



# Reflections on Baldpate's 2013 September Flood Disaster

(presented for Summer Enchanted Evenings one year later, September 2014 by Lois H Smith, Innkeeper)



## Reflections Baldpate 2013 Flood

As I have been wondering how best to convey where we are now with our Flood Disaster Challenges, two themes keep popping up that have become my mantra over the past months

Love one another (Give & Accept help)

Be thankful (Too blessed to be Stressed)!

## LOVE one another (Give & Accept help)

### Love one another (Give & Receive Help)

▶ Linking arms got us over and across



That September Thursday morning, after what seemed like unceasing days of pouring rain, the raging waters put the gravity of the increasing dangers squarely in our face. Paramount was safety for our guests and staff (as we all know, buildings and roads can be replaced but people are one of a kind).

From the earliest hours, Staff & even our guests were valiantly battling the water, trying to avert damages. By mid morning we called 911 for evacuation help. The immediate response was incredible; our local police arrived to provide escape for us. By this time

our road was severed with numerous six foot wide washouts filled with raging waters. Walking up and out was the only option, but that meant leaving everything behind, heading out into the torrential rains and somehow getting over those roaring waters.

Our rescuers calmly explained the escape method; at each impasse they would link arms on each side with each evacuee, then jump them across the rushing water. LINKING ARMS was the method to safely get through. This to me is literally & figuratively, love personified, I have often needed to be reminded that God did not put us here to struggle alone. I know that sometimes my pride blocks my way (the "I must do this myself" theory) and I fail to ask for or be open to help from those who have been set in my path to link arms to help me.



We did evacuate our guests immediately, but at the recommendation of our emergency authorities, the staff and I chose to stay on premise to wait out the storm. We had electricity, fireplaces for heat and clean water, since we have our own system. We were very thankful to be together and safe, even though, without cell phone or internet, we did not have contact with the world outside. Initially we believed it might be possible to re-open, but once we learned the UTSD, our sewer utility, had been destroyed, there was no choice but to close for 2013.

Since we were stocked up to go another month, emptying our refrigerators and locking up for winter were even more of a job than usual especially because we had no vehicle access. We donated what we could to the Red Cross Shelters hand carrying it to the top of our driveway. The first couple of days since it continued to rain on & off, we worked at diverting water and digging trenches to prevent more damages. Then we cleaned as best we could with the "no-flush" restrictions. Our cars were finally rescued to the top of the driveway, phone and internet restored, and staff said sad farewells and evacuated to the Denver area. Walking everything I could out, I moved to my home in Estes Park which thankfully was undamaged.



Just the other day a guest shared this thought as we were discussing the flood – Tragedy + Time = Comedy. Altho I didn't need much time, that proved true for me! Because next, my comic relief, our hungry local bears added to the Baldpate adventure, breaking in on a nightly basis to check for food and generally make a mess since we weren't there to scare them away. Unfortunately 6 sets of windows were completely destroyed in the process. I was not happy, but thankful to be safe at home since one of the windows they came through was my Baldpate bedroom window!!

The real joke however came a week or so later, frightening then, I now have to laugh that I had to call for emergency help again. In the middle of the night, our infamous Estes wind had blown open my front door and I realized I had a bear scrounging around in my house in town!!!

## BE THANKFUL (Too blessed to be stressed)



### Be Thankful (too Blessed to be Stressed)



Beginning again with that crazy morning, the stress was sincere. Looking back at my crude video account I realize how many days we were on high alert. Even now, I have days where I feel real recovery is not possible.

Whether shoveling mud, boarding broken windows, donating to restoration, delaying account and loan payments, scaring away the bears or just listening to our concerns, our family and Baldpate friends will never know how much encouraged we were by their actions.

I especially love this photo which is symbolic of how blessed I am. It was sent in the midst of the disaster to my own kids by our friend, Sheriff Justin Smith. He had flown over and wanted my family to know I was okay when we had no way to contact each other.



### Donations & Grants



- ▶ Help from Friends & Family
  - ▶ Donations from Baldpate Alumni & Guests
  - ▶ Grants
- History Colorado via Preservation Colorado Inc  
United Way of Larimer County

Since those first few traumatic weeks, we have been blessed to have received a grant from History Colorado via Preservation Colorado Inc. That grant allowed us to repair the windows correctly and shore up our foundations where it had washed away and was compromised.

Our road was a significant problem, as you can imagine. After many calls & letters, we did receive assistance from the county (our driveway is actually a county road) for temporary repairs on our driveway just the week before we were

to open for this summer. In addition to the culvert work and thousands of dollars we had personally spent last fall, the county provided over 60 dump trucks of fill, equipment & manpower to create safe passage for our summer season. Just yesterday I was notified more permanent repairs will begin next week!



As well we received a grant from Larimer County United Way to assist with our financial loss, repaying advance deposits and utility bills. As I believe is the case with many of our business neighbors, our fall season is critically important to our bottom line. For me at Baldpate, closing unexpectedly meant a loss of 20% of my gross income, which let me tell you is significantly more than my profit margin. So even with the deferred payments granted by some banks & vendors, it seems financial recovery is likely to be the biggest long term issue for me and many of my business partners.



## Challenges & Pending Projects



- ▶ Foundations & Roof repairs
- ▶ Utilities - Sewer & Propane repairs
- ▶ Road culverts & resurfacing
- ▶ Financial Recovery
- ▶ Deferred maintenance
- ▶ Homestead completion

Sooooooo.... While we still have challenges & pending projects, we do have hope (and lots of new stories :)

Just opening for this season presented unusual challenges since we had not been able to do our normal winterization. And our opening staff had to clean up after our bears in addition to their normal spring cleaning. Since our propane tank had been filled just a day or two before the flood, it was too heavy to be easily moved from its displaced location.

Projects we had hoped to complete like renovation of Baldpate's original homestead had to be pushed aside to do foundation and roof repairs!

Then of course, paying bills with no money is always interesting!



YES, disaster has new meaning for us! Floods can come up or down :) But either way, Linking arms, Mountain strong, helping each other is the solution! For us as small businesses, that may mean a guest visits one more time or friend supports us by some unexpected kind gesture.

YES, things have changed, we can choose to bemoan the past or celebrate and be blessed that as a result of those rushing waters, and perhaps you have the same, the basements at Baldpate have never been so clean and our road will be better than ever! We came away with experience that helped us calmly get through our fire last week!