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2014 NEWSLETTER



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ENDORSED
FLY-FISHING
GUIDE



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Paula "heroning" in the Bahamas

Hunker NEWS

I'm feeling that a fairly complete update of our "state of the union" is appropriate to all our guests over the years in the Sweetwater Fishing business. You may know that Paula and I started Sweetwater Fishing Expeditions back in 1977 with simply the idea of taking people into the Winds (all backpacking trips) in the summer and to New

Zealand in the winter. Well, with very little capital, Paula with a full-time job in town, we did it. The business grew slowly but steadily to the point that we even spent two months together in New Zealand in 1981 with first baby Louisa. We had moved to our farm in Crowheart in 1978. With the advent of children (coming in 1980, '83, and '84) and the demands of a farm (with lambing in February), we let the New Zealand part of the business go. Since then we have fine-tuned our mountain trips to include horse, goat, and llama-supported adventures. We began doing limited day fishing around Lander, when we moved back about 1990, and most recently we have enjoyed learning to do drift boat fishing on the Bighorn River at Thermopolis. All this time Paula has been the ballast, maintaining an even income, first working as a librarian for the school district and most recently as the Associate State Director of the Wyoming Nature Conservancy.



George, Paula, Greg Corso, Molly, Hank, Nick, Louisa

We have been lucky to raise two educated daughters. Louisa, now 33, got a Masters in Communications recently and now has a real job at the local community college as a librarian. She is hoping to expand this position to professorship. She and husband, Nick Storm, recently moved back to Lander, where he works for NOLS in the Professional Training department (they were married June, 2012 in our field). Molly, almost 31, has been teaching Architecture and designing for a number of years now (all in Los Angeles), after a Masters in Architecture. She is presently on a fellowship at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Hank (now 29) is taking after his good-for-nothing Dad and is heavily involved in the Sweetwater operation with plans to continue serving our area as a first-rate teaching, fishing guide. He has also been producing some videos for us and others.



Hank and Audie Cunningham enjoying Colorado



Molly and boyfriend, Greg Corso

Since Paula went back to school at the University of Wyoming in 1989, she worked 9 years at the local school district, as a librarian first at the grade school and then at the high school. The last thirteen years she has worked for the Wyoming office of The Nature Conservancy and is presently the Associate State Director. She has gotten lots done to conserve the important parts of our Wyoming heritage. Since moving back to town (Lander) in 1990 when Paula got her first job, we sold the farm in Crowheart and built a house near town overlooking the Popo Agie River (not quite like having a trout stream in your back yard, but almost). When our children joined the high school nordic ski team I became involved and have been coaching nordic skiing for about fifteen years now. It has distinctly become an important and extremely rewarding part of my winter, along with tying flies.

Paula and I have been extremely lucky the last few years to do some travelling. We have enjoyed especially learning to bonefish in the Bahamas, but this year will be heading back to old haunts in New Zealand, where we are planning on fishing and "tramping" (backpacking) for a month. Last year we hiked in the Dolomites and rode bicycles in France on separate trips.

Mountain SEASON

Hank took over much of the guiding work this past summer, in part due to the travel that Paula and I were doing. Hank accompanied **Joe Brereton** and **Rob Pellan** each on separate backpacking trips for golden trout. Joe's trip went very smoothly, and Rob's golden quest was a great success despite atrocious September weather. Hank and I together did a mountain trip with **Mike** and **Carol Edwards** and **Dwight** and **DJ Jennings**. Mike and Carol returned from a trip last year and Mike spent almost a solid month in the Winds. Dwight has come with us many times before and wanted to introduce his son DJ (22) to the Winds to carry on the legacy. I also did a trip solo with **Yanki Schori** and his two sons **Tal** (an architect friend of Molly Hunker's) and **Ithai**. These guys had not fly fished before, but seemed to love every minute, including cooking their own small brookies and starting the fire. I also did a quick three-day blast for golden trout with **Mike Hummel** and his friend **Jeff Hammonds**.

We really did have limited mountain trips, but the local fishing business was booming. Hank had two longer-term groups. The first was composed

of **Ed Cady**, son **Brendan Cady**, **Steve Wurth**, and son **Rob Wurth**, along with **Terry Moore**, and **John Freeman**. Two each fished with Hank each day. The others discovered our area on their own. Hank also had **Miles McDonald** and **Bill Sullivan** for four days (he had met them at Exuma in the Bahamas during the previous winter). Some of these days Hank drifted the Bighorn at Thermopolis and others he was able to guide them on the Wind (in the canyon) via raft through the only permitted outfitter, Wind River Canyon Whitewater. He also put in perhaps ten days guiding for WRC Whitewater completely separately from our trips. We expect to be able to put together trips in the Canyon this season with Hank doing the guiding.

Hank and I worked together for two days with **Pam** and **Bill Bryan** (of Off the Beaten Path, in Bozeman) and their long-time family friend **Melissa Frank**, with son **Jack Mudd** and daughter **Karina**. We did floats on the Bighorn with **Tim Wagner** and his son **Mitch**, **Matt Stone** and **Karl Sporer** and **Arlen Bucklin**, **June Aprille** (many times in the mountains with Jim Ferguson), **George** and **Kathrn Butler**, locals **Mike Kotrick** and **Rita Neill**, **Mike Vandierdonck** (an inveterate hopper man), and local **Mark Moxley**. **Rich Amerian** (many trips in the high mountains) and his fire-fighter buddy, **Jim Cook** joined me for two days floating the Bighorn. We fished the smaller streams with **Dick** and **Allison Jones**, **Tim Benitz** and daughter **Sedley** (quite the fly fishing gal for 13). And **Cliff Garten** was back for a day in the lowlands. Hank finished the season again with **Fred Mueller**, who likes to spend a week, and just "fish like friends." Jim Ferguson fished with **Jim Dunn**, who has become a regular part of our September.

We're expecting to have another good year. Hank and I have one mountain adventure on the calendar. We will be planning on using the drift boat down in Thermopolis on the Bighorn quite a lot. The fishing there this past season was wonderful, especially early and late (meaning March-April and October-November). Hank expects to guide the Canyon some through Wind River Canyon Whitewater. We will be able to book our own guests there on a limited basis (they only

allow one boat on the water for each of the two stretches). Although last season was particularly dry through the summer, we have gotten tremendous fall moisture and are expecting river levels to be in good shape next season. Right now our snow pack for the whole Wind River Range is above average, but it is really too early to tell where it will be come summer. We have never really had low water affect our mountain fishing. Now, a late ice-out can be another matter.

Jim Ferguson worked quite a lot for NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School) during the 2013 season (since our bookings for him were way down). As usual, he is in Chile for the winter working some mountaineering trips for NOLS and piddling with rose bushes and projects at his property, Aguas Azules. It appears we will have a better season for Jim in 2014 (he already has two mountains trips on his calendar).

We have met you all over the phone and in person as strangers and you have left as friends. We love to see your returning faces. I get letters expressing your joy in being out with Hank, Jim and me, with remarks like how patient we are and our ability to teach to beginners and old hands alike. We expect to continue to expand our own horizons and to bring the joy of our sport (lifestyle) to you. Hope to see you again soon. We are very fortunate (but we know that)! We get big joy from our life and our times in the mountains, and on our beautiful stream and lakes with you. Thank you.

George Hunker



Nick Storm and Louisa Hunker

