

Editor proceeds on to next great adventure

BY WENDY RANEY

When I saw the ad seven years ago announcing that the Foundation was seeking a director of field operations I was convinced the job had been designed for me. The position combined the trail stewardship coordinator and chapter liaison responsibilities and called for some media coordination, political advocacy and travel. It combined all of my personal and professional interests. It seemed too good to be true. Fortunately for me, it was exactly what I'd hoped it might be.

I immediately set out to help strengthen the Foundation's relationships with its chapters. In 2004, I visited 32 of the Foundation's 40 chapters. I had the opportunity to see stretches of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail I might otherwise never have enjoyed, but even better, I became acquainted with local Lewis and Clark experts and enthusiasts who led each tour and introduced me to their chapter members and other Lewis and Clark friends.

I soon began editing *The Orderly Report* and was excited to put my journalism degree to use. There were other highlights as well: I worked with the Forest Service to establish a monitoring program on the Lolo Motorway and spent days in the wilderness with loyal Foundation volunteers. I worked with the Bureau of Land Management on a variety of preservation and protection projects, and helped develop the trail stewardship program that now brings educational presentations to classrooms around the country. I established the Lewis and Clark Challenge, a health and wellness program that has been adopted by the Ohio River Chapter. I also helped facilitate the national Memorandum of Understanding between the Foundation and the Boy Scouts of America. I was honored to represent the Foundation as a board member of the Partnership for the National Trails System and was lead planner for that organization's 12th conference in Missoula, Montana, last year.

As much as I enjoyed all of those experiences, I was offered my dream job in 2006, when Jim Merritt retired as editor of *We Proceeded On*. I edited my first issue of *WPO* in February 2007 and have enjoyed working as editor while continuing to fulfill my trail stewardship responsibilities. At every stop along the trail and through every submission to this publication, I have made new friends; people I will

continue to communicate with long after my children are grown.

That brings me to the reason for writing this column. As much as I've loved working for the Foundation, I have embarked on a new adventure that demands my full time and attention. As many of you know, I have a son, Cash, who turns three in October. In May, my husband, Brent McCann, and I welcomed two new additions to our family. Twins Milena and Cruze arrived just as Brent took a new job as foreman of a historic cattle ranch. Those two events thus coincided with a cross-country move that brought us home to Montana (after a 20-month stay in Texas where Brent earned a Master's degree from the King



The McCann family: Cash, Wendy, Milena, Cruze and Brent.

Ranch Institute for Ranch Management in Kingsville.) Three children under the age of three are keeping me plenty busy for the time being. So it is with mixed emotions that I bid you farewell as editor.

My husband has joined me in countless Foundation activities over the past seven years. Cash has attended two annual meetings and several other Lewis and Clark events. He has listened to *WPO* submissions read aloud to resemble the bedtime classic, *Goodnight Moon*. He understands that e-mails take a few minutes to answer and conference calls last much longer. He has been patient and understanding, indulging my commitment to this organization and this publication in particular.

The way members of this Foundation have embraced my family has made my decision to leave my job all the more difficult, but the opportunity to watch my children grow and develop through their early years is one I cannot miss. I remain committed to the mission of this organization and already am working with staff and the board of directors on ways to stay involved with the Foundation, though it may be some time before I can truly be an active volunteer.

To the Foundation's leadership, past and present, thank you for your support and the flexibility and independence you've given me over the years. To the readers of *WPO*, thank you for your interest in these timeless stories and for engaging one another in civil and cordial discussions and debates. To my many friends, I hope to see you along the trail. I'll be the one introducing three members of the next generation to the thrills, adventures and lessons of Lewis and Clark.