

## PRESS RELEASE

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[www.DougLeen.com](http://www.DougLeen.com)

Part time Jackson Hole resident Doug Leen came home from Antarctica last year to find a road built across his property. Acting on behalf of his two other partners; a Learjet-setting dentist and an orthopedic surgeon, both from the Seattle area, Leen took it upon himself this Saturday morning to remove the dirt by himself--all 250 cubic yards of it. "It's a town where the millionaires like us are getting run out of town by the billionaires," Leen said; modestly dressed in Carhardt pants, a Filson plaid shirt with accents of Patagonia, adding, "So its resorted to a battle of the backhoes."

Developers WW SaddleButte LLC hired Seaton Construction to bulldoze their way to the summit of Saddle Butte where 15 homesites are being developed. Seaton used Rendezvous Engineering to design the road and Matt Osdiek presented Leen with a precise plan which promised only one tree would be affected and that they would only encroach 4 feet into a 10 foot easement that Leen (and no other landowners) granted the developers free of charge. Their only pathway was through the existing 20+ homesites of Saddle Butte subdivision, artfully planned in the 1960s by George and Bob Hufsmith with only 30 feet road easements.

"For the 36 years I've lived here, there has always been squabbling between neighbors over the covenants and especially the road and water system," Leen said. "I asked Matt Osteik what I would get out this and he said "a better road." Not wanting to be a bad neighbor, Leen coaxed his two partners to give this land up. What he wasn't told is that they needed the easement to avoid the electrical and phone services that Leen's neighbors, Dick and Jean Ferguson, purposely put 5 feet out in their easement to thwart encroachment on their impossibly steep driveway.

Upon returning in October of last year, Leen found something entirely different: the Ferguson's utility services were still standing and the road was 10 feet north into Leen's property and a full three feet higher. And if this wasn't enough, Leen's driveway was feathered a full 60 feet into his property raising the grade from 10% to 20%.

Well this got Leen mad. "At first I didn't think I would find anyone in the valley that would help me rip out this road," Leen said, but in fact several backhoe drivers clamored to do the job making the choice difficult. Leen finally selected the best two: a fourth generation valley excavationist and the other, a direct descendent of the person who made the first ascent of the Grand Teton. Leen, whose uncle, David Abercrombie, founder of the world famous Abercrombie and Fitch sporting goods company and owner of one of the largest ranches in Jackson Hole in the 1930s, completed the team. With a wad of Wyoming snoose under the lip, marking the road-cuts in brown spat, the three started ripping asphalt and dumping dirt at 3am Saturday morning.

"I haven't had this much fun since 1962 when my brothers and I blew the pitchers mound off the Little League field with purloined dynamite," Leen said with glee. That prank was attributed to the flying saucer craze which swept the Pacific Northwest at the time and Leen went unnoticed until he was caught stealing the top of the Space Needle a year later. "With all the security today, you can't play around with dynamite anymore," Leen stated, "so I had to resort to backhoes--the new frontier in monkey-wrench diplomacy." Leen is a former geologist, park ranger, dentist, and shoe salesman and put those skills to use, he said.

"It was a perfect day for the job," Leen stated. "Here we were, two backhoes blazing away making all kinds of noise and not a neighbor's light went on. When the sheriff deputies arrived a full 9 hours later, they were amazed that I could move so much dirt in such a short time."

"It just takes money," Leen said, slapping his left back pocket where his heavy wallet was packed with hundred dollar bills, adding, "This is a commodity in abundant supply here in the valley." The deputies were surprised that Leen started so early. "Stealth....is a strategic advantage," Leen replied, something he learned from another

Jackson Hole resident, Dick Cheney.

Most of the dirt was dumped across the road, where, ironically, up to ten feet of easement remained available because of the engineering error by Rendezvous. "The road was actually 12 feet into my property in one place," Leen proudly stated "and three feet higher as well," making it impossible for him to access his property for the past 7 months. "We politely requested they remove all the dirt four different times over the winter" and even their lawyer, Joe Moore, came up and promised Leen that "He would make everything right." This began on October 26, 2005 but when Leen left the next day, the dirt removal process stopped and Seaton Construction returned and dumped four more 2 ton boulders up against four aspen trees--"their idea of a retaining wall" Leen stated pointing at the torn up aspens.

Leen had been told by Matt Ostdiek, engineer and vice president of Rendezvous Engineering of Jackson Wyoming, who designed the road, that he only goofed by 10 feet of northward shift and a mere one foot, 11 inches higher than the plans called for but Leen proved that thesis wrong by ripping off the asphalt, digging down a full three feet to the rubber road matt placed over the old roadbed. "Such matting is used when the underlying road materials are unstable" Leen's expert excavator said, who chose to remain anonymous. And in fact, rumbling could be heard all night as the road began its collapse down the vertical 8 feet of excavation back to Leen's property line. "I would think that the developer, Terry Worrell, should know about this," Leen stated with concern. "A lot of heavy construction traffic is expected here to build these ridgeline spec houses and eventually HumVees will have a hard time negotiating up the remaining one lane road."

"It's ironic that in two miles of paving, the only place this road was raised was adjoining my property," Leen commented, but added "it solved an impossible driveway dilemma for my neighbors, Dick and Jean Ferguson," who live directly across and uphill from Leen's property. Coincidentally, Dick is the current president of the Saddle Butte Landowners Association, which represents the original 20+ members on Saddle Butte, Leen included; who pays dues to be represented against developers like this. "If the road was moved ten feet into their property and lowered 3 feet, the Ferguson's would have howled" Leen stated, "but they stood idly by and watched the destruction of approximately 400 feet of my property. It used to be that neighbors would look out for each other, but today with high land values, they are willing to stab each other in the back."

Dick Ferguson is a former park ranger and was introduced to the Butte over 25 years ago by Leen, who also worked in Yellowstone and Grand Teton. Jean is a counselor in Jackson who resolves disputes, such as the likes of road problems between neighbors. "As officers of our Association, I trusted them to make sure the road would be placed where the engineers said it would be," Leen said. The Fergusons should be doubly aware of faulty engineering their own architect never visited their homesitedesigning everything in California and mailing the plans to the builders who resorted to dynamiting their way up the hill above Leen's property and blasting the ridgeline off the hill.

This miscalculation disgruntled all the neighbors after sending a 30 lb. boulder through the roof of their closest neighbor's home about 150 feet distant who happened to be the current president of the Association; an office the Fergusons quickly assumed and have held almost continuously since the owner fled in disgust. The Fergusons were vacationing in Hawaii and were unavailable for comment.

It's a shame to tear up such beautiful place," Leen said, standing next to 8 foot high piles of dirt; his newly placed sign: "Welcome to Saddle Butte--Home of the Selfish" and under his newly inflated 11 foot red and yellow helium blimp which is tethered 125 feet above his home in front of the Ferguson's view. "It's perfectly legal....the blimp" Leen said waving the county regulation in one hand. "Bad fences make bad neighbors....and that's what I am going to be from now on. Fight fire with fire and backhoes with backhoes."

*(Leen is a publisher, part time dentist, and former geologist, seasonal park ranger and....shoe salesman who lives in rural Alaska on his restored 1899 tugboat. He can be reached virtually on the web at: [www.DougLeen.com](http://www.DougLeen.com) )*