

## A Piece of Heaven

**Ninety-three acres nestled in the mountains with Ponderosa Pines, cedars and Black Oaks, its elevation enables you to enjoy all four seasons**

By Becky Fidler

Some people say change isn't good, but for my husband, Dennis, and me, it was a new beginning in our lives. I always joked that this was our mid-life crisis move.

The Fidler's country home, before ...

... and after!

It all began 12 years ago; an hour ride from the city took you to an entirely different world. Ninety-three acres nestled in the mountains with Ponderosa Pines, cedars and Black Oaks, its elevation enables you to enjoy all four seasons. The huge array of wildlife is also abundant. It had two, year-round creeks, an apple and pear orchard of approximately 220 trees planted back in the 1940s, nine rundown cabins, plus a lot of old outhouses. The only thing this property lacked was the care and the upkeep. Both of our thoughts were of the endless possibilities and the excitement of taking on new challenges.

We would head up to the mountains on Fridays, with our two yellow Labs, stay in our 24-foot trailer and work until we had to go home on Sunday. How we hated to leave! The ongoing projects for the first few years were mainly cleanups, repairing fence lines, and updating the electrical, water and septic systems.

In 2000, my dream of starting a farm finally became a reality. Two, 12-week-old pet cows—Libby, a black-and-white Holstein, and Sam, a Jersey steer—started it all. These two big pets gave us the excuse to escape to the mountains during the middle of the week.

We moved from our trailer to a 500-square foot cabin. Our new home was pretty run-down and barely livable. The biggest drawback was the lack of indoor plumbing. We tried to make it as functional as possible and then began its restoration.

It was still tough to accomplish the much-needed work and repairs with our limited time, so in 2001 we made the permanent move to the mountains. Our cabin is now a beautiful, two-bedroom, two-bath home overlooking the creek. Just perfect for us and our new Lab, Cody.

To occupy my time a little more, I finally convinced my husband to get a few more animals. Our permanent residents now include: Delightful, an Arabian mare; Harley, an Appaloosa gelding; Jack, a miniature donkey; Rambo the rooster and his harem of 23, all-varieties, free-range hens. We're also raising pigs and Black Angus cattle.

Each of these farm animals has special housing designed and built just for them. We've also added a hay barn, a 25' by 40' workshop to house all Dennis' tools, and a 30' by 45' garage to hold our tractors and toys.

For two people who lived their entire lives in the city and never had any experience raising livestock or using the wide array of machinery and tools, the mountain life has enabled us to enjoy a life-changing experience and taught us to believe in ourselves. The rewards of raising your own meat, raising hens for fresh eggs, growing fresh vegetables, learning to can fresh pears and apples, and sharing our knowledge with our kids and grandkids is unbelievable.

We're still experiencing so many new things and we're never afraid to take on a new challenge. We've learned how to utilize and recycle back to the land. Even the manure plays a part in enriching the soil for the newly planted apple and pear trees, and for a full crop of corn being planted in the spring. Our front entrance had a makeover with the installation of an automatic gate and timbers used from one of our downed Ponderosa Pines. We used five, 14-foot tall, 2-inch diameter logs to create a massive opening at our entrance. Our friend used a 9-foot section to carve us a bear, which

stands guard there.

It's rewarding to see our grandkids' eyes light up when they collect the eggs, help feed the animals, and pick the fresh raspberries and pop them into their mouths.

With motivation, creativity and a lot of hard work, our property has transformed from a run-down, forgotten piece of land into a beautiful, restored piece of heaven. It will only get better as we continue to restore the old cabins. A visiting friend told it best: Most people work 52 weeks a year to spend two weeks in the place you live year-round. That I truly believe. Becky Fidler's Reader Resumé first appeared in the September/October 2007 issue of Hobby Farms. She'll receive apparel from Mahindra for submitting her Reader Resumé.