

A TOWN WE LOVE

TETON VALLEY, WYDAHO

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IT'S NOT A SECRET ANYMORE (ALTHOUGH, WE SELFISHLY WISH IT STILL WERE) THAT TETON VALLEY, WYDAHO—JUST OVER-THE-PASS FROM ITS BIG SISTER, JACKSON HOLE, WYOMING—OFFERS MUCH MORE THAN JUST FOUR SLEEPY ONE-HORSE TOWNS. THERE'S NO DEBATING THE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, STUNNING BEAUTY, AND UNCOMPROMISED AUTHENTIC MOUNTAIN-TOWN FEEL. BUT IT'S THE PEOPLE OF TETON VALLEY—A CURIOUS BLEND OF ROUGH-AND-TUMBLE LOCALS, DEEP-ROOTED LDS POTATO FARMERS, AND ECLECTIC OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS—WHO FORM A SURPRISINGLY HARMONIOUS CULTURE. THINK OF THE MODERN TAP-ESTRY OF PERSONALITIES AS THE FUR TRAPPERS WHO MESHED WITH THE VALLEY'S NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE EARLY 1800s. THEY ISOLATED THEMSELVES IN THIS HIGH MOUNTAIN REGION FOR A REASON—ONE MAYBE NOT TOO FAR FROM OUR OWN—AND BUILT A COMMUNITY BASED ON A SENSE OF BELONGING THAT KEEPS PEOPLE HERE FOR THE LONG HAUL.

I moved to Driggs long before Teton Valley had its first stoplight (now we have two). I remember posting up on couches at the intersection of Main Street and Ski Hill Road to protest what was inevitable—the growth of an area that didn't quite fit into its big-boy britches. With former Jackson residents who had been priced out of the market moving over-the-hill and free-spirited suburbanites staking their claim on the West, this little valley that straddles the Idaho and Wyoming border was a hot commodity. All around us, farmland was converted into subdivisions awaiting houses and golf courses, rolled out like red carpets, soon occupied the dry farms. Still—there we sat on our hand-me-down couches, powder-struck ski bums who had shuffled in to lay down tracks on, arguably, the best and most consistent snow in the lower 48. And we owned it! Not quite with the localism of a surf break in Malibu, but with a more humble demeanor, one that allowed us to weave our way into the local cloth of Teton Valley.

Today, with the increasingly desperate Jackson Hole housing crisis—leaving job openings unfilled and workers camping out for weeks—the “other side of the hill” (Victor, Driggs, Teton, and Alta) continues to provide refuge to both the working and professional classes of Jackson Hole. And what about all the old-school transplants, like myself? Well, we're toughing it out as freelancers, artists, construction personnel, and professional townspeople, finally surviving in what was once considered a spillover economy. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong, and we have businesses like Grand Teton Distilling making their homes here. Yes, there has been a marked decline of the ski bum as we knew it, but those of us who wore that badge with pride are still seeking powder and pleasure and it's not hard to find here. We no longer tuck ourselves under the armpit of Jackson just to go along for the ride. The truth is—Teton Valley is on the map and there are many standout people and places responsible for putting it there.







A TOWN WE LOVE

**TOM AND
DOROTHY
WARREN**
DRIGGS, IDAHO



A REAL EDUCATION.

"YOU REALLY SHOULD BE WRITING AN ARTICLE ABOUT PAUL PETZOLDT," SAYS DOROTHY WARREN ABOUT THE FOUNDER OF THE NATIONAL OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP SCHOOL (NOLS). "WE LOVED HIM; HE WAS OUR MENTOR."

Back when everyone else in Teton Valley was tending farms, Tom Warren of River-ton, Wyoming, shushed the slopes of Jackson Hole, Snow King, Antelope Valley, and Red Lodge, Montana. As an avid outdoorsman, he embarked on his first NOLS course in 1965, made possible by a "pay-back-when-able" scholarship granted by Petzoldt. Dorothy Warren of Casper was soon to follow. "After we

married, Tom went into the mountains with NOLS. And so I decided I had to get into the mountains too—which I knew nothing about—or not be married." Growing up, Dorothy's family rarely camped or hiked and—get this—on road trips she was hardly allowed to stray from the car. "Being in the mountains for 35 days changes you," says Dorothy of her course in 1969. And so it began. A sheltered Western girl turned outdoor pioneer by her rugged mountaineer of a husband.

In 1971, Petzoldt called upon Tom and Dorothy to help establish a Teton youth hostel for his mountain skills school. They set up shop in an uninsulated house in Driggs, Idaho. "We cooked on a wood stove and birds flew in and out through the raf-

ters," remembers Dorothy of their less-than-posh accommodations, housing a rotating door of six to nine "NOLSies." They were some of the first of their tribe, non-LDS outsiders rubbing shoulders with the locals. "They didn't totally open their doors to us," Dorothy says of the early years, "but they didn't exactly close them either."

Times were tough back then. Local families, many kids deep, sustained themselves through farming or ranching. And the newcomers, well, I assume they pieced things together like we did. "But the ski area (Grand Targhee) changed everything," says Tom, allowing Tom and Dorothy to diversify. Tom became a ski patroller at Grand Targhee in the winter and a roofer in the

summer. And Dorothy was one of the first public school teachers to actually call home to parents, pushing her junior high kids towards schoolwork accountability. To that, Tom adds, "I also did my own kind of educating," through community rock climbing courses and training fellow carpenters on the job.

During our conversation, Tom and Dorothy didn't really mention Jackson or moving over the hill from the bigger "metropolis." Back then, if you made it here, you stayed. There was no hopping over Teton Pass when the grocery store was closed. Instead, they borrowed butter from their neighbors as first-generation newcomers who forever tweaked the landscape of the word "local."



**BRICE AND
WHITNI
NELSON**
VICTOR, IDAHO

**WORK HARD.
PLAY HARD.
ROCK HARD.**



BRICE NELSON REMEMBERS A TIME WHEN SKI BUMS WERE THIRD-CLASS CITIZENS IN TETON VALLEY. "THE KNOTTY PINE WAS A GOOD PLACE TO GET YOUR PONYTAIL CUT OFF IF YOU WERE A GUY," SAYS BRICE ABOUT THE BAR AND RESTAURANT HE NOW OWNS WITH HIS WIFE WHITNI, "AND IT HAPPENED..."

It was the year Jerry died and local music scenes around the country started blossoming. Everywhere except Teton Valley, that is. "There was nothing to do. No nightlife," says Brice, a snow-chasing transplant like the rest of us. So on a mission—although not exactly clear what that was yet—Brice purchased The Knotty Pine Supper Club in 1996. At the time, Victor's population was 119. "It was frightening," he

says, recalling the bar's vibe, "The old owner introduced me to his customers and guys flipped me off." But fresh out of school and with no vested interest in his college path, The Pine offered an option full of "what ifs," and "could bes."

Brice started booking local bands and working his way onto the schedules of national acts like Vinyl and Yonder Mountain String Band, creating a revolution that was

unique to Victor. "Bands don't just come to towns of 100 people and have the kind of turnout we had," he explains. "You could look around and everyone was moving and [finally] acting without a lot of inhibition." Soon The Knotty Pine, with its national acts and intimate setting, became a destination for Jacksonites who shuttled over The Pass in droves.

And then Brice met Whitney, an adventure-seeking midwife who moved to the valley in 2002. Brice remembers his line well. "We were having a band that night and I offered to put her and her boyfriend on the guest list." To that, Whitney replied, "I don't have a boyfriend." The rest—as they say—is history.

Together, the Nelsons have created more than just a destination music venue. Their family restaurant provides innovative dishes, without alienating those wanting local bar fare. They grow most of the restaurant's produce in a garden and greenhouse that formed out of necessity. "We were buying four commercial shares from a local CSA when

the economy dropped out," says Brice. But they pulled together family resources by having all three of Whitney's sons work the kitchen with Brice, while Whitney baked homemade desserts and tended their gardens. And as a reward for their efforts, people kept showing up. Today, this foodie pit stop is one of the only area restaurants with a customer base that dates back over 20 years.

But life in Teton Valley—"Well, people like to sugar coat it," says Brice. He explains that the real local culture consists of tough folks who made it through the lulls. It's a culture that's based on a proven acceptance, one that makes Brice chuckle, "I found it funny when they [the locals] were picking on the new guy, but they finally let me in on it." And he and Whitney are here for the long haul.



DEEP ROOTS. CORE VALUES.



GARTH AND ALICIA KAUFMAN
ALTA, WYOMING

"I USED TO WANT TO GET OUT OF HERE SO BAD," CONFESSES ALICIA KAUFMAN, RIGHT-HAND WOMAN (AND LOVING WIFE) TO FORMER X-GAMES SNOCROSS RACER, GARTH KAUFMAN. "BUT GARTH GREW UP HERE, SO HE LEARNED HOW TO TREAT PEOPLE LIKE YOU'RE GOING TO SEE THEM THE REST OF YOUR LIFE," SHE SMILES, ADMITTING TO THE FACT THAT THEY ARE IN TETON VALLEY TO STAY.

Alicia moved to the valley in high school—bribed by her parents with a ski pass—where she met Garth, a local ranch boy with red hair and big-gauge earrings. "Garth was always a little flashy," she laughs, "but shy." After high

school, Alicia fell into the unofficial role of Garth's manager and promoter. "People just noticed something about him," she says. "I made his resumes in Word, interspersed with photos. We felt like we had this real professional package."

But hard work was instilled in Garth long before the young lovers put it to paper. At a young age, his pay for working the family farm (moving pipe and harvesting) was a snowmobile and gas. "I rode the wheels off my first trail sled!" he laughs. At age 16, Garth finally saved enough money to race. "My first race was a disaster," he remembers. Their trailer caught on fire and his first real race sled burned to the ground. Garth and his father spent the rest of that winter rebuilding his charred ride.

From an outsider's viewpoint, this hip hometown

boy and his family posse (consisting of Alicia and their two boys Palmer, seven, and Dexter, five) live the rock-and-roll lifestyle, but couldn't be more humble to the core. Year after year, the snocross series and Team Arctic Cat moves the whole family to Minnesota for the winter. And despite the action sports vibe that surrounds them, coupled with Garth's numerous podium appearances, Garth says he tries to shelter his kids from racing. "I see so many people whose parents pushed them into it ... I'm really glad that I had to earn it," he explains, noting that if his boys really want to walk that path, he'll be right behind them. And you never know... in a community that's produced superstars like Garth, his cousin and fellow snocross champion, Tucker Hibbert, and one of Teton

Gravity Research's poster boys, Sage Cattabriga-Alosa, it will be fun to see where the young Kaufman boys end up.

But this season, after traveling back and forth for over a decade, the family has decided to move back to Alta full-time. "It's hard to describe this place [and its inherent pull]," explains Garth. He's stoked the bitter Minnesotan winters made his wife appreciate home. "The grass is always greener," says Alicia. "But when you come home and the mountains give you a big hug, well, that's a feeling you have to come to on your own." A feeling she'll be reminded of this winter as the family feeds their cows by horse-drawn sleigh with the alpenglow of the Tetons as their backdrop.



EAT, STAY, PLAY IN TETON VALLEY

EAT

FORAGE BISTRO AND LOUNGE, DRIGGS

At first glance, this artisanal nook seems more suited to a San Francisco street corner than Driggs, Idaho, but the bistro-style fare, with hints of Indian and Thai influence, creates a warm-you-up après for lucky locals and welcome visitors. "We're all about seasonal, contemporary comfort food," says owner and chef Christian Hanley, a graduate of the New England Culinary Institute. Enjoy their sustainably-sourced Seafood Cioppino or gobble down a lamb burger with Manchego cheese and malted onions. And the Green Goddess Salad—don't neglect your greens!

285 East Little Avenue in Driggs
208.354.2858
forageandlounge.com

THE KNOTTY PINE IN VICTOR

Keeping true to the owner's roots, The Knotty Pine serves up the best (and only) Kansas City-style baby back ribs in town. Or go Idaho-style instead with their Snake

River Farms Kobe Skirt Steak. Honeycomb from the restaurant's hives is sure to grace a seasonal cheese board or two. And, for the musically-curious out there—don't miss Galactic's *Into the Deep* national tour as they saunter through The Pine on February 23, 2016.

58 S. Main Street in Victor
208.787.2866
knottypinesupperclub.com

STAY & PLAY



GRAND TARGHEE RESORT IN ALTA

"Snow from heaven, not hoses!" state bumper stickers from the '80s. And while Targhee has since invested in snowmaking at lower elevations, I suspect they rarely

turn it on. Regardless, a trip to "The Ghee" will make you feel like a local with consistent powder snow (if you time it right) and lack of lift lines. Enjoy base-located comforts like slope-side lodging, the Trap Bar, and fine dining at The Branding Iron.

3300 Ski Hill Road in Alta
800.TARGHEE
grandtarghee.com

TETON TEEPEE LODGE IN ALTA

At the base of the hill in Alta lies the perfect nesting spot for a group or singles wanting to share a community vibe. The Teton Teepee—with private rooms nestled around a central, communal hearth—is a vacation place to come home to and share about your day. Its hostel-style kitchen and convenient location make it a perfect choice for DIY'ers and no-frills powder seekers.

470 West Alta Ski Hill Road in Alta
307.353.8176
tetonteepee@yahoo.com



TETON SPRINGS LODGE AND SPA AND HIGH MOUNTAIN HELI-SKIING IN VICTOR

For fine-tuned amenities, hit up the Teton Springs Lodge and Spa and High Mountain Heli-Skiing. This all-season resort on the west slope of the Tetons boasts four-star rooms, luxury cabins, and a heli-pad to boot! Book a package that includes guided backcountry skiing, spa treatments, or—for guaranteed face-shots—heli-skiing in the neighboring Snake River and Palisades ranges. Then, after a fun day of freshies, saddle up to the bar at the Headwaters Grille for fine dining and an uncompromised view of their seasonal golf course (blanketed in white, of course).

10 Warm Creek Lane in Victor
208.787.7888
tetonspringslodge.com

DON'T MISS GALACTIC'S INTO THE DEEP NATIONAL TOUR THE KNOTTY PINE FEBRUARY 23, 2016

