

Return of the Rainmaker

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Montana Pioneer
May 2001

Call It Coincidence, or Attunement with the Forces of Nature, Rain Seems to Follow Matt Ryan Wherever He Goes

Say what you want about Matt Ryan, but when he shows up in Montana , drought conditions seem to improve. Called by drought stricken farmers and ranchers, Ryan has made five trips to Montana over a period of ten years. He has been called here before, and he was called again in February, by ranchers willing to pay him good money to "make rain."

His last "rainmaking trip" began February 13 and ended March 20. The first and primary area he addressed with his mysterious technique stretched about 150 miles north to south, from Cascade through Great Falls , Brady, Conrad, and Shelby . Of the 37 days Ryan spent in Montana , he spent 27 days in this area.

The National Weather Service (NWS) defines this area as "North Central" Montana . Precipitation for this and areas of Montana is officially recorded in Crop Weather Reports issued by the NWS. By mid-Aprils, in an otherwise drought stricken season, 10 out of 14 stations had reported above average precipitation for the month, some by a large amount.

Ryan then turned his attention to "Central" Montana , as defined on the NWS charts, centering his efforts in Roundup. "I worked only nine days in this area, March 6th through the 14th," Ryan told the Pioneer, and then returned to Great Falls . By mid-April, the situation had improved. Seven out of nine stations in Central Montana reported above average precipitation with Roundup turning in a whopping 214 percent above average.

Joan Murphy, 65, had called Ryan to the area, having reached a point of desperation on the Hill Ranch near Winnett, 100 miles north of Billings . With the help of her mother, Viola Hill, Murphy decided to take the plunge and hire Ryan. The Murphys need water for livestock, grazing, and growing hay. Without good water, like all the ranches in Montana , they can't survive — and the situation has become critical.

"He spent nine days here," Murphy said, setting up his working site on the ranch. "We did get rains and snow during that time," but precipitation then dropped off when Ryan left.

Ryan wished to stay in the area longer but previous commitments limited his time, something he had told the Murphys going in. Ryan also told them, either way, he would probably need to come back, that while his rainmaking produces "pulses" that bring rain concurrently with his efforts and then for some weeks after, in severe, chronic drought situations, usually the process must be reinforced with follow-up visits.

In Brady, Ryan began working for Gary Gollehon and the community group Gollehon organized there. Gollehon, a dry land wheat farmer, was at the end of his rope. But after Ryan went to work, Gollehon reported to the Lewistown News-Argus that he saw "immediate results in the mountains."

"At Teton Pass ski area, near Choteau," the News-Argus reported Gollehon as saying, "They got 60 inches of snow in the last three weeks of February and another 11 inches the first week of March. Before that, they had nothing."

Such stories of rain and snow following Ryan's practices are by no means isolated. The Montana Pioneer reported last November that Ryan appeared to have achieved impressive results during last summer's drought, and when called to douse forest fires near Helena and Canyon Ferry Lake. At that time, early September snows began to fall conspicuously in a time of drought, on the heels of wet weather in northeastern Montana after Ryan's appearance there, when previously that area had also been drought stricken.

Ryan claims to have a similar record of success in California , Oregon , New Mexico and other areas of the country over a ten year period.

What is Rainmaking?

Rainmaking is, of course, the stuff of legend. No one is supposed to be able to make rain, not in the world of modern, materialistic science. The theories and practices of Wilhelm Reich, ridiculed by most of the scientific world, hardly lend credibility to the rainmaking craft. But it was Reich's teaching that got Ryan started.

Proponents of rainmaking liken it to other natural phenomena, lightning and dowsing. Using long metal tubes and certain water sources (natural springs, for instance), Ryan says water in the earth can attract water in the air, the same way a charge in the ground attracts a charge in the sky, causing lightning to strike. Then there's the dowser, or witcher, used commonly in Montana to discover underground water for wells, and even minerals for mining operations. Water produces energy currents, dowsers say, and Ryan claims those currents can be directed.

Ryan's method, while closely guarded, involves long years of study in using metal pipes inserted in water like antennae and directed in such a way, according to Ryan, that he can direct the elements, which in turn moves weather patterns. This is, of course, scientifically unproven or, perhaps more accurately, so incredible to scientists that it is dismissed.

Rainmaking, though, was not dismissed by another proponent of the art, a Chippewa Ojibwa named Sun Bear. Sun Bear's writings inspired Ryan to travel from his native New York to Washington state, and to take up rainmaking there. Describing Sun Bear as a visionary mystic, Ryan says, "We were close — over time he became like my father, my brother, and my friend."

Within six months of meeting Sun Bear, Ryan met Jerome Eden in northern Idaho. Eden had studied with the original scientists around Wilhelm Reich and kept a "rainmaking device," called a cloudbuster, in a meadow on his property. Ryan spent four years with Eden, learning and practicing the craft of rainmaking.

It was through Sun Bear, though, that he learned rainmaking as a mystic art. Sun Bear, Ryan says, was a rainmaker of the old school, born in 1929 and trained by Native American elders. But, Ryan explains, Sun Bear didn't "make rain."

"It would be more accurate to say that the rains would come when he called for them."

It was knowledge of these forces that brought Ryan to a deeper understanding, and to practicing rainmaking without man-made tools.

"I have a relationship with the weather," Ryan said, calmly. "That's what Sun Bear taught me."

Ryan then speaks of the forces of nature "that I realize I'm a part of, that move around us all the time. When you get down to it, we're all built out of the earth, every molecule in our bodies. So we are intimately related to her, to all aspects of nature. With the weather, I've just increased that relationship beyond what someone would usually do."

Situation Still Critical

Even with the recent increase in precipitation, reservoirs on the Murphy ranch and across Montana are low or dry, owing to one of the worst droughts in 100 years. The situation is critical. And while precipitation, coincidentally or not, seems to appear in Ryan's wake, pervasive dryness still plagues the state. Farmers and ranchers are faced with a problem that a few weeks of moderate precipitation will not resolve. The snows and rains that Joan Murphy attributed to Ryan's effort helped bring grass for grazing, but will not sustain it.

"We're in such a quandary," Murphy said. "We don't know what to do . . . You have to stretch the mind and be open to something different . . . Matt plans to come back in May and June."

At that time, Ryan will apply his art in Golden Valley, Mussellshell, and Petroleum counties, reinforcing the process he believes will bring the rains and end the drought.