

Is It Possible To Make Rain?

Contributed by David Lewis

Yogi Berra, that Mystic Visionary, Just Might Have the Answer

Imagine my dilemma. I've got all these fabulous Yogi Berra quotes that I want to share with you in this month's Up Front. But I also need to write about Matt Ryan, the "Rainmaker," featured on page 9.

Pardon me for doing so, but I'm going to attempt both, answering the question, "Is it possible to make rain?" by saying, and here we go with the Yogi Berra quotes, you can observe a lot by watching.

Having indeed observed by watching, I can tell you that when Matt Ryan comes to Montana, the weather invariably gets wetter, even here down in Livingston, well "outside his area influence," as he puts it. You could call this coincidence, in that it defies traditional science and reason. And this must be weighed when drawing a conclusion. But after a while, when you come to a fork in the road, in regard to your powers of deductive reasoning, you have to take it.

I remember last summer (it gets late early out here) when the state was plagued by drought, especially in the northeast, and by fire on the banks of Canyon Ferry Lake. Ryan went to work, summoned by Montanans in these respective areas. And the rains came — and then a conspicuously early snow that doused the fires in mid September, the typical follow-up period that Ryan says brings moisture after he works his mysterious craft.

Few people know exactly how Ryan makes rain, if that's what he does. His work involves both technology and nature-based spirituality, a mind attuned to the natural forces. Ninety percent of his game, you might say, is half-mental.

Whatever his method, I'd give anything to make rain myself, though the results wouldn't necessarily be as impressive. So, if you can't imitate him, don't copy him — right?

Some believe Ryan may be hoodwinking the people who hire him. And I want to address this. At a time when a nickel ain't worth a dime anymore, he gets about ten thousand dollars each time he takes on a particular job. His detractors apparently think he should work for nothing, spending weeks at a time in a tent on the prairie, which he does. But nobody should expect anybody to work for nothing. That's a "perfect world" scenario and as everybody knows if the world was perfect, it wouldn't be.

Although rain and snow seemed once again to follow Ryan to Montana this year, drought conditions still persist, just like last year — and it's dejavu all over again. But there's still time to turn things around before a summer drought takes hold. It ain't over till it's over, because Ryan is scheduled to return here this month and in June to "make it rain" again.

Our hearts go out to Montana's farmers and ranchers, overwhelming underdogs against the forces of nature. It is an extremely difficult situation, to be sure. But maybe Ryan can help improve the odds. He will make the trip here again from California — it's not that far, it just seems like it is — and give Montana an even shot. The future here, which ain't what it used to be, may be bright after all — or rainy, as the case may be.

So, does Matt Ryan really make rain? We're going to let you be the judge. We've been following the story for several months now. We haven't made any conclusions, just presented the facts, which are impressive. As journalists, we're not supposed to give our opinions. Besides, facts speak louder than opinion. Nevertheless, people ask me all the time if Matt Ryan can really make rain. All I can say is I wish I had an answer to that because I'm tired of answering that question.

Thank you for making this day necessary.