

Priest Lake Web site keeps community churning

By NICK IVIE
Staff writer

PRIEST LAKE — Churning. Apart from the butter making process, means to stir or shake up.

Something Priest Lake resident Pecky Cox has been doing since 2007 with her Web site, *As The Lake Churns*. A site designed to inform not only North Idaho but the world to the happenings of the lake, the land and the people.

"One of the first things I noticed about our lake was the most up-to-date communication device was the laundromat bulletin board," Cox said. "Unless you relied upon word of mouth or telephone you were totally left out of the loop of what is really happening at Priest Lake."

Pecky's love for the lake began during her first visit in 1977. She would come to visit her brother Mario who attended Priest River Lamanna High School as a foreign exchange student, living with the Deinhardt family during the school year and Dean Stevens at Granite Creek Marina during the summer.

Her appreciation for the area was as strong as her love for the people. Befriending the Stevens' daughter, Melissa, and continuing to refer to Dean as "Dad" even today. The rigors of life would unfortunately keep Cox from returning to her "crown jewel" once again until 2003.

Prior to meeting her husband Fred through a love of golf, Pecky lived a lavish lifestyle, traveling the world while enjoying cooks, maids, drivers and gardeners, but was never truly happy as her heart was always in North Idaho. As soon as she showed up in August 2003, she would realize her days of weekly manicures were over as Fred would have a chainsaw in her hands by fall.

"I was asked once by a Washington newspaper how I felt about Priest Lake and I said, 'Maybe I died and went to heaven and didn't notice,' and that is why I'm here."

With the age of technology



—Courtesy photo/Pecky Cox, *As The Lake Churns*

As The Lake Churns creator Pecky Cox celebrates her citizenship into the United States with her husband Fred in June 2008.

where it is today Pecky quickly found the current means of information sharing at the lake inexcusable.

The idea of the *As The Lake Churns* Web site came about to fill that need and also provide a place for her to display her photography, something she would soon be known for nationally. Before long the site that celebrated reaching 100 viewers in a week would quickly be getting between 7,000 and 8,000 viewers per week.

Cox considers herself a "shutter bug" and recalled the story of how she acquired her first camera.

"When I was 7 years old I was

saving money to buy a camera. I came up short and 'liberated' a few pesos from my mother's purse to complete the purchase. I was forgiven when she saw some nice pictures, but she made me give her the photos since I used her money to get them. I never found out how she knew."

She would go on to say about photography, "So much beauty just flies by our observation, unless someone frames it and hangs it on the walls of our mind."

Apart from fabulous pictures depicting the people and places of the Priest Lake area, *As The Lake Churns* offers visitors live webcams, a chat forum, an e-bulletin board, updated maps, a business directory and a current events calendar.

Offshoots stemming from the site include the formation of the Priest Lake Photography Group on Facebook and the Priest Lake Task Force. A group initiated by *As The Lake Churns* for the purpose of cleaning up the lake and ridding it of stray docks and boats. Something Cox takes great pride in and had the feeling reciprocated when Idaho Gov. Butch Otter recognized the site for being directly responsible

for locating a boat loaded with invasive mussels heading for the lake.

With everything that is already featured Pecky still plans to improve the site and the Priest Lake area in general through more webcams, a history blog, Priest Lake auction and people helping people sections besides continuing her efforts for a cleaner lake one beach at a time through the Priest Lake Task Force.

Apart from keeping the people of the lake together as a community, *As The Lake Churns* has been directly responsible for finding lost dogs, missing docks, boats, but more importantly for reuniting old friends and even lost relatives.

"I have had, literally, scores of people from all over the world tell me, thank you for giving us a way to stay plugged into our lake while away." From Florida to Mexico people tell me they love the connection and especially the webcams."

Cox proved to be as dedicated to her country as she is to her lake when on June 17, 2008, she would raise her right hand and say the Pledge of Allegiance for the first time as a citizen of the United States. Something she was not required to do with a green card good for life, but chose to do in order to join in on honoring the country.

To view the *As The Lake Churns* site you can go to: www.priestlaker.com or www.peckycox.com. You can also find Pecky and her work on Facebook or flickr by searching Pecky Cox, Priest Lake.

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