

STATE OF OREGON
ROUTE SLIP

Date 4/1/82

TO:

Gerry Thompson
Governor's Office

FROM:

Bob Madgomeny

CHECK

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approval | <input type="checkbox"/> Investigate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Necessary Action | <input type="checkbox"/> Confer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare Reply | <input type="checkbox"/> Per Telephone Conversation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> For My Signature | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> For Your Information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your Signature | <input type="checkbox"/> As Requested |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comment | <input type="checkbox"/> Note and File |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Initial and Return | <input type="checkbox"/> Return With More Details |

COMMENTS:

Another article that might be worth while reading - especially the part about the system they use with the children. (marked lightly in per info for Governor

Lifestyle stark for guru's followers

By David Jordan
Bulletin Staff Writer

BIG MUDDY RANCH — "This is the pulsating heart of our ranch right now," says Sheila Fisher, chuckling as she gestures toward a shed visible behind a screen of cars and pickup trucks.

The shed is a repair garage. Flash floods washed out several ranch roads last fall, Fisher explains, and the followers of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh who live at the Big Muddy have been driving vehicles across creekbeds to reach several of their work sites. Cars, trucks and other motorized equipment keep turning up with water-logged engines that have to be dehydrated by mechanics.

Still, Fisher says, the roads are being repaired and the 280 to 300 followers of the Indian guru who arrived at the ranch last summer have survived their first fall and winter without extreme hardship.

"It wasn't bad at all. People warned us of terrible things, but none of them really happened," says Fisher, a 37-year-old English-woman who works in the public relations department of the ranch commune.

"We've heard that there were times when there was 20 inches of snow in Bend or Madras, and we had only about two inches," she adds.

"I haven't experienced any discomfort. The mobile homes we live in are incredible," she says.

The biggest weather-related problem so far, Fisher says, has been one that ties in with the ranch's name.

"The Big Muddy is 64,000 acres of mud when it's wet," she says. "It's the kind that's this deep" — she holds her hands about a foot apart — "and it sticks to your feet wherever you go."

John Shelfer, the ranch's manager and husband of Bhagwan confidant Sheela Silverman, has said that the environment at the ranch is not as harsh as many people think. Ranch workers are



John Shelfer

building near the ranch headquarters. They are not segregated by sex, Fisher says, but they tend to group up as they near adolescence.

A different pair of adults stays with the children each night. The task rotates among the ranch workers.

The children "visit with their parents whenever they like," Fisher says, adding that the system is the same as one used at Israeli kibbutzes.

Schooling for the children is provided on the ranch.

At age 5, each child begins working at least two hours a day.

As she watches a party of children with buckets and wash rags swarm over a dusty pickup truck, Fisher observes: "The little ones can clean a doll house for two hours if they want. The point is to teach the value of work and discipline."

Work becomes a focal point in a community as free of diversions as the Big Muddy. There is no television to distract anyone, for instance.

Fisher and fellow public relations workers now operate out of a single-wide mobile home near the ranch headquarters, but ground was broken last week for a new office building a mile or so away — near an airplane landing strip. The building will house such ranch operations as purchasing, accounting and secretarial services, in addition to public relations.

Another building that will go up soon is a 19,141-square-foot church about four miles southeast of the headquarters. Religious services now are held in the cafeteria.

The Bhagwan participated in a service at the cafeteria March 20. It was the closest contact most of the ranch residents had experienced with him since he arrived at the ranch and went into seclusion late last summer.

A small bus that operates all day links various parts of the 100-square-mile ranch with the cafeteria, the headquarters and other gathering places. A larger, school-type bus makes rounds in the morning to carry people to jobs.

Although sect leader Sheela Silverman has expressed fear of violence being directed toward the ranch, the Bhagwan's followers had not established any security measures by last week. Anyone could drive to the ranch headquarters, although residents say the 20-mile trip from Antelope over a rugged dirt road generally takes about 45 minutes.

People who make the trip to the ranch in mid or late afternoon are likely to encounter a black 4-wheel-drive vehicle with a yellow light flashing atop it. The vehicle runs interference when the Bhagwan climbs behind the wheel of a Rolls Royce for his daily drive.

As the Rolls Royce moves slowly over the dusty roads of ranch work areas, the Bhagwan's faithful gather at roadside and wave to their master. The small, bearded figure at the steering wheel returns the waves with a white-gloved hand.

this year, and Shelfer said he and his agricultural specialists think the number of frost-free days will be sufficient to allow them to prosper.

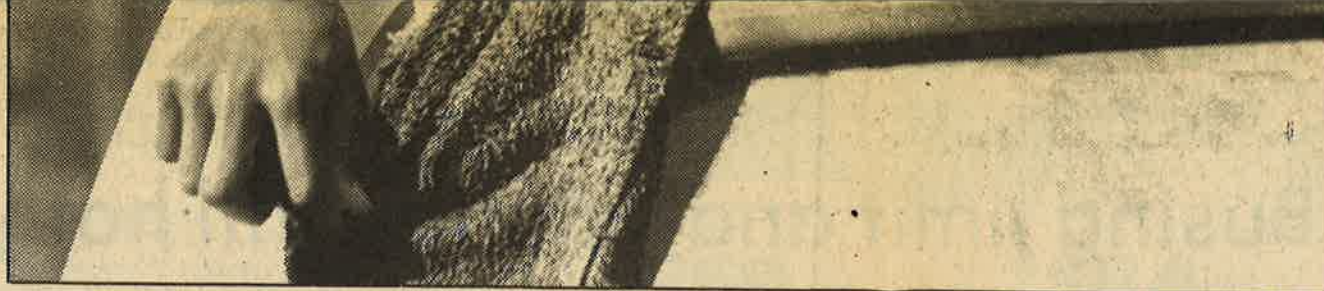
The ranch slopes upward from the John Day River at its eastern boundary, Shelfer said, rising from about 1,500 feet where Currant Creek flows into the John Day to about 4,000 feet. Thermal circulation of air up the slope tends to moderate temperature extremes, he said.

Ranch residents have installed a number of weather-recording devices around the property to study temperature extremes, wind levels, precipitation and the like.

Even though the religious sect wasn't frozen out during its first winter, the Big Muddy country remains stark. The ranch is made up largely of bare ground that throws up dust with each footstep this time of year, juniper trees and hulking hills of rock.

A casual observer might figure that the country would intimidate someone like Fisher, who came to the ranch last October after years of managing the guru's center in urban London. Not so, she says.

"I was born in Britain, but I was brought up in South Africa," she says, adding: "I was raised in the back veldt of South Africa, so



Bulletin/Doug Bradley

Sucker at the ready, Rajeev washed part of the Big Muddy Ranch from a truck

coming here was a lot like going home."

The veldt is open grassy country, with few bushes and almost no trees.

Fisher, an attractive woman with shoulder-length brown hair and gray-tinted glasses, speaks with an accent that combines England and South Africa in a way that causes many people to think she is Australian.

This day, she wears dark pink pants stuffed into oxblood boots that reach to mid-calf. Her dark maroon, long-sleeved blouse is covered by a light maroon knitted vest that hangs to her knees. The clothing falls within the range of reddish hues that the Bhagwan has decreed his disciples must wear to

symbolize the rising of the sun.

Fisher has been a follower of the guru for 10 years. As a disciple, or sannyasin, she has been given an Indian name by the Bhagwan — Veena. This is the name by which she goes on the ranch.

Fisher is married to another disciple, Gene Fisher. Gene, a professional singer-guitarist, accompanied Sheila to the Big Muddy last fall but returned to England in December when he was offered a chance to make a recording. He is due to return in a couple of weeks.

Ranch workers live in mobile homes that are set up to provide six bedrooms each. Married couples share a bedroom. Singles have private bedrooms.

Each mobile home has two

bathrooms and a kitchen, although the cooking facilities are rarely used because ranch residents take their three vegetarian meals a day at a central cafeteria.

Fisher and her husband have no children, but about 35 youngsters between the ages of 2 and 14 live on the ranch.

Children live with their parents until they are 5 or 6 years old, Fisher says. At that point, she says, they are "given the choice" of continuing to live with their parents or moving in with other children in a dormitory called Howdy Doody.

Thus far, all of the children given a choice have decided to live in Howdy Doody.

The youngsters sleep one to a bed in two rooms of an older

work from 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily, with an hour for lunch and half a day off every two weeks.

They also take a break for tea in late afternoon. A sign at ranch headquarters listing the hours when gasoline can be obtained for vehicles says the pumps are shut down daily for "tea time."

The tea break apparently stems from the sect's origins in India, where some customs of the erstwhile British empire hang on.

Non-American accents are heard frequently at the ranch, and Fisher says approximately 20 percent of the resident disciples are foreigners from countries such as England, Germany and Australia. The rest are Americans, she says.

Fisher's public relations job is in one of several departments at the ranch. She says the workers are divided among departments ranging from farming through construction to cooking.

As a public relations worker, Fisher answers questions from reporters and monitors newspaper coverage of the Bhagwan's followers. (Thirteen newspapers are delivered at the ranch.) She also conducts tours of the ranch for guests. The ranch receives an estimated 30 to 50 visitors a day.

returning to his triple-wide mobile home.

The 110-mile round trip to the nearest sizable town is recreation to the guru, but others in the sect have found the ranch's isolation a bit of a problem.

Ranch manager Shelfer and other sect leaders have angered some neighbors by proposing incorporation of a city on the property. Shelfer says that when he and the others came to Oregon, "we didn't have any idea of having a city."

"I'm from New York City," he said. "If you want toothpaste there, you go downstairs and around the corner. Here you travel an hour and a half to Madras or three and a half hours to The Dalles.

"I didn't realize how far away from basic services we were going to be."

But the ranch residents give no indication that isolation, harsh weather, stark country or anything else may drive them off.

Shelfer, Fisher and the rest seem to remain convinced that they are involved — as Silverman put it — in "something alive, something positive, something beautiful that's happening."

(See related stories, Page B-2)

Voters okay fire, library levies

By David Cash
Bulletin Staff Writer

Central Oregon's voters — the one of every five who decided to vote — approved levy requests Tuesday for ambulance service, fire protection and library service.

But Central Oregon Community College's levies failed, in one instance by an 80-vote margin out of a total of more than 9,000 votes (see separate story).

Election officials in Deschutes and Jefferson counties reported an 18 percent voter turnout. In Crook County, the figure was closer to 17 percent.

According to the unofficial returns reported this morning, here's what happened Tuesday.

Deschutes County

Voters in Deschutes County Rural Fire Protection District No. 1 approved a \$309,837 levy by a comfortable margin, 456 to 278. The district provides fire protection to about 15,000 people in a 115-square-mile area outside the Redmond city limits.

The money will fund four full-



election

time employees and one half-time employee, according to Hoy Fultz, who heads the district as well as the Redmond Fire Department.

Also successful was a \$136,078 levy requested by Redmond's Central Oregon District Hospital. The money will fund ambulance services next year. Voters passed that one, 808-569.

The Redmond Fire Department operates the ambulance in and around Redmond. The hospital levies the money because the hospital's tax district encompasses the area served by the ambulance.

Cloverdale-area residents voted 52 to 13 to merge with the Sisters School District instead of remaining in the Redmond School District.

That vote supports an earlier decision by the Deschutes County Education Service District to put

Cloverdale's 20,800 acres in Sisters' district. When the ESD board voted for that merger, some residents successfully petitioned to have the issue put on Tuesday's ballot.

In uncontested races, Max Merrill of Bend and Bob Patrick of LaPine were reelected to the board of directors at Central Oregon Community College.

Other uncontested positions determined Tuesday were: George Moore, Brothers school board; Cliff Clemons and Art Thenell, Sisters School Board; and B.J. Struckmeyer, of Brothers, and Syd McGill, of Bend, Education Service District board of directors.

Jefferson County

In one of the few contested races on Tuesday's ballot, Culver's William (Butch) McPheeters prevailed over two opponents to win a seat on

the Culver school board. The tally was: McPheeters, 120; Eugene (E.V.) Smith, 86; and Keith Urbach, 84.

Members of the small community of Ashwood also had a choice to make for their school board. Jim Nartz defeated John Marston, 19 to 9. That election got a 58 percent turnout in Ashwood.

In uncontested races, Penny Marston of Ashwood and Toni Johnson of Camp Sherman were elected to the county's Education Service District board of directors, and Ruth Lovegren won a seat on the Camp Sherman school board.

Crook County

Voters approved a two-year tax levy for the Crook County Library, 642 to 504.

The total levy, \$83,300 per year, is 7 percent less than the previous two-year levy. The library expects to make up the difference with savings from earlier budgets, according to librarian Richard Chrisinger.

In an uncontested race, Harlan Scott won a position on the Crook County School Board.

How Central Oregon voted

Central Oregon Community College "A" tax levy

Yes: 4,595 No: 4,675

Central Oregon Community College "B" tax levy

Yes: 3,919 No: 5,300

Deschutes County Rural Fire Protection District No. 1 tax levy

Yes: 456 No: 278

Central Oregon District Hospital tax levy

Yes: 808 No: 569

Cloverdale merger with Sisters School District

Yes: 52 No: 13

Crook County Library tax levy

Yes: 642 No: 504

Culver School Board

William (Butch) McPheeters: 120
Eugene (E.V.) Smith: 86
Keith Urbach: 84

Ashwood School Board

Jim Nartz: 19
John Marston: 9

Antelope School Board

Frances Dickson: 55
Glenda Harvey: 45