

## Two Lifelong Love Affairs

Jennifer Tennican: You are watching and listening to

Rebecca Huntington: Wyoming Media Lab.

Rebecca: I'm Rebecca Huntington.

Jennifer: And I'm Jennifer Tennican. And this is Wyoming Media Lab.

Bert: One night, coming back from Yellowstone, we ran into porcupines...all headed South. We estimated hundreds.

Bert: We were even...

Jennifer: If there's one guy you would trust in Jackson about nature observations, it would be Bert Raynes.

Rebecca: But it still stretches the imagination.

Jennifer: Well, I mean, honestly, you should know. You interviewed him.

Rebecca: Where did your love of nature come from?

Bert: My wife. Meg Raynes. I was a city kid and she had rural roots. She taught me everything. Grew up on the mean streets of Jersey City, New Jersey, with very little opportunity to get out [horns] away from the streets and it wasn't until I went to college and away from home, that I knew anything much different than that.

Interviewer: How did you and Meg meet?

Bert: Well, we were tall people. She was a 6'1" and a half and I saw this tall woman running around with a bunch of little girls, half her size. I had to meet her. So, I met her and uh, she snagged me.

Jennifer: Meg gets him into nature, they end up living in upstate New York. Bert's a chemical engineer with GE then they moved to Cleveland. They just keep getting involved with these no-good naturalist people and they learned more about birds, they become really avid birders and nature is this integral part of their life together. Eventually, they end up in Jackson.

Rebecca: How did you guys end up in Jackson Hole?

Bert: I had read about Jackson Hole when I was a kid and always wanted to see Tetons. So our first real vacation, we drove out here, and we came at just the wrong time- it was mosquito time [mosquito sounds]. We never saw the whole mountain range [thunder], because of clouds and showers. But we fell in love with the people.

Rebecca: And now we get to the porcupines, right?

Jennifer: Slow down, you don't want to rush a good love story.

Narrator: So, Meg and Bert shared their love of nature with a lot of people and when Meg passed away, Bert wanted to find a way to keep honoring his love for her. That's where Bert's friend Steve Kilpatrick comes in.

Steve Kilpatrick: He goes, you know, I'm getting on with life. What are some options for me to invest my money in that are wildlife-oriented and will be, you know, conservation-directed?

Steve: I just thought for a minute, I go, "Man, you been writing these and you know that was a few years ago, but for at least 35 years, you been writing this column, asking people to sorta document what's happening with wildlife in a valley with emphasis on birds. But uh, you know that's not retrievable. We can't really do anything with that. We can't go back through 40 years of newspaper articles and so, I said, "Well, maybe we got to do some citizen science thing."

Narrator: And that, my friend, is how nature mapping Jackson Hole was born.

Rebecca: So nature mapping is a form of citizen science.

Jennifer: Absolutely. Citizens are trained to record what, where, and when they see wildlife.

Rebecca: But is that really science?

Jennifer: With so many boots on the ground, hiking boots on the ground, that is, you get thousands of sightings.

Jennifer: The sightings are vetted and put into a database, and then scientists and wildlife managers can use that information for research and for making decisions that could affect wildlife. Even though Bert's known as a bird guy, nature mapping doesn't just keep track of birds. It's for elk, moose, deer,

Rebecca: Porcupines?

Jennifer: Bingo. I am glad you are still interested in porcupines, my friend.

Jennifer: So now that nature mapping is up and running, Steve Kilpatrick goes to see Bert.

Bert: Steve, baby!

Steve: So you got thoughts on observations?

Bert: I got a little uh-

Steve: Paul Hood here, who's our techno expert.

Paul: When nature mapping was first started, um, Meg was given observer number 1 and Bert was given nature observer number 2.

Jennifer: And so Bert came up with this sort of greatest hits list of observations and that's where we got to the porcupine story.

Rebecca: Finally.

Jennifer: Do you know what they call a group of porcupines?

Rebecca: I do not.

Jennifer: They're called a prickle.

Rebecca: [laughs]

Paul: Hundred?

Bert: 80... I think is what we kinda- we didn't start counting immediately. You know you see one and then you see another. They reminded me of cattle where you don't have to really haze them anymore, they know where they're going and they just go single file basically.

Paul: Wow.

Bert: We were along Jackson Lake by that time, so, it was in the Grand Teton.

Paul: We're talking 80 porcupines, not 80 shots of whiskey.

[laughter]

Bert: We had children in the car.

Paul: Oh. [laughs]

Bert: Nobody believes it.

Steve: I don't believe it, that's incredible. [laughs]

Paul: What time of year do, uh, porcupines [crosstalk] migrate? [laughs]

Bert: September. September

Paul: Would you say they were running? Walking? Flying? [laughs]

Bert: Waddling. Have you ever watched a porcupine?

Bert: Sorta the way I walk.

Paul: [laughs] Okay.

Steve: Hallucinatory drugs weren't common in those days.

Bert: We're, um, pure and innocent.

[laughter]

Steve: This is pretty wild story. [laughs]

Bert: I know.

[playful music]

Bert: Wait 'til I tell you about the whale.

Paul: Do you have any idea what year?

Bert: '75 would be my best guess.

Paul: Alright, I'm gonna submit this one.

Bert: That's really it.

Paul: Today we'll go ahead and retire Meg Raynes' account. And then, then you'll be the first one. You'll be username number 1. And uh, the username library, so.

Bert: I don't look forward to that, particularly.

Rebecca: Bert really didn't want to take over position number 1, did he?

Jennifer: It's really Steve who steps up and makes sure that Meg's number will not be taken over by Bert and her number will just be retired, but he doesn't even want the number to be retired.

Susan1: Where's that?

Steve: Behind these 4 trekkers.

Susan: Is it perched or?

Susan: Well, let's check in with Mr. Bert.

Bert: I don't think you can know too much about the environment that you live in. My wife, Meg, used to say, "I like the environment. I live in it." And it's true, we live in it. You ought to like it.

Bert: It's fun to open somebody's eyes the way mine were opened. You can sit there and see 'em get the spark and think, "There, I've ruined another life. They're going to be bird watchers." Satisfying.

Jennifer: Bert is known as a bird guy. So, the irony of this piece being about a mammal sighting is not lost on him.

Rebecca: This is Rebecca Huntington.

Jennifer: And this is Jennifer Tennican.

Rebecca: For Wyoming Media Lab.

Jennifer: Which is actually where we're recording in a minivan.

[laughter]

Jennifer: And now, we're going to leave the minivan.

[car door opens] [car door closes]