The Life and Times of a Backcountry President

The joyous occasion occurred in Nampa Idaho, one fall evening. The sire was from good Owyhee County/Silver City stock; the dam was out of a Scottish immigrant that settled near Peck Idaho. Home was to be a 28-acre farm just south of Homedale. It was a perfect place to raise a herd of young'uns; lots of pastures and fields and outdoor activities to grow 'em up robust and healthy.

After the wars, Dad came home and got hired on as a Rural Mail Carrier, a job he held for the next thirty-something years. Mom graduated from the U of I and came down here to teach Home Ec. She ended up being a stay-at-home mom, which was the norm back then, and besides carrying mail, Dad also farmed, through rain, sleet, snow and dark of night. He raised hay, corn, wheat, and beef cows. Twenty eight acres was just big enough to keep the kids in chores and teach them a work ethic, and to have horses.

Horses were my life. I can't remember when I fell in love with them, but I got it from my mom, and I know I was pretty little—about knee-high to a grasshopper, I think. Every summer when we'd go up to Granddad's I'd hound my older cousin to take me horseback riding. She hated me, I'm sure. Then Granddad gave me his old hunting mare, which was too old to be too dangerous for a little tyke, but I learned a lot from that horse.

Then high school came around, and sports and school activities took over my life, and horses were forgotten. I went to school at the U of I (go Vandals!), lived in the Delta Gamma Sorority, and graduated with a BS from Washington State University (go Cougars!).

After a short stint working for the City of Boise, and a short stint working with the Idaho Fish & Game, I settled into the Federal Employee scene; I too went to work for Ye Olde Postal Service. Except, I just took the job for a couple years, until I found something else I *really* wanted to do. Fifteen years later I was still looking. Only, not very hard, because I still didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up, and the pay and benefits at the Post Office were pretty darned good.

I started out as a clerk in Boise, transferred after about 3 years to being a carrier, and endured about 10 butt-cold winters before I decided I *really* didn't want to do this until I was sixty years old. So I got promoted to Carrier Supervisor. It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. Whew! Dealing with twenty grouchy old crusty mail carriers every day was not a pleasant experience. Granted, there were a few that were very good, and very willing to help out, but there were a lot of them that just liked to make life miserable for the boss.

It was about this time that I knew something was missing from my life. Living in a subdivision in Boise, I felt all closed in. I started thinking of horses again, but where would I keep them? Could I afford horses?? It soon became apparent that horses and that country way of life were essential to my well-being, and it was more a question of 'can I afford *not* to have them?'

A lifestyle change was definitely in order. I needed to get out of Boise. So I got promoted to Postmaster of a small office—Melba, to be exact. Close to my roots in Owyhee County, horse country………… Not.

Not good. Too far from Boise and I was still commuting. So I transferred to the Star Post Office, bought ten acres of raggedly old alfalfa field with an irrigation well on it, and went to work building fences and corrals. (Thanks for the work ethic, Mom & Dad; it has served me well) and gradually my little homestead came to be, complete with cows and horses, a hay field and pasture.

I stayed with the Postal Service for 32 years, and retired as Postmaster of the Star Post Office in May of 2010, when I hung up my mail bag and took up packing mules instead of mail. The rest is history waiting to be made. One of the things on my bucket list is to pack the Idaho Centennial Trail from the Nevada border to the Canadian border. After that, I want to go to Scotland and Ireland, and take an equine tour. No more confining subdivisions and jobs for me; I have other things to do with my life. Those wide-open spaces and crystal-clear mountain lakes and streams beckon.

Happy trails. See you on the next switchback.

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