

# LETTERS

## Jumbo Resort supporter takes off gloves

*Patrick Hasburgh is a writer, producer and director. In his long career, he was a producer for the television programs *The A Team*, *Hardcastle & McCormick* and *21 Jump Street*. He also wrote and directed the movie *Aspen Extreme*. He is married to B.C. native Cheri Jensen and has two children. They relocated from Aspen, Colorado, to Panorama in the summer of 2005.*

### Dear Editor:

Whenever I see a “Grizzlies not Gondolas” bumper sticker I imagine B.T. Barnum joyously rolling over in his not so warm grave. Barnum, you may all recall, is the notorious circus ringmaster and red blooded American huckster who infamously proclaimed that there was a sucker born every minute.

I Love Jumbo Wild. Oh, yeah—me, too. Jumbo Wild Forever—wouldn't that be nice. That the timber and mining industry, a privately held heli-skiing operation, bow hunters and riflemen, snowmobile high-markers and dust covered Quadra-maniacs, wanderers in rental cars and mad-core mountain bikers wearing armored leotards can claim the unimpeachable high ground of selfless environmentalism is a sleight of hand worthy of Houdini. It has somehow become curiously fashionable for locals to boast their anti-Jumbo positions on back bumpers and in bar-rooms, sounding more often like ELF activists and Greenpeace devotees than residents of a community that collects much of its income from tourism and skiing, logging and construction. To imply that the Jumbo Valley and its accompanying network of glaciers, snow fields and mountain meadows is pristine wilderness warranting extreme

measures of protectionism is folly, if not ridiculous and maybe even intentional disinformation.

Beautiful as Jumbo's snow covered peaks indisputably are, the thirty-some kilometers of valley floor, its countless descending slopes and nearly trout-free waters add up to an environmental catastrophe. Indiscriminate dumps of mine tailings are scattered up and down the banks of Toby Creek and the accompanying forest has been ruthlessly denuded and clear cut; residual timber debris and root balls are stacked high, sadly punctuating an already ugly patchwork of trampled seedlings, rock piles and pine beetle kill. If ever a living breathing grizzly actually did inhabit this locale it more than likely died of loneliness years ago, or maybe the furry hermit voluntarily committed itself to the Calgary Zoo. There might be plenty of wolves back in Jumbo Valley but the grizz are a fizz; the gondolas win this one easily.

In the spirit of full disclosure I will admit that I am in fact one of those backcountry snowmobile riders and this summer I also plan to buy my first quad. My brother is a serious hunter and I am well aware that wild elk don't commit suicide on my behalf whenever I'm hungry for game. And I am forever trying to con my way onto the RK helicopter to partake of their fabulous product at the standby rate. RK Heli has been very kind and generous to me; they're a first rate operation and I hope they continue to flourish long into the future—I also hope these words won't get me banished to a lifetime of snowshoeing and skinning as I sled to the base of Rosie's or Christy's to do penance trudging up to the summit of Jumbo, like Sisyphus in a snowsuit—ugh.

*Continued on Page 8*

# Resort will be a boon, writer claims

Continued from Page 7

A high tide raises all boats and the Jumbo Resort will be a boon to RK Heli, Panorama Mountain, Toby Creek Adventures, the town of Invermere and yes, even that lonely grizzly if we can bust him out of the Calgary Zoo. The project will also, I believe, prove to be remarkably positive both economically and environmentally for the entire Columbia River Valley. It will create tax revenue streams, not suck them dry; this is basic economics. The half a billion dollars purportedly available to be invested to develop the resort is going to chum the local labor pools and feed the hungry fish of this region's honorable working class; its time and materials will be bought and sold and supplied by local merchants and craftsmen. That money stays here—the contractors aren't going to be sending out for electricians, cabinetmakers and doorknobs—nobody will be buying a plumber on EBay; 25 years from now Don McBlain will still be trying to retire.

As for Panorama Road and its subsequent dirt path extending on into Jumbo, well, that road already needs fixing. It's an asphalt nightmare; the effective personification of a sequel to Death Race 2000. Maybe the timber mills that sponsor the fifty-ton logging trucks that lumber up and down that road daily should kick in a few million shekels for road maintenance and repair. But does any one honestly believe that the resort traffic to Jumbo is going to further damage that road—a 9.0 earthquake couldn't further damage that road; it's a potholed-highway sans guardrails bordered by whirlpool rapids and avalanches chutes. Every time I make it into town without an incident I feel like I should win a trophy.

The Pristine Wilderness Horse is long out of the barn and the only way we are going to save what's left of mother nature's beautiful bounty is to give people access to it—smart access. The stockbroker in Toronto or the television Producer in Beverly Hills, the autoworker in Ottawa or the offshore oil rigger in the gulf of Texas doesn't give two candy kisses about our Jumbo Resort debate. You know why? He's never been there. No reason to go. Maybe he doesn't have six hundred dollars for five lifts in a Bell 212 to shred the RK stash or he might prefer to take his kids to Disneyland to shoot squirt guns at fake pirates. But in any event very few Joe Six-packs have ever gazed upon a Rocky Mountain big sky and wondered what if, what now, what's next?

Jumbo Resort may or may not be a smart and

pragmatic business plan and whether or not it will ever be financially successful is anyone's guess—but for sure the Jumbo Resort plan is an environmentally responsible one. And one can only wonder how much better shape the Jumbo Valley might be in today if this project was allowed to go forward when it was first put forth 25 years ago. If you want people to shop at your store you have to keep it clean and safe and attractive, its wares competitively priced.

So it will be up to the local business community and this region's private sector to help restore this priceless piece of real estate to its original luster. Jumbo could be a world class signature resort and a source of pride for the entire community but it needs to be replanted, its natural beauty replenished. Developing Jumbo will serve to protect our remaining wilderness in that the tourists who have visited its beauty might be less inclined to let Big Oil and the Timber Barons hollow out a mountain or cut down Canadian forests in their seemingly relentless quest for impure profits.

---

***"The future is a freight train, it's unstoppable, it's long, it's loaded and it's heading into our local station. Let's all climb on board and make sure it stays on the right track."***

---

Like it or not, some kind of development is in Jumbo Glacier's future; either mine shafts or double black diamond ski runs, the choice is ours. That old timber mill can be resurrected and refitted to split logs or it can be reincarnated into a tasteful cluster of shops and fun eateries, ski kiosks and heli-adventure offices.

The Jumbo Resort will offer entrepreneurial opportunities for every interested local merchant or potential business owner/operator so inclined and capable. This is not a project wherein opportunity is going to be hoarded by an exclusive gang of west coast fat cat and high dollar Albertans—it's a project for the entire community of this valley; information to the otherwise is, to put it politely, inaccurate.

Isn't it time for some serious sword burying on both sides of the Jumbo debate? I know there is a handful of old cranks and pensioners, myself included, who have created meaningfully new identities for themselves by taking a virulently vitriolic anti or insanely optimistic pro side of the Jumbo debate. And some local folks might reasonably think that I haven't lived in this area long enough to spout the strong opinions that I do but my son is a full blooded Invermerian, born locally a year ago this

past December; so let's just say I speak for him, too. Isn't it time for cooler heads to prevail; time for a more moderate, modern and much younger guard to decide on the future of Jumbo and its development?

I know Invermere Mayor Mark Shmigelsky is adamantly opposed to the Jumbo project but I continue to be baffled as to the reasons why. I understand Mayor Shmigelsky also works at the local timber mill but I certainly can't imagine nor would I ever imply that there might be a conflict of interest. But isn't it a big part of the job of an elected official to shepherd and oversee economic growth and prosperity for his constituency and its community?

If smart and clean and green developments like Jumbo are not going to be part of the future commercial landscape of the Upper Columbia locality, what will be? Is farming and ranching going to make a comeback—how many head of cattle would it take to finance the student body of a public school when, as is enviable, there are ten times as many kids and classrooms as there are today?

When all of those homes that are being built shoulder to shoulder in Lakeview Meadows are finally finished, not to mention in CastleRock and no doubt at the future Wilmer Estates, how are all those nail benders and tile setters going to pay for their newly purchased pickup trucks and snowmobiles?

And where the heck do we think these new home owners and residents are going to recreate—how many skaters and ice fishermen can fit on the frozen face of Lillian Lake, how many water skiers and windsurfers can crowd onto Lake Windermere; how many angels can dance on the head of a pin?

The Jumbo Resort Project and its board has met or surpassed virtually every environmental requirement asked of them. It will be, without exaggeration, the most environmentally conscientious development in the history of Canada. To suggest otherwise is to misrepresent the truth. The future is a freight train, it's unstoppable, it's long, it's loaded and it's heading into our local station. Let's all climb on board and make sure it stays on the right track.

**Patrick Hasburgh  
Panorama**

