

## PAUL DOUGLAS INTERVIEW.

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I'm sitting with Paul Douglas looking out at the North Dakota Badlands. Paul and his wife Joann have a Bed & Breakfast that is absolutely amazing. Its name is Eagle Ridge Lodge and it's appropriately named because this lodge sits on a site where eagles must often wait for their prey to appear in the rugged valley below.

Paul has agreed to share some of his experiences in this part of the west.

**Marv:** Paul, you were born and raised 40 miles from here over in Southeast Montana. You still own a ranch there as well as operating the B&B here. Tell us a little about yourself.

**Paul:** I was born and raised on our ranch. It is very remote. A break down in our family took me to the state of Colorado. I established my Colorado residency and received my PhD. at Colorado State. From there I went to manage the Wyoming Hereford Ranch, for a number of years. I found that their values and their vision of what they wanted the ranch to do was not part of my vision. So my wife and I choose to venture out to a new chapter in our lives. It was called "Hospitality and Horses." We established this lodge, knowing that there was a great need for an upscale facility in the Badlands of North Dakota. Some place where you didn't have to run across the pasture to take a shower or take the other direction to the outhouse. That was not what we intended to do. It took me about 2 ½ years to acquire a Guide and Outfitting license to operate a trail riding service on the National Grasslands. We accomplished that and had a very successful trail riding business here. It turned out to be a geological and archeological

trail ride experience. Those folks that had no knowledge of a horse were very comfortable with their horse because they were so excited, in what they were seeing. I told them, "If you fall off I won't come back." So they quickly adapted to their horse.

**Marv:** There was motivation.

**Paul:** About 4 years into this trail riding business, the insurance industry got to the point where they did not want to underwrite smaller operations. They raised liability premiums to where it forced us out of the business. So, our "Hospitality and Horses" changed to "Hospitality." Here we are!

**Marv:** There is a lot of history here. Can you speak to some of the history that occurred, in the Badlands?

**Paul:** The Badlands has truly a western history to it. Very recently, in the last 5 to 10 years, Scandinavian and European people have searched the western United States for "The Real West." They tell us that they have found it, in the Badlands. They love it here. Here again Theodore Roosevelt was a very wise man, not because he was President of the United States, he came here for a purpose. The purpose was for his healing and he grew to love this land. The Badlands was a large "Cattle Baron" country. The Marquis De Mores and Pierre Wibaux were huge cattle owners here. I really don't know how large a cattle herd Theodore Roosevelt had but I do know of several large ranches, in the area. One of them being the HT Ranch, another the X bar X Ranch that reached the Miles City, Montana area. So these were large ranches.

**Marv:** I also understand that what ended the Marquis' short history here, were the blizzards of 1888-89.

**Paul:** It also was devastating to the large ranchers, of the area. That's where Charlie Russell got his painting, "The Last of the Ten Thousand." The Marquis De Mores was a man I have to admire. Even though there are reports, of him being a not very likeable person.

**Marv:** He had a bunch of duels, supposedly.

**Paul:** He was 50 to 75 years ahead of his time, in establishing a packing plant. Sending carcasses of beef back east. The failure of the packing plant was probably due, to the failure of his life. I still admire the foresight that these early people had.

**Marv:** Were these ranchers Texans?

**Paul:** No, they were not. The Marquis De Mores came out of New York. Wibaux came from France. Theodore Roosevelt came from New York, in the late 1800's. Now there was an incredible cattle rustling problem, at the time. It was "Open Range."

**Marv:** Of course. You can look right down into this valley, below us, and you could have 500 head of cattle down there and you may not be able to see half of them.

**Paul:** During this same time, in the cattle rustling era, The Montana and Western North Dakota Stock Growers Association was formed. Theodore Roosevelt was on the Board of Directors. They took it upon themselves, in vigilante form, to curb the rustling and consequently there were lots of people that lost their lives, at the end of a rope.

**Marv:** Quick justice.

**Paul:** We see out here, some 140 years later, we're one of the few with a guest ranch. However, in the 1860's, the Bible Camp Ranch that we can see on the river bottom, was the first guest ranch in all of North America. This area that we are looking out upon was an area that they never could trail cattle

through, the reason being the extreme roughness of terrain. An old friend, who has passed away, told me, they would trail cattle to Medora, which was a rail head and ship to Chicago. They went through on the river or they would use West River Road (That you used to drive up here), but not the rough country below us. Interestingly enough, what we're looking down on was part of that early guest ranch. They used it for their brood mare pasture. Our abstracts, for this property, show the ownership of this land clear back into the 1800s.

**Marv:** This looks like mountain lion country to me.

**Paul:** There is a huge population of lions in the Badlands Corridor. We do have a season now. Last fall, as soon as the 14<sup>th</sup> mountain lion was shot, the season ended. Now, how many were shot and not reported we don't know. Every year their numbers seem to increase. We've seen them, in here. I've not personally seen one, but they're here. Now how many are residents, we don't know. They travel over a large area.

**Marv:** Back to the area's history for a moment, Custer came through here and Sitting Bull surrender up at Fort Union.

**Paul:** I would think Sitting Bull would have travel through here, returning to the Grand River, in South Dakota. Now, Custer's Trail, from Fort Abraham Lincoln, to the "Battle of the Little Big Horn," is right on the other side of this ridge. We can still see their wagon tracks. We understand that, for 180 feet on either side of the wagon tracks, the foot soldiers and the horses moved. This Trail was also traveled by others. So it is not exclusive to Custer.

**Marv:** I've heard that along the Knife River, there are still travois tracks, from the tribes moving back and forth. These passage ways still can be seen.

**Paul:** Some of the history out of Fort Robinson, which is south of here, indicates that the role of the cavalry, in this area, was not entirely to gather up the Indians and put them back on the reservations, as Custer and General Sully attempted to do. The role of the cavalry, as I understand it, was for those people who were building the railroads. This was post-Civil War. The United States government was basically broke. So it was very important that the railroad be finished, to be able to move gold from the west to the east. Certainly the Indians were adversaries to this activity.

**Marv:** The completion of the railroad was the death-kneel for the Indians. It brought settlers and it ended the buffalo. Now this is where that history happened. Places like this raise your pulse rate, if you have an interest in the history of the west.

**Marv:** I come from the area of North Dakota that was German farmers and homesteading. The farmer is a different "Breed of Cat" than the rancher. The Farmer brought community, family, civilization and those things. The Rancher was first to this wild land and he had to do what was necessary to hold it. That's my understanding of how a lot of these big ranches were formed.

**Paul:** Taking it from that point, to what it is today, the use of the resource here is an incredible story in itself. This resource has evolved, from cattle, to an added enterprise of oil, to an additional enterprise of recreation. Some of this land has been, in these ranching families, for three generations. Federal land is what I'm talking about. Ranchers are in pretty serious jeopardy of losing grazing rights. Because, in my opinion, they have tried to use the resource, for modern day biological types of cows, weighing 1200-1300 lbs. These mature cows weighed 800 lbs. during Theodore Roosevelt's time. Those ranches, despite the winters, were fairly successful. You read and hear about the misuse, of grazing resources, by the modern day rancher. Some is true and some is false. None the less, the United States government and the Forest Service that manages the national grass-lands, is cutting back drastically on grazing

permutations. They are finding that there is a tremendous demand by the public, for use of the grasslands. My theory is they are compatible and they are not intrusive, on to one another. The American public's use, of this land, is not damaging.

**Marv:** Talk a little bit about this oil boom. It sounds like these discoveries have the potential, for our country.

**Paul:** We hear reports of seismology discoveries, in zones below the Bakken, which are very rich in oil. This is good quality, as opposed to some of the oil that is being extracted. They call this a sweet crude because it does not have a lot of hydrogen sulfide.

**Marv:** So the refining process is less costly and yields more.

**Paul:** We've had two individuals, from the Huston area, that sell oil field equipment. This was in the last three weeks. They were extremely hyper. So, I asked them, "Why are you so excited to the point of not being able to sleep?" They said, "Because we can't fill the demand for oil field products. We are so far behind and our job has become so intense because our orders are backed up for years." It's tough. Think about this, it cost 30 million dollars to drill one of these locations.

**Marv:** I think too, like all industries, the oil industry has been cyclical. Once you shut down the engine getting it started again and having adequate supplies does take time. However, this is a boom type demand that's growing exponentially.

**Paul:** Not only do we have a huge production of crude being brought to the surface, they are now constructing three pipelines through this area. One will go to the Baker, Montana, area. It will then go to various points, in Wyoming and down to Oklahoma. They have another that will go clear to Galveston, Texas. Finally, another short line will go down highway 85 to somewhere in Nebraska. What they're trying to do is move the crude to locations where it can be refined.

**Paul:** I say, "Why are we building a pipeline that is going to go to Texas and then shipped the finished product back here, why don't we do it right here?"

**Marv:** That's too logical, Paul.

**Marv:** I'm always interested in how the west has changed. Certainly, the oil strikes here, suggest change. What do you see as the positives and negatives regarding this change?

**Paul:** That's a tough one. It all depends upon how old you are, at this time. I'm sure the younger generation would say something different than my generation. I think that there is an increase in people that have a different set of values. I see that as a real clash to sustainability. Course we all hate change. I would like to see a sustainability to our population and our environment that is beneficial to all. Now I'm not certain that a large population here will be beneficial.

**Marv:** We talked earlier that it is almost like the gold and silver strikes of the 1800s. It produced wealth but had a negative side, as well.

**Marv:** Paul, in concluding our visit, has there been a change in the rancher in southeast Montana or southwest North Dakota, from your growing up days until now?

**Paul:** Having parents that went through the depression, those values and those things we endured growing up, were done to survive. We have now evolved to a life with leisure and recreation.

**Marv:** Discretionary things.

**Paul:** Yeah. I do see an attitude change that people are saying, “Hey, I want to see the world. I want more experiences other than just working and providing for my family.” I see a welcoming of revenues that the oil industry may bring to land owners, allowing disposable income for enjoyment, not just survivability.

**Marv:** Vacations for example. My folks never took a vacation. That was sacrilegious. I do believe however, that it was the time of the “American Dream.” I grew up being preached to that there was one and I believed. I lived it in my working life. I think that has changed, as well. Maybe the dream is still there but it seems like fewer people want to strive for that.

**Paul:** We all change.

**Marv:** Paul, thank you so much. Do you have a closing message about Eagle Ridge Lodge and this part of the west?

**Paul:** We love to have folks come. We get wonderful people here. It’s been a real treat to be able to have people from all over the world visit us. Good, genuine people. To be able to sit down, visit and enjoy one another. I could have built a shack on top of this ridge, but if I have only one window looking out on this view, Eagle Ridge would still have been special.

**Marv:** If you take you and Joann out of it, it would still be impressive but not the same. Thank you Paul Douglas

Eagle Ridge Lodge can be found at [www.eagleridgelodge.com](http://www.eagleridgelodge.com)