



Acting Your Age

In June my son, Jack, graduated high school. He went to work at Paint Rock Canyon Ranch, in Hyattville, Wyoming. Carolyn Alm promised low pay, long hours, hard work and a great time, and according to Jack, the job is all of that...especially a great time. He wants to go back next year.

A couple of days after he was supposed to start there was a field day near Gillette at Glenn and Joy Barlow's ranch at which they were going to be awarded the Aldo Leopold Environmental Stewardship Award. With a day to kill before the field day, Carolyn and I took off on 4-wheelers to see the ranch. We stopped to climb up some rocks. Climbing up was fine, it was coming down that didn't go so well. Jumping down from a ledge I landed wrong and a disc in my lower back decided something had to give. I think of myself as being able to work through a lot, but the herniated disc laid me up for a month. I was doped up on progressively stronger pain killers and in a lot of pain. A few weeks ago I got a cortisone injection in my spine and since then my recovery has been rapid. Now I'm getting around fine, just a little slower, and the doctor says no riding or running for 4-6 months.

No More Do-Overs

Jack leaving home has been an interesting time for introspection. Laid up and unable to work, I probably thought about it more than I might have otherwise, but I'd been thinking about it for the last several months. What was I thinking? Well, Jack's traveled with Allie, Kathy and me to Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Africa and many western states (this line of work has its perks)...so there have been great times and intense adventures we will remember the rest of our lives. But you all know the demands of running a business—especially one in transition. It has been hard not to dwell on the times when I thought about taking him fishing but put work first or was unable to go to a school event because I was teaching a school or facilitating an EL. This is not intended to elicit sympathy. I love our company, I love working with y'all and I love following the progress of our EL members. We all make choices and trade offs. It's not like we never went fishing, I just kind of wish we'd gone a little more often. I've realized that my life has changed to another stage as much as his has.

The Perfect Storm

Jack is gone, I got laid up and last weekend I turned Fifty. Hard to argue with the fact that my healthiest years are behind me and at least half my life is done.

I'm told that men have a harder time adjusting to aging than women. I don't know if that's true, but I know I'm not at ease with my aging (although the alternative is much less acceptable). Seeing my mother, now 90, age 20 years in the last 10 and cope with alzheimers has been sobering, to say the least.

MENopause

While we usually associate menopause with women, a condition called "andropause" hits men in their late 40's and early 50's. It is commonly (and incorrectly) referred to as "male menopause" and opinions vary on the cause. Some doctors claim that the condition is caused by a decline in hormones, particularly testosterone. The hormone levels actually start to decline in mid to late 20's

and most people have fairly healthy levels until their mid 40's (about the average life expectancy until about 100 years ago). Others argue that it is mostly psychological.

I'm guessing that both biological and psychological factors contribute. Regardless of the cause, between 45 and 55 a lot of men get the "male-menopause" symptoms which can include:

- ? Anxiety, indecisiveness, forgetfulness and a loss of self-confidence.
- ? Decreased energy, strength and endurance.
- ? Weight gain with decreased muscle and increased body fat.
- ? Longer recovery time from injuries or illnesses.
- ? Excessive sweating and/or chills.
- ? Sleep disturbances.
- ? Mild to moderate depression and irritability.
- ? Decreased sex drive, function or sensitivity.

Guys tend not to talk much about these problems. We suspect we are alone or are embarrassed or doubt that exposing what we probably consider weaknesses would do any good anyway. But it would do us good to discuss these issues for a number of reasons, not the least of which is to keep our wives in the loop. While you may not be talking about it, she sure knows something's up and she probably suspects it has something to do with her. Let her know that it doesn't. It would also help to talk to other men to know that you aren't alone and that many exciting years lie ahead. The hormonal imbalances, stresses and worries that kick in around age 50 don't last. Studies show that men and women, but especially men, are more stressed about aging when they are 50-55 than when they are 60 or 70.

Is What You Do Who You Are?

Doctors say that men for whom work is their main source of personal identity are most at risk. I think you'd have to say that most ranchers are in the high risk group. When you live inside your business, what you do becomes a huge part of who you are. There's nothing wrong with that, but it can lead to some difficult issues. For example, what will happen if you retire? If what you do is who you are, who will you be when you aren't "doing" anymore? My Australian colleagues talk about coaching people to make the transformation from "human doings" to "human beings." I think we know intellectually that a fulfilled life requires more than collecting a bunch of assets, even if our intention is to pass those assets on to our children. The transformation from human doing to human being requires accepting that truth on an emotional level, and realizing that it is the emotional, spiritual, physical and intellectual relationships we embrace that give meaning to our lives. To that end, we are planning on launching a program for EL alumni in 2008 that will help members discover and fulfill their life purpose. This is more important than ever before because people are living and staying healthy longer than ever before. At 50 we have a lot of time to enjoy life and have an impact on the things we care about.

A 30 Year Bonus!

In his book *Prime Cuts: Life Strategies for farming after 50*, Noel McNaughton points out that 100 years ago average life expectancy in industrialized countries was less than 50. Now life expectancy for a 40 year old man is 82. That's a 30 year bonus!

The 30 year bonus is the good news. The bad news is that some of us won't be around to collect all of it. On average, 1 of 4 men age 50 won't live to see 65. That means that we need to prepare ourselves, our families and our businesses.

The 5 D's

How can you prepare? Use the drought planning model we showed you at the Ranching For Profit School in which you developed strategies to drought proof your business and to manage through

drought. This same strategy of “risk proofing” and creating “risk management” strategies can be applied to all kinds of risk including the 5 D’s of risk related to people (death, disability, disagreement, divorce, depression).

It was rewarding to see that RMC kept working even though I couldn’t. But it was also a wake up call to develop and implement strategies to further risk proof RMC by developing systems that will continue to serve our clients and fulfill our mission even if I can’t personally. We have already started developing and implementing some of those strategies and systems and will continue with that over the next 6 months. EL members will see one of these in action at their Fall meeting.

With these systems RMC can out live me and continue to fulfill my mission. But what about your business? A sustainable business can not be based on exceptional (and therefore unsustainable) effort. Nor can it be built around one indispensable person. What strategies and tactics can you implement to build a business that will work and continue to support the people who depend on it without you?

What Do You Do When Your Business Doesn’t Need You Any More?

For a lot of us it is hard to imagine a ranch that can run without us. But at some point we will lose energy, if not enthusiasm, and even if we don’t there is likely a generation in the wings itching to get their hands on the controls. Even if we love what we do and have fun doing it, there will be a day when we physically aren’t capable of the work we could do a decade earlier. Therefore we need to plan our retirement.

Stan Parsons used to tell me “you can’t retire from something, you have to retire *to* something.” We need to create that something long before we retire. You might like to travel or be more involved in the community, or any of a list of worthwhile things. We make excuses that we don’t have time or we can’t afford it, or we’ll do it someday. We treat our lives as though they were something that was going to happen later. In his book, *Knowledge Rich Ranching*, Allan Nation cites a study that showed that “delaying the pursuit of one’s true life dream until one ‘could afford it’ in 98 cases out of 100 meant its forfeiture.” I’m not suggesting you mortgage the farm, but that you identify and start taking steps toward that dream.

Exciting Years Ahead

I have four great advantages over a lot of men my age. First, I know what my life is for, and I get to do it every day. RMC’s mission is my mission. It keeps me excited, enthused and energized. My second advantage is one shared by many of you, but probably not acknowledged often enough. I have a GREAT family. I love my wife, and she has endured unreasonable challenges and supported me without faltering. Third, I have assembled a wonderful team of supportive people in our office and across the continent. Most notably, Peter McBride cut his Argentina trip short when he learned I was laid up, so he could fill in at the Tulsa RFP school for me. On virtually no notice, Roger Ingram dropped everything and stood in for me, conducting a 7 hour economic workshop for the Illinois Cattlemen’s Association. He also went above and beyond the call helping benchmark *ProfitProbes™* with me. Kathy and Sally pinch hit for me in more ways than I can count at the office. Finally, my fourth great advantage is the support of the RFP alumni and especially our EL members. More than clients, you are friends and have been wonderfully supportive and encouraging. Thanks.

You don’t stop playing because you get old. You get old because you stop playing.

Jack says he wants to go back to work at Paint Rock Canyon next summer. If he does I think I’ll find an excuse to go with him. Maybe we can do a little fishing. But when he starts work I think I’ll even climb that rock again...this time I’ll just find an easier way down.

UPCOMING RANCHING FOR PROFIT EVENTS**Ranching For Profit Schools** *It is still only \$100 US (\$200 CAN) to repeat the school.*

Colorado Springs, CO, Dec 3-9, 2006

Edmonton, AB, Jan.14 - 20, 2007

Saskatoon, SK, Dec. 10 - 16, 2006

Billings, MT, Jan. 28. - Feb. 3, 2007

Boise, ID, Jan. 7 - 13, 2007

Economic Short Course *RFP alumni can take the Economic Short Course for only \$200 US.*

Roanoke, Virginia, September 15-16, 2006

Workshops

Enterprise, OR, 1 p.m., Aug. 19 RSVP to Cynthia Warnock 541-577-3266

Nebraska Workshops

Kearney, NE 9/11 (308-236-1235)

O'Neal, NE 9/12 (402-288-5611)

September, 11-13

Thedford, NE 9/12 (800-657-2113)

Alliance, NE 9/13 (308-235-3122)

Executive Link Meetings

Far West Chapter, Cottonwood Ranch, Wells, NV, Nov 2-4, CE: Bud Williams Marketing

Colorado Chapter, Colorado Springs, CO, Nov 6-8, CE: Time Management

Alberta Chapter, Edmonton, AB, CO, Nov 6-8, CE: Time Management

High Plains Chapter, Billings, MT, CO, Nov 6-8, CE: Strategic Visioning & Goal Actualization

East Coast Chapter, Roanoke, VA October 26-28 CE: EL Orientation

East Coast Here We Come

We plan to start an Executive Link chapter on the east coast this fall. Our first meeting will be October 26-28, 2006 in Roanoke, Virginia. Just prior to that, I'll be teaching a 2-day Economic Short Course in Roanoke Sept. 15-16. If you have friends, relatives and colleagues who may be interested in attending or would like to help spread the word, we'd like to talk to them.

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