

March 2024

Horizons

A Golden West Customer Newsletter

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Beauty in the Badlands

Elsie Fortune combines ranching and
photography 'in the middle of nowhere'

Beauty in the Badlands

Growing up on a cattle ranch in the Badlands of South Dakota, there are certain paths in life you can expect to follow. Photography isn't a typical one, but for Elsie Fortune, a camera is every bit as important as checking on newborn calves or fixing fences.

It's a balancing act Elsie has learned to master – and she wouldn't have it any other way.

Fifth-generation rancher turns photographer

If there's such a thing as a ranching gene, the Fortune family has it. Elsie and her brother Rolly are fifth-generation ranchers, living on the property near Interior that their grandparents bought to expand their operations. Even though her closest neighbors – her parents – are two miles away, Elsie admits living in the middle of nowhere has a certain appeal.

"I live on top of a hill overlooking a beautiful Badlands scenery," she says. "That's the reason I picked where I live. I sat up there and watched the sunrises and sunsets, and I was like, yeah. This is it."

It's no surprise that someone who appreciates natural beauty would be drawn to photography. Elsie attended Northwest College in Powell, Wyoming, to study photographic communications before transferring to Chadron State College in Nebraska for business and marketing.

Though she participated in rodeo events such as breakaway and team roping, her heart was set on opening a photography business of her own. Immediately after graduating in 2017, she did exactly that – and it didn't take long for Elsie to attract her clientele.

"The first few years of my photography business, a lot of people took chances with me when I was still learning," she recalls. "I've been super fortunate that way. Most of my business, I would say, is people I

know or personal recommendations. That's been really cool."

Capturing memories is special

Elsie Fortune Photography offers a wide variety of services. With weddings and portraits being the most popular, other assignments include headshots, livestock sale photos, commercial photography, and more.

"All the random things!" she says.

Having a photography business in a rural area, Elsie explains, means you'll end up doing a little bit of everything. Social media has played a significant role in helping spread the word about her business. The off-the-beaten-path location also contributes to her success. ▶

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From cattle to cameras, Elsie has been capturing memories in the Badlands for years.



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“There’s so many people that are traveling to the Badlands National Park or just passing through that want family photos in such a beautiful area,” she says. “I do a lot of family photos for tourists and elopements for people from all over the world.”

Family and engagement photo shoots are her favorite sessions.

“I love getting to go to peoples’ places and see where they live and see what’s special to them,” Elsie explains. “You feel more connected to them after you do their family photos and you’re a part of the family in a sense, like you were there for some of their big moments. It’s pretty special to be able to capture people’s memories.”

Inspecting livestock brands

While Rolly plans on taking over ranch operations when their dad retires, Elsie contributes when she’s not tied up with photography sessions, especially during calving season. Her love for agriculture led her to also serve as the local livestock brand inspector, a role she finds fun and rewarding. She travels around the area to confirm lawful ownership before or after transport and following sales transactions.

“It’s a good way to make connections with a lot of people in agriculture,” she says. “And it’s very busy in the winter season, so it’s a good off-time, seasonal job for me to tie in with the photography.”

Being a brand inspector involves more paperwork than Elsie expected – all handwritten in paper ledgers. But for Elsie Fortune Photography, the internet is crucial. She is thankful for the great service Golden West provides.

Elsie and her mother, Kathy, still have a close bond as neighbors – even if it’s two miles down the road.

High-speed internet is crucial for business

“My business relies on having good internet,” Elsie explains. “I offer all my clients an online gallery, so everything is through the internet. I don’t send a USB of the photos; they receive the photos over an online gallery.”

That’s where her Golden West fiber-optic connection proves its worth. Once she was upgraded, she noticed the difference immediately.

“It was incredibly fast,” she recalls. “After I was done shooting and selecting images, it would only take 15 minutes to upload photos compared to hours before I had fiber.”

When asked about her future plans, Elsie doesn’t hesitate. “I love my life,” she says. “I want to keep doing photography and living out in the middle of nowhere. Things might change, but for right now it’s working great!”

“After I was done shooting and selecting images, it would only take 15 minutes to upload photos compared to hours before I had fiber.”

– ELSIE FORTUNE



Photo by Alisha Lawrence

SDTA scholarships support telecom studies

The South Dakota Telecommunications Association (SDTA) will award multiple scholarships again this year totaling over \$6,000 to help offset the cost of college or technical schooling.

These scholarships are for students studying a variety of fields that use or rely on telecommunications and broadband technologies. This includes majors in marketing, computer science, medicine, education, and more. Applicants may be current high school seniors or students already attending college.

Qualifying criteria

To be eligible, the student must:

- Reside in a household that subscribes to an SDTA member company, like Golden West.
- Have a high school diploma or GED equivalent.
- Must be accepted into or attending a multi-year program at any accredited technical college or post-secondary higher education institution in South Dakota for the fall 2024 semester.
- Must major in a degree/program or field of study that's useful in the telecommunications or broadband industry, or which significantly relies on the use of broadband services and related technologies.

Previous SDTA Memorial Scholarship recipients are not eligible to apply. For more information, including examples of fields of study eligible for this scholarship, and to apply visit https://sdtaonline.com/sdta_scholarships.php or scan the QR code. The deadline for applications is June 15, 2024. Scholarships will be distributed for the 2025 spring semester.



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Take control of your account with the new My Golden West eBill mobile app. Download it to your smartphone or tablet from the Apple or Google Play stores. Log in to your eStatement account or create one if needed and take care of business anytime, anywhere you have an internet connection!



As a member-owned cooperative, Golden West prioritizes customer service. Call anytime and you will reach a real person. Outside of regular business hours, we will offer technical support to keep you connected.

Extra account access options

For your customer service needs after hours – or when a phone call just isn't convenient – Golden West continually adds alternate, convenient options that give you control over your account. Previous examples include the chat feature available on the Golden West website and our automated pay-by-phone option.

The cooperative has long offered an online account with AutoPay and electronic statement options. Customers log in using the My Account link at the top of the goldenwest.com website. Access just got even easier with the launch of the NEW My Golden West eBill mobile app.

eBill app adds convenience

Visit the Apple or Google Play stores to download the free My Golden West eBill mobile app to your smartphone or tablet. Tip: search for "Golden West eBill." Log in or create an account if needed and use it to manage your payments, review your eStatements, and more.

The convenience and portability of a mobile app is hard to beat, but if it's not your style, you can keep using the link on our website. Or keep calling Golden West. When you do, know that the person on the other end will also be from South Dakota!



6 things you can do with your eBill account

The My Golden West eBill mobile app offers an easy and convenient way to manage your account online. Besides saving you the cost of a postage stamp – every penny counts these days! – the app gives you control over your Golden West services.

While it won't make you coffee, walk the dog, or give you a foot rub, the My Golden West eBill app – or the eBill account feature in general – is designed to make your life easier. In addition to the mobile app, eBill can also be accessed through the My Account link at the top of the goldenwest.com website. Here are some of the things you can do with it:

- **Review bills and service details.** Access your current bill, view statements from the past three years, and review current service details, such as internet speed, cable TV package, etc.
- **Enroll in paperless billing.** Reduce clutter by signing up for web-only eStatements. You'll receive a notification when your new bill is available, and you can access it securely through your online account.
- **Make a one-time payment.** Make a secure payment anytime you'd like. In the middle of the night? Halfway through "The Masked Singer"? Standing in line at the grocery store? It's entirely up to you.
- **Track call history.** Monitor your calling patterns to optimize your plan. You can track long distance minutes during your current billing cycle to ensure you stay under the 300 minutes included with all bundled packages.
- **Sign up for AutoPay.** Never miss a payment by scheduling automatic payments from your bank account. Like the infomercial goes, set it and forget it! And in the process, banish "The check's in the mail!" from your vocabulary forever. If your current payment date isn't ideal, you can change that as well, provided the payment is received before it's due.
- **Minimal Wi-Fi control.** Reboot your router or reset your Wi-Fi password directly through the app. This feature is for customers who lease the Zyxel router model from Golden West. Those who have a Gigaspire router will instead use the My Golden West Wi-Fi mobile app to manage their Wi-Fi.

Signing up is easy. Simply download the My Golden West eBill mobile app through the Apple or Google Play stores and you'll be one step closer to effortless account management. For additional help with getting started, visit goldenwest.com/estatement.

Convenient ways to pay your bill

Golden West is committed to making the bill-paying experience as easy as possible. Choose from any of the following convenient options to pay your bill without any fees or additional charges:

AutoPay: Set up automatic payments from your bank account or credit/debit card for any of five available monthly dates for your automatic payment.

My Golden West eBill: Download the NEW My Golden West eBill app from the Apple or Google Play stores to take control of your account through your smartphone or tablet. You can also visit goldenwest.com and click on My Account.

Pay by Phone: Call 1-855-888-7777, option two, and follow the automated prompts to pay using a payment method on file anytime. Alternatively, talk to a member service representative during regular business hours to make a one-time payment.

In Person: Stop by any Golden West office with checks, credit/debit cards, money orders, or cash to make your payment. Visit goldenwest.com/contact for a list of office locations.

Mail: You will have to pay for a stamp, but that is the only cost to you. Mail your payment to: Golden West, PO Box 411, Wall, SD 57790.

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