

Times changing in outdoor life

If you read *Outdoor Life* when you were young, you most likely remember the "This Happened to Me" stories, whose animated drawings usually showed something like a snarling grizzly bearing down on a cowering man whose rifle had jammed.

To me those little stories showed the intrigue of the outdoors, and the world outside the backwoods of Montana.

So did *Outdoor Life* magazine. The pictures of trophy bulls and lunker trout were always something I aspired to the next weekend or day after school I ventured outdoors. (After all, you should have goals in life.)

Now it looks as if the direction of *Outdoor Life* magazine is changing.

Recently the magazine fired longtime editor Clare Conley, who was a staunch defender of hunting rights.

Dave Reese

Conley was quoted as saying his strong defense of hunting was not what the magazine owners wanted to see.

Indeed, Conley's devotion to hunting was so strong he called for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would have protected the right to hunt — a right that in northwestern Montana is close to aboriginal.

"A lot of people believe hunting does not fit, but it does, it's an important part of our heritage," Conley said recently in an interview with *The Associated Press*.

Conley's dismissal was simply a sign of our times.

He still maintains that the 200,000 or so anti-hunting activists are able to bully the two million hunters in the United States.

Legis. You are likely aware of the state's move to take on the duty of killing the bison that wander out of Yellowstone National Park.

Since 1985, Montana has allowed hunters to kill bison that roam outside the park. About 700 bison have been shot since the 1986 Legislature designated it a game animal, resulting in a national outcry by animal-rights activists who used the controversial, publicized hunt as a rallying point.

State officials say the bison must be shot because they are infected with brucellosis, a disease that causes cattle to abort their calves.

Writers of house Bill 290 bill seek to end Montana's bison hunt.

The bill was endorsed 6-2 two weeks ago by a Senate committee in the Legislature but it was shot down 25-24 Monday.

Then the Montana Senate reversed itself Tuesday and voted preliminary approval of the bill. If the bill is passed the hunt could not be reinstated without specific authorization from the Legislature.

Senators endorsed the measure 38-20 Tuesday. A final Senate vote was expected yesterday, after which the House would take up Senate changes to the bill.

The effort to remove of the legal hunt was due partly to national publicity surrounding the hunt.

Some of that publicity centered around Lyn "Lee" Dessaux of Santa Cruz, Calif., who served 28 days of a 90-day sentence for poaching two hunters with a ski pole during a bison hunt March 13, 1990.

It's not only the anti-hunting activists who are toying with Montana's hunting laws.

Recently the Montana Fish and Game Commission sided with hunters who did not want to amend the regulations in the Elkhorn Mountains to allow the hunting of trophy bulls — only the harvest of spike bulls.

Hunting guides had hoped to have the regulations for that area changed to branch antlered bulls in an effort to attract more paying clients. After all, big bulls mean big money.

Now even the Montana public is getting in on the fray.

A petition being circulated in eastern Montana seeks the resignation of K.L. Cool, director of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, for supporting the state's desire to take control of the bison hunt.

Cool supports the state's killing of the bison as a control action performed by park rangers and state game officials.

The petitioners say they think Cool's opposition to the bison hunt is owing in to animal-rights activists.

For him to step down now would just galvanize the anti-hunters' case.

Recently the Montana Fish and Game Commission voted not to allow the issuance of 2,000 additional out-of-state deer "A" tags.

Now for those of you who have had someone in a fancy 4x4 with California license plates drive up to the same area you were hunting in, you probably agree with the commission's decision to keep the out-of-state hunters out of state.

Their decision points to the fact that Montanans pride themselves on having an excellent wildlife resource that they don't want infringed upon by outsiders.

That's not to say we don't have enough wildlife go around.

In fact, the Kalispell office of Fish, Wildlife and Parks wants to make another 600 whitetail "B" tags available for the Tully Lake area.

It's good to see that our wildlife biologists are on top of the situation.

However, like the magazine editor's firing and the petition seeking the resignation of the state's fish and game director, the situation surrounding hunting demonstrates one thing: that times in the outdoor life are changing.

Welcome ...

The outdoors. It's why many people choose to live in the Flathead Valley. So starting today and running every Thursday.

Skiing is no dream for this youth

By DAVE REESE

The Daily Inter Lake

A look of determination spreads across Ted Ernst's face as he makes his way down the slope.

His father, Ed, guides him from behind for a short ways, then pushes Ted off down the hill, his arms stiff on their outriggers, his monoski spraying snow to the side.

Ted's mono ski catches an edge and falls over, and his look of determination is replaced by a smile as his father bends down to help the 13-year-old, who was paralyzed from the waist down in a fall from a tree two summers ago.

"We've been able to slow him down a little since this," his father said on a chair ride up Big Mountain where Ted was skiing Sunday. "Not much, but a little."

A former runner, hiker and basketball player, Ernst hasn't let the injury stand in the way of his active lifestyle.

The Kalispell boy stays active by wheelchair racing or by taking part in the Disabled Recreation and Environmental Access Movement ski program at Big Mountain. He trains at least three miles a day on his racing wheelchair and strengthens his upper body daily on his chin-up and dip bar.

"I'm pretty athletic and I like to try a lot of stuff," he said in an interview this week.

Ernst has become virtually an overnight success at wheelchair racing.

Last year he broke two national records en route to three gold medals in the national championships in Colorado Springs, Colo.

In June Ernst will travel to Princeton, N.J., to compete in this year's national wheelchair races, where he anticipates another sweep in the 100- and 200-meter events.

"I hope to break them (his former records) this year, and I'm pretty sure I will," he said. "Just practicing down at the track I've already broken them, and if I can do that down at junior nationals I will for sure hold the record."

The company that manufactures racing wheelchairs recognized his talent and signed him up for "Team Shadow."

First he will have to win a qualifying race in Cheney, Wash.

"They're pretty easy times to beat," he said of the qualifying times, "though they've lowered them this year."

Last year Ernst raced in the popular Bloomsday run in Spokane, where he placed 36th out of 96 racers.

He ran his 10-pound racing chair alongside another disabled racer, Max Rhodes, who is 71. Ernst, who is raising money for his trip to Princeton, said he wants to keep racing at least that long.

Although he spends most of his time on athletics, he doesn't forget about his academics. In fact, his father said his studies have improved since Ted's accident.

Just this year Ernst took up skiing on DREAM's mono ski, which is a molded, fiberglass chair mounted on a single downhill ski.

A shock absorber provides a smooth ride, and he has outriggers with foot-long skis strapped to his arms.

Last weekend was Ernst's fifth time on the ski.

"He's really focused in," said Jim Arestad, one of his instructors. "When he gets something in his mind he keeps trying it and trying it, which is a really good attitude to see."

Ernst is one of 110 skiers who take part in DREAM.

He was added to the list of developmentally and physically disabled skiers that has grown dramatically in the last year, according to director Kim Cheff.

This year DREAM took part in 320 lessons, a large increase from last year.

A good part of that increase is due to skiers from out of state, Cheff said.

School districts in the Flathead Valley have also enjoyed the benefits of the DREAM program.

This year Cheff is bringing in disabled students from many area schools — even as far away as Browning — to take part in lessons and training on any of DREAM's equipment.

Being an instructor for disabled skiers has given Arestad insight to their challenges on the ski hill. The first-year instructor said, "You learn a lot



Ed Ernst guides his son, Ted, down a steep part of a ski run before letting Ted go the rest of the way on his own. (Inter Lake photos by Dave Reese)



Ted Ernst, right, and his father joke around on a chairlift ride Sunday on Big Mountain.

about yourself, too," he said. More than 40 volunteers offer their time to help out in the program.

When they acquire enough training they can become "ski buddies" who accompany the disabled skiers anywhere they want to on Big Mountain, said Cheff, who was named program director this year.

To familiarize the instructors with the equipment, they are required to use it themselves.

"It gives you a whole different perspective on the thing," Arestad said. Safety for the skiers is a high priority, too.

Through DREAM, skiers are able to interact with disabled and non-disabled people, Cheff said. This weekend will be one such opportunity.

Outfitting becomes a big business

By DAVE REESE

The Daily Inter Lake

Shawn Little spent the majority of his time either fishing or hunting, and he had always wanted to work in the woods full time.

His chance to do just that came up three years ago, when an outfitter closed his camp in the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

A taxidermist by trade, Little is one of 39 outfitters in the sprawling Bob Marshall Wilderness.

His Snowy Springs outfitting business is also one of the 600 Montana guide services that are seeing a few changes these days.

In 1976 the outfitting industry was worth about \$30 million a year to the state.

Last year a Montana State University study found that outfitting contributed \$120 million a year to the state's economy, according to Ron Curtiss, chairman of the Montana Board of Outfitters.

While the revenue that outfitting brings the state has risen, Curtiss said the figure has leveled off because the state has frozen the number of out-of-state fishing and hunting

for guide services, but they are now demanding more creature comforts in the backcountry, said Curtiss.

"They want to be more comfortable there than customers did in the past," he said.

Along with this trend, Curtiss said he is also starting to see a different type of clientele in the backcountry.

"Because of the cost of an outfitter, the clients are becoming more affluent," he said.

Something else that is changing is the outfitter clientele grows older their physical limitations are changing, he said.

This in turn affects hunting success. Some of his clients may not be able to cover as much country in one day.

"Even though we have more game in the woods now, we aren't getting that much more game out of there," Curtiss said.

A typical outfitting trip now is used by clients to spend time with friends or just relaxing in the woods and having all the comforts of home.

"They don't demand that they bag

on outfitting, guides may not have backcountry caches or leave wall tents standing between trips.

Those roomy wall tents are now becoming smaller and lighter because of stock restrictions imposed by the Forest Service, which Curtiss said is making it almost "impossible to provide" the amenities he would like to.

Sleeping cots have almost become a thing of the past because of the loads outfitters can carry, he said.

The area surrounding the Flathead Valley has one of the highest concentrations of outfitters in the state, according to Curtiss.

The Bob Marshall and Great Bear wildernesses are the largest outfitter areas in the state, aside from the Yellowstone Park area, Curtiss said.

But the guides here are some of the lowest paid in the state, he added.

"They don't charge more to operate but the costs are higher" because of the extensive trailwork required to reach the backcountry, Curtiss said.

For those who are interested in becoming an outfitter, it takes more

DREAM's annual race and fund-raiser is this Sunday on Big Mountain.

Starting at 1 p.m., racers both able and disabled will go against each other on two separate courses on Chair Three.

It is always a popular time for Big Mountain ski patrolers to put their skills against each other.

Disabled ski groups from Missoula and Bozeman will also be there.

Learning how to use the ski equipment can be frustrating at first, Cheff said.

"I think every skier feels that way," she said. "But when they see the immediate success, the emotion changes from fear to enjoyment."

As Ernst put it, "Everybody is eager to help there, and Jim really helps a lot."

Aside from providing social interaction for disabled people, Cheff said "We try to bring out their physical abilities."

"They realize that even though they have a disability they aren't disabled."

Ted Ernst obviously is one such person.

"Ted's a real go-getter," said Cheff, who first met him at the Columbia Falls Boogie to the Bank road race. "He's not letting his disability overcome his lifestyle."

"God has given him the grace to get through this," his father said. "He handles this better than I ever could have imagined."

Ernst has a fused disk in his neck that not only makes his neck stiff, but he also risks serious injury if he falls on it wrong.

"Two bars in his back help to prevent that from happening, however."

"Skiing is worth the risk," he added. "I've got a motto that if you can't stand up, stand out."

That was how Little wound up with his Snowy Springs outfitter service, which is based in Kalispell.

Until that permit came open, Little said "It was hard to get in. I ran into a lot of closed doors."

Despite the imposing restrictions and costs, Little's reason for becoming an outfitter was simple: "I suppose the basic reason (for becoming an outfitter) is I love the outdoors and like to spend a lot of time out there," he said. "It's the best way to make a living for me."

Curtiss said the cost to buy an outfitting service in the Bob Marshall wilderness runs anywhere from \$100,000 to \$200,000.

"It's so expensive and time-consuming," Curtiss said, "that only those who are really dedicated can get into it."

"These businesses are quite valuable to sell. When they sell, they sell for a lot of money."

Becoming a fishing outfitter is much easier, though, since the state does not control the open waterways of the state, said Curtiss.

Before a person takes the test to become a hunting outfitter, he or she has to put in at least three years under a licensed outfitter.

Outfitters in the Bob Marshall have