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**Yaks**

Continued

ground below their bellies only after many years of slow and deliberate grazing.

"Yet these yaks weren't just any old grumpy Tibetan yaks that Richards yanked off the pasture to star alongside Pitt and several monkish-looking folk with Tibetan names. The yaks in this movie were Montana-grown yaks, mostly, with a few yaks from neighboring Washington State thrown in to make an even dozen."

"At first they wanted 40 halter-trained yaks for their movie. But they didn't understand that you wouldn't have 40 halter-trained yaks in all of North America," Richards said. In fact, there are probably only about 2,000 yaks in all of the continent, and most of those are not for sale, since they are preserved as breeding stock.

When he explained the problem, the movie folks consented to accept a dozen yaks, and they withdrew their requirements that they all be broke to ride.

But they did get Ferdinand, a halter-broke male yak that would allow Richards to sit on him once in awhile, if he was in the mood.

Richards, along with the rest of the movie-going public, must attend the movie to find out whether Pitt, or a stunt man standing in, actually tried to ride Ferdinand. Or whether, as is rumored, director Jean-Jacques Annaud really did dye Richards' photogenic black-and-white "Royal" yaks coal black for decorative effect.

By the time filming began, Richards had long since left Argentina with \$37,000 in his pocket for his yak-casting service, the most unique and unusual facet of 15 years in the exotic animal trade.

Competition for the yak procurement contract was stiff from exotic animal breeders in both Canada and Germany. So when Richards got the great Yak contract (depleted by none other than the Missoula law firm Garlington, Lohn & Robinson) he received the coveted Governor's Excellence in Exporting Award, representing the significant initial export sale of a Montana product or service, namely Tibetan yaks to Argentina. While not, perhaps as good as an Oscar or a date with Demi Moore, it is still quite a nice plaque, and he

displays it proudly in his living room.

Of course, procuring the yaks was only half the battle. They had to be delivered to Argentina safely. Richards hired on as yak steward for the international flight aboard a Boeing 747 cargo plane, which provided some adventuresome moments. There were delays in Miami, flat tires in Brazil, and somewhere north of Argentina, an engine on the big plane blew. The yaks grew restless in the narrow, \$4,000 boxes in which they were consigned. And the flight crew, fearing delays, did not want to land and unload them.

But all arrived safely, and it can now be reported that several of the yaks have since had calves, although published reports in Newsweek that the yaks did more than eat and sleep during the long flight to Buenos Aires are entirely untrue, Richards said.

He netted \$37,000 for his great yak contract, and he told the producers he would forgo the entire amount if they would only cast Demi Moore as the female lead.

They rejected his offer.

All told, Richards estimates that the movie producers probably had \$100,000 tied up in Tibetan yaks by the time the movie was completed. Shipping costs alone were about \$50,000. That is why the yaks stayed in Argentina after the movie was filmed.

Richards trained as a research pharmacologist in his student days. But he began a career as an exotic animal breeder some 15 years ago, when his llama hobby farm grew so much that it demanded his attention full time. He has also raised elk. But yak are his current all-consuming interest. He has plans to breed them back to domestic cattle, providing the cattle industry with a hardy, low-fat, low-cholesterol product that tastes better than beef, and costs about 20 percent less to feed per pound of weight gain.

He operates Living Diamonds Tibetan Yak Ranch at 6900 Farm Road, just off U.S. 93 between Pablo and Polson. He'll be at the premier of the movie Friday, when it opens in downtown Polson's Showboat theater at 7 p.m. It will also be showing at a theater near you.

**Care**

Continued

"The biggest difference (now) is that the provider can see the patient immediately," she said.

"They can see the patient the day they walk into their office. If everything clicked really well, we could get someone turned around in three to seven days."

Part of the bottleneck began in April, when MCP received 1,200 applications in one month, she said. "It was an incredible amount when we first opened our doors," Barta said.

Applications now are running about 400 a month, she said.

Under the new agreement, MCP will pay for the initial assessment whether or not the patient is approved for treatment. Beyond that, the provider will be responsible for collecting from the patient if the patient is turned down.

"It was clearly a problem in the past, that it was taking an inordinate amount of time," said Gene Durand, director of adult mental health services for the Western Montana Mental Health Center. "This is a very reasonable, kind of helpful promise. In the ethical world, we've been responsible for this anyway. It could have a real positive effect on access."

**Commuters**

Continued

eight-seater 1985 Dodge van to help the transportation agency better meet demand.

"We are pleased to be able to contribute to such a worthwhile effort," said Tim Engberg, the hospital's director of planning and community services.

"We all benefit from cleaner air and safer roads when we reduce the number of single-occupant vehicles," said Engberg.

The new van will hit the road within the next two weeks, after it's been thoroughly serviced and cleaned, said Larrivee.

St. Pat's and the University of Montana are two key players in Missoula that employ people who commute daily from the Bitterroot Valley. More than 100 hospital employees make the drive north and another 700 staffers and students are university-bound.

The association has kept a log of the total number of miles saved by travelers since the van pooling began Aug. 11. With just one van, the program is saving an average of 3,000 miles per week, or 19,200 miles to date.

"And that's not an inflated number at all," said Larrivee.

If the agency continues with just one van, it will save 156,000 miles within a year. But its members want to more than double that number of miles saved.

Beyond adding the St. Pat's van, Larrivee has submitted a request for supplemental funding to the

state Department of Transportation to buy two more vans that ultimately must be approved by the State Highway Commission.

He has his fingers crossed. Riders pay 5 cents per mile, so fees range from \$5 per round trip from Hamilton to Missoula, to \$2 per round trip from Florence to Missoula. The agency offers a free cab ride home to passengers who must leave work early because of an emergency.

"It's absolutely wonderful," said Amy Heller, who rides the van from Stevensville five days a week to her job at the University of Montana Foundation.

For her, the cost is \$3 per day round trip. She catches it at one of the park-and-ride lots along Highway 93, near the Stevensville Cutoff.

Van pooling saves fuel and parking costs, automobile insurance rates and wear and tear on a vehicle, passengers say. It also reduces stress for those who don't have to drive and fight the heavy traffic.

Heller recalled one day earlier this month when the van got stuck behind a string of traffic because a natural gas line broke in Lolo. For nearly 90 minutes, traffic was at a halt.

Instead of getting all stressed out about it, passengers in the van pool ended up making the best of the situation.

"We had a lot of fun with it and joked about keeping a Monopoly

game under the seat for the next time something like that happens. Especially in those types of situation, it's nice to have someone else drive," said Heller.

The van is equipped with a bike carrier so people can get around downtown, once in Missoula. It also has a cellular telephone for emergencies, and for travelers to call employers if an accident delays traffic or to let passengers waiting at the next stop know of such a delay so they can car pool from there.

Cindy Ferguson, a Florence resident who works in the admissions office at University of Montana, rides the van five days a week and loves it.

"The traffic ... the commute in the morning is just unbelievable and so many of those cars have just one person in them," said

Ferguson.

"It's really cheaper for me than driving in every day and I don't have to fight parking," she added.

Carla Majernik, whose has commuted from Hamilton to Missoula for the past 20 years, takes the van two days a week to her job at Adventure Cycling Association. She has the option to work on her home computer the remaining three days out of the week.

She admits it takes longer to reach her destination when riding the van, about 20 to 30 minutes extra each way. But she said it is worth it for her and makes sense.

"I want to support it. I just think about the fact there are at least 10 less cars on the road because of that one van," she said.

*'It's really cheaper for me than driving in every day and I don't have to fight parking.'*

- Cindy Ferguson, Florence commuter

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**CAVANAUGH'S HOTELS**

**Hunters**

Continued

*'Other states have gotten more and more restrictive' with mule deer seasons. The commission did not want to do that.'*

- John Firebaugh, regional wildlife manager

There's a widespread misconception that the new regulation addresses declining mule deer numbers, Firebaugh said, when it actually is designed to improve buck-to-doe ratios.

"We already have no either-sex mule deer season, and we've cut down 'B' tags for antlerless mule deer," he said. "So it's an effort to increase buck survival through the hunting season."

"The commission's other new regulations take care of low populations generally. But how to do it, and be effective, and still provide hunting opportunities is a real challenge."

State wildlife officials won't know until after this season how effective the new mule deer plan is, Firebaugh said.

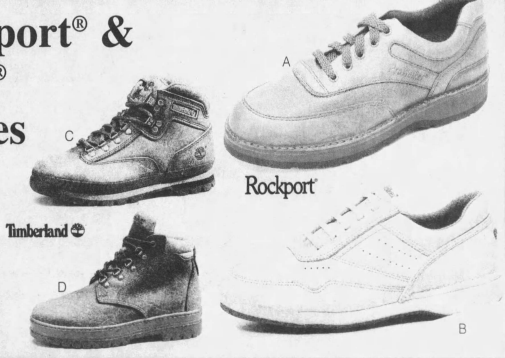
"But we will monitor that harvest real close, through post-season surveys and check stations, to see what effect it has," he said.

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