



Opening Lines

*Note from Big Loop.
By Rachel Dahl*

The first time I ever wrote an article for CJ was back in 2011. It took me a year of missed deadlines to overcome my fear and intimidation to send something she could work with. I remember the phone call after she read my draft—there was some colorful language and some “I said...” (her) and some tears (me), but I knew she was right. I took the marked-up-and-slashed-through copy she had returned, and after much coaching and several more drafts, became a much better and more confident writer.

The intimidation has come back this past month as CJ has reminded me, repeatedly, that this column is due. “I need...” and “When can I expect...” and “Dammit kid...”

I still remember the day in early 2010 when I first called her. Filled with nerves, explaining I was Demar Dahl’s niece [see page 30], I asked if she remembered when she interviewed my dad for a story in *Nevada* magazine. I was looking for advice about becoming a freelance magazine writer. I could hardly believe she would trust me enough to give me a chance to write an article for *RANGE*, something I had only dreamed about. But now, here we are.

Some days I’m not sure she wholly trusts me, but she’s turning over the reins to her baby and teaching me more than I ever could have conceived.

These past months have been the most intimidating, the busiest, and the most fun a person could imagine. We have learned about content, timing renewals, newsstands and agents, and print orders. There have been some surprises and some mistakes, a lot of digging through old files, organizing more than 30 years of magazines and books and memorabilia into a new office space. Hiring new staff and teaching them what I’ve barely learned myself.

But getting to know all of you—this *RANGE* magazine family—has been the icing on the cake, the best reward of all. As we’ve

answered phone calls and read your mail we’ve learned so much about you, the people CJ has gathered together to support and defend this western way of life.

Sadie got a call from a sweet lady who lives out in the wilds of Wyoming and has to get her mail in town because they won’t bring it out that far. She talked about her grandchildren and getting ready for winter and how much she loves *RANGE*. I got to talk to a Montana rancher one day as he renewed his subscription and told me about his grazing permit and the Bureau of Reclamation and his getting ready for heart surgery and how he timed it so he’d be up around again to get ready for winter. There was a reader from deep in Texas, hard to hear on a line that made him sound like he was in the bottom of a well. He said they live in the middle of nowhere and don’t have very good service

and many of the roads are still gravel. I looked it up online and a satellite view shows pivots as far as the eye can see. And now I want to go there.

We enjoy hearing about your lives and how much you love *RANGE*. Last night we

stayed late to finish processing mail, so we have the most up-to-date list of subscribers to send to the printer next week. We call this exercise “Mail Bag” and it’s our favorite task. The lines written on kitchen notepads, the little “extra” you add in with your subscriptions, the many, many gifts you buy for all your friends as you help us spread the word.

“Listen to this one,” Amber said, as she read the note scrawled at the bottom of a subscription renewal. “Here’s to renew mine and a couple gifts and use the leftover to buy the crew some coffee. Keep up the good work!”

My favorite lately was addressed “To CJ and the Big Loop. Here’s for my renewal and some extra for the cause. Good luck with the transition and the hounds Clio and Othello. All you need now is a Queensland to keep you all in line. God Bless.”

Over and over we get these little boosts, reminders to keep going, that what we’re doing matters. Your encouragement and support over the years has always been inspiring, but your adding us into this *RANGE* family has meant the world. We, this scrappy little team in Fallon, want you to know that you are appreciated and we’ll do right by what you and CJ have built. ■

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