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FEATURED

Misadventures in the Wild: New book by Idaho Falls author gets personal with outdoor reporting

By JERRY PAINTER jpainter@postregister.com 15 hrs ago



Kris Millgate of Tight Line Media poses for a photo at Russ Freeman Park on Tuesday, July 2, 2019.

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As a passionate outdoor reporter for many years, Kris Millgate said there were moments that would cause her to step back out of objective “work mode” and become human.

Like the time she was nose-to-nose with a grizzly bear, and it woke up from its sedation.

“So what’s it like to go nose-to-nose with a grizzly bear? You’re going to pee your pants,” Millgate said. “I could never tell you in my news story that I peed my pants, but inside a book, I can tell you that you are so scared that you pee your pants.”

Millgate was talking about some of her personal experiences she has included in her new book “My Place Among Men — Misadventures in the Wild,” while sitting alongside the Snake River at Freeman Park last week.

Her first book tells the personal side of many of the stories she covered as an outdoors reporter. The book is due on shelves Aug. 6, and her first book signing event will be Aug. 7 at Great Harvest in Idaho Falls. The event is sponsored by Teton Land Trust. Millgate, who lives in Idaho Falls, has planned her first seven book signing events in Idaho before going out of state.



[Courtesy photo](#)

Millgate said the book grew out of answering the question, “What’s it like to be the only woman in the woods?”

“They wanted to know what it was like to be in that moment, and I realized that maybe writing inside of a news story wasn’t giving them that,” she said.

Millgate said because of her journalistic approach, she carefully kept herself out of her stories. In her new book, she puts herself front and center, in an autobiographical way. Sometimes the stories are awkward, sometimes humorous.

One tells how she stepped away from a huddle of men collaring a bighorn sheep to get a video shot of the animal being released. Microphones were still attached to men in the group and linked to her ear.

“In the huddle as I walk away I hear, ‘Where’s she going? Does she even know what she’s doing? Is she any good?’” she said. “It’s that moment when you kind of roll your eyes and think, ‘Honestly, is he really asking if I’m any good? He has no idea of what I’m really doing. He thinks I’m just this silly little girl running around in the woods.’ I heard somebody else in the huddle say, ‘You’ll know the answer to that when you see her story.’ I was kinda proud of that moment. I don’t know who said either statement.”

A goofier story in her book involves a hunting guide in New Mexico taking her to elk habitat that was recovering.

"I've never been to New Mexico, I don't know New Mexico at all," she said. "I don't know this guide at all. Before the sun is even up we are hiking in single file, and we have to get into our spot before the sun comes up and he says, 'I really wish you would fart.' I said 'What?' He said, 'It would make us feel more comfortable because we have a woman with us, and we would all feel more comfortable if you'd just go ahead and fart.' I said, 'I don't fart on cue, but I will be so upset if you keep talking when the sun comes up and you ruin my shot.'"



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us here?" she said. "I do miss the Wasatch Mountains, but I would not trade them for the Snake River."

She grew up hiking the mountains with her father.

Millgate started working as a general assignment TV reporter before she left college at the University of Utah. She bounced around to several cities across the U.S. for about 10 years. She and her husband settled in Idaho Falls, and she started the company Tight Line Media to produce stories for a variety of media and also do production work. Millgate is a lifetime member of Trout Unlimited and former commissioner for Idaho Falls Parks and Recreation. She's a fly fisher, trail runner and youth hockey coach.

During her time at other cities, she always wanted to get back West. Unlike several other female TV reporters, she didn't mind getting a little dirty.

"I was the only one that would keep boots in my car," she said. "So I could go from court to a farmer's field and get muddy, and I'd have the boots to do it."

Millgate grew up in Utah surrounded by the Wasatch Mountains.

"A lot of people will say, 'Do you miss those mountains because mountains don't surround

“My mother says I don’t have a danger gene, which is true, but my dad doesn’t have an internal compass,” she said. “We were always lost, and he would never admit it. I learned to follow him wherever he was going. It taught me persistence and endurance and patience. I use all of those skills in my job now.”

The book shows readers a personal side of many of the major outdoor issues facing the West today, such as public lands, grizzly bears, wolves and the loss of salmon in the West. It was stories such as these that pulled her into outdoor reporting.

“Those stories mattered, and you have to get dirty to get those, or you have to get cold,” she said. “There were days when it was 20 below, and my batteries were in my armpits, and the snot freezes in my nose. Some people don’t have any interest in having a workday like that. But I do. I think the stories that come out of the wild are just fascinating.”

Now with her new book, readers will learn her reaction to the experiences. Her human side.

“Inside those stories there’s a moment where I stop what I’m doing, and even though my camera is still rolling I step back as a human and look at the moment and think, I’m on top of a beaver dam and looking at the first Chinook I’ve ever seen in my life,” she said. “I’m human right then, I’m not a reporter. You feel things in a different way when you flip from work mode to personal mode. Those moments go into the book.”

JerryPainter