



Contributed Photo

Jake Reynolds takes aim with one of his custom rifles.

SHOOTING THE BREEZE

Scratch your shooting itch with a custom-built rifle

You have been using the same old off-the-shelf rifle for years. It works all right, but you just have the itch for something new. A custom rifle that not only looks good but performs better than what you have in the closet. Well, you are in luck.

Owned and operated by Jake Reynolds, Reynolds Rifleworks is located right here in Grant County and can likely make all your rifle dreams come true.

Growing up with a dad who was an avid hunter and military marksman, Jake was exposed at an early age to quality rifles. When he was old enough to hold it up, Jake was allowed to use his dad's very own custom rifle to compete in 4-H shooting competitions. Jake's love of shooting fueled his desire to create next level rifles.

In 2018, Jake decided he needed something special for elk hunting. With the help of a gunsmith friend he put together his first rifle, a .300 Ultra Mag on a Remington 700 action. He is still waiting on that elk tag, but says it worked like a charm on antelope.

He enjoyed building rifles so much that in 2020, he took the leap and started Reynolds Rifleworks LLC here in Grant County. Jake can do a variety of rifle work, from refurbish-

ing a wood stock to skeletonizing your bolt or laser engraving. For a complete list of his services, check out his website, www.reynoldsrifleworks.com. One of the services he provides is loading custom ammunition to work with the rifle he builds



Rod Carpenter

for you or the pet rifle you have. Jake cautions, though, that it is a little more expensive than off-the-shelf ammo.

While Jake can do some truly impressive work on an existing rifle, what he really likes to do is build super-accurate custom bolt-action and semiauto rifles. I had the pleasure of handling a 6.5 PRC he put together. With a carbon fiber barrel and stock, it was nice and light, but smooth to handle, and shot well. I may have coveted just a little bit.

If you are looking for something a cut above what you can find on the gun rack, it is worth your time to get in touch with Jake. He can be reached either through his website or by phone or text at 541-620-4256. Let him know what you are thinking of, what components you want to marry together, and he will work to make your dream a reality.

What is your dream rifle? Let us know at shootingthebreeze@breezebme@gmail.com.

Rod Carpenter is a husband, father and huntin' fool.

Blue Mountains Trail workshops set

EO Media Group

BAKER CITY — The Greater Hells Canyon Council is planning a series of free community engagement workshops to talk with local residents about the Blue Mountains Trail, the first two scheduled in late May in Sumpter and La Grande.

That's the 566-mile route that runs between John Day and Wallowa Lake State Park. In between the trail, which includes existing trails and roads, along with short sections of cross-country travel, passes through all seven of the federal wilderness areas in Northeast Oregon — Eagle Cap, Hells Canyon, Wenaha-Tucannon, North Fork Umatilla, North Fork John Day, Monument Rock and Strawberry Mountain.

In the summer and fall of 2020, Renee Patrick, an experienced long-distance hiker

from Bend, became the first person to complete a solo hike of the Blue Mountains Trail.

In September of that year, three other hikers — Whitney La Ruffa, Naomi Hudetz and Mike Unger — also followed the entire route.

Jared Kennedy, the development director for the Greater Hells Canyon Council and project lead for the Blue Mountains Trail, is scheduling the workshops.

The first is set for Wednesday, May 25, at the Sumpter Community Hall, 275 N. Mill St., from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Light refreshments will be served.

The second workshop will take place Thursday, May 26, at the Cook Memorial Library, 2006 Fourth St. in La Grande, also from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

To register for either workshop, go to <https://www.hellscanyon.org/events>.

To Patagonia and back

By ANN BLOOM
For the Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — It's called "the greatest test of horsemanship and wilderness skills on earth" for a reason. The Gaucho Derby, a 500-kilometer horse race done in 10 days in Patagonia, is a test of endurance and determination on the part of both horse and rider.

Brenda Johnson, whose participation in the race was first reported in the Chieftain in February, qualified for the race and left for Argentine Patagonia, in South America, in late February for the race, which was run in early March.

Johnson described her experience as "epic." She said that was the only word she could think of to describe it. "It was literally epic. It is the best word to use," she said.

She described the terrain as very much resembling Wallowa County.

"Our mountains are big and beautiful," she said. "But those mountains were on a whole other level. So much wilder. It was humbling."

One thing she said that surprised her, in addition to the scope and scale of the scenery, was how important the other riders were.

"It was impossible to do it alone because of the intensity of the course and the terrain," she said. "Friendships were forged out of necessity and love."

Of the 34 original riders who started the competition, 28 riders crossed the finish line. Six competitors dropped out or were withheld during the race because of injury or other medical reasons.

"It was nothing like I thought it would be. I thought I'd pit myself against nature," she said. "In addition to navigating the terrain I was navigating a multicultural social landscape — it was an amazing human experience."

However, she did have an opportunity to test herself against the ravages of nature when, during a severe windstorm, her tent collapsed, and she spent the night trying to keep it from blowing away. It was a night of little sleep.

"It was 3 a.m. and the wind was so bad, my tent poles snapped like twigs right through my rainfly," she said.

Thankfully, there was no rain, just wind, she added.



Brenda Johnson/Contributed Photo
Brenda Johnson competed in the endurance horse race called the Gaucho Derby in South America's Patagonia from March 3-13, 2022.

Those riders and friendships became even more vital when Johnson was injured halfway through the ride. She was dismounting her horse, a mount she described as challenging, when the horse bucked. "(I) faceplanted on a rock and I broke my nose," she said.

She said there was quite a bit of blood due to the fact she sustained a laceration in a vein in her nose and blood was pumping out.

"My race was over," she said. She could not continue without being checked and cleared by a medic.

There were medic and vet checkpoints at various stages along the race, which was fortunate, because within 20 minutes of Johnson reaching a medic at a vet checkpoint, a more serious accident occurred when another rider was kicked in the head by a horse. If it had not been for his helmet, the accident would have proven fatal. A medic had already been called to ride out with her, but due to the seriousness of the other rider's injuries (he was knocked unconscious), a helicopter was called. Between the medic, a veterinarian, Johnson and some of the other riders, they provided first aid to the injured rider during the two hours they waited for the helicopter to arrive. Both Johnson and the injured rider were taken to El Calafate,

Argentina, to a waiting ambulance.

Johnson was cleared by the doctor and the medic on the tarmac and "the doctor sent me on my way."

The next morning, the Argentine Army helicopter crew flew the medic and Johnson into Sierra Nevada, a beautiful estancia (ranch) and one of the horse-change stations. She stayed in Sierra Nevada for a little over 24 hours and then reunited with the other riders. She said she was honored to cross the finish line with Kirsteen Thain, the rider from Hong Kong, whom she had ridden the entire race with prior to her accident, as well as a group of riders from Africa, Mexico and France. The Gaucho Derby has participants from all over the world.

Johnson said that travel to the starting line went smoothly. Most people spoke English, and none of her flights were canceled, although she admits there was a moment of complete panic when the bag containing her stirrups, leathers and helmet was the very last bag coming off the plane when she landed in Patagonia.

"It was the one bag that could not be replaced," she said.

Besides the riders, there were about 50 crew members (medics, vets, etc.) and about 50 gauchos (Argentine cowboys) who handled the horses used in the ride. There were over 300 horses needed from start to finish.

Although the riders used maps and GPS trackers, there were times when they lost their way due to the terrain, lack of sleep and the emotional intensity of the ride.

"Oh, yeah. We go so lost," Johnson said.

Recovering lost ground was time- and labor-intensive.

After the ride was over, she and a couple of riders spent several days traveling around Argentina sight-seeing, but more importantly using the time to process their experience and decompress from such an exhausting and intense experience. She still maintains contact with the people she met on the trip through social media.

Finally, given everything she experienced, would she do it again?

"If I could afford it? If someone paid for it? Would I do it again? In a heartbeat," she said.

ON THE TRAIL

Hunting the best mayfly hatches east of the Cascades

A few of the big yellow mayflies began to show, struggling at the surface of the dark water then, drying their wings, breaking free and flying.

I switched to a graphite rod on which I had tied a 3X leader and a big yellow parachute Hex imitation. My friend Craig Schuhmann handed me a Floating Hex Nymph originated by the late Klamath tyer Dick Winter. I knotted a length of tippet material and fished the two flies in tandem.

Late June and early July mark one of the great bug events on the Williamson River when that largest of the mayflies, the Hexegenia, throw their shadows on the water. If the Hex hatch happens at all, it happens at dusk.

A tributary of Upper Klamath Lake, the Williamson River drains about 3,000 square miles of southeast Oregon. Connected to the food-rich lake, the trout migrate out to feed and then back to cool off in summer.

A 5-mile float offers time for reflection. We watched trains pass, the cars flashing by on the tracks, mirrored in the river. One image in my mind is a four-pound rainbow three feet above the surface, its red-banded body reflected in the water it has just burst out of at the moment the fly came out of its lip. In the last hour, trout boiled along each bank. We cast to rise rings. In a summer evening punctuated by 21 grabs and a dozen battles and five fish brought to my hand, the hatch was a frantic moment between dusk and full dark when we measured casts, lost track of our flies and struck at sounds and splashes.

Fishing the hex hatch

The hexegenia hatch on the Williamson River might be the most well known, but in June and July, the big bugs can pop on Clear Lake, Lost Lake, Timothy Lake and Harriett Lake on the slopes of Mount Hood. The biggest hex hatch I ever witnessed was on a summer evening on Clear Lake when the rocks were yellow with bugs and the fish plucked dries lazily off the surface.

Carry two rods, one loaded with a floating line and the other with a sinking line and a 3X tippet. The dry is best matched by a No. 10-12 yellow Hex Paradrake or an Extended Body Hexagenia.

The best fishing can be on substantial nymphs like the Red Fox Squirrel Nymph, Beadhead Wet Hare's Ear Wet or Dick Winter's Floating Hex Nymph. Fish two nymphs in tandem at first, then switch over to a dry with a floating nymph in tandem.

Green drake

Look at the calendar. If it says May at the top, an angler should be ready to match a green drake hatch at any moment. It's a short window of opportunity, but it's the most important thing happening that week in the eyes of *Drunella grandis* and *Oncorhynchus mykiss gairdneri* (the redband rainbow).

Coincident with the more well publicized salmonfly hatch on the Deschutes River, green drake mayflies start to appear in May. By June some trout will pass up a bigger stonefly to chase down a green drake. Green drakes may be more prevalent on the Metolius River in May and June and a second hatch happens on the Metolius in September and October.

The green drake is a sporadic hatch on most western streams, but it can be abundant on the Metolius and a few others. It is a

good idea to carry dries to match this mayfly when the adults could show up any time.

Best bets include the Loop Wing Green Drake, Electric Green Drake and the CDC Green Drake Emerger.

Callibaetis

The most reliable mayfly hatch to follow is the Callibaetis which shows up in May on rivers like the Owyhee and the Powder and is important in the mountains from Anthony Lakes to East Lake and Paulina through the end of August.

Once I saw so many callibaetis in Diamond Lake, I thought they would hold me up if I fell out of the boat. The trout as fat as footballs were so sated we had to switch to different flies to get them to eat.

One morning in July at Anthony Lake, I caught 23 trout in two hours on a Callibaetis Nymph in tandem with a Rubber-legged Hare's Ear. Some of my favorite imitations include Dexter's Callibaetis (tied with wood duck and red fox) and Dexter's Pheasant Callibaetis tied with natural pheasant, red Flashabou and rockchuck fur. One of my new favorite dries is Mason's Mighty Morsel Mayfly (from Rainy's Flies) which takes a traditional design and adds a foam saddle for buoyancy, a poly wing and a short sub tail imitative of a nymphal shuck. The fly comes in six different variations: Adams, blue-winged olive, pale morning dun, purple, March brown and Callibaetis.

May, June, July and August, these are the months of the mayfly. If we are honest, this is why we fly fish, for the moments when the trout crash through the surface tension to eat the fly. And the reflections in between.

Gary Lewis is the author of "Fishing Central Oregon," "Oregon Lake Maps and Fishing Guide" and other titles. To contact Gary, visit www.garylewisoutdoors.com.



Gary Lewis

TOM CHRISTENSEN

CONSTRUCTION

(541) 410-0557 • (541) 575-0192

CCB# 106077

REMODELS • NEW CONSTRUCTION • POLE BUILDINGS
CONCRETE EXCAVATION • SHEET ROCK • SIDING
ROOFING • FENCES • DECKS • TELESCOPING FORKLIFT SERVICES

Budget 8 Motel

711 W Main St, John Day, OR 97845 • (541) 575-2155

Daily & Weekly Rates

BLUE MOUNTAIN EAGLE
EARLY DEADLINE

For June 1st Edition
Ad, Classified & Legal Deadline
Thursday, May 26th by 4PM

Our office will be closed May 30th
in observance of Memorial Day

Blue Mountain
EAGLE

Grant County's newspaper since 1868

195 N Canyon Blvd., John Day, Oregon

MyEagleNews.com

541-575-0710