

Our City

As Al and I dropped into the headwaters of the South Fork of the Boise it looked far better than I had hoped, given its recent history. The waters were crystal clear with riffles, runs and pools that looked inviting. As we drove the length of the “special regulation” section, anticipation swelled. The area had been subject to a recent fire that was evident in places but not to the extent I had feared. It had also been subject to the torrential rains we have experienced the last two years; and as we drove farther down we found four huge blowouts complete with boulders, trees, smaller rocks and debris. Yet, the water remained clear and inviting. We made our way to Baumgartner Campground, pitched camp, ate, and waded upstream. We were filled with the excitement of potential and promise.

Potential and promise faded as pool after pool was barren. We found a few cased caddis where they had built their pupal homes on the stream’s submerged rocks. The caddis hatch that should have happened never did. As the sun set, we found a pod of small fish sparingly feeding on emerging mayflies. A few were landed and returned. The night turned dark and left me empty and out of sorts as my mind drifted to the School Board meeting that was taking place. Patty Porath and Dan Hammond were presenting the results of the Idaho Quality Program Standards grant. I hoped it was going better than the fishing. Both gnawed at my stomach.

The next morning while getting water for coffee Al and I met the most interesting gal. Her name was Carline. She was from Seattle and had just passed the halfway point in her 1700 mile solo mountain bike ride through the backcountry of the Pacific Northwest. She had planned on four friends joining her, but they baled; so she told her husband that she would do it alone. Like the previous night’s fishing it would not have sat well with me were Sally to do something like that. She was low on power bars so we resupplied her and wished her well as she was anxious to get on the road and we needed to find some fish.

We drove upstream looking for water that had not been subjected to fire and siltation from the heavy rains. The fishing got no better. Nor did it that night. It was time to move. We headed for Atlanta and the Middle Fork of the Boise. The road from the mining camp of Rocky Bar to Atlanta was “western” but passable in my 4-Runner. Based on a tip, we pitched camp just below “town.” We built a sandwich, found some shade and took our customary midafternoon nap. The waters didn’t appear to be any different than the South Fork. And while they weren’t huge by any stretch, there were fish everywhere there should have been. Which in itself was odd given we fished the river directly behind town to the wilderness border. They are where you find them, no question. But Al and I longed for something different. It is not just about catching fish; hell I could have done that at home.

The following morning we headed out after finding the waters below Atlanta and those of the lower Yuba River fishless. After the heavy rain from the night before the road back was a bit more “western,” but still passable. We found ourselves back at Baumgartner along with what must have been half of Boise. The fishing that night was no better than the previous two.

A new plan formulated that night. We packed before dawn and headed to Fairfield, a tank full of gas and a hot breakfast. As we topped the pass that would drop us into Fairfield cellphone service was restored and mine lit up and sounded like a million dollar winner on a slot

machine. It was my choice I know, but I spent the next three hours on the phone dealing with City business and talking with Patty and Dan about their School Board presentation. As it turned out Patty and Dan weren't the only ones who attended the meeting on behalf of the Ag Program and FFA Chapter. I hope the added presence and comments were well received. The individuals attending only want what is best for our students. It pleases me to no end the number of people who value the life skills taught to and experienced by students actively involved in our Agricultural Science and Leadership development programs. The partnerships developed by the programs are making positive life differences for so many students. Thank you to all who choose to help make these differences possible.

City matters would require that I cut my vacation a few days short. Budgeting questions and employee work hours needed to be dealt with. But, as it was Saturday we had two more days to fish. We headed to waters in the general neighborhood that I had last fished with Hank Boomer prior to his Magistrate appointment in Cascade. The stream didn't disappoint, in fact it was better than I had remembered it. While the fish were bigger than we had caught on the Middle Fork, most folks would still call them small. They were Rainbows and Bull Trout with plenty of fight and a compulsion for small attractor dry flies. We enjoyed two days of outstanding fishing and managed in our minds at least to salvage the trip and our vacation. It is gratifying that a pristine stream and a few fish caught on dry flies can still do that for me.

In between working with Robyn on finalizing the City budget and working on some departmental work hour proposals Al and I did manage to eke out a bit more fishing time on the Reservation where we both brought to net several large Rainbows on emerging and spent Pale Morning Duns. I am extremely pleased with the budgeting process this year and it is largely due to the frugality of our departmental superintendents and our Clerk Robyn Herndon. The funds saved during the completion of the recent Downtown Revitalization will be used as one time monies to purchase much needed equipment in Fire, Police, Parks, Golf and Administration departments. The monies saved in the recurring budget will be used to bolster the lower end of the City's salary schedules in each department in hopes of retaining more experienced employees rather than having to retrain new ones who replace those leaving for better pay.

Please refer to Daniel Moore's piece on the results of last week's City Council meeting. It was relatively short and to specific points. I will say good luck to Travis Mills and Hailey Lusk and their new group "The Power of Pride" who are dedicated to increasing the pride in and fundraising for our local athletic programs and the opportunities they provide.

Last Thursday, Friday and Saturday found me in Yellowstone with 26 FFA officers as we planned the coming year's program of activities. The Officer Retreat included 18 miles of long uphill climbs and downhill scrambles on one of the Park's more difficult trails. The change it made in many of the kids was stark. Finding yourself in the "middle of nowhere" with no choice but to press forward does that; it is a life skill or trait that is best learned early. Potential and promise look good but accomplish nothing without the will to finish and make the most of what was started. The determination and will of this year's FFA Officer Team will lend itself quite well to the support given the Ag Program. I am looking forward to the coming year.

Until next week...