

We know who you are and we know what you like

Look into the mirror. Congratulations, you're the face of Montana for November, chosen because of our readership survey. So, let me tell you something about yourself.

You're 46 years or older, more likely to be female than male and very likely to read all 12 issues a year, many of you from cover to cover.

You're highly satisfied with *RM*, and the older you are, the more satisfied you become — thank you very much for aging gratefully.

If you're a woman, your favorite is recipes, and your least favorite is politics. If you're a man, you might say your least favorite is recipes, but an awful lot of you will be sneaking peeks at the shrimp recipes in this issue.

You read the features and like those that have to do with Montana people and places. The calendar draws a lot of attention, too.

Of the 1,123 surveys mailed from our cooperatives, based on a random sampling of members in each, 353 surveys came back, a whopping 35 percent response. Half the co-ops returned about 50 percent or better, mostly from the rural areas of the state.

I congratulated Manager John Sokoloski of Wibaux-based Goldenwest Electric on his rate of return. "By my math," I said, "you made 67 percent." His response was to guess the names of the two members who returned surveys. He promised to call the third member and urge him to get the survey mailed. Thus, Goldenwest achieved 100 percent.



Buoyed by the success of that maneuver, I called Manager Ken Sugden of Flathead Electric, based in Kalispell, and asked him to duplicate Sokoloski's performance with his 40,000-plus membership. Last time I saw him, Ken was still laughing at me.

Anyhoo. A more detailed survey analysis is on page 7.

Meanwhile, let's have some fun with some of your responses, my wisecracks in italics. Then I'll tell you where the survey will take your magazine.

Relax, we're not changing things very much. We gave respondents free rein to tell us where to cut sections of the magazine. More people told us not to cut anything than the 11 who gave us responses. Of those, nine said to cut politics, and two curmudgeons said we oughta whack the kid section of art and poetry. Ain't gonna happen — those kids are going to grow up to be co-op members, maybe even trustees.

When we asked for least favorite, politicians drew a lot of fire. "Make them answer the questions," one of you wrote. *Wish us luck with that.* One woman said we shouldn't talk politics until we deleted the propaganda. *Hmmmm?*

Global warming drew a lot of heat — and like our reader forum on the topic, about nine in 10 think the backers of disaster have been dining on too much bologna.

Besides recipes, the favorites were young people, including the Youth Tour, the tribute to Wade Sukut, your local co-op news, the photos and global warming, of all things. "You poked fun at both sides," one of you wrote. Oh, and some of you mentioned this column. *God bless you.* Although....

Two of the more sadistic among you made a point of mentioning that you missed the previous editor, Mack McConnell, and one poor soul thinks he's still writing for the magazine. *Ouch.*

Many readers liked the survey itself. Very many said they liked the magazine and encouraged us to keep up the good work. On the extreme side, one of you wrote that we were as good as Texas Monthly, Arizona Highways and AARP. *Wow.*

But a reality check came from one reader who spoke up to say, "Stop sending the magazine and apply the savings to my electricity bill."

Now what? What do we do with the wealth of data and commentary we gained from the survey?

You've already seen one little touch. The cover. Although we already have a high readership, for the next few months, we will exploit the glamour animals of Montana. In the hope that new and younger readers will pick up *RM* and examine it, especially in high-growth areas. It's not a big deal. We know that as younger people

age, they become more involved with issues, just as they vote more faithfully as the years pass. We don't have to chase young readers — they'll grow into *RM*.

And we definitely don't want to mess up the magazine that our core readership already likes.

Still, many of you said you wanted more stories on energy technology and electrical safety as well as a reader response department.

On page 13, you'll find comments from readers, some from the mail, others from the survey.

We'll keep up that segment as a place to exchange ideas. And, contrary to usual practices, you can remain anonymous, although we won't allow libel or profanity, no matter how well-intentioned. Beware, I'll edit as I please, while keeping to the spirit of your words.

Thanks to all our readers. And, by the way, you don't have to wait for a survey to let us know how you're feeling. We're as close as your mailbox or e-mail program. Pick up the phone if you like.

Finally, check out the recipes closely. You'll see we added one extra this month and a tasteful review of the delicious winning entry.

We got a feeling, to paraphrase a line out of "Seinfeld" that if you call the ocean next week, it's gonna be running out of shrimp.