

## Our City

It was a 74 mile hike in and out. It's as far from a road or phone (no landline or cell service) as you can get in the continental United States. There were to be Cutthroats there, of the Yellowstone variety; lots of them. For me at least, on a walk of that nature the whole thing takes on its own rhythm. And it is in that rhythm that I find peace and comfort; though at times my body was telling me something quite different. It is not foreign to the casting motion of a smooth four weight rod with small dries on Spring Creek; at times I find fleeting moments of perfection or as close as I am likely to come in this lifetime.

When the challenge started last Monday I was not at all sure I wanted to be a part of something competitive that I take pleasure in doing just for the sake of doing it. It is why I don't tie flies professionally or guide. However, as I get closer to retirement both have some appeal. The City's insurance carrier, III-A and Blue Cross, sponsored all of our employees who wanted one with Fitbits as part of their wellness program. If you are familiar with "wellness programs" and Fitbits, you know there are typically challenges associated with each. The City's first challenge "is designed to encourage you to increase movement through walking or any other activity. It's time to move more, sit less and feel better!" Well, I do and I don't.

I have been walking daily for quite a while in a personal effort to live healthier. Which is the right reason, but I was more or less going through the motions of logging five to ten miles a day. The challenge changed that a "bit." There is something about a scoreboard that changes things for some of us. Sally also got a Fitbit at her work but quit wearing it after a few days because the one she received didn't log her spinning, pilates, circuit training and yoga. She would tell you she's not competitive, but that is her own fantasy; she works incredibly hard and in my humble opinion is a "freakin' stud." In the most feminine sense of the word of course. Anyway, the scoreboard changed routine walks into something else for me and I found the rhythm of the long hikes of years gone by and the odd competitive need to keep up with the likes of Roger and Rob Thomas, Paul Laggis and Al Goetz who are in no way associated with the City but always seem to be ahead of me; the old memories are strong. It's not a walk in the park hiking with those guys. Put a backpack on any of them and a trail at their feet and its "hasta la vista baby" I may not see them until lunch or camp for that matter. I don't cover the miles as fast as I used to, but my stride is lengthening and my cardiopulmonary system is improving quickly. I may find my way back yet provided life doesn't get in the way.

Which was the case last Monday. Not necessarily life getting in the way so much as responsibility. I got my morning walk in; but the rest of the day was consumed with school and FFA. The American Falls Ag Issues team had an interview scheduled at 12:30 with Jeremy Fields, the Regional Director for Senator Risch, in Pocatello. The team had a very good interview with Mr. Fields on their topic of immigration, and left with a better understanding of the hugely political implications associated with the issue. Later that afternoon the team joined twenty other Chapter members at the Regional FFA Leadership Conference in Pocatello where they learned valuable life skills. That night they joined the other 250 FFA members in attendance where they bagged 8000 pounds of potatoes donated by our own Driscoll Potatoes and made over 1000 containers of dried soup mix from beans, lentils, peas and rice also donated by Idaho growers. The potatoes and soup mixes were then sent home with Chapters

to their local food banks and to the Pocatello food bank. After a late night, morning found the FFA members back at the Leadership Conference which concluded at noon.

In a continuing effort to “grow our own” Randy and Kristen Jensen helped me by taking over 30 eighth graders on a tour of Seagull Bay Dairy, Snake River Cattle and Petersen Manufacturing on Wednesday morning. The purpose of the tour was to show the students the various types of jobs associated with each business; contrary to the popular myth, Ag is not solely about just cows and plows; a surprising amount of technology and skill is associated with putting food on the world’s table. Technology and skills most folks, let alone kids, don’t even know exist. I have said it before but it is worth repeating – Idaho has the nation’s fastest growing economy but lacks the skilled work force to make it viable. With the efforts of our business and industry partners the American Falls FFA Chapter is trying to change that in eastern Idaho. It is no easy task but together with vision and hard work it will be done.

Thursday afternoon found me in a meeting with our Fair Board Chairman Bill Schroeder, retired County Agent Stan Gortsema and Jim Mullen of Keller and Associates Engineering. If you have been to the Power County Fair in the past ten years you will have noticed that we have an overcrowding issue with pigs and lambs; the past two years have seen lambs moved outside the barn. You may further remember the torrential rains and wind we’ve have during fair week too; which is not conducive to keeping animals clean and show worthy. In an effort to help solve this problem I told Bill and Stan a week or so ago that I would see if I could find an engineering company that would design a new barn for minimal cost and whose credentials would satisfy the County Commissioners’ need for engineered plans required for public works. Jim Mullen agreed with no hesitation. Bill and Stan will be meeting with the Commissioners in the near future to discuss the future of a possible new barn at the fairgrounds.

Friday was more or less normal in the big picture sort of way. I will be meeting with the Ag Issues team later today after they all finish taking the ACT College Entrance Exam. The team will be putting together their forum on immigration that they will be bringing to the public in a few weeks. Tomorrow morning will find me working with the Marketing Plan team and the Chapter Officers as they begin to compile our National Chapter application.

It is difficult to find a rhythm in the days when they are all so different but I look forward to the next seven weeks of the “wellness –step challenge.” I look forward too to the challenges that face not only the City but our entire community. It helps, me at least, to have a sense of wellbeing and inter calm as the ups and downs of school and City business are persistent and challenging in their own unique ways. Things appear clear and doable when I hit my stride and fall into a cadence; and that will suffice until such time as I can once again take my four weight out in search of rising trout, midges and Blue Winged Olives.

Until next week...