

Lodging



Elk Mountain Lodge

Jemez Springs

The Perfect Place to Get Away

BY MANDY MARKSTEINER
Special to the Monitor

Tucked away in the beautiful Jemez Mountains, the Elk Mountain Lodge is a cozy Bed and Breakfast. It's a wonderful place to unwind, wake up to the sounds of elk bugling across the meadow, enjoy a room with a private hot tub and a hot breakfast.

Guests come to get away from the city for the weekend, go hiking, fishing and cross-country skiing. One of the reasons people come back is to see Cody, owner Terry Strite's sweet 9-year-old Great Pyrenees, Chow and Labrador mix. It's a dog-friendly B&B and guests can bring up to two dogs.

It can also be a perfect opportunity for someone interested in owning a business because it's now for sale for \$780,000.

There are five rooms; the Santa Fe Room, Country Lace

Room, Royal Aspen Suite, and Ponderosa Room all can accommodate two people and Tall Pines Cabin has a king bed and sleeps five. Each room has radiant heated flagstone floors, natural log walls, Jacuzzi tubs, oil paintings by Joan Dolkes, high ceilings and a private barbecue grill.

Strite built the original lodge on three acres of land in 1992. His mother and stepfather, Joan and Roy Dolkes, bought the property in 1973 but didn't develop it.

The Dolkes owned several businesses. They bought the Amber Light Motel and turned it into Dolkes Amber Lodge and opened a restaurant in the lodge called the Dinner Bell. They also bought Los Ojos and really built up the hospitality industry in Jemez Springs.

When Ray started to have heart problems, they sold everything but the three acres. Ray passed away and Joanne wanted to think of something to do with the property. At the time,

Strite was working for a custom building company in Washington State. He came down, and the family camped out and tossed some ideas around about what to do with the land.

Since he had worked in construction for 4 and a half years, building the lodge and cabins that surrounded it was a simple job. "I had learned the process of building custom homes."

They worked with Ponderosa Log Homes, in Colorado Springs, to build the first cabin.

"It was a restaurant in the beginning," said Strite, "Because that's what Mom wanted to do."

La Cueva Steakhouse was open for business from 1993-1995. When Joanne retired and moved to Rio Rancho, Strite decided that owning a restaurant was too chaotic. He wanted a simpler life and a business that was easier to run.

He remodeled the building and added additional cabins, starting with Tall Pines. In 1996 he opened Elk Mountain Lodge.

"It wasn't as busy as first," he said. "I was able to run it by myself with a housekeeper. But over the years we've built up a consistent clientele of return customers."

When he ran it by himself, he kept things simple. He served green chile breakfast burritos that he made ahead of time along with a continental breakfast. He keeps the grounds and the cabins in good shape and shovels the snow in the winter. Overall, the Elk Mountain Lodge has been a low-key and relaxing business for Strite.

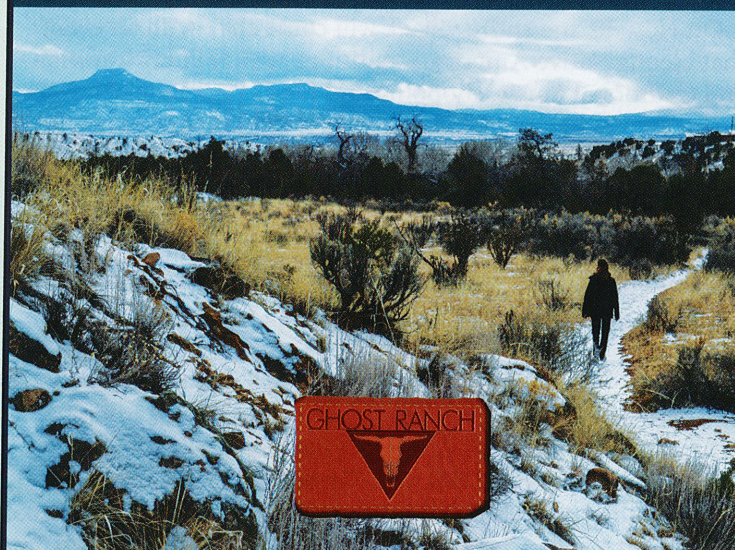
But now he is ready to retire, take the mobile home to a place where the climate is agreeable with his girlfriend, Jenny Young, her mother, and Cody and he might buy a home in the Northwest.



The Elk Mountain Lodge was opened in 1996 and is a dog-friendly B&B. Guests can bring up two dogs when they stay. Bottom Photo: Cody is owner Terry Strite's 9-year-old Great Pyrenees, Chow and Labrador mix. MANDY MARKSTEINER/Monitor

The Elk Mountain Lodge is located at 37485 Highway 126, Jemez Springs, New Mexico. Visit their website at elkmtnlodge.com or call 505-829-3159 to make a reservation.

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