected problems that always occurs during construction. IT IS AN ABSOLUTE MUST to check with everyone who has built on the ranch in recent years. There are many success stories, but there are some absolute disasters traceable to general contractors. Get recommendations and talk to others for whom the recommended general has worked. Ask whether the work was done on budget, whether the quality of work was as expected and about problems that arose during construction and how the problems were handled. Probably the best recommendation a general can have is to have met a major (unavoidable) problem and to have handled it well. Expect the work to take more time than planned.

Now an update on real estate matters. This information was kindly provided by Jill Gaar, Sales Associate, Madison Valley Real Estate, P.O. Box 504, Ennis, MT 59729, (888) 592-5002. Many thanks to her. Her predecessor "correspondent" has moved to Wyoming and she responded to my urgent cry for help.

Unimproved lots currently listed:

Lot 10 - \$30,000.
Lot 12 - \$34,900.
Lot 31 - \$215,000.
Lot 75 or 78 - \$42,500. (sell one, not both)
Lot 80 - \$40,000.
Lot 116 - \$45,000.

Homes currently listed:

Lots 64A & 64B - \$1,995,000.
Lot 99 - \$395,000.

Activity:

Lot 51 was listed at \$40,000., is now under contract and due to close soon.

Lot 103 was listed at \$100,000 and sold in October. Lot 106 was listed at \$85,000 and sold in late August. Both lots bordered on the National Forest and sold for approximately \$3,900 per acre.

The next issue I intend to address in this column wells. I have chosen to address wells not only because they need to be drilled and flowing early in a project, but also because wells have been vexatious for many. Although I am not aware of anyone who has been unable to get a productive well in the end, many have had serious difficulties. The mixed geology of our area presents many challenges. Further, not every well driller has been straight with his customer. Please call or write me with your questions, thoughts and experiences regarding wells. I know that there are drilling techniques that may reduce problems, but I do not know how to assess them. If you do, let me know. Also, I will be pleased to list names of drillers with whom our members have had good experiences.

More broadly, if you have had experiences – good or bad – which you are willing to share regarding almost any subject relating to related to building and maintaining properties at the ranch please contact me. I intend this column to be your column. If you have subjects you want discussed or information which could benefit others on the ranch, let me know. I think it would be of great value to exchange the names of contractors, service people, tradesman, mortgage sources, insurance sources, etc., who are good or useful. To the extent space in the newsletter permits, I will include such names in my articles. Telephone: (772) 231-9755. Email: VanDFam@aol.com.

See you on the Ranch!

Hoolan's History

MADISON VALLEY INDIANS

Crows, Blackfeet, Shoshone and Bannack Indians were the main groups that were so much a part of the history of our Madison Valley. If one had a time machine that sent you back a few hundred years to our main ranch gate, this road being the Indian highway, you should not be surprised to see a small group of young Crow bucks riding by on one of their infamous horse stealing trips or maybe a whole Blackfeet village traveling through on their way to dig camus roots and hunt buffalo south of here, or Shoshones up from Utah to visit the Bannacks, one of their sub tribes (the Bannacks lived here most of the year). Sandra and I have found over 100 of their teepee rings up and down the valley. There was another group of Indians I find most interesting that lived in the Madison Valley area that never traveled across our ranch or used our famous Blackfoot Trail, these being the Sheepeaters or mountain Shoshone.

This timed people lived like hermits high in the mountains around our ranch, traveling in small bands of 5 to 10 adults and about the same number of children. With such small numbers they were unable to defend themselves against their better armed and aggressive neighbors that traveled through this area during the summer months.

What I find most interesting about them was they stayed in the mountains all year, even after all others were driven far south by the winter. They would subsist on mountain sheep using bow and arrows to make their kills, or by drawing the sheep into log traps on the windswept sides of the mountains. One of our early ranchers found and described one of these traps. He wrote that right at the timberline the Sheepeaters probably noted the preferred escape route of a band of sheep, then built a wedge a couple hundred yards wide at the mouth and tapered down to a dead end in about 300 yards. They built the funnel walls from dead logs and branches and at the end built the walls just high enough for the sheep to jump over. Once the sheep jumped over, they found themselves on what might be called the first cattle guard, well spaced small diameter logs, a couple of feet off the ground. This caused them to slow considerably to walk

across this arrangement, probably causing some pushing and falling. In any case, this extra time taken was an opportunity to let the arrows fly and let fly they did, shooting arrows from a unique bow that was less than 3 feet long and made from the sheep's horns. These magnificent bows were the most powerful weapon available prior to the introduction of the gun and were sought after throughout the West and Great Plains

The Sheepeaters lived in a teepee-like shelter, stacking wood poles together and covering the cone with sheepskins. When moving on they would just remove the skins and leave the poles standing. These tent frames are still being found in the most remote parts of the high country.

Some of what we know about these Indians was passed on to us by the mountain men beaver trappers. Even this group had little contact with them, spending most of their time in the valley floors searching for beaver. One particular mountain man, who spent 12 years in the area between 1827-1839, enjoyed hunting sheep high in the mountaintops rather than other game in the valley floor, "because it offered me the best views of this new and exciting world I find myself in." This mountain man mentioned finding the Sheepeaters only twice. He described them as neatly clothed in sheepskin, and a very content and happy people. They had no horses, and used only dogs to carry most things when moving from camp to camp.

I personally have read of only one Sheepeater grave being found, east of our ranch. The body was dressed in a sheepskin robe and was carbon dated to 1000 + years ago. The Bannocks that claimed our valley were said to have traded at times with the Sheepeaters, and once a year a big Shoshone tribal pow-wow, held in Idaho, would bring Indians, including some Sheepeaters, from far and wide.

The Sheepeaters goods brought a premium value, especially the famous bow. One of these bows found its way to a mountain man rendezvous and being only 32" long, shot an arrow through a 9" tree at 50 feet. I guess this is one reason the plains Indians preferred it even over a gun when chasing buffalo. One had to stop and reload a gun but the small, powerful bow could be shot over and over. It was claimed it would shoot an arrow completely through a buffalo. The bow had a value of 10 good horses!

These Indians never changed their ways, they had no need of horses living in such rough places. They were a very spiritual stoneage people to the end. Their numbers were never more than 2000 and since they lived in such remote places for over a thousand years, their ancient methods served them well.

The last Sheepeater, a 100 year old woman called Aggretta, told her story to Mr. William Allen in 1913. Her small band was living in the Bighorn Mountains, south of present day Billings, MT., when a young white man, lost and sick, stumbled into the camp. They tried to help him but in a few days he turned red like an Indian with spots all over his face. He spread his sickness throughout the camp. Most all died, some went to other Sheepeater camps and soon the disease spread to all camps and the 2000 Sheepeaters went down to 200.

The mountains started to fill up with hunters and miners and by 1875 there seemed to be no place for the few remaining Sheepeaters. The very last camp was found in a remote side canyon of the Snake River by a Col. Brown, US army. Brown wrote on August 16, 1879, "The last vestige of an ancient living culture is gone forever."

I have read estimates of 1000 years from the beginning to the end of this subculture of the Shoshone Indians. Using a telescope during the winter months and looking into the sides of the mountains across Hwy 287 east of our ranch, one can sometimes find sheep grazing high above the timber line where the wind has blown the snow away, I can't help thinking of a bygone time, the time of the Sheepeaters!

In my research of this Sheepeater story, I met people who tell me they know where a few remaining Sheepeater teepee wood frames still stand in the back country and next summer will show me. If this turns out well and any of you ranch folks want to see them, let me know.

Attention all of you with treeless lots! Bemoan your lack of trees no more!

ARBOR DAY ON THE RANCH

Bill and Sandra Hoolan

Several of us have experimented with different types of trees over the past 10 years. It seems almost any tree does well if watered during the summer months, like aspen and spruce. Lodgepole pine seems to be able to make it best, on its own, through our dry summers, so Lodgepole it is for our first big planting experiment in the spring. With a little luck and a few good rains the seedlings should get a good start.

We have located a supplier of seedling trees. By buying and planting in bulk, and with the help of high school kids, we can have them in the ground for approximately \$3.00 each. This is a small risk to see if trees will grow on your property unattended.

Let me know this winter if you want to give it a go, I'll need to know how many and approximately where on your lot to plant and we'll have the kids do the rest.

Phone Bill or Sandra at 406-682-4334.

One of these months I'm going to figure out how to do this in a real newsletter format, but since I am not exactly a technology wizard, this will have to do for the time being. I owe 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, recipes, reports from the ranch, stuff for sale, letters to the editor, etc. I really enjoy hearing from you!

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