**Something Presidential... 😊**

“The due to unforeseen circumstances, the light at the end of the tunnel has been turned off... or maybe its just that the oncoming train has lost its head-light!”

It frequently seems like that in regards to goatpackings only real ironclad threat, Bighorn Sheep. For those of us that have been in the thick of this issue for the last three years, burnout is an ever-present reality.

**Case in point:**

Just before leaving for a vacation in New Mexico, I was blindsided by the revelation that the finalized Owyhee Canyonlands Land Use coalition plan includes a stipulation that ‘No packgoats are to be used within the Bighorn sheep core habitat areas... in other words, most of the Idaho’s Owyhee canyonlands.

Probably, the first question that comes to mind is, ‘was Larry unaware that this land use plan was proceeding forward? Hardly. It has been in the media for a couple of years or more. But this plan was all about multiple use compromises between the BLM and the area’s ranchers. How in the world did packgoats get their own special use restriction??

As soon as I read the announcement of the finalization of the plan in the Mountain Home newspaper, I got on the phone and eventually ended up with John Sullivan, the plan’s point man. After a couple of conversations with him, I got down to the bottom line and asked him, “So what scientific information or research was used to justify this decision?”

His response? “Well, ummm, we didn’t actually do a scientific analysis.” So how did they/he come to the conclusion that packgoats were a threat in this area? “Well, the guys in the field said that...”

So once again, we fall victim to the old Joseph Goebbels quote, “If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.” Or otherwise stated, “Well! Everyone’s saying it, so it must be true!”

Interestingly, when I met with the Blue Mountains wildlife biologist regarding their plans to exclude packgoats from their areas, he stated almost word for word the same premise... everyone’s saying it!

So do I understand correctly that these land managers are planning on taking away my and a lot of other folks ability to hike in these beautiful areas, on the basis that packgoats might, could possibly, perhaps, we think, maybe be a hazard to these Bighorns that in all likelihood we will never, ever get close to?

So it would seem... so it would seem.

It is more than a little discouraging to this hiker, who only really began hiking at around age 58, and who discovered these wonderful little load carriers, thinking I was going to be able to extend my hiking time considerably beyond what I had originally thought, only to have the carpet pulled out from under me by these unaccountable and uncaring bureaucratic know-nothings.

**The Monthly Newsletter is Not-so-Monthly**

*Sigh!*

Due to the press of deadlines in the ever-present & consuming Bighorn Sheep issue, added to the fact that my bride and I had planned on leaving in May for a vacation in New Mexico, the May newsletter kind of got hind... well, neglected.

I also need to mention that due to the currently great turmoil in our HOA (Homeowners Association, of which I am the president), I had to be present for the May 8th meeting, a fact that drew an ever-increasing amount of ‘friendly fire’ from Ms. Larry, but which also meant that the May newsletter had to be combined with the June newsletter, which I am having to accomplish while I am on vacation(?) here in NM. (Hey! Its warm!!)

The bottom line here, is that, already stated, this will
Highlining, a Practical Necessity

Goatpacking and the 'goatpacking ethic' has changed considerably in the 10 or so years I have been associated with it. The Rendezvous used to be pretty much arranged around the idea that the goats would be free to roam from campsite to campsite, and be enjoyed by all. In the last few years, we have in many cases transitioned to a more restricted environment, where animals have had to be highlined much of the time.

Highlining:
Highlining has been a focus of some of those changes, going from, at least in the minds of some, "Why would anyone want to do that?" To a more conservative approach, due to wanting to know where our guys are at night. This, in large part, has occurred as there have been some clear losses where goats disappeared during the night never to be seen again. It happened a few years back to George Bogdan, who clearly noted that he never highlined at night. How ever after losing all of Wade Steele's goats on a trip into Jungle Lake, George then noted that he would always highline in the future. Losing all your best friends, in a flash overnight, has a way of prioritizing this particular issue.

However, now there is a much more insistent issue to consider. In the last couple of years, we and especially, our goats, have come under intense scrutiny by land managers as a potential threat to their blessed Bighorn Sheep. Whether or not we are, or we are not, is not the issue in the slightest, at least at this point. The most important issue is that we have been catapulted into an extremely uncomfortable and high visibility situation, and quite frankly, it will only take one incident of losing our goats, to sink our ship as effectively as the iceberg that sank the Titanic. Complacency sank the Titanic, and complacency will sink us, you can certainly be sure of that.

The end result, whether or not you like highlining, it has become an absolute necessity. None of us has the freedom to jeopardize the access of anyone else to the wilderness. And just ONE loss of our animals will do exactly that.
It has been noted, variously, that this has been the least publicized Rendezvous we have ever had. My first reaction was, ‘Harrrrrumph!’ But after looking through the past few month’s editions of the newsletter, trying to find where I had previously published a Rendezvous article, I had to come to the conclusion that I had not ever published anything in the newsletters. Certainty doesn’t seem to be so certain anymore!

That having been said, the 2014 Rendezvous, which is being put together by Charlene Carlson-Norman, is being held close to Bend, Oregon, in the vicinity of La Pine, Oregon (30 miles south of Bend) at the Ogden Group Camp, near Paulina Lake. Driving instructions will be posted on the website.

The NAPgA website has had pictures and maps for some time under the heading ‘2014 Rendezvous’ in the left-hand menu on the Home Page.

Please periodically check the Rendezvous section of the website, as that is where any further information, as well as driving instructions will be posted.

* Pictures will be flashbacks to Rendys past!