

Grandfather holds the secret to his sadness

DEAR AMY: More than 50 years ago I met a girl, and we started dating. A few months later she told me she was expecting a baby, but she said the child wasn't mine. We got married and had two more children and a nice life but divorced after 15 years.

We stayed in touch until her death. All three children have also passed away over the years. The oldest son died three years ago. This son was married and had a family, but they didn't include me in many family events. These grandchildren are young adults.

His widow wants me to be a grandfather to people I really don't know and who are not actually related to me (genetically). I guess I need to keep it to myself, but I'm not their grandfather and really don't want to become one at this stage in my life. I don't want to tell them why because it will cause them pain, but this secret is a problem, emotionally, for me. I think about it every day.

How do I come clean about this and not affect this family? I have already affected them by keeping my distance, but I just don't feel like a part of them. — Struggling Grandfather

DEAR STRUGGLING: I suspect this is not really about genetics. You sound



Ask Amy

AMY DICKINSON

very sad and alone. You seem bitter about the estrangement from your children — and perhaps this son in particular because you were a generous presence in his life. This family — his widow and her children — is already hurting. Their husband/father is gone, and now you are rejecting them.

The truth could not hurt them any more, and it might hurt them less to know that you have this incredibly burdensome secret that causes you pain and confusion.

The moment you disclose this, you will discover why you needed to. The burden will be lifted, and then you can commence the discovery of what a family really is. If you want a family, you may find this one waiting for you.

Send questions via email to askamy@tribune.com or by mail to Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611. Amy Dickinson's memoir, "The Mighty Queens of Freeville: A Mother, a Daughter and the Town that Raised Them" (Hyperion), is available in bookstores.

Erosion of a good thing

Eastern Idaho fishermen are about to screw up the world's best deal, and it is enough to make an old man — me — cry.

The best deal is at the Grandview boat slide on the Henry's Fork of the Snake River.

Three years ago, the U.S. Forest Service considered closing the boat slide, which is an unsightly rut in the hillside between the Grandview Camp Ground and the river. The rut was caused by decades of use by boaters who dragged their boats off the steep hillside to access a relatively untouched section of the famed river.

At the time, Forest Service officials said the slide was dumping silt into the river and they argued its very presence endangered the river section's listing as "wild and scenic."

At the time, a group of anglers persuaded government officials to keep the slide open. The Forest Service worked to decrease erosion on the slide and everybody was happy.

Until this summer. This year, some boaters decided they didn't want to use the slide. Instead, they are pioneering new trails down the hillside.

That is not going to work because it further scars the hillside and will eventually lead to more



In the Woods

ROB THORNBERRY

erosion issues.

Lee Mabey, a Forest Service fisheries biologist, said anglers have to do their part.

"We will do all we can to make the Grandview slide work, but if people don't honor our effort, it could all be shut down," he said.

Matt Woodard, who has used the slide for decades, challenges anglers to obey the rules.

"The word needs to get out that people making new trails down the hill at Grandview will result in all of us losing the ability to float an amazing, beautiful stretch of the Henry's Fork," he said. "The Forest Service will not tolerate further erosion by people making their own trails down to the river. Everyone loses with this type of attitude."

Woodard is right. Spoiled anglers need to do the right thing and stick to the trail before we all lose access to one of the best floats in eastern Idaho.

It is time to give PacifiCorp a big, wet kiss for its work rebuilding Ashton Dam.

Too often, conservationists and big business end up on opposite sides of a natural-resource issue. There they take turns pointing fingers and blaming each other.

That didn't happen when PacifiCorp plugged holes in the aging dam west of Ashton. The power utility rebuilt the nearly 100-year-old dam and did so without harming the famed downstream fishery.

PacifiCorp officials listened to concerns from Fish and Game and the Henry's Fork Foundation and completed the work with little damage to the river.

"I'm pretty happy with the way things have turned out," said Dan Garren, Fish and Game's fisheries manager in the Upper Snake Region. "They avoided a large-scale sediment event and, when you think about the scope of the project up there, that's pretty amazing."

Garren believes the power utility's communication and outreach to anglers was "awesome."

"PacifiCorp listened, and I really think they stepped up their efforts," Garren said.

Brandon Hoffner, executive director of the Henry's Fork Foundation, said

the utility was great to work with.

"They have been very responsive to our concerns," he said. "We are very happy with the fact they were able to get the project done with what looks like minimal effects to the river."

So, as an angler who loves the river downstream of Ashton Dam, I also say thanks to PacifiCorp for the nice work.

Elk hunters who have controlled hunt tags in November should be happy this year, said Daryl Meints, Fish and Game's regional wildlife manager in Idaho Falls.

"I think they are going to do very well," Meints said.

His confidence is fueled by the fact that biologists over the past few years have cut the number of elk tags in Island Park, Pioneer and Beaverhead zones. Lower harvest over the past couple of years should lead to lots of animals in the hills this year.

Meints said archery hunters reported seeing lots of animals.

"All indications are that we've made some substantial improvement in our herds," he said.

The general season cow hunt east of Idaho Falls is open, but the popular hunt won't start in earnest until more snow flies.

The hunt was started to keep a lid on the productive elk herd that ranges from Palisades Reservoir to Soda Springs. Many of those elk winter on the Tex Creek Wildlife Management Area, and biologists started the cow hunt to keep the herd from growing too large for the winter range.

It is a popular hunt with hunters looking to fill their freezer, but annual success rates are driven largely by snow.

It snows, and elk leave their well-protected winter haunts. It doesn't, and we are all buying burgers at the grocery store.

The annual eastern Idaho moose hunt runs until Nov. 23, but it is already being considered a great success, Meints said.

Hunters must report all harvested animals to Fish and Game, and so far this year, the quality of the animals is "impressive," Meints said.

"As far as the size of bull moose that I am seeing, it has been a long time since I've seen this quality," he said.

He said the department

has checked a large number of moose with antler spreads exceeding 40 inches. Some have reached 45 inches, which is considered a huge bull for this region.

"I am very happy to report that this has been one of the best moose seasons we've had in a long time," Meints said.

The fishing report from the upper Salmon River is good, according to creel data collected by Fish and Game.

"Overall, this was the best weekend of fishing that has been observed on the upper Salmon River this fall," said Brent Beller of Fish and Game.

Beller's crew checked 369 anglers who reported catching 151 fish.

The best fishing was between the South Fork of the Salmon River and the Middle Fork of the Salmon River.

Water temperatures are in the high 30s.

Water clarity was good over the weekend, but there is still a possibility the river could be clouded by rain falling on the recent burns.

Fishing is great on Henry's Lake, according to a number of reports.

Fish are congregated along the shorelines, which makes for a quality fishing experience for bank anglers and float tubers.

Bank anglers are doing well near the state park and county boat dock.

Boat anglers are catching fish all over the lake.

Anglers are catching fish on leech patterns, spinners, Rapalas and night crawlers.

The only catch is that it can be cold. Be prepared.

Teton Regional Land Trust is seeking volunteers for a project Saturday and Sunday.

Restoration Specialist Tamara Sperber and her team will hold a "planting project" along the banks of the Teton River to improve fish and wildlife habitat on a conservation easement property.

The work starts at 9 a.m.

Bring appropriate clothing for cold and wet weather. Rubber boots and waders are recommended. Also bring your own work gloves.

The land trust will provide lunch.

This project is a partnership with Teton Valley Trout Unlimited.

For information and to sign up, email Tamara@tetonlandtrust.org or call (208) 354-8939.

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