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Chapter 20b

The Motel Years 1995 – 2000

Arriving in Arco

We departed Salmon June 7, 1995 with the fifth wheel and went to the Mountain View RV Park in Arco.

The next morning there was 6 inches of snow on the ground! What a surprise that was. We left the trailer and met Gary and Kathleen at the condo in Sun Valley to relax and unwind.

Then it was back to Arco to get ready for the takeover. We finally got to meet the mysterious Mike Beitz. He was always travelling when we looked at the motel.

Diane had asked previously if I wanted to help install the swamp coolers that they remove and store every fall.

I was ready to help and learn the process, but Mike had them installed. They were busy packing and moving, so we stayed out of their way.

On July 14 we moved the trailer to the motel and parked on a pad in back that had hookups for a trailer.

The first thing to do was get a bank account at the local Wells Fargo Bank. The customer service lady was Sharon (Noh) Parsons, a Salmon High School classmate of mine. We were surprised to see each other in Arco.

She had dated LaRue's brother Val. He graduated and left for the Air Force. I took her to the Junior prom in 1953. It was our only date. She told me later that she had a cowboy in Challis in mind when we went to the prom. They married after graduation and eventually moved to Arco.

We worked with Diane learning the ropes in the office, the laundry room, and met the maids. They were worried and nervous.

The next day I picked up a U-Haul trailer and went to Idaho Falls to get the basic necessities to move in the next day.

That evening the Beitz's went to dinner and left us to tend the motel. That was the extent of our training.

On July 16 we all went to the title office and closed. We put \$80,000 down and assumed the note the Beitz's had with Dick Starnes. They carried the remainder. We would make one payment a month to an escrow service in Idaho Falls.

We were in the motel business, and it was the busiest time of the year. It was baptism by fire.

The Beitz's cleaned out the cash drawer and departed. We had to learn to rent rooms and run a motel.

The difficult part was that we were not familiar with the room configurations and the rates.

The three buildings were built at different times. The rooms were all different. There were smoking rooms and non-smoking rooms. Diane knew them by heart and the rates. There were no cheat sheets to look at. I put one together and we referred to it every time we rented a room. People bore with us while we figured it out.

Room Configuration in 1995

North Building

- #1 nonsmoking, kitchen, 1 queen
- #2 nonsmoking, 1 queen, hot water heater in separate room
- #3 smoking, 1 queen, 1 double
- #4 smoking, kitchen, 1 queen
- #5 nonsmoking, 1 queen, 1 double
- #6 nonsmoking, 1 queen, 1 double
- #7 smoking, 1 queen, hot water heater in separate room
- #8 nonsmoking, kitchen, 1 queen

Back Building

- #9 smoking, 1 queen
- #10 smoking, 1 queen
- #11 nonsmoking, 1 queen, water heater on back of building
- #12 nonsmoking, 1 queen
- #13 nonsmoking, 1 queen
- #14 smoking, 1 queen
- #15 nonsmoking, 1 queen, 2 water heaters and storage in locked back room

South Building

- #16 smoking, 1 queen in front room, kitchen, 1 double in back room
- #17 nonsmoking, 1 queen in front room, kitchen, 1 double in back room
- #18 smoking, 1 queen in front room, kitchen, 1 double and 1 single in back room
- #19 nonsmoking, 1 queen in front room, big fridge, 1 double in back room
- #20 smoking, 1 queen in front room, 1 double and 1 single in back room
- #21 nonsmoking, 1 queen in front room, 1 double and 1 single in back room

We eventually replaced the single beds with double beds in units 18, 20, 21 and replaced the double beds in units 3, 5, 6 with queen beds .

Taking Over the Motel

Our first customer was a couple from Amsterdam, Holland, and about our age. We told them we had just taken over. We asked them if they would like to come in later and have a glass of wine with us. They were delighted. I ran to the store and got wine and snacks.

We didn't have furniture moved in. I got a cardboard box for a table, and four lawn chairs set up in the kitchen.

It slowed down around 6pm and we could relax when they came in. They were great people and we had a good time. They said only in America could people our age change careers and do what we were doing. They wrote to us when they got back to Holland.

I had gotten our bed moved in that afternoon. We were too wound up to go to bed until about 4am.

The next morning I was up early. I figured I had to work something out to track revenue. I had retrieved my old Packard Bell personal computer, black and white monitor, and dot matrix printer from storage. I set it up in the spare bedroom.

I built a spreadsheet using the IBM Lotus 1-2-3 that I pirated from work.

LaRue got up and counted the cash. Then we worked out a daily cash management sheet.

Then it was dial up the credit card company and batch transmit the transactions from the credit card terminal.

LaRue got with the maids and give them the list of rooms to be cleaned. We both started stripping beds and getting acquainted with the rooms.

We had 2 experienced maids, Pat Lingle and Elaine Jason. They had worked at the DK for several years. Elaine was mentally challenged, but capable and programmed to clean a room the same way every day. We would later hire her 20 year old mentally challenged daughter, LaRee. They were dependable and great employees. Two other maids were short term and not reliable. We added two high school girls to assure a full crew every day.

We had a meeting with the maids to impress upon them our requirement for clean and properly stocked rooms. It is the way we want it done every day. We will check each room and if something is not right, they will hear about it.

After 4 nights of not getting much sleep we had to change the way we operate. I would go to bed early and get up at 5am to open and do the spreadsheet. LaRue would stay up until midnight and sleep until 8am. It worked well for us with her being a night person and me being an early person.

The rooms were in good shape although the furnishings were dated. The Beitz's liked tacky trinkets hanging on the walls and yellow paint. We planned to remove the trinkets and repaint the yellow rooms a neutral color in the off season. They also had large colorful butterflies hanging on the exterior of the buildings. They had to go.

Gary and Kathleen came up the first weekend. We removed trinkets and butterflies. Gary and I ripped out Mike's partition in the laundry room, his work bench, and shelves packed with junk. This was all in the backroom of the living quarters.

We hauled heaping loads to the dump. We now had a laundry room with a small table for folding, two washers, and two dryers. It was clean and organized, but not adequate.

Clem Birney, an old geezer from Nebraska, owned and operated the Lost River Motel across from us. He was open in the summer and closed winters. He drove in about the third day we were there. He proceeded to tell us how to price our rooms and operate our motel. If we needed help just holler. Needless to say, he did not win friends, and we did not need his help.

A few days later I checked with Wells Fargo and did not see any deposits from our credit card transactions. We checked with the credit card processor and the deposits were made, but going into the Beitz's account. Somehow the change had not occurred. We eventually got our money.

One week after we took over the Iowa 150 bicycle tour was coming through Arco. Dianne had reserved every room expecting to accommodate them all. We had long term stays we inherited and would not have enough rooms. We had to book rooms at the Lazy A Motel for those that we could not accommodate.

It was nervous time getting ready. We pre-registered them with names assigned to rooms based on their rooming preference. Then figured the charge per person based on what they had been quoted.

We could move them through rather quickly. Each person only had to pay their room share when they arrived. They trickled in all afternoon, and it worked out well.

The city put on a spaghetti feed for them in the park. They cleared out for dinner early, returned, and went to bed early.

We had 31 beds total, and every bed was occupied that night. The only thing that bothered us was that they had to have their bicycle in the room.

We had stacks of old towels and rags for them to clean their bikes. They were up early and gone the next morning.

Problems

The maids had been using an old metal food serving cart with small wheels for their supplies. It was wobbly and difficult to move. A maid would push and another would pull.

We immediately acquired two modern motel carts. Also, a new pull cart for hauling dirty items from the stripped rooms. The maids had been hand carrying dirty stuff to the laundry room.

LaRue started inspecting sheets and towels and discarded worn stuff wholesale. We placed a large order for new towels and sheets. We became a good customer of American Hotel Supply.

We noticed during our room inspections that carpets did not look clean. We found that the maids rarely put a new bag in the vacuum. The bags were stuffed full. We even found a vacuum with no belt to drive the rotating brush. New rules were put in place, and we ordered new vacuums to get better cleaning.

Phone coverage was a problem. If we were both out on the premises there was a switch to flip for a ringer outside. It could be heard a block away. We would have to run to the office to answer a call.

The first few days we would forget to turn off the ringer. We would hear about it from a guest that evening.

Transferring calls to a room could only be done on the console in the office. If we were in the living room we would have to run to the office console.

The telephone system was old, obsolete, and had a limit of 2 lines. Internet access in the area was only dial up phone access. Two lines were not adequate. A new phone system was a high priority.

The laundry room in the back of the house was not adequate. It consisted of two conventional washers and two conventional dryers. During busy times they ran all day and could not handle the load. It required most of the sheets to be sent to Blackfoot. A driver would pick up and deliver every Monday. This was costly and required a large inventory of sheets.

There were sheets, towels, and cleaning stuff everywhere. The maids didn't have a good folding table to work on. Diane would take loads from the dryer into the living room to fold.

One of the things a motel owner in Cortez, Colorado stressed was to have a separate laundry facility. The maids would not be doing laundry in the living quarters. A new professional laundry facility was one of our highest priorities.

An amenity in the rooms that was really dated was the coffee service. It was a 1950's vintage plastic shelf on the wall. It had signage, a small hot plate, and pot to heat water. A shelf below had instant coffee, sugar, creamer packets, plastic cup holders, and inserts. It was not only dated, but ugly and dangerous attached to the wall.

We ordered 4 cup coffee makers, ground coffee packets, sugar and creamer packets, and got rid of the old service in August. I kept one for a souvenir, but ended up throwing it away when we sold the motel.

Several rooms had kitchenettes. They had old propane stoves and large refrigerators at least 40 years old. The stoves were next to the wall with wood cabinets above the burners. There was a fire hazard.

I planned to remove the stoves at the first opportunity. For the time being I turned off the propane. I often found the propane turned back on. Once people saw a stove they wanted to cook. Then they would come to the office wanting pots and pans.

We did not want long term stays and cooking in our rooms.

We inherited three rooms paying low weekly or monthly rent. We planned to make changes when they departed.

One guy stayed over a year paying a very low monthly rent. He sat in the room and smoked when he was not at work. The walls were coated with nicotine. When he left it took a couple of weeks to wash down the walls, repaint, and install new carpet.

It was so clean we made it a nonsmoking room. It became one of our favorites and most popular to rent at a much higher nightly rate. Even if it sat empty at times during the slow winter months we were ahead. Also, there was much less wear and tear on the room.

Focusing on overnight and short stays became our strategy. It was the result of many interviews, experience, and observation during our extensive motel search. The strategy worked well for us over the 7 years we had the motel.

There was no ice machine and there was no place to put one. The former owners did not worry about it. Ice was a necessary amenity in our opinion.

I made a quick trip to Idaho Falls and got a mini freezer for the office. We got new ice buckets and liners that we would fill from the ice maker in our refrigerator. It was a popular guest amenity and good interim solution until we got an ice machine a year later.

A memorable encounter occurred the first or second week. We had a large group of Harley riders in the south building. One morning they were revving up and tuning the Harleys.

I was walking out of the office and was confronted by a rambo guy in camo's and bloused paratrooper type pants and boots. He had a 45 caliber pistol strapped on his side. He was irate and demanded, "You take care of those guys with the motorcycles or I am going to". I needed to defuse the situation and told him, "Calm down. They are nice guys, and they will soon be gone". He grumbled and went back to his room.

A while later I looked out and he was laughing, joking, and having a beer with them.

Arco Rotary Club

We were in the motel about a month when Jim Morris, the Superintendent of the Craters of the Moon National Monument stopped in. He had park brochures for us to give to guests. We talked a while and he said he was in Arco Rotary. It meets every Tuesday at the Golden West restaurant at noon. He invited me to the next meeting as his guest. I attended, was invited to join, and accepted.

It was a small chapter averaging about 10 members who were all business people or retired business people. They knew what was going on around town, and discussed things freely. I

always knew what was going on. The two bankers and the judge were especially interesting and informative.

One of the charter members was Ira Boyer. He was the gas and oil distributor for many years, and retired for many years. He was nearing the end and I only got to visit with him a few times before he passed. The interesting part is that his daughter was married to the actor/comedian, Gene Wilder. If they were in town visiting he would bring Wilder to Rotary. It was before my time, and never got to meet him.

(I would go on to serve 2 terms as President and become a Paul Harris Fellow. I didn't want the job but the club had been languishing for many years and needed to be rejuvenated. It turned into something that I enjoyed doing. I made sure we achieved the District Governor's goals every year.

We had a fund for a community project that had been sitting in the bank for years. I came up with the idea to use the fund as seed money for a grant. The old railroad tracks had been removed that ran along the highway across from the motel. The right of way was available. My idea was to get a section paved for a walking, biking, and jogging trail. We moved ahead and got it accomplished. We then had a huge granite rock about 5 ft high hauled in and attached a bronze plaque on the face. The plaque said, "Arco Rotary" and below "Ira Boyer Memorial Parkway". Ira's daughter came to the dedication and still contributes funds for maintenance.

I took two astronauts to a special Rotary dinner meeting. They visited with us long after dinner was over.

They were in town to celebrate the 35th anniversary of their training at the Craters of the Moon and stayed at the motel two nights. They were the 6th man to walk on the moon, Edgar Mitchell, and the 12th and last man to walk on the moon, Gene Cernan.

I still have their registration slips and Gene Cernan's autographed book.

We supported the acquisition of a Navy submarine for display at the Arco Science Center that was to be built across the street from the motel. The USS Hawkbill (666) was decommissioned and available. However, it was too big to transport. The solution was to cut out the center portion containing the sail (conning tower). It was trucked into town with the mayor waiving from the top of the sail. There was a dedication with sailor plank holders (1st crew) and the Commanding Officer of its first voyage attending and speaking.

A fundraiser for this project was selling bricks with a brass plaque and the name of the contributor. We bought one for each grandchild with the DK Motel and their names on it. They were placed by the sail, but the last time I checked I could not find the one for Christopher.)

New Telephone System

A good telephone system was required in those days. Very few people had a cell phone. Our system was antiquated and had a limit of two lines that were always busy.

I got bids for a new telephone system in July. I elected to go with AT&T on a lease to ownership agreement for a total cost of around \$8,000.

We would get the controller, 20 new room telephones, a console for the office, an identical console for the living room, a portable handset, a combination intercom/doorbell/telephone, and 4 telephone lines.

In August they swooped in and installed the system in a day. Now if we were out on the premise with the portable handset we could answer calls, transfer calls, and communicate with people at the door.

The outside ringer was no longer needed. The portable handset had long range. We could go to Pickles for lunch and not miss a thing.

A great feature that we could turn on or off was that callers in response to a menu could enter the room number they were calling. They would be transferred without us being involved. It was a great upgrade and made life easier.

The new telephone system required 2 digit room numbers. Number 10 was reserved for the office, so room #1 became #11. It went on around to room #21 becoming #31. Hotel tradition avoids #13, so we had no #13.

I replaced the old metal room numbers on each door with new square dark blue plaques with large white numerals. They would complement what would be our new color scheme. The planned color scheme was gray, navy blue, white trim, and red accent on our neon sign.

The dated and ugly orange plastic key tags were replaced with much smaller rectangle shaped dark blue tags with only the room number.

We did not want missing keys being traced to the motel. The old key tags had, “ drop in any mail box to return postage paid”. The postage was \$8. I could replace the new key tag for 35 cents. It was less than a dollar for a new key.

A few days after getting the new telephone system, Clem Birney, at the Lost River Motel called and wanted the old system. Sorry Clem AT&T took it. I wouldn't have let him have it anyway.

Arco hosted an annual softball tournament in middle August. Our first summer we were fully booked with teams from Idaho Falls, Blackfoot, and the Wendell/Jerome area.

The Idaho Falls and Blackfoot teams were young and rowdy. We decided that from here on we would only accept the team from Wendell/Jerome. They were older dairy farmers. While they had a good time they were orderly, enjoyable, and wrapped things up early in the evening.

We had them every year thereafter, and reserved the 12 rooms they preferred. We would join them in the evenings, and they became good friends. They were also good ball players and usually took first place.

With this strategy we had rooms available for tourists who paid the going rate. We would still be full by 6pm. The cheap rowdy ball teams filled up the competition.

After the Tourist Season

The pace started slowing down in September and it was welcome. Our occupancy was around 99%. It was a good summer and a good start.

We were accustomed to going to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico the end of October to utilize our timeshare week. We began thinking maybe we could continue going.

All we needed was a good manager. We had hired a new maid, Nancy Hughes, for laundry and she looked to be a good candidate. She was in her 50's, divorced, and stable. We approached her with the idea. She was willing, so we started training her in the office.

We tried her by going to dinner in Mackey and leaving her in charge. That worked fine so we hooked up the 5th wheel on October 1 and went for a night on the Little Lost River north of Howe. We had our cell phone to be in touch, but the battery didn't last until morning. Everything was fine when we got back to Arco, and she handled the overnight stay easily.

The end of September I removed the swamp coolers from the windows. The only place to store them was in the box off an old truck in the back of the motel. It was the only storage we had. I put the room # on each one so I would know where they went in the spring.

We elected to go to Puerto Vallarta for a week the last week of October, and left Nancy in charge.

I made a daily work sheet for her to fill out that looked like my computer spreadsheet. Also, a cash management worksheet for each day. I did it this way since she was not computer literate. We didn't want to add the stress of computer problems.

All I had to do was transfer her entries onto my computer spreadsheet, which took about an hour. Her daily cash management worksheet matched with the cash receipts and the cash bag. She was calm about it all and had no problems. The method worked well. We did it this way every time we were away.

Mid November was the time to shut down the 6 rooms in the back building. They were heated by electric baseboard heaters, expensive to operate, and not needed during the winter months. It involved shutting off the water, opening a drain valve in the crawl space underneath room #20, and pouring antifreeze in the toilets and drains.

The rest of the rooms were heated by propane wall heaters. They were very old, but usually worked well. Once in a while I would have to relight a pilot light or have a control unit worked on by our propane guy, Bill, at V1 Propane.

Our first 6 months were busy and hectic. What a way to get started in the motel business.

It was difficult Friday evenings watching people and their rigs going by on the highway to enjoy the weekend.

When you thought about making money 24/7 it was not so bad.

My Motel Management Software

I liked the way my spreadsheet for daily room revenue worked and continued to expand it.

I set up a monthly sheet so that the totals rippled up automatically to a room-by-room monthly summary. Then ripple up to a yearly summary showing monthly totals side by side. The year **summary** then rippled up automatically to a summary showing the years side by side.

I entered the room revenue the day it was collected, and the rest was automatic. I could track what every room was doing and what every month or year was doing.

When we thought we were not doing as well this month compared to last month or last year I would bring up the spreadsheet and there was the answer. We were always doing better than we thought. It was the trend we wanted.

I set up an expense monthly summary the same way. I had categories for, utilities, maintenance, supplies, etc. I entered the item and the expense underneath the proper category. The monthly totals rippled up in the same manner with monthly side by side summaries for the year and every year side by side. There was never any doubt about how we were doing on revenue and expense.

My software was a great tool.

1996 Year of Big Changes

The winter was cold with a lot of snow and blowing snow.

I had to deal with snow removal and hired John's Auto Electric with their wrecker/snowplow. A big problem was where to push the snow as our space was limited. The solution was push it towards the units in back. It resulted in a huge mound in the back of the parking lot. It eventually blocked the rear exits. It was a big mess when it warmed up and the snow melted.

Acquiring the Annex

Early January the owner of Grandpa's Southern BBQ, Lloyd Westbrook, stopped to chat.

He and his wife, Loretta, owned the six-unit apartment building across the street on the North side of the motel. It was perpendicular to the street and centered on four city lots with a large lawn in front and back. It also had a newer two door garage that was large.

I had been noticing the property and there was very little or no activity. Lloyd said he needed money for his restaurant and would like to sell it.

I didn't think much of it that day. The more I thought the more interesting it became. We would have more units to rent, a large garage, storage space, and a lot of open green space on both sides of the building. The space would be great for pushing snow from the motel.

I got back with Lloyd to look at it. It was originally six one and two bedroom apartments. A few years back it became an assisted living facility.

Two of the apartments on the north end had been remodeled into two bed units, with a large bathroom, and a large walk-in closet.

The two apartments on the south end had a kitchen, huge pantry, and dining room for the assisted living people. These two were in bad shape.

The two units in the middle were a one bedroom apartment and a two bedroom apartment. They were in their original old condition. They were rentable with elbow grease, paint, and repairs.

A single guy was in the one bedroom apartment and was moving out.

I saw that the two remodeled units on the north end could be rentable quickly with the addition of beds, furniture, and carpeting.

The two in the middle would take some work and would be rentable.

The two on the south end closest to the motel were bad, but perfect for storage. We could empty our storage units in Idaho Falls and have everything in those two units.

I would also have a shop and storage space in the garage.

Lloyd held firm at \$45,000. He would take a small down payment and carry the note. We struck a deal.

We labeled the acquisition, "The Annex", and the rentable units, A1, A2, A3, and A4.

A Great Buy on Motel Furnishings

After striking the deal with Lloyd Gary Slette called and said a large chain motel in Burley was selling complete rooms of furnishings to get ready for an upgrade. I drove to Burley to take a look.

The furnishings were in good shape. Each room included a queen bed, a headboard, 2 night stands, 2 night stand lamps, 1 hanging lamp, 2 wall mounted lamps, a 36 inch round table, 2 sled chairs, a large mirror, 2 large pictures in frames, a large 4 drawer credenza, and the carpet. All of this was \$100 per room.

A credenza alone was worth more than \$100. I didn't care for the light green and light pinkish carpet, but you had to take them. The furniture was better than our furniture and I bought 10 rooms of my choice. I had a week to get it moved.

I went back to Arco to figure out how to do it. I would go to Twin Falls, rent a truck, leave the car at the Slette's, and go to Burley. I would need help loading so I called a Burley moving company. I could hire two of their guys.

I would need storage space to store it when I got back to Arco. We had not closed on the Annex. That was the space I needed to store as well as utilize a lot of it.

I got with Lloyd and he agreed to let me use the apartments to store the stuff.. The garage was not available as he had a guy using it for woodworking.

I picked up the truck in Twin Falls and it was snowing hard. I had no experience driving a diesel truck with a clutch and manual shift and was nervous about it.

We got it all loaded in Burley and I gave the two movers \$100 each for 4-5 hours work.

Everything went fine on a cold winter night. It was 30 below zero when I arrived in Arco. I was afraid if I shut the engine off the diesel would not start the next morning. I left it idling the rest of the night.

I hired a young guy the next day. We put 6 credenza's in the 6 units in the motel's south building. They were a perfect fit and needed. We also replaced the nightstands and lamps. I would put the matching headboards in later.

We unloaded the rest in 2 units in the Annex. We got done and I saw the carpet rolls were close to the wall furnace that to my surprise were operating. Without thinking I turned off the furnace.

The Freeze Up

The next morning I went to the Annex to look things over. I could hear water running in the unit next door. A PVC pipe had froze and broke. Luckily the shut off was handy. I had a big problem to fix.

The next day I headed to Twin Falls to return the rental truck.

LaRue called and said there was no water in rooms 16 and 17 in the north building. of the motel.

The propane guy, Bill, was there to fill the propane tank. She told him about it when he came to the office. He was super nice and said he would check it out.

He figured the wind blowing out of the north into the crawl space opening caused a freeze up. He crawled under to check things out and nothing was broke. I would have pipes to thaw when I got back.

The next day I discovered the cover for the opening into the crawl space was inadequate and cold air could easily blow in. Also, the heat tape that was on the pipes was old and not working.

Where there wasn't heat tape the pipes were wrapped in newspaper. I used a hot air blower, thawed the pipes, and got water flowing with no problems.

Then I stripped the newspaper insulation. I found dates in the 1950's. I spent days under there stripping paper, putting on new pipe insulation, and new heat tapes.

I also fabricated two insulated plywood covers for the entries into the crawl space. We never had a problem after that.

After we closed on the Annex, I turned my attention to the broken water pipe. I found when the 2 units were remodeled they replaced the old galvanized pipe with PVC. It breaks easily in freezing conditions. I found the break, fixed it, and turned on the water only to find another break. This went on and on. Totally frustrated I yanked out all the PVC and put in all new copper pipe.

I spent hours in the crawl space underneath. While I was at it I installed shut off valves and drains for each unit. I could now easily do maintenance and winterize the units. We would not utilize the Annex during the slow winter months, so this was important.

I then worked on getting the two remodeled rooms A3 and A4 in the Annex ready to rent. I would wash the walls, paint, get new carpet installed, and move in 2 queen beds and furniture that I acquired in Burley. The credenza fit perfectly in the space between the walk-in closet and the bathroom.

An older couple drove in. They were looking for a small apartment for the summer while they visited their daughter. I didn't want to rent long term but the Annex one bedroom apartment (A2) was rentable as is, if people were not too picky. I let them look at it thinking they would not want it. To my surprise they would rent it if I put in a couch and a couple of chairs.

I had a couch and chairs from our Idaho Falls house in storage. We agreed on \$550 per month and they moved in May 16. That was our first rental in the Annex. I finished up with A3 and A4. The kids came and stayed in them in mid June to test them out.

We had a BBQ and picnic on the front lawn and had an enjoyable evening in front of the Annex.

The rooms were rented thereafter. They were two of our most popular units in the summer.

With two rooms available for storage in the Annex I began moving our stuff from Idaho Falls. I made many trips through the summer with truck and trailer to transport the contents of 5 storage units.

Air Conditioning Upgrade

During the summer of 1995 I was not happy with the swamp coolers for air conditioning.

The units for the north and south buildings were huge 3x3x3 units that mounted in the back window and were unsightly. Each had a water line connected for the water supply and I was always fixing a float or a water pump. They were not controlled by a thermostat, so the guest had to turn them on or off. They were not suitable for motel use.

I reinstalled the swamp coolers at the beginning of the 1996 season and began looking for refrigerated units. I found a good buy at Blackers in Idaho Falls and got six Amana units for the south building. The cost for those were \$1,974.

The north building back windows were a narrow slider that required a vertical unit that was more expensive. They had White Westinghouse models that fit, and I got 8. The total for those came to \$3,752.

I would end up later acquiring two White Westinghouse units and two more Amana units for the Annex.

The rooms on the back building were small and a much smaller unit would suffice. I couldn't find any and decided to utilize the swamp coolers for a while longer as they were visible only from the back alley.

Now I had to worry about power requirements.

I found an electrician and he ran conduit on the back of the buildings so each unit would have their own line and circuit breaker. The cost for that was \$1,963.

I removed the swamp coolers and installed the new air conditioners, and we were in business. It was a worthwhile upgrade.

Other Repairs

A problem I was determined to fix was in the building in the back. The hot and cold was backward in about three of the units.

I spent days under that building correcting the problem. While at it I installed shut off valves and drain valves for each unit to facilitate winterizing and maintenance.

I also fabricated two insulated plywood covers for the two entries into the crawl space. With these projects completed we were set for cold winters.

Other Projects

The six units in the south building each had a back bedroom.

Room 26 on the west end had the back bedroom locked off. It contained two large propane water heaters and hundreds of old sheets, old towels, years of old cans of paint, acid for cleaning, and other junk. It was full and a fire hazard. Gary and I took several loads to the dump. Paint was supposed to be left with the attendant, but he was gone. We went on to the landfill and dumped. I sweated the consequences. The next week I got a call from a guy saying he was the sheriff. He asked about the paint we dumped. I almost had a heart attack. The caller was Gary playing games with me.

I removed the old fridges before tourist season started. I replaced them with mini fridges, and sold the old fridges for \$25 each. Our maid, Pat Lenge, bought one. Later, it caught fire and they had to call the fire department. Dodged a bullet on that one.

I also removed eight old 4 burner propane cookstoves with ovens. Brother Garry and Gladys had a bar and café in Yellowpine. He said he could sell them easily to the locals. He came over and hauled them to Yellowpine. We never saw any money.

Sign Renovation

We had a large neon sign in front that was visible from up and down the highway. The color scheme was unattractive. It was faded brown with white and yellow panels popular in the 1950's. It proclaimed RCA color TV and telephones. That was not needed in modern times. Bulbs were out and the vertical part with MOTEL was missing light behind one of the characters. It showed M TEL at night. It displayed neglect on the part of the owners.

The Beitz's had done one good thing by installing a 3x3 reader board below the sign. It had three rows. You could put up any message you wanted from a large supply of plastic cards with letters and numbers.

YESCO in Twin Falls was the sign company that serviced Arco. The sign had been under a maintenance contract with them years ago. I called YESCO to see about updating it.

A guy came out and we discussed changes and a color scheme of white, dark blue trim, and a red DK at the top.

A few days later we received an artist rendition. We liked it. It was expensive at \$3,500, but gave the go ahead.

YESCO spent a couple of days replacing bulbs, fixing neon, and new paint. We also signed a maintenance agreement. They would check the sign periodically and repaint when necessary. The sign always looked fresh and clean.

The YESCO crew would often rent rooms with us, and we became friends. They took great care of our sign.

Security Camera and Monitor

The office was not visible from the living room. They were separated by a wall.

We were alerted to someone entering the office by the door activating a switch that rang a bell in the living room. You then went to the office to see what it was all about.

I was at Costco in Idaho Falls and saw a video monitor system and purchased it.

I mounted the small camera in the corner of the office and ran coax through the wall to a monitor on top of our TV cabinet. Now we could see what was taking place in the office while sitting in the living room, and even in bed.

You were never sure about middle of the night people. This provided an added level of security.

We had a scruffy guy come in one night and you could see him look up at the corner. He reacted when he saw the camera. He muttered something and went out the door. We are sure he had something bad in mind.

The Telephone Booth

Mike Beitz had his little business things going. One was a revenue sharing agreement with a 3rd party for a coin operated telephone booth.

It was next to the sidewalk in front and people using the phone could observe everything taking place in the office.

If they needed change they would come to the office. I had one guy ask to plug in his computer as his battery was low. Our take the end of 1995 was \$12, and we provided the power for the booth.

It was a big annoyance. I tried to terminate the agreement by calling and sending letters to no avail. Gary then sent a letter on his letterhead telling them they had two weeks. If it was not gone by then the booth was going to the dump. They showed up on the last day of the deadline and hauled it away.

The New Laundry Facility

During our first winter we made plans for a new laundry. We wanted to have it the duration of our ownership rather than just part of it.

The best location would be off the east end of the south building. This would put it between our office/living quarters and the service station/convenience store next to us.

It would solve the problem of car lights shining on us and people sitting over there watching what we were doing.

The only problem was two huge trees, but they could be sacrificed. They looked dangerous in a windstorm. It would solve that problem.

When the snow melted I went out with a spray can and laid out the dimensions and a layout of the interior. I would refine it now and then, making it larger. It would have a guest laundry in the front and the door to the motel laundry behind to the right.

The motel laundry would have a bathroom with a toilet, sink, shower, and space for two large water heaters on the left as you entered.

I could then remove the 2 water heaters in the backroom of #26 and return the room to service as a bedroom. The water heaters would connect the laundry room to the south building, and recirculate hot water.

The motel laundry would run across and behind the guest laundry. The washers would share the drain, water, and electrical connections in the common wall.

I needed a contractor and talked to Don Northrup who had a great reputation. He was totally booked with projects out of town. He suggested Don Ziegler who owned and operated the lumber yard and hardware store. He was a professional engineer by training and a qualified builder doing business as King Mountain Construction. His girlfriend, Marci, ran the store. I knew them as I frequented their business regularly.

I was in the office one morning in mid May. Don Ziegler walked in and asked if I might need any work done. I showed him my layout on the lawn all staked out. He would draw it up and get back to me.

Don was back in couple of days with a set of professional drawings.

He would get the permits, have the trees removed, excavate and pour an 8 foot deep foundation, pour a concrete floor, construct the building with 2x6's, have the electrical done, have the plumbing done, a new water line from the street, the sewer connection done, procure and install a high capacity 100 gallon propane water heater, remove the water heaters in the back of #26 and install the old 80 gallon water heater in tandem as backup for the new one, install a recirculating hot water pump to the south building, install a propane wall heater in the guest laundry, a propane wall heater in the laundry room, toilet, sink, and shower in the bathroom, set tubs in the laundry room, and build shelves across the back wall. The siding would be medium gray vinyl. The roof would be dark blue metal as we requested.

We would be responsible for the laundry equipment. The estimated cost was \$41,000 and he could start immediately. We gave the go ahead.

Monday morning we were surprised to see the trees being taken down. There were big trucks and a Collins Excavating backhoe.

Collins removed the trees, stumps, and dug the foundation and water line trenches. They had to be 8 ft deep to be below the frostline.

I was not aware of it but Don was already building the walls in his lumber yard.

When the forms were in for the foundation concrete trucks, one after the other, arrived from Idaho Falls.

We had a new building in no time.

There was a \$1,000 overrun due to an additional charge by the city for the water hookup. It was added by the mayor as he viewed the work being done by the city crew. I guess he needed a new toy. After the mayor retired I heard similar stories.

I researched products and ordered a new high capacity WASCO commercial washer, a high capacity commercial dryer, and a commercial water softener. Also, 2 coin operated washers, and 2 coin operated dryers for the guest laundry. The total cost was \$8,800. They arrived early and we had them stored in the garage at the annex.

The commercial washer was big and extremely heavy. Don brought his forklift and two employees from the lumber yard to get everything over into the laundry room. They had to use rollers to get it in. Then they bolted everything down per specifications. The equipment moving and placement wasn't Don's responsibility, but he did it anyway.

We moved our best washer and dryer into the new laundry room to handle small loads. I added a 4x8 table in the middle of the room for folding. It was a first-class facility.

We were happy and in the new laundry room by the middle of July 1996. The new water heater was a monster and could heat water as fast as it was used.

Other Building Projects

I asked Don to give us a bid for gray vinyl siding on the south building. Also, a bid for gray vinyl siding and dark blue metal roof on the north building.

The bids were reasonable and we gave him the go ahead.

We were in the middle of tourist season. Don worked with us to minimize disturbing guests. We would give the go ahead to start work around 10am and stop him around 3pm.

When he got to the north building and began removing the asphalt shingles he found several layers. This increased his work load a bunch.

He found dry rot in the six wood porches where they attached to the north building. We lucked out. He had just gotten a great deal on a load of cedar. He would pass the saving on to us. We would get three new cedar decks with railings for \$2,700.

Each deck had two steps and was centered across the entry of two rooms instead of a small porch for each room.

The total remodel cost for the two buildings was \$20,000.

I stained the decks medium gray. We placed big flower pots on each end of the 2nd step.

We often had tourists say they chose us because of the nice look and the flowers. The improvements would pay for themselves with the increase in room rentals.

When Don finished the buildings I had him insulate and panel the back room of #26. It would then be a two bedroom unit like the others in the south building. Another bed meant more revenue.

Wood doors with aluminum screen doors were on the north and south buildings. The screen doors impeded guests coming and going with luggage. I had Don remove them.

The doors were hollow core with no insulation and an eyesore. We had Don replace them with steel insulated doors. The total for the #26 backroom and the doors was \$2,760. I painted the doors "thunder gray". It was a dark smokey bluish gray.

The new look was great. People in town were taking notice and talking about us. There had been no improvements of this scale in Arco for many years.

Our Office Help

Nancy Hughes was doing a great job for us in the new laundry and spelling us off when we were away. Around late summer she had to go to Portland to help her daughter who was having an operation. She would be back in time for us to go to Puerto Vallarta the end of October.

October was coming up. There was no Nancy and no word. We decided we needed another person trained just in case. I talked to a lady, Debbie, in the Sawtooth Club who seemed sharp and capable. I asked if she would be interested. She was, so we brought her in a couple of evenings to train.

Gary and Kathleen came up in mid September with their trailer and camped up Antelope Creek. We had what looked to be a slow Saturday night. It would be a good time to leave Debbie in charge and have dinner with Gary, Kathleen, and kids.

We were nervous, but with a slow night she should be ok. We got back and the no vacancy light was on much to our surprise. We walked in thinking she would be upset and flustered, but she was cool, calm, and collected. It had gotten busy. She rented over 10 rooms in a hurry with no problems.

Gary and Kathleen liked their stay on Antelope Creek and asked us to be on the lookout for property.

We wanted to try Debbie on an overnight stay. We hooked up the 5th wheel and went to the Little Lost River north of Howe for a night. It went well, so we did it again about a week later with good results. We had found a relief manager, and scheduled her to motel sit for our Puerto Vallarta trip the last week in October.

A couple of days before we were to depart Nancy arrived unannounced! She was ready to tend the motel. Too late Nancy. She then burned her bridges.

We came back from Puerto Vallarta and Debbie said it went well with no problems. I noticed the beer was gone that we left in the fridge. There was about a case of various brands that guests would leave. I didn't think too much of it as I knew she enjoyed a beer. Occupancy was low, so she apparently had an easy time of it.

I went to vote and ran into the guy that bought the Lost River Motel from Clem. He thanked me for taking vacation. His business really boomed!

Then we got a call from the couple that own the bar and café in Howe. They would close early on Sunday. They would book a room with us and go to the bars for the evening. He said they called and told Nancy they would be in around 5pm and hold a room for them.

They arrived, the office was locked, and Nancy was not around. They had to go to the Lost River Motel and hated it. No wonder business was lousy while we were gone.

I then talked to Frank who owns the Sawtooth Club. He said Debbie came in about 5pm every night we were gone! So much for Debbie. We later referred to her as "Crazy Debbie" after we hired a new Debbie.

A young divorced gal with a young son, Debbie (Collins) James, moved back to Arco to live with her parents who owned Collins Excavating. She needed work and was extremely capable. We hired her to run the laundry, train in the office, and stay when we went somewhere. She was excellent.

1997

In March Gary and Kathleen became aware of a cabin up Antelope Creek that was for sale. Cliff, a would be mountain man, built it from scrounged logs, lumber, etc.

He lived there full time with his wife. It was rustic with no running water, an outhouse, a couple of log outbuildings, and a sweat lodge. Cliff offered to let them use it for the weekend while he and his wife went to Montana where they would be moving.

We pulled the 5th wheel up on May 19 and spent the night with them and celebrated Caitlin's 3rd birthday. The place was just what Gary was looking for and they bought it. It turned out to be a great acquisition that they still enjoy.

Ice Machine

The first thing to get for the 1996 tourist season was an ice machine. We had space in the new guest laundry room. The hook ups were put in when the laundry building was built. I ordered a new Scotsman ice machine for \$1,790 from Bar and Restaurant Supply in Idaho Falls.

I hauled it to Arco and did the installation myself. It was a nice addition, but a problem keeping greedy people from filling large ice chests, and not leaving ice for other people.

New Propane Heaters

The propane wall heaters in the north and the south buildings were old. Rooms 11 and 15 had control valves much older than the others and were getting cranky. New valves were no longer available. It was time to look for replacement furnaces.

Our V-1 propane guy, Bill, said the best high tech and most efficient model was Rinnai, made in Japan. He had installed a few and it was his recommendation. The drawback was that they were pricey.

They were the size of a small suitcase and had a flexible hose for a vent and a flexible hose for outside air through the back of the unit. With extensions they could be routed through the existing hole in the roof for the old furnace vent.

There was no pilot light or live flame. They ignited and ran only at the level required to maintain the desired temperature. They could bring a cold room up to temperature in minutes. Being 80% efficient they used less propane.

I ordered the medium size model for rooms 11 and 15. That model was around \$1400 each installed.

New Windows in the Back Building

The front windows in the rooms in the back building were huge, single pane, and were the original windows. I had Don remove them, scale the size down to 4x4, and replace with double

pane windows with a slider for ventilation in the bottom part of the window. He also procured two 4x4 slider double pane windows for the office with installation later. The total cost was \$1,656.

1998

Air Conditioners for the Back Building

In June I went to Costco in Twin Falls and bought six Sharp 5100 btu air conditioners for rooms 20-25 to replace the last of the swamp coolers. I was able to sell all 20 of my old swamp coolers to a guy in Mountain Home for \$25 each. Very glad to get them out of my way.

The Remodel of the House

The working relationship with Don was great. I told him we would want a blue steel roof on the house/office at some point in time.

He looked and pointed out a pronounced sag in the roof line. He thought it indicated broken rafters. It could be a big job to fix. He would prove to be correct.

It was around this time that Don told us that he was closing the lumber yard and hardware store.

When the Home Depot opened in Idaho Falls it killed their business. He had tried to sell to no avail. The only option was to close the doors. This is what was happening in Arco. You could not even buy a pair of socks in town. The two grocery stores merged into one. The one that closed was turned into a funeral home. Then we had two funeral homes.

Our small living room had just enough room for a couch, two lounge chairs, a TV, and the pellet stove. During the fall of 1998 my plan was to take out the wall between the old laundry room and living room. Removing the wall would more than triple the size.

I began removing the knotty pine boards that were on both sides of the wall. Then I removed the plumbing, sewer drains, and electrical. I knocked out a few 2x4 studs and noticed there was some load on them. The remaining studs had a lot of load. I stopped and called Don.

He came over and found that it was a load bearing wall, and it was good that I stopped. It will require an 18 foot beam supported by support beams on both ends that extend through the floor to the ground. There were too many unknowns, so he would work on a time and material basis.

Since the job just expanded I asked about removing the old wall furnace in the wall between the living room and kitchen. It was 4 foot wide and floor to ceiling high. When we first saw it we thought the bottom vent sent heat out both sides to the kitchen and to the living room. The first

winter proved otherwise. One side was intake air and the other side blew heat. The living room was the intake side and did not get direct heat.

When the Beitz's took over the motel the living room was in the front adjacent to the office and the kitchen was in the middle of the building. The rear of the building was formerly two bedrooms that were remodeled into the laundry.

They changed the front living room to be the kitchen. The former kitchen became the living room. Now the living room did not get direct heat from the wall furnace. So, they installed a pellet stove that took up the outside wall of the living room.

It was time to remove the old inadequate and very noisy furnace. Removing it we found a charred area showing there had been a small fire apparently in the electrical connection. An extension cord bypassing the problem had been utilized for a fix. It was good to get that mess out of there. The former laundry room had a wall furnace that would suffice until we got a new Rinnai furnace installed.

With the old furnace out we would have a six foot wide opening between the kitchen and living room. Another beam and support beams went on the list to span the opening.

Don thought we should have another beam between the two cross beams for additional support. He was worried about the sag in the roof line, and it would provide a margin of safety in the middle of the house. He ordered a 10 inch laminated beam for the wide span and smaller laminated beams for the two shorter spans and support beams. He had steel brackets fabricated for bolting the beams together. When the beams arrived Don brought in floor to ceiling jacks to hold up the ceiling while he installed them.

He put down a new sub floor throughout for a smooth surface. We had new carpet installed. Then we brought our dining room table, chairs, and hutch from storage. We felt like we were living in a home again. It was mission accomplished. We had a big open living room and dining room.

The next job was to get up into the attic and see what was going on. There was no way to get into it. He had to cut an opening.

Don found broken rafters and the electrical was a dangerous mess. To get around in the attic he laid down 1x12 boards for a walkway and installed lights. He was up there many days jacking up the centerline of the roof several inches and repairing the rafters.

Then he put in new electrical wiring and removed the old wiring. A propane line running to the furnace was also dangerous. It was replaced and rerouted to meet code.

I told him I was worried about what it was going to cost. He said, “don’t worry about it. I won’t charge you for all my hours, as I work slow”.

With the rafters fixed and the interior work done he went to work on the roof. The old shingles had to come off, and he found layer upon layer. In one area he found 12 layers. Somebody must have been a frustrated roofer. It is a wonder the house didn’t cave in when there was 2 feet of snow load that winter.

In the process of redoing the roof Don suggested extending the roof over the backroom addition that had a flat roof. The flat roof also extended over a patio. Snow would build up and required shoveling.

We gave the go ahead and he installed rafters over the flat roof, put on blue steel, and enclosed the ends with gray vinyl siding. It made the back of the house look great, and solved a big problem.

It took about a month and I sweated the total bill. It came to \$2,148. I expected \$10,000.

We had a large model Rinnai furnace installed where the old laundry room furnace was, and a small Rinnai model in the far corner of the office. They worked wonders in keeping an even temperature throughout.

The office was small with a room behind the back wall. It was about 4 feet wide. There was a water heater, water softener, storage shelves, and telephone equipment. Also, a counter with an old key cutting machine that ruined four out of five key blanks. I elected to have keys made at Ace Hardware and got rid of it.

We decided to remove the wall and make the office larger. It would give us more room between the front desk and the back wall.

Don was busy working on the rafters and roof. I knew Ed Price who was a finish carpenter and retired. He was expensive being accustomed to union wages, but he was fast and good. He had built shelves for our rooms, and we liked his work.

Ed ripped out the wall and we replaced the water heater and water softener. He enclosed them in a small closet with louvered doors. He then built cabinets for storage along the rest of the back wall. The extra space allowed a computer desk between the front desk and the outer north wall. The computer could now be moved from the back bedroom into the office. The new telephone system also fit in there.

The front desk was an old display cabinet with a counter placed on top. Ed made a new counter top. It had a riser on the half extending to the wall with a 1 foot wide top. It was all topped with dark green laminate trimmed with oak. He also put oak paneling on the front of the old display cabinet.

Guests could use the top of the riser to register without bending over the lower counter. The riser hid the phone console, the credit card machine, and provided a place to hang notes and rate sheets without being visible to the guest.

I put up new lighting and wired in a battery powered emergency light that would activate when the power failed. We learned from experience that it was needed. New carpet was installed, and the office looked great.

With the roof done Don installed the two new slider windows that had been in storage in the office. He also redid the entry porch to match the new decks on the north building.

Don was amazing. The total cost for the beams, porch, and installation of the windows was \$1,601.

New Sewer Line and Water Line

A sewer line and water line replacement were unexpected repairs. Early in the year the sewer for the north building and the house was slow and backing up.

I had a plumber run a snake down the line and he diagnosed a broken sewer line. I called Collins Excavating. Luckily, they were in town as they worked all over the state and as far away as Alaska. They dug a test hole and found the pipe was bad. It was cheap plastic and cracking.

It was a long run on a diagonal across the back parking lot to the end of the south building and to the city sewer in the alley. It had been installed years earlier when the city put a new sewer line in the alley. Whoever owned the motel at the time went the cheapest way possible with plastic pipe. It would all have to be replaced.

Collins began digging at room 14 towards the end of the house and diagonally across the parking lot.

The water line to the house was uncovered and it was badly rusted. A worker tapped it with his shovel, and we had a geyser of water 20 ft in the air. I had visions of a long shut down. We called the city, and they came and shut the water off. Collins had a saddle patch that might work, and it did. We decided to move on with the sewer and put in a new water line later.

They dug across the parking lot and came to the concrete driveway/trailer pad. The concrete was broken and sinking in places. We decided to demolish the entire driveway.

That uncovered the propane pipe from the propane tank to the south building. It was old and should be replaced. It was an easy job for V-1 propane at no charge..

The digging revealed the sewer connection coming from the back units was also cheap plastic. So, it was another 100 ft of line to replace.

That was the end of the surprises, and they put in new sewer pipe. The trench had to remain open for a day to spot problems. They filled in the trench and it was a wait period for settling.

Collins then replaced the water line to the house. The old line came from the north building and they capped it off. Then they dug a trench and tapped into the water line feeding the new laundry building. The new water line came into the house under the south side of the house.

With the sewer and the water line finished Collins brought in asphalt to patch the driveway and pave the driveway/trailer pad.

I found you don't trigger a conversation with the owner, Junior Collins. You cannot get the conversation to stop. His son worked for him and he never said a word. Daughter Debbie worked for us, and she was talker like her dad.

Annex Rooms Added to the Phone System

When we bought the Annex I had individual phone lines installed in order to get telephones in the rooms quickly. It was a costly monthly expense.

The new phone system could be expanded to serve the Annex with the installation of a line across the street, and expansion modules to the phone system.

I was picking up food at the Village Club and talking to Jack Youngstrom who has Powerline Construction. His wife, Jeneane, runs the Village Club and he works mostly in Island Park and Ashton all week and gets back Friday afternoon.

I mentioned that I wanted to run a telephone line over to the Annex but didn't know how I would get it done. He said he would do it for free. All I had to do is buy the cable.

Jack and his crew with their boom truck pulled in late Friday afternoon and made easy work of it. They ran the line up the pole for the yard light at the back of house to a tall tree behind the

north building. Then over the street to a tall tree at the end of the Annex. Then to the end unit in the Annex.

I had the company that installed the new phone system add capability for six more phones, connect the line to the system, and install new lines from the end unit to the rooms with new telephones.

I renumbered the Annex rooms 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37. Rooms 32 and 33 were our storage units that someday could be remodeled into guest rooms.

New Computer

My old computer did not have internet capability and was very limited. With the new computer came a lot of software including Microsoft Publisher for building websites.

By trial and error I built a website for the motel and published it on the Internet. People could now find us. It resulted in an increase in reservations.

Summary List of Projects in 1999

3/99 New Rinnai furnaces in room 26 and 28	\$2,471
4/99 Phone system upgrade. Expand system to include the annex.	\$2,285
4/99 New flooring and carpet in office	\$ 742
4/99 Sewer line replacement. Collins Excavating	\$3,973
5/99 Three new Sharp air conditioners for rooms 33, 34, and office	\$ 714
6/99 Rafter repairs and new blue steel roof on office/house. Don	\$2,148
7/99 Water line into house replacement. Collins Excavating	\$ 965
7/99 Asphalt patching on parking lot. Collins Excavating	\$1,890
8/99 New Micron computer	\$1,123
11/99 New Rinnai furnace room 12. V-1 Propane	\$1,205
11/99 New Rinnai furnace room 18. V-1 Propane	\$1,227
12/99 New Rinnai furnace room 29. V-1 Propane	\$1,333

Our Idaho Power People

When we took over the motel the Beitz's told us to expect an Idaho Power crew every April for 4 weeks.

The crew consisted of 5 guys with 2 fish hauling tanker trucks. They drove to Hagerman early every morning and loaded steelhead hatchlings at the Hagerman fish hatchery. The fish were transported to the hatchery at Ellis, which is between Challis and Salmon. They would return to Arco to overnight.

The North building had electrical hookups in the back where they parked on the street and plugged in the trucks. They required 5 rooms in the North Building so they could monitor the trucks parked behind.

We had them every year and they were good guys. Idaho Power paid the going rate and it was good business in April before the tourist seasons starts. They also paid for the electrical hookups for the trucks.

Their route on highway 93 took them by Mt Borah twice a day and the guys often talked about climbing it. I told them about my experience climbing it three times and one aborted attempt due to a blizzard.

I was invited by the boss, Vic Otto, to join them for a climb during the summer. Being prepared was essential for success, so I wrote a guideline for everyone to read and heed. My guideline follows:

Mt Borah Climb

Time:

They say to allow about 12 hours but I have found that a window of 9-10 hours is adequate unless a member of the party has problems. The slowest time I've had was 5 hours up, an hour on top, and 3 ½ hours down. The fastest was 4 hours up and 3 hours going down (not recommended). If the day is really pleasant we can take our time coming down and not beat up the legs so badly. We leave at daybreak and have a lot of daylight. By leaving at daybreak it is cool all the way to the top and is only hot coming down the lower part.

Equipment:

Good pair of sunglasses and a hat

Day pack for water, extra gear, camera, food, etc

Fanny pack (Not essential but quick access to sunglasses, lip balm, energy snacks, etc)

Wear quality high top hiking boots (preferably light and mostly leather)

Wear light weight shorts (or pants if you prefer) for strenuous hiking and comfort

Wear light weight long sleeve jersey for early morning and on top

Take 1 short sleeve shirt for the hot part coming down or stay with the long sleeve jersey

Take a windbreaker jacket and pants. (Gortex running clothes are excellent)

Take a good pair of light leather gloves as the rock is tough on hands

Take extra pair of socks Take light weight poncho (in case of wet weather. Haven't had to use it yet)

Flashlight (just in case)

Optional - a pair of sneakers in case of feet problems

Liquids:

The least I have used was on a cool day and was a quart of water, a coke, and a quart of gatoraid. The last notes I took was 3 quarts of liquid consumed on a fairly warm day. To be safe I would plan on 4 quarts of what you like. We would then leave 1 quart about mid mountain for coming down. I found that a quart of gatoraid was ok for nutrient replacement but I really liked plain water the best and a Coke for lunch.

Food:

What worked best for me was about 4 bananas, a couple of oranges, a couple of apples, and many small Snicker bars for energy as you are hiking. I also liked lifesavers or lemon drops for moisture as I hiked. On top you need to eat pretty good but probably won't feel like too much. I liked some cheese, salami, crackers, etc. Heavy food and a lot of it isn't appealing. Rev. Rittenhouse of May always told us that all you need is a handful of raisins! Probably good for energy and a quick snack.

Other Essential Items:

Sunscreen (15 or better) as the sun really beats down

Lip Balm

Band Aids and /or blister kits

Toilet Paper (just in case)

Aspirin or whatever you use

Camera and film. I take my small Sony camcorder and small Olympus 35 mm Small

Binoculars (optional)

Route:

Leave from the parking area and campground at the base of the mountain at daybreak. The trail is now about 1/3 mile longer since the Forest Service closed off the jeep trail. At the end of the jeep trail you veer left and head straight up a ravine that is steep and soft dirt. It then traverses West for a ways then turns East straight up the ridge to timberline. It is brutal hiking

for about 1 1/2 hours. This is also the killer part on the way down. After a break at timberline it gets fairly easy by comparison over a rocky but good trail. You will be surprised at how much altitude you gain. It then flattens out for a ways where we will leave some water, sneakers, etc for the trip down. It then heads up again over rocky shale and big rocks to pick your way over. It then gets steep, rocky and narrow as you come to Chicken Out Ridge. It then slows down to a crawl as you go hand over hand and pick your way along the ridge. This lasts about a 1/2 mile or more. The best route through is to veer right through a little V when you start up Chicken Out Ridge and stay on the right side of the ridge until about halfway when it is best to get right on top of the ridge or veer over to left side until the ridge ends with a 6-8 foot drop to a snowfield. At the snowfield the trail turns North and you traverse across to the saddle at the base of the final assault to the top. The traverse across is easy hiking and pleasurable with terrific view of the valley below and the peak above. It looks scary from the highway but after Chicken Out Ridge it is all pleasure. It is best to take a break at the saddle and enjoy the view of the Pahsimeroi and all around, and build up some energy. From there it is about 800 vertical to the top. It is mostly straight up through scree, shale, and large rocks. It is slow tough going, sometimes sliding back nearly as much as you gain. It is best described as a scramble. People have been all over the place and there is no set trail. I prefer to veer to the right and pick my way over big boulders and rocks and sort of go up the ridge with the drop off on my right. It probably takes about an hour for the last 800 vertical. The view at the top is worth it all.

The Mt Borah Climb and the Glacier

Vic Otto and I stayed in touch to plan the date of the climb and who was going. It got down to Vic, his daughter and me. His brother, Bruce Otto, was interested.

The interesting thing about Bruce is that he discovered Idaho's only glacier on the back side of the mountain. He was a geology student in the 1970's at Boise State. While exploring the back side of Mt Borah he discovered what he thought to be a glacier. He told his professor who didn't think it was possible. However, he agreed to go with Bruce and take a look. He confirmed it was a glacier, and it is the only known glacier in Idaho. It became known as "Otto's Glacier"

(An article in the paper in early March 2020 said the glacier had been officially recognized and named the "Borah Glacier" on February 1, 2020. A second article later stated that Bruce Otto knows of another glacier in Idaho, but the location is being kept secret to keep people away for the time being.)

Bruce decided he would join us for the climb and offered to show us the glacier, which meant climbing the back side.

I had never heard of anyone reaching the top from the backside as the last 2000 ft is vertical rock. I offered my opinion, but Bruce thought we could find a way. It would be new territory and conquest for me, so let's do it.

We drove two trucks in case we had trouble and departed the motel at 4am. North of Mackay it was east over Double Springs Pass, then south over Horse Heaven Hills.

This is the same route we took to the head of the Pahsimoroi when we lived in Idaho Falls.

At Mahogany Creek there was a logging road west towards Mt. Borah. It went a short distance and ended. We started walking.

We bushwacked south through trees and ravines a good distance to a big meadow headed west towards the mountain. We surprised a herd of elk and saw two of the largest bull elk I have ever seen. The meadow was about a mile long and had a steady uphill slope to a large ridge running north and south parallel to the mountain. It was a hard scramble up to the ridge. At the top we could see the glacier across a steep canyon.

We wanted to see the glacier up close. It was down the west side of the ridge into the canyon and a climb up to the glacier. We were now at the base of the glacier with Bruce who discovered it.

Bruce, being a geologist, gave us a detailed briefing on the geology of the area. The clock was ticking.

From there it was nearly vertical rock to the top of Borah and impossible to climb without technical climbing gear. The only option was a scramble back up onto the ridge and proceed south to where the ridge curved into the southeast side of the mountain. It was a tough scramble and hike to where the ridge ended at the mountain.

By then it was about 1pm. We were ready for food and a rest. From our vantage point we could see the head of the Pahsimoroi, Marion Lake, Pass Lake, and the summit of Mt Borah above us.

We could also see a couple of people on the summit watching us. They were probably wondering what those idiots are doing.

I scouted around for a way up but didn't see any possible route. We didn't have time anyway as we had a 3 hour hike to get back to the trucks.

We enjoyed the view and the sunshine for a while and headed back. It was a great excursion.

My Air Force Reunion

When I got the new computer I could access the internet. I searched and found that my old Air Force unit in Scotland was having a reunion in Las Vegas.

I had not heard from any of these guys since 1957 and signed up. The reunion was April 26-28, 2000 at the Flamingo Hilton.

LaRue stayed home to tend the motel and I drove down.

We had 240 people attend and had a super time. It was great to reunite with five old buddies I worked with on Dog Trick.

It was especially great to see my old friend, George Page, who worked in the orderly room and the post office. He was the one that knew where I was in Turkey and forwarded LaRue's postcard that led to us getting back together after I was discharged. George apologized.

The last evening the master of ceremonies summoned the Scottish wives to the stage. The stage was full and hardly any women were left in the crowd. It is a fact that 80% of the guys that went to Scotland came home married, and it was evident.

The guy that had a web page for our group posted that he would have to bow out. He would scrap it unless someone took over within two weeks. The deadline came and nobody came forward, so I jumped in. He had a list of about 100 airmen and I was #74.

Another guy maintained addresses. I took the two lists and combined them into a spreadsheet with names, years at Kirknewton, email address, home address, and phone numbers. I also developed and published a new and expanded webpage.

(My alumni list now has over 2500 known airmen that served at RAF Station Kirknewton from 1952-1966.

After Las Vegas in 2000 we scheduled reunions every two years and switched to every year after 2006.

LaRue and I attended reunions in San Antonio, Texas (drove); Biloxi, Mississippi; Colorado Springs, Colorado (drove); Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Red Wing, Minnesota (drove); a Miami Caribbean Cruise; Branson, Missouri (drove); Edinburgh, Scotland; Las Vegas, Nevada (drove); Dayton, Ohio; Seattle, Washington (drove); and a New Orleans Gulf of Mexico cruise. I organized the Miami cruise and the last Las Vegas reunion.)

End chapter 20b