

**Big Sky Fox Trotter Association**  
Minutes for January 21, 2006 meeting,  
12:00 p.m., Jokers Wild Casino, Missoula, MT

**Call to order:** President Ross Damrow called the meeting to order at 12:20 p.m. Attending the meeting were the following newly elected 2006 officers and board members: president Ross Damrow, vice president Bob Womack, secretary Karen Philips, treasurer Donna Goss, directors Bill Free (western region), Mary Greene (central region), and Mark Goss and Gail Hansen (at large representatives). Members attending were Mary Auger, Vonnie Campbell, Jerry Christison, Ann Damrow, Bobbi Dyrud, Candace Erickson, Thea Gervais, Craig Hansen, Elmer Hansen, Catherine Hanson, Gary Hanson, Michael Hummert, Joyce Johnson, Suzanne Nebeker, Cathy Olson, Randy Olson, Annette Padgett, Kristina Tracer, and Jack Womack. Also attending was guest Pam Ristad who is Candace Erickson's sister. This was a great turnout (28) and Ross thanked everyone for coming and some from a very long distance--Randy and Cathy Olson came from Rigby, Idaho!

**Minutes:** Jack Womack moved and Mark Goss seconded that the October 15, 2005 minutes be approved as printed in the Jan./Feb. BSFTA newsletter. Motion passed.

**Treasurer's report:** Treasurer Donna Goss reported the ending balance as of 12/31/05 was \$1,853.91. This is down \$1,333.04 from 12/31/04. Our balance as of 1/21/06 is \$2,004.91, which includes dues from membership renewals. We have one outstanding check for \$131.96 (from 2004) that Ross will follow up on. This check needs to be cashed or returned to the treasury. Michael Hummert moved and Jack Womack seconded that the treasurer's report be approved. Motion passed.

**Committee Reports:**

**Trail Rides:** Thea Gervais, trail rides chair, reported that Lost Trail Hot Springs (close to the Idaho border on Hwy. 93) is being considered for a club ride or a National Trail Ride. Karen Philips, Thea and Jeanine Nelson will investigate this site.

Suzanne Nebeker agreed to host a National Trail Ride in the Salmon area. She had participants from last year's ride request another ride this year.

Mary Greene, Jerry Christison and Jan & Ray Prill will work with Thea to organize a ride in the Bob Marshall Wilderness (Benchmark area). Ross requested that this be our annual Fall Gather Ride and National Trail Ride, traditionally scheduled the third weekend of August (Aug. 18-20). It is our turn this year to host this ride with Wyoming, as Craig Dansie and the Wyoming group hosted it last year with us. Contact Mary at 406-443-6133 or mfnngreene@gmail.com and Jerry Christison at 406-227-5400 or lazyjc@opexonline.com for more information.

Jerry Christison said there are two spots available for a 135 mile trip (5-6 days) in the Bob Marshall from Essex to Benchmark. Contact Jerry for more information.

The Curt Bates and Laurie DeMarois Memorial Trail Ride (after the show) takes place July 23.

Contact Thea Gervais at 406-642-6546 or mtgervais@hotmail.com if you have other trail ride ideas.

**Clinics:** Mark Goss, clinics chair, reported that Jane Zubia will be in Corvallis this spring and summer. Dates are March 10-19, May 19-24 (then she goes to the Moses Lake show) and July 9-24. She will train riders, horses, and horses and riders together and will work at Mark and Donna's arena. Contact Jane at 307-754-5610 or satngait@tritnet.net to schedule spots and Mark at 406-961-3119 or mrg1947m@netscape.net to reserve stalls.

Mark reminded members that BSFTA can host a clinic anywhere in the region, and he urged members to contact him. Ross asked Mary Greene to research possible places for clinics in the central area of

Montana. Pam Ristad mentioned Parelli clinics at a Florence arena; Annette will get those clinics into the newsletter and to Lauren, our webmaster.

Mark is organizing a ranch versatility clinic which would be ongoing and possibly start in April. He has no details for it yet.

For members who want to improve their skills during the winter months, Thea has training videos and DVDs. These include the Dennis Reis series, Ray Hunt, Clinton Anderson (working with gaited horses), and David Lichman, who is Parelli trained and has a series entitled Gaited Horses Naturally. She offered to share the videos and DVDs at her and other members' homes. She can also get tickets to Dennis Reis clinics. If you are interested in seeing the videos, are willing to host a get-together at your home, or want Dennis Reis clinic tickets, contact Thea.

Contact Mark Goss at 406-961-3119 or mrg1947m@netscape.net if you have clinic ideas.

**Show:** BSFTA's show is July 21-22, and Ross volunteered to be the 2006 show chair. He is working on the class schedule and will call on members to handle various jobs that need to be accomplished. There will be a Thursday night BBQ, similar to last year. More details will follow in future meetings.

**Youth Committee:** Jack Womack, Youth Chair, reported that he started drafting a mission statement for the youth chapter. The first objective of any MFTHBA youth chapter is to further the breed. The second objective is to equip youth with knowledge about fox trotters, showing, trail riding, and horse care and to provide them with the resources needed to take over the youth chapter.

We need more youth members and he appealed to anyone who has youth relatives or friends to contact him so that he can encourage them to get involved. The club will be a subset of BSFTA (BSFTA Youth Association), which in the future will have its own officers. Jack said our group will not require youth members to own a fox trotter.

Jack wants to use talent within the association to train youth in showing, etc. Gary Hanson requested that we provide basic training for adults and youth, which members agreed is a good idea. Suzanne suggested we continue to offer novice classes for youth and adults which encourages greater participation. Bill Free offered to help train novice youth and adults on gaits, showing, and understanding the classes.

Mark suggested putting signs up in various businesses that cater to "horse people" and in that way reach outside of our organization. Bill Free noted that liability is always an issue, so activities for youth need to be covered under BSFTA's insurance and parents need to sign a release. Catherine Hanson said to be very organized before we start promoting because kids who respond will want to get involved and be able to ride a horse, not just learn about them. Pony Clubs and 4-H are good groups to approach. The age range for this club is approximately 5 to 18. Jack will send youth club information to Annette for the newsletter and to Lauren for the web site.

If you have or know of any teens, children, or grandchildren who might be interested in the youth club or you know of youth organizations for Jack to call, contact him at 406-549-4344 or jackwomack@hotmail.com.

#### **Old Business:**

**Intermountain Regional High Point Versatility Horse and Rider Circuit:** Ross reported that MFTHBA's versatility committee has taken a more visible position on the circuit since our last meeting on Oct. 15, 2005. At the October meeting, after extensive discussion, a motion was made and passed to table the circuit topic, have current and newly elected directors and officers meet to discuss it further, and have the board make recommendations to the membership at the January 21 meeting.

As required by the motion, the board met before the general meeting to discuss the circuit. It was apparent to board members that a lot of work had gone into the circuit concept since last year, and according to Ross, Roger Cole, MFTHBA Versatility Chair, has been bombarded by e-mails. The board reviewed the information presented by MFTHBA in the January issue of the Journal (page 22) and the concerns brought up by members at the October meeting, and they agreed the circuit concept is great. However, the board felt that several issues that originally surfaced and were discussed at length at the October meeting still remained.

One roadblock for board members was the requirement that exhibitors must compete at Ava as part of the circuit. Board members want to encourage participation at Ava, but their first priority is to encourage participation at the local level. Board members felt that the Ava show requirement could discourage local participation in the circuit because competitors who can't afford to go to Ava have no chance of winning the award or recognition for their participation.

The second concern for board members was that the circuit is intended to be a regional competition but as it is structured now, with only three shows allowed to participate, it excludes other shows in our region from being involved. Board members felt that other shows, like Washington, Oregon, and Wyoming, ought to be included in the circuit if they offer versatility classes and they want to participate.

The recommendation from board members at the Board of Directors meeting was that, until these concerns are reconciled, their position is to pass on participating in the circuit this year but to continue working with MFTHBA to resolve these issues for 2007.

Suzanne Nebeker spoke and said that she worked with Roger Cole and Brent Strong from Utah to organize the circuit. They chose the intermountain corridor to determine which shows would be in the circuit because of their proximity to each other. She was on both Montana's and Utah's show committees, and it made sense to her to work with those shows for the circuit. She said the Washington show was over before they really got rolling with the circuit idea. They are trying to get regional shows to offer more versatility classes because they have found good participation in those classes. They want western competitors recognized at Ava and the western region recognized as the center for versatility horses.

She fought the Ava requirement but couldn't get it changed, even though people in Missouri thought it was wrong too. The argument for requiring participation in Ava is that participation in versatility classes at the Celebration in the past was low, although that is changing. The goal is to have other regions besides Missouri represented in world competition at Ava. She asked members to look past today and look to the future instead. If clubs continue to grow there may come a time when they can sponsor their high point versatility competitors. If BSFTA doesn't participate in the circuit this year, there will be another third circuit show somewhere else. Her thought was that Oregon and Washington could have their own circuit because they are fairly close to each other. Idaho has an affiliate but no one knows about it. They are trying to get it going and are looking at doing a circuit show in that state this year or next. The future vision is that regions could have more than one circuit.

She recognized another argument from board members which is that circuit shows must offer competition for youth, amateur, and open for each versatility and ranch horse class. This requires more classes, awards, money and time. She said Utah has done it four years now and it actually increased the show fees because it increased participation, so it turned out to be a wash, cost wise. She suggested rearranging the sponsorship money to include more youth and amateur versatility classes.

Another complaint she hears is that there is only one national high point award, so competitors can only compete in the open classes to win this award. The reason given by MFTHBA for this is that there are not enough competitors in the youth and amateur versatility classes. Suzanne said out west most people compete in the amateur division. Competitors can't earn any points in youth or amateur divisions at Ava, but we can show these numbers by having youth and amateur divisions at our shows and submitting the numbers of competitors to Ava. She is also trying to get novice classes offered in the versatility classes at Ava.

Suzanne said she didn't get any feedback from Montana and Utah suggesting changes. Ross questioned the time frame of this as he expressed these exact same concerns in an e-mail to Suzanne on October 14. She said the versatility committee met after the Celebration show. Between Sept. 20 and early December they had conversations about the circuit. She did get these questions from affiliates: Why do we have to compete in Ava, why wasn't Washington included in the circuit and why do we have to have three divisions (youth, amateur and open)? Ross communicated with Roger Cole and previously talked with Brent Strong from Utah who expressed additional reservations beyond those that were brought up by BSFTA. In all of those communications, Ross expressed the same concerns that have been discussed today. Ross said it is clear to him from these communications that BSFTA is not alone with its concerns about the circuit. BSFTA thinks the circuit is a great concept, but Ross asked "Who is listening to our concerns about it?" There is a principle involved here and we are talking to the national versatility committee, but we don't get the impression that anyone is listening to our suggestions. Ross said he can send MFTHBA all of our show records for amateur participation in our versatility classes if they want to see our numbers. That evidence doesn't have to come from circuit competition.

Suzanne said the circuit concept is in its infancy and BSFTA has an opportunity to be a leader. She asked for the club's endorsement to participate in the circuit this year using shows in the intermountain area. We have three people from our region on the national versatility committee: Suzanne, Mark Goss, and Brent Strong. If there are objections from the affiliates in our region, those three will hear about it. It is too late this year to make changes, but they can be made for 2007.

Bob Womack reiterated the concerns of the BSFTA board and members at this meeting, saying if things will change in 2007 so that everybody can compete on an even scale, and the structure is fair and includes all shows in our region that want to be involved, then we are all for it, but not under the current circumstances.

Mark disagreed on one point in that he feels Ava is listening to affiliates more than they ever have before. In the last two years they provided financial support for judges' clinics outside of Missouri. This has never happened before. The problem is a performance versus versatility battle within MFTHBA, and they are trying to increase participation in Ava rather than increasing participation in Hamilton, Montana. He feels they need to increase participation at the local level first, before they can increase participation in Ava. Their scoring system is skewed, awarding more points at Ava than all of the points that can possibly be earned in the regional circuit shows combined. A competitor can register for a circuit, not compete in any of those shows, go to Ava, and still win it all.

Ross listed the options available to BSFTA:

Option 1. We participate in the circuit, which means we coordinate with two other circuit shows to provide two saddles (the third one is provided by MFTHBA). Saddles will be awarded to winners of the youth, amateur and open divisions.

Regarding option 1, Ross heard this from Utah: They didn't want to have to get sponsors for the saddles, and they didn't like the requirement to compete at Ava. They decided live with the Ava requirement this year but work with the national committee to change it to something they are more comfortable with in 2007. The arrangement made for saddles is this: Foxtrot USA is providing one saddle, Suzanne has promised Utah that she will get sponsorships for their saddle, and she is willing to do that for BSFTA also. She said BSFTA doesn't have to worry about getting a saddle--she will take care of that obligation for the club.

To be in the circuit we have to offer 8 versatility classes for youth, amateur, and open for a total of 24, some of which we already have in our class schedule. The 8 classes are Western Pleasure, English Pleasure, Western Horsemanship, Showmanship, Trail, Reining, Barrels, and Poles. Shows can offer additional classes like ranch horse classes, but they don't have to.

Option 2. We choose not to participate in the circuit this year and work to get the appropriate changes made for 2007.

Gary Hanson said the board met behind closed doors, formed their opinion behind closed doors and announced their decision. He asked how many board members who participated in the circuit helped influence the board and said we have people who want to enter the circuit, so what would it hurt the club to sponsor this. He felt people had been unduly and negatively influenced by the boards' position.

Jack Womack moved and Mark Goss seconded that we call a vote to either participate with a yes vote or not participate with a no vote in the 2006 Intermountain Circuit. More discussion followed. One question asked was if there was any way to combine the divisions in each class so the show would go faster, and Suzanne said we can't do that because of the way the scoring is set up. The vote was 13 yes, 12 no, and 2 abstentions. Motion passed and BSFTA will participate in the 2006 Intermountain Versatility Circuit.

### **New Business:**

**Induction of 2006 Officers and Directors:** Ross thanked past officers Mark Goss--vice-president, Karen Philips--secretary, Donna Goss--treasurer, Kristina Tracer--western director, Mary Greene--central director, Vaughn Clutter--eastern director and Pete Peterson and Bob Womack--at large directors. He welcomed 2006 officers Bob Womack--vice-president, Karen Philips--secretary, Donna Goss--treasurer, Bill Free--western director, Mary Greene--central director, Vaughn Clutter--eastern director and Mark Goss and Gail Hansen--at large directors.

**Audit and Budget:** Ross said we need to complete a 2005 audit this month. Candace Erickson, a CPA, volunteered to head the audit committee and she will work with Joyce Johnson and Pam Ristad. Budget committee members are Candace, Ross and Donna. They will develop a 2006 budget for the club and show.

**Web site:** Karen presented a handout from Lauren Johansson, our new webmaster who lives in Horseshoe Bend, Idaho. Lauren proposed that we upgrade our current account that was originally set up by John Glosser in 1998. She requested that BSFTA purchase a domain name (which would be bigskyfta.org) and switch to Network Solutions for \$119.50, billed annually. Mark Goss moved and Jack Womack seconded that we authorize Lauren to make these changes. Motion passed.

**Club Historian:** Ross asked for a volunteer to serve as our historian and to collect the information needed to submit a club notebook as part of the Affiliate of the Year competition. This person would also work with Lauren to collect archival photos and information from the web site. Annette Padgett agreed to do this, and Kristina Tracer will help her. Information and photos need to go to Annette ASAP because the deadline is March 31.

**Quarter Horse Assn.:** Annette Padgett said the Quarter Horse Association would like BSFTA to change its show location to the Diamond A Indoor Arena and share the cost of up to 100 stalls at \$15 for each stall used. Jerry Christison said there is an excellent facility available in Helena for \$500 where the Governor's Cup is held every year. Ross asked Annette and Jerry to provide him with more details on these sites and said the show committee will review them.

**Renew Dues:** Please renew your 2006 dues which are \$15 for individuals and \$25 for families. Forms are available in the newsletter and on the web site (bigskyfta.org).

**Stallion Futurity:** Suzanne reported that Utah is having a stallion review on March 18-19, BSFTA members who own stallions can participate in it this year, and Merle Arbo is doing a clinic. See the documents that follow for more information.

**Awards:** Ross congratulated these members for winning 2005 MFTHBA championships: Thea Gervais--Amateur Ladies, Amateur Ranch Horse Conformation, & Amateur Ranch Horse Pleasure--reserve; Mark Goss--Amateur Working Cow--reserve; Donna Goss's horse, ridden by Ty Heth--Open Working Cow; Suzanne Nebeker--Open Foxtrot, Open Trail & Showmanship; Bob Womack--Amateur Ranch Roping; and Jack Womack--Open Mares 4 years old & older--3 gait. These were excellent results for BSFTA members!

Next meeting: Ross thanked everyone again for their participation and patience during this meeting. The next meeting's date and location will be arranged later and sent to members. For more information, contact Ross at 406-961-4321 or rossdamrow@montana.com.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:45.

Karen Philips, Secretary