

High Country News

May 18, 1992

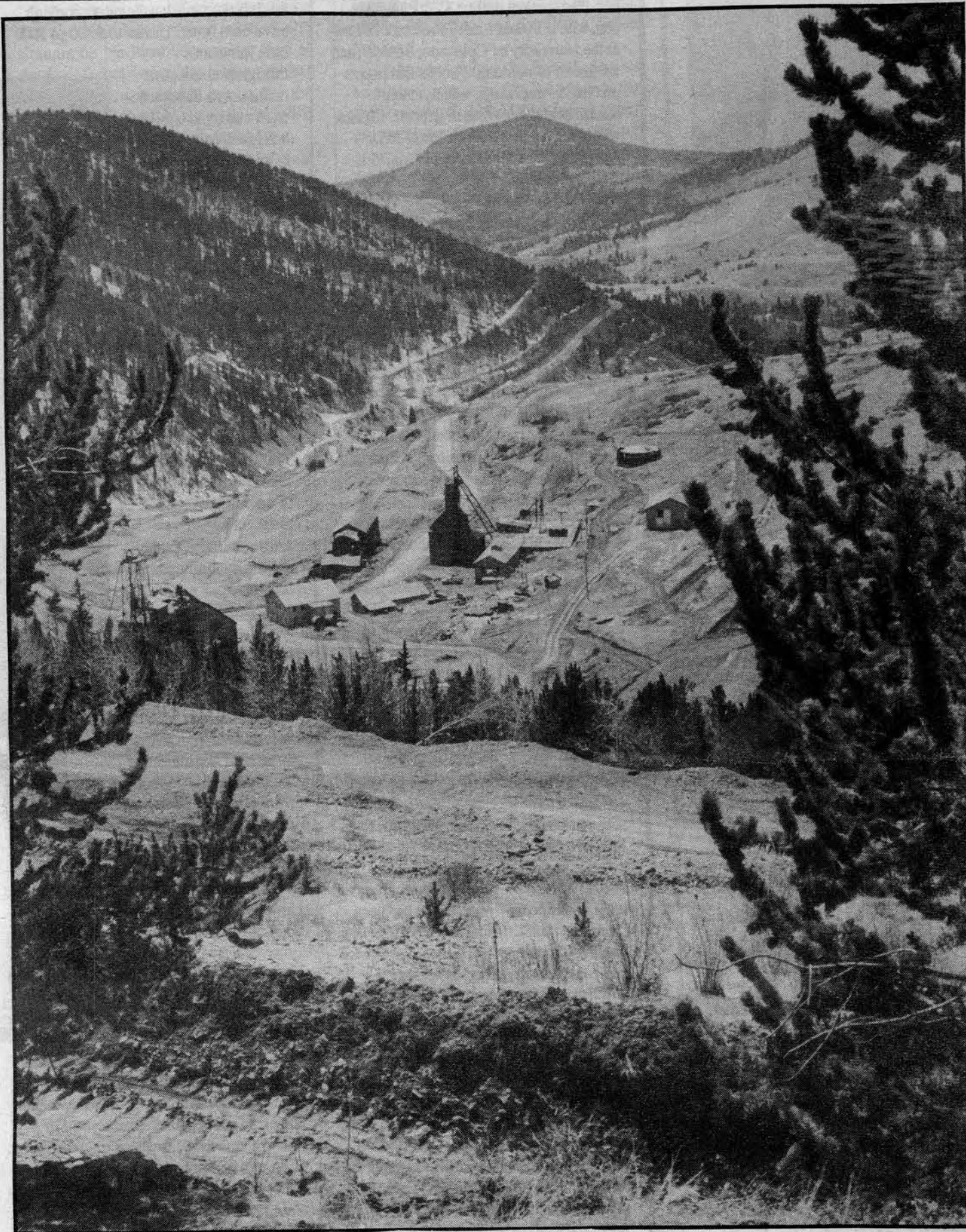
Vol. 24 No. 9

A Paper for People who Care about the West

One dollar

A small town fights a large mine

Victor, Colorado/10



Barry Noreen

An open-pit mining operation would destroy the area around the old Cresson Mine near Victor, Colorado

Synar debates Simpson:
How much is
a blade of
federal grass
worth?/5



Mike Synar

Al Simpson

Photos by Garth Dowling

Essay:
Will ranchers
go the way of
Detroit?/14

Dear friends,



HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

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Help HCN celebrate

We now have a definite speaker and a tentative schedule for the Saturday, June 20, dedication of the *High Country News* building in Paonia, to which all readers are invited.

The speaker will be Charles Wilkinson, who is Moses Lasky Professor of Law at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and the author of numerous books and papers on Native Americans, water, natural resources and the West in general. Charles, whose eulogy to the Doctrine of Prior Appropriation appeared in the Aug. 12, 1991, issue of *HCN*, will read from his works and talk about *High Country News*.

He will speak at 3:30 p.m. in Paonia's Paradise Theatre, which seats about 150. Tickets are free, but to ensure admission, you may want to write asking for tickets. This will help us plan for dinner, which will occur in the Paonia park at 6 p.m. The building itself will be on display from 1 to 3 p.m., followed by a very brief ceremony.

Paonia is about five hours from Denver, six hours from Salt Lake City, four hours from Albuquerque, and 10 hours from Jackson Hole. It is also about two hours from Aspen, and almost three hours from Telluride, where the annual bluegrass festival will take place on the same weekend.

For those who overnight in Paonia, there will be Sunday morning hikes into the nearby West Elk Mountains and to the Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

Argh

Circulation manager Gretchen Nicholoff recently sent out what she calls a "mortification" letter, informing 65 subscribers that the paper's computer program had a fit of some sort and terminated their subscriptions approximately four issues ago. She got the news when some of the victims called to say they missed the paper. Gretchen then discovered that an entire subset of subscribers — people who had been billed, and had paid, but had paid a little later than the computer would have liked — were bumped. We've renamed the program, which the software company calls MacSUB, Hal, after the wayward computer in 2001.

J. Hunter Holloway

We were saddened to hear of the death on April 30 in an auto accident of J. Hunter Holloway. We knew Hunter as a fine and helpful public information person for the Bureau of Reclamation several years ago, but he was also a veteran journalist and an ex-Marine, and was active in wilderness search and mountain rescue. A memorial service was held May 5 at Calvary Episcopal Church in Golden, Colo.

Hunters raise big bucks

HCN's publisher and editor attended a different kind of environmental event

HOTLINE

Oregon desert conference picketed

About 75 multiple-use advocates picketed the 14th annual Desert Conference April 25 at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Oregon. Ranchers and loggers protesting the conference brought along two cattle trucks and a logging truck for their rally. Approximately 200 people attended the conference, which attracts the "who's who" of Northwest environmental ranks.

May 2 at the Elks Club in nearby Montrose, Colo. It was a dinner-raffle-auction put on by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Guns, ammunition, handmade knives, guided hunting trips, duck decoys, castings of bear paws, paintings and lithographs of elk and bronzes of animals were up for bid or went to the holders of the raffle tickets.

It wasn't exactly a Sierra Club or Audubon setting, but the result couldn't have been better. Thanks to \$300 to \$600 bids for various lithographs, as well as raffle tickets that cost \$5 each and could only be bought in units of \$20, over \$30,000 was raised, which will go to buy or enhance elk habitat.

Fax fanaticism

If you know a young person who is puzzling about a career, you might advise her or him to become a lawyer specializing in Fax cases. The litigation possibilities are endless, thanks to the possibility of Faxing to a wrong number, or the difficulty in safeguarding Faxes.

The field has already begun to burgeon, we realized, after finding the following "Confidentiality Notice" on the bottom of a Fax we received from an attorney:

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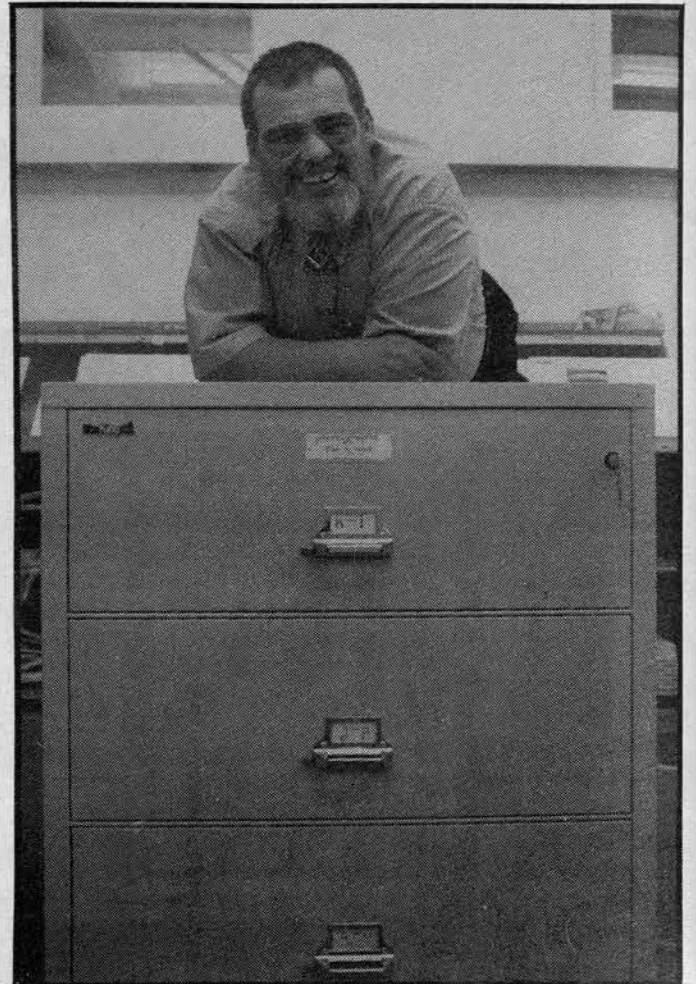
We understand everything but the last two words. We have checked, and the above statement — a long way of saying "This transmission insured by Smith and Wesson" — is not copyrighted. You may want to put it on your Faxes — especially on routine press releases sent unsolicited to *High Country News*.

A reality check

A note from a San Diego subscriber tells us why it is so hard for *HCN* to achieve

a 100 percent renewal rate. He thanks us for the renewal reminder but writes:

"I've had the good fortune to meet a fellow subscriber to your excellent publication. She and I are now sharing life and living together. Coincidentally, her subscription expires in May also, so you will be receiving a renewal check from her shortly. If I subscribe separately in the future, you will be one of the first to know the relationship was shorter-term, rather than the preferred long-term."



Tom Huerkamp atop the new *HCN* fireproof photo file

Photos have safe haven

After the subscription list, *HCN's* most valuable possession is its photo file. So when the paper was planning its new office, we wanted to include in the budget enough money to put all the photos in strong, fireproof file cabinets. That task was made less painful by Grand Mesa Office Supply of nearby Delta, Colo., and its proprietors, Tom and Marylou Huerkamp. They made us a two-fer offer we couldn't turn down: We bought one file cabinet for \$1,895 and they threw a second one in for free. The photos are now relatively safe, and the old photo file cabinet now houses the paper's business documents.

The Huerkamps and their crew, all of whom are avid sportsmen, also donated a large bulletin board, which hangs in the new building's kitchen, adorned by a sign that reads: "Donated by Delta County Duck Hunters."

— Ed Marston and Betsy Marston
for the staff

Oregon rancher Doc Hatfield also attended (*HCN*, 3/23/92). Protest organizer Charles Cushman of Battle Ground, Wash., told the *Portland Oregonian* that environmentalists have ruined "hundreds of timber-dependent communities" because of their support for spotted owls and old-growth forests. Now, he said, "they are starting on ranching communities. This is a systematic, cultural genocide of rural America." Andy Kerr of the Oregon Natural Resources Council said environmentalists are not anti-cowboy. "They are anti-ecological destruction caused by these bovine bulldozers." As a

result, Kerr said many people support the Oregon High Desert Protection Act, which would halt grazing on 6 million acres of public land in eastern Oregon, create a 1 million-acre Steens Mountain National Park and preserve and protect portions of 54 rivers as Wild and Scenic. Earth First! member Scott Greacen of Portland recited a poem for the pickets: "Thank you for coming and bringing the press; a well-informed public will help us clean up your mess. You'll give us some grief, but the conference is full; 'cause we don't want your beef, and we don't need your bull."

WESTERN ROUNDUP

Forest Service scientist cries foul

A U.S. Inspector General Office investigation has been triggered by a 28-year Forest Service veteran who says she resigned after refusing to accommodate more oil and gas exploration in Colorado's Pike and San Isabel national forests.

Geologist Marti Martinez had headed a 10-member group of Forest Service specialists working on an environmental impact statement for oil leasing. After more than two years of work, she says she was told by her superiors to rewrite reports so leasing activity could take place in environmentally sensitive areas.

When she refused, Martinez says she was removed from her job as coordinator of the EIS and given a "gofer" position in the spring of 1991. She resigned in December, and when forest supervisor Jack Weissling approved the EIS, she appealed the decision as a private citizen.

Contrary to scientifically backed recommendations from agency specialists, she said, "We were told by management staff, 'This is the way it's going to be.' It was not based on scientific data."

Martinez's charges echo controversies involving John Mumma, former regional director of the National Park Service in Montana, and Lorraine Mintzmyer, former regional director of the National Park Service in Denver. Both told a congressional committee they were subjected to intense political pressure.

The EIS recommends opening up virtually all of the 2.2 million acres studied, but Martinez said very little field work, analyzing specific sites, was done — although required by the National Environmental Policy Act.

As a result, she said, "The argument management had was that we did not have enough data to justify more protection, and that's true. But the same is true for the other (pro-development) side. Nothing was verified on the ground."

Martinez said she and her panel recommended that the Spanish Peaks area,

a relatively pristine parcel long seen as worthy of wilderness designation, remain off-limits to oil and gas leasing. She also said the panel urged the same "no surface occupancy" recommendation for thousands of acres within the Comanche National Grasslands. Part of the San Isabel forest, the grasslands has been identified as critical habitat for the lesser prairie chicken, a species included on Colorado's threatened species list.

Male birds take part in an annual mating ritual that includes leaping and low-pitched noise-making, which attracts females. The event is highly publicized by Colorado wildlife officials as part of the state's "watchable wildlife" program.

Colorado officials were concerned during the EIS process that the birds' habitat would be roaded and degraded by the sounds of drilling activity. Biologist Bruce Goforth of the Colorado Division of Wildlife repeatedly wrote to Weissling, urging that the prairie chicken's habitat remain untouched.

Although the bird is on the state's threatened list, it is not listed on any federal species list. But plans for the Pike-San Isabel forest agree that the state's threatened or endangered species will be respected when various logging, grazing or mineral activities are proposed.

As early as May 1990, however, the state was worried. Biologist Goforth wrote, "It is not enough to say that wildlife species impacted by oil and gas activities can use secondary or marginal habitat and hopefully survive or prosper ... Nor is the use of special stipulations always a satisfactory answer to wildlife impacts, since direct habitat losses are not addressed."

Based upon Goforth's concerns, Colorado's agency took the rare action of appealing Weissling's approval of the oil and gas leasing plan. In a sharply worded letter, the agency appeal said failure to consider the impacts of exploration and drilling activities on the birds' nesting and mating-display area resulted

in a document which is "wholly inadequate and fails to comply with NEPA." The state appeal asserted that ignoring DOW's concerns resulted in "an arbitrary and capricious decision on behalf of Mr. Weissling and the USDA Forest Service."

After receiving the appeal, sources said Weissling called DOW officials. He assured them that in the future, each prospective site would be analyzed and appropriate protection applied when a company filed for an application to drill. DOW officials relented and withdrew the appeal. For the record, DOW officials now say the Pike-San Isabel forest plan sufficiently protects the prairie chicken and other species.

That did not stop the Colorado Environmental Coalition from filing an appeal of its own. Coalition spokesman Todd Robertson charged that a forest plan or verbal agreement from transient agency managers is hardly enough protection for wildlife. A permit to drill, he said, gives an oil company tremendous clout.

As Martinez puts it, energy companies "can go out on known T & E (threatened and endangered species) tracts and do their thing."

Martinez, however, is not bitter about her almost three decades with the Forest Service. The agency, she said, is "a good outfit. I do not blame the Forest Service for what happened. I blame a few managers."

She said she opted for retirement because she could afford it financially. She also said if she had "blown the whistle" her work environment would have been drastically changed for her last two years on the job.

Citing the on-going investigation, neither Weissling nor any of his staff would comment.

— Barry Noreen

The writer covers environmental issues for the Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph.

HOTLINE



Roy Willey/Aspen Times

This dead swan netted a bear hunter a \$50 fine

Swan song for a hunter

A dead swan nailed to a tree netted a western Colorado bear hunter a \$50 fine instead of a black bear. Dale Paas received a citation for failing to "containerize" his bait after local hikers found the swan and mounds of food and garbage stacked on Forest Service land near Independence Pass. Chester and Judy Goss reported the illegal bait station to the Division of Wildlife April 22, and notified the local representative of Coloradans United for Bears, Michelle Savage. Savage's group is pushing a ballot initiative to end spring bear hunting and the use of bait and hounds (HCN, 4/20/92). Savage said it took three days of pressing hard to get local Division of Wildlife officer Rick Adams to cite the hunter with one violation. She said action on the case came only after the regional law enforcement chief intervened. Adams, however, said he delayed charging Paas because he didn't have enough evidence to prove who had set the bait and he needed an admission from the hunter. He told *The Aspen Times*, "If I hadn't stuck my neck out and took advantage of my friendship (with Paas), I wouldn't have been able to prove the case in court." Goss said he noticed at least four violations of bear-baiting regulations, including lack of identification at the bait station, and lack of a vet certificate stating how the swan died and that it was free of contagious disease.

BARBS

Filling the niche opened by the collapse of the USSR.

A Bush administration official in the Office of Personnel Management ordered six pages of birth-control information scissored out of 275,000 copies of a health-care book sent to federal workers with children. "We didn't want to offend anybody," said bureaucrat Curt Smith.

HOTLINE

Agency makes major shift

Yet another federal natural resource director is gone from the Rocky Mountain region. Gary Cargill has been regional forester for six years, and was one of the lead persons on the Yellowstone Vision document that apparently led to the departure of Lorraine Mintzmyer as regional director of the National Park Service in the Rockies. (HCN, 10/7/91.) But Cargill's resignation and departure for a ranch in New Mexico are apparently unrelated to the controversy. And the traditional forester's replacement by a 44-year-old ecologist and newcomer to the Forest Service — Elizabeth Estill — was welcomed by Darrell Knuffke of The Wilderness Society. He told the *Denver Post*, "It's terrific to see people advancing in an agency that heretofore only seemed to promote people out of the timber program." F. Dale Roberson, Forest Service Chief, who flew to Denver to announce the retirement and promotion, appeared to agree with Knuffke: "She

represents the new perspective of the Forest Service and the leadership of the Forest Service for the 1990s and beyond." Estill will take over the 22-million-acre region in August. She has been with the agency for four years, and has served as its director of recreation,



Elizabeth Estill

cultural resources and wilderness management. Before that, she ran recreation for the Tennessee Valley Authority. Estill is the first woman to become a regional forester in the 87-year history of the Forest Service

Timber workers rally in Arizona

Timber workers protested "radical conservationists" and government restrictions on logging at a rally in Flagstaff, Ariz., last month. The rally was sponsored by Arizona's AFL-CIO labor groups and included more than 400 workers dependent on timber and other natural resources for their jobs, reports *The Arizona Republic*. Arizona House Majority Leader Mark Killian set the tone for the rally, declaring, "People come first, and animals and plants don't come before people." Lewis Tenney, vice president of Precision Pine and Timber, said, "We've allowed the extreme environmentalists to lie to the American public for so long that they don't know what the truth is." The rally came as the U.S. Forest Service proposed eliminating public appeals of timber sales (HCN, 9/23/91). A decision is expected in June.

HOTLINE

Bill would block land acquisition

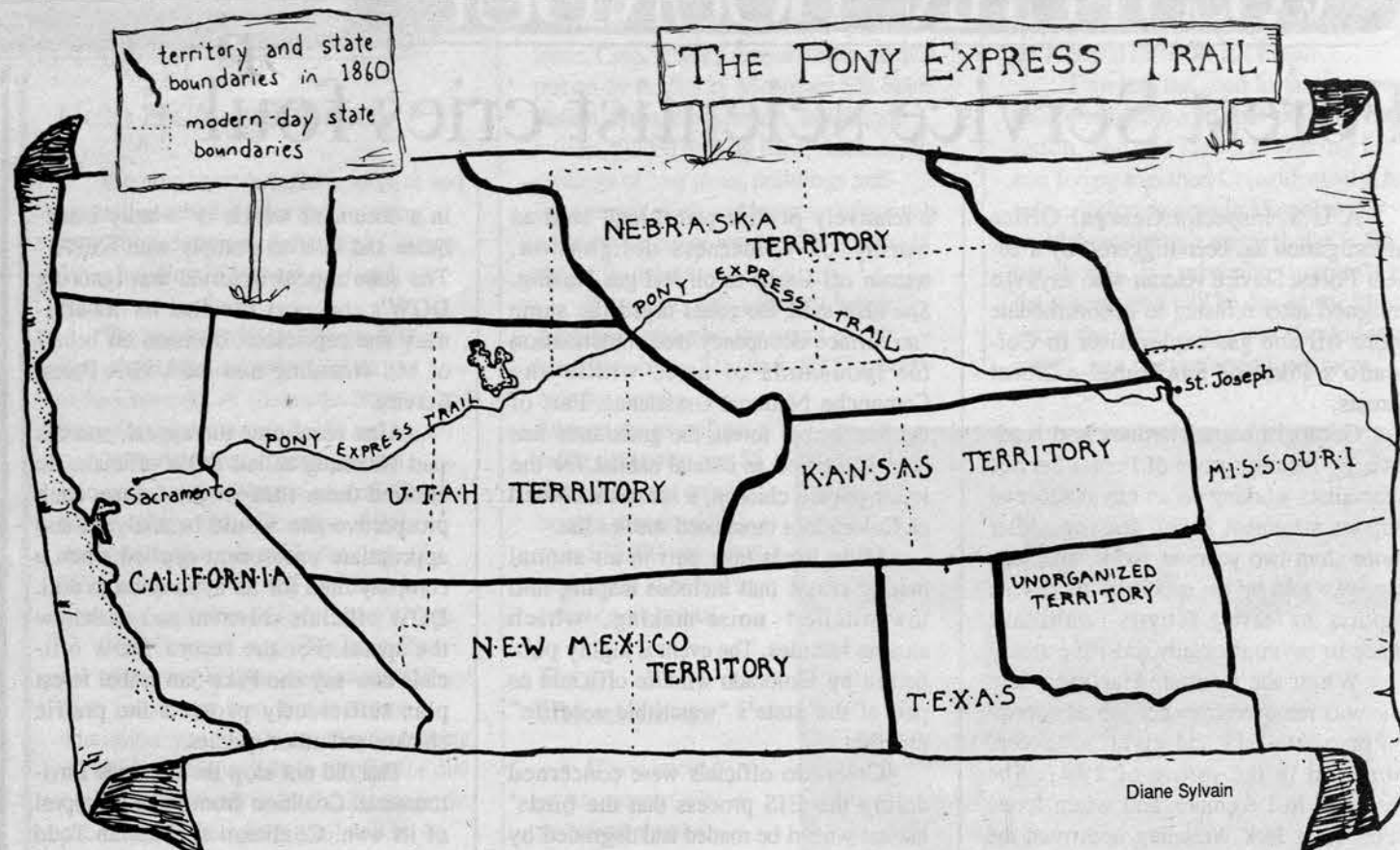
Several Western senators who think the federal government is eager to extend its tentacles in their states have introduced a bill aimed at "no net loss of private lands." The controversial proposal, now before the Public Lands subcommittee, would force federal agencies, such as the Forest Service and Park Service, to sell land to the private sector before buying additional land in any given county. "We very much need this additional protection in order to preserve our communities, our local tax base, and simply put, our way of life," said co-sponsor Alan Simpson, R-Wyo. Endorsed by the National Cattlemen's Association and co-sponsored by Malcolm Wallop, R-Wyo., and Steve Symms, R-Idaho, the proposal has drawn fire from environmental groups. "This certainly would tie the agencies' hands," said Larry Mehlhaff of the Sierra Club in Wyoming. "We'd see fewer acquisitions and more public land transferred to private industry in a way that's harmful to the environment." A companion bill has been proposed by Rep. Craig Thomas, R-Wyo., in the House.

Reining in the military

Critics of the U.S. Department of Defense's campaign to create new military training and bombing ranges have found a friend in Congress. Rep. Bruce Vento, D-Minn., the influential chairman of the House Interior Subcommittee on Public Lands and National Parks, has introduced legislation that could, for the first time, bring the military's range-expansion campaign under civilian control. "It's my dream come true. Hallelujah!" said Grace Bukowski of Reno, Nev.-based Citizen Alert, a grass-roots group dedicated to protecting citizens and the environment from the abuses of military training activities. Vento's bill would impose a moratorium on the expansion or creation of new training areas until the Department of Defense unveils a five-year national strategic defense plan, something Citizen Alert and others have sought for years. In addition, the bill would strip control over military air space expansions from the Federal Aviation Administration and grant that authority to Congress. The FAA has been loath to buck the Defense Department. Pentagon spokesman Glenn Flood said the DOD has yet to formulate a reaction to the legislation, "but we're working on one." Congressional hearings may be held this month.

... and they don't drive drunk

Hungry deer have descended on the small town of Story, Wyo., 20 miles south of Sheridan. After another balmy winter, deer have moved into backyards to munch on trees, shrubs, and even raspberry plants from a commercial farm. Recently, 100 Story residents gathered at the Woman's Club to ask staffers with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department for advice. Since sterilization and relocation are too expensive, and in-town hunting too dangerous, townspeople were told about two options: building fences and repelling the deer with sprays. But not everyone at the meeting was fed up with deer. Resident Jack Schaal told the *Sheridan Press*, "I would rather live with the deer than some of the people I know. The deer don't play loud music and they don't ride snowmobiles by your house at 2 in the morning. I think they are pretty good neighbors."



A new front in the war for the West

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Riders of the famed Pony Express, the Old West's 1,800-mile-long mail route from Missouri to California, had to fight off Indians, horse rustlers and thieves. Now, 100 years later, the riders' fans are fighting off Congress.

In fact, the feud over legislation to designate the Express a national historic trail is taking longer than the fabled mail route itself actually stayed in business.

The Pony Express trail and the 5,000-mile-long California Trail, which changed the course of history for the West, have been held at gunpoint for more than two years by Sen. Malcolm Wallop, R-Wyo., over an issue that once started wars in the Wild West: private property rights.

Wallop and his camp — which includes Sen. Jake Garn, R-Utah, Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., Western ranchers, farmers and private property rights groups — say they have nothing against the legendary trails, but that they're taking a stand in principle against the government's power to condemn land.

"It's the good old United States government telling us to trust them, and we don't," said Bob Budd, executive director of the Wyoming Stockgrowers' Association. "We're just saying, Okay, if you want a trail, just show us you're not going to use this as a mechanism to come in and throw us out of business or achieve an end that you're not stating."

The lawmakers pushing to officially protect the two 100-year-old pioneer trails have drawn a line in the prairie and taken an equally firm stand on principle. They say that caving in to Wallop's alternative bill could set a precedent and erode the federal government's long-standing power of eminent domain.

The two sides were set for a showdown Feb. 19 on the condemnation issue at the first Senate hearing on the trails since the House unanimously passed the legislation last May.

But since only Sen. Dale Bumpers, D-Ark., showed up, the two sides are still at a standoff and the issue, despite reams of mail from Western constituents who support historic designation, is far from being resolved.

Caught somewhere in the middle are frustrated grass-roots groups like the Pony Express Association and the Oregon-California Trails Association who simply want the government to put up markers and interpretive signs along

both trails, and perhaps a visitors' center here or there in an especially significant area — like where Pony Express rider Wild Bill Hickok shot his first man.

With an eye toward capitalizing on urban tourists' romanticism of the rugged West, Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., has already secured a \$150,000 appropriation from Congress and directed the National Park Service to find a place in Kansas to put the visitors' center.

"There's only about three words' difference between the bills and we're in complete deadlock," said Bill Watson, past president of the Oregon-California Trails Association. "Our analysis says we can live with either."

The longer Congress delays, the more likely it is that someone will put up a shopping mall or pave over parts of the trail, Watson said. Although Watson doesn't necessarily want to stop those malls from going up, he said a historic designation can often compel a developer, like one in Boise, to redesign a project to highlight the trail route.

"The sooner you get the designation, the trail gets identified on the map, which helps to alert developers and highway planners that there are delicate areas that need to be preserved," Watson said.

Until the telegraph put them out of business, riders of the famed Pony Express delivered mail, stock prices and newspaper correspondents' dispatches from St. Joseph, Mo., to San Francisco within 10 days. An ad for riders in a period newspaper read: "Wanted: Young, skinny, wiry fellows, not over 18. Must be expert riders, willing to risk death daily. Orphans preferred. Wages \$25 a week."

The California Trails, on the other hand, were the paths over the Sierra Nevada mountains that thousands of settlers took, starting in 1848, in search of gold or a better, self-made way of life.

"We don't want to condemn any land whatsoever," said Ken Martin, head of the Pony Express Association in Marysville, Kan. "We want the farmer or rancher to have their farm or ranch. Yes, we'd like to have access, but he has the say-so."

Both Martin and Watson say their organizations work with private landowners to arrange tours or to mark the deep wagon ruts or remnants of pony express mail stations that are still evident along much of the trails. Both, too, are somewhat baffled by Wallop's opposi-

tion. The two trails are in the bed of the Oregon Trail, which Congress designated as historic nearly a decade ago, and which has yet to put a single rancher, miner or oilman out of business.

"Look, we just don't want the agencies to go on a buying spree," said one Republican House staff aide who favors Wallop's side. "It's not that we don't like the Pony Express, the concern is, once the federal government gets involved, Katy bar the door."

Feasibility studies show the National Park Service plans to acquire only six miles for visitor centers along the 6,000 miles of trail. Of the more than 320 historic sites along both trails, Watson said 100 are already covered currently under either the Oregon or Mormon trails.

Both the House and Senate bills would allow the government to buy private property from willing sellers only, thus barring condemnation. The only difference in the bills applies to private property within the boundaries of federally administered areas — places like national parks and forests, wildlife refuges and Bureau of Land Management areas.

The feud, according to Wallop aides, revolves around Wallop's concern that, once land is designated a historic trail, the private property in the corridor would be considered within a federally administered area and thus subject to condemnation. It's a point proponents dismiss as frivolous.

"If the Pony Express and California trails are not designated historic trails, I think we would lose a valuable part of our heritage — one of the most massive western migrations of people," said Sacramento Western historian Jack Steed. "There are Americans still to be born who would say, 'Where did they go, Daddy?' And no one will know."

For more information, contact: Bill Watson, with OCTA, 3 Drum Hill Drive, Summit, NJ 07901 (201/273-7817); Ken Martin, Pony Express Association, 1002 Jenkins, Marysville, KS 66508 (913/562-3615); Steve Elkington, National Park Service, NPS 782, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127 (202/343-3776).

— Brigid Schulte

The writer reports for States News Service in Washington, D.C.

Synar, Simpson keep gloves on in grazing debate

JACKSON, Wyo. — Debating face to face instead of in their respective congressional houses, Rep. Mike Synar, D-Okla., and Sen. Alan Simpson, R-Wyo., argued, courteously, the wisdom of increasing fees for livestock grazing on 250 million acres of public lands.

The occasion was the annual rendezvous of the Wyoming Wildlife Federation, which drew an audience of 200 April 24.

Synar began by charging that permit-holders were "feeding off" the federal treasury. Current grazing fees are \$1.92 per animal unit month (AUM) but Synar said other federal, state and private land commands grazing fees as high as \$20 per animal unit month.

Synar said some of the large lessees getting a bargain in 16 Western states include the Mormon church, Union Oil, Utah Pacific Power and Light, Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., John Hancock Insurance Co., Zen Chi-Ku Cattle and Steak of Montana and Japan, and landowner David Russell, the largest single lessee, who lease a total of 5.3 million acres.

"Wyoming has 17 million acres of grazing land (and) 8.4 million acres are controlled by 39 people," Synar said in an interview after the debate. "The culprit here is an outdated and unjustifiable subsidy for a tiny fraction of the U.S. livestock industry."

Simpson denied that the majority of lessees are large corporations. He said 67 percent of the lessees — specifically those on Bureau of Land Management land — are ranchers with herds of 100-500 head, considered small-to-medium-size ranching operations.

Each defended his numbers and seemed to cite the same statistics, although from vastly different perspectives. Dan Talbot, deputy assistant secretary at the Department of Interior, quoted a 1986 grazing-fee report that said that 90 percent of the BLM leases had livestock herds of 500 head or fewer.

Talbot continued that 88 percent of Forest Service lands were leased to operations with 500 or fewer head of livestock. He conceded that some permittees were corporations but did not have specific information about those leasing the land.

An aide to Synar, who asked that his name not be used, said Talbot was contradicting an updated report due to be released soon by the BLM. The aide said that 10 percent of the lessees control 47 percent of the animals on BLM land. He said, for example, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company controls 672,390 acres which sustain a total of 2,785 head of cattle. "That is not an exception," he said.

Synar has proposed more than quadrupling the current grazing fee of \$1.92 per animal unit month to \$8.70 by 1994. The increases, he argued, would add up to \$425 million over the next five years.

Simpson said Synar's proposal would put some ranching operations out of business and harm local economies in the West. Like some Eastern congressmen, Simpson said, Synar possessed little understanding of public lands.

Synar responded that he had been unfairly labeled. "I'm not a supporter of Jeremy Rifkin, I am not an eco-terrorist, I am not a vegetarian," he said. "Show me one shred of evidence of the economic impact and I'll rethink everything here."

Simpson said all the needed information has already been presented: "It's in the *Congressional Register*." He said

it includes information about how the increase will affect society.

Simpson said it was unfair to single out public subsidization of ranching. "We see about a nickel's worth of subsidies in this state," he said, adding that \$13 billion is spent nationally in agricultural subsidies.

Some members of the audience agreed, saying that fees from other industries should be reviewed. Synar agreed. "We're going after timber; we're going after oil and gas royalties; we're going after hard-rock minerals and uranium."

Simpson pointed out that Synar should examine all industries using public lands, including recreation. That's something, Simpson said, "the people of this state wouldn't take." To that, some audience members shouted, "Yes, we would!"

The audience applauded both debaters, but appeared more supportive of Synar's position. From a partial text of Simpson's speech, it appeared he toned down his rhetoric considerably, excluding one section which pointed out that Synar had bounced 12 checks at the House bank.

Former regional forester John Mumma, sitting in the audience, was the first to address the two. He asked the two

officials to allow wolf reintroduction into Yellowstone Park and other Western areas without the intense political pressure to which he was subjected while in northern Montana. Mumma was forced from his position for political reasons this past fall, and then retired.

Simpson responded, "John Mumma was very unfortunately removed," and went on to deny one newspaper's allegations that he was involved in the political forces which helped remove Mumma. In addition, Simpson noted, "The wolf commission has been pressed in a hideous way to do its work."

Clifford Hansen, former Wyoming governor, U.S. senator, rancher and large landowner, pointed out to the congressmen that "It's a tough thing to break even in the oil and gas industry."

Synar was not sympathetic. The public owns the lands for the oil and gas leasing, he said, and "\$500 million is the subsidy to the oil and gas industry."

A rancher from Rock Springs, John Magnagna, said, "With the higher grazing fees, we'll have to focus on short-term profitability — rather than good stewardship."

Synar replied, "I'm not making these numbers up. This has come after six years of examining this issue. There are those who argue for the status quo,

arguing a way of life. We are arguing in a strictly economic manner."

In addition, Synar said that there were "four independent reports" concluding that "not one lessee would drop off" if fees were increased to fair market prices. "I've asked the Cattlemen's Association to come up with 'facts' to back up their argument. But they know they're getting a sweetheart deal that must be stopped."

Part of Synar's and others' argument for wanting fair-market grazing fees is that the public range is overgrazed and neglected, causing erosion and loss of productivity. Synar said that the BLM's data "shows that 60 percent of our public rangeland will continue to be in fair to bad condition well into the next century."

Synar became involved in grazing issues as the chairman of the House Subcommittee on Environment, Energy and Natural Resources. Summing up, he said, "Grazing on our public lands is producing an ecological and fiscal disaster. Since 1975 the taxpayers have lost almost \$2 billion subsidizing 26,000 livestock producers."

— Lauren McKeever

The writer free-lances from Jackson, Wyoming.

Ex-forester takes government to task

The degradation of this country's public lands is an early signal of serious environmental abuse occurring in the United States, according to John Mumma, former regional forester for the U.S. Forest Service in northern Montana.

"Folks, the canary in this country is sick," Mumma warned during his keynote speech at the Wyoming Wildlife Federation rendezvous, April 25.

Mumma, who resigned rather than accept transfer (*HCN*, 10/7/91), said target harvest quotas for his district would have violated a number of federal laws, including the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Forest Management Act and the Endangered Species Act. Mumma oversaw 25 million acres on 15 national forests in Montana, northern Idaho, portions of Washington, and North and South Dakota.

In one of his rare public speaking engagements since he left the Forest Service, Mumma urged the audience to demand that public officials address environmental issues. Referring to the threatened salmon, ancient forests and deteriorating riparian areas, Mumma told the audience, "You can make a difference. Become active. Hold the administration accountable. Demand that your elected officials enter into the next century with a vision that includes a national conservation ethic."

Recalling the conservation vision President Teddy Roosevelt demonstrated by establishing forest reserves, Mumma said, "I've often wondered what these lands would look like today if they would have been (under) private ownership."

He said that Roosevelt's decisions weren't "necessarily popular, but isn't that a leadership quality — making tough decisions?" Mumma

added, "I believe that this is a leadership quality lacking in America today."

A 28-year veteran of the Forest Service, Mumma told the audience they would be "shocked" and "saddened" by the checkerboard appearance of forests in northwestern Montana, where privately owned lands which have been logged about publicly owned lands.

"As the private forest harvesting intensified and began to dwindle — the industry association yelled for more, more, from the national forests. And we said 'no.' No, not as long as I'm regional forester," Mumma recalled.

Mumma exhorted the audience to demand that President Bush live up to his campaign promise to be the "environmental" president. "It's been at least 100 years since we have had a conservation president, and it's long past time that we had another," Mumma said.

He said the greatest philosophical influence on him was Aldo Leopold, the author of *Sand County Almanac*. Mumma described Leopold as a man of "great wisdom, 50 years ahead of his time." He said he gave copies of Leopold's book to his staff to encourage the development of a land ethic.

Mumma received a standing ovation from the 100 audience members after his speech. Interviewed later, he said political pressure from the secre-



Jim Evans/Jackson Hole Guide

John Mumma talks to the Wyoming Wildlife Federation

tary of agriculture, who oversees the Forest Service, is "unprecedented" from what he has seen throughout his career, and that morale at the Forest Service is "really tough right now. They're losing a lot of their young professionals."

He said the Forest Service proposal to eliminate the public appeals process after agency decisions is "atrocious." The appeals process "should be allowed to continue; it could be streamlined, but a lot of good has come from the appeals." Asked whether the Forest Service will be able to carry out its mandate, Mumma said there will be a "rebellion in the ranks" if various agencies are pressured to deviate from their missions.

When a state game and fish employee expressed frustration over the government not fully funding projects, and added, "I don't want to call in the Sierra Club ..." Mumma replied, "Sometimes you've got to."

— Lauren McKeever

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FOR WANT OF A STAMP...

In the old days, Los Angeles ran the rural Owens Valley with an iron fist. It secretly cut a deal with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation that brought the valley's water to Los Angeles. In the process of draining the valley's surface- and groundwater, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power bought 252,830 acres of land in Inyo County. But like the LAPD, the LADWP is not what it used to be. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, lack of \$3.40 worth of postage resulted in the DWP being late with its \$3.22 million property tax payments in Inyo County. As a result, L.A. will apparently have to pay a penalty of \$333,407 — a huge windfall to the sparsely populated Sierra Nevada county.

FIGHTING COWS IN NEW MEXICO

The Wilderness Society and a new group called Gila Watch are fighting a Forest Service plan to increase grazing in southwestern New Mexico's Gila and Aldo Leopold wilderness areas. On the Diamond Bar Allotment, which is 144,000 acres of mostly wilderness land, the agency supports a plan to fence off lower streams, build 33 stock ponds on little-used uplands of the allotment, and increase the number of cattle from 800 to 1,200. Adding more cows and construction far inside a designated wilderness has outraged local environmentalists. They say that the area is already overgrazed and that making room for more cows will destroy the secluded uplands and hasten destruction of the watershed. Susan Schock-Grinold, who leads Gila Watch, says, "The Forest Service plan will turn the area into a giant stockyard." Because threatened species of fish including the Gila trout live in streams running through the allotment, final approval hinges on a decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For more information, contact Susan Schock-Grinold of Gila Watch (505/388-2854) or Jim Norton of The Wilderness Society (505/986-8373). The Forest Service has requested comment on the plan; write to District Ranger Gerry Engel, Gila National Forest, P.O. Box 488, Mimbres, NM 88049 (505/536-2250).

SO MANY HIKES, SO LITTLE TIME

The *Hiker's Guide to Colorado*, first published in 1984, has been expanded and revised by authors Caryn and Peter Boddie. It describes 100 hikes, all but five west of I-25, Colorado's north-to-south interstate. The hikes are an excellent mix of easy to difficult and brief day hikes to long backpacking trips. The authors are very good at telling you how to reach a trailhead — often the most frustrating part of a hike — and what you will find once you're on the trail. In addition to the hike descriptions and maps, the book contains an excellent, common-sense introduction, and several useful appendices, including addresses and telephone numbers for public-land agencies and hiking and outdoor groups, trails accessible to the handicapped, as well as stores throughout the state that sell maps.

Falcon Press, P.O. Box 1718,
Helena, MT 59624. Cloth: \$11.95.
302 pages. Illustrated with maps and photos.

— Ed Marston

A GUIDE TO WATER

A good introduction to anyone interested in water issues in the West is *A Citizen's Guide to Water Development in Wyoming*, a concisely written 20-page booklet published by the Powder River Basin Resource Council in Douglas, Wyo. The 600-member, nonprofit council was founded in 1973 to help prevent or alleviate environmental problems in Wyoming. Single copies of the informative booklet are available free from the Powder River Basin Resource Council at P.O. Box 1178, Douglas, WY 82633.

MINING IN MT. NEBO

The Uinta National Forest wants the public to comment on a gypsum mine planned for the Mt. Nebo Wilderness in central Utah. Nephi Mayor Robert Steele plans to mine claims that were established almost 66 years ago, and state law, which allows for the mining of wilderness claims that predate a wilderness, is on his side. Environmental groups say a 68-acre, open-pit mine would be a "disaster," and that the Forest Service should consider buying the land. Gary Macfarlane, natural resource specialist for the Utah Wilderness Association, says

"the mine would leave an unreclaimable, open scar. The Forest Service needs to take that into consideration as much as they do Steele's right to mine." Forest Service officials say they see no reason to try and buy the property because the claims predate the wilderness area, making the mine a legitimate project. Steele, who bought the claims in 1973 for \$10, wants to sell them for \$1 million, while the government estimates their value at \$270,000. In an April 17 interview with *The Salt Lake Tribune*, Steele said, "There's no question about it, \$1 million is a lot of money. But if they intend to make a wilderness out of that — if that is what the people want — they should give me fair market value. If not, they should allow me to mine the property." Written comments should be sent by June 15 to Peter Karp, Forest Supervisor, Uinta National Forest, P.O. Box 1428, Provo, UT 84603.

LAST CALL ON WEST ELK ROAD

The public comment period is about to end on Kentucky millionaire Robert Minerich's proposal to build a road to one of his two properties within western Colorado's 176,000-acre West Elk wilderness. The proposed 1.6 mile all-weather road, which would access 80 acres of property where Minerich wants to build a house, has some residents of Paonia and Crested Butte up in arms. They say the project would scar a pristine yet popular part of the wilderness and increase odds that another road will be built to Minerich's second parcel, deeper in the wilderness. Though the Forest Service opposes development in the area, Minerich is legally entitled to access his property for "reasonable use and enjoyment" of his land, says Paonia District Ranger Stephen Posey. Since buying the land in 1989, Minerich has threatened several developments and the Forest Service has responded with proposals for land trades or acquisition. Minerich has rejected swaps, however, and unless Congress appropriates money, chances for outright purchase are slim. For more information or to comment on the road proposal, write District Ranger Stephen Posey, Gunnison National Forest, P.O. Box 1030, Paonia, CO 81428 (303/527-4131).

MOUNTAINFILM '92 FESTIVAL

Viewers can vicariously scale the world's highest peaks without leaving their seats in Telluride's Sheridan Opera House, site of the 14th annual Mountainfilm festival, May 22-25. Mountaineering isn't the only theme: Films and discussions will also address preservation, tourism and wilderness. Festival manager Jim Bedford says films this year focus on the first French woman to climb Mt. Everest, abuse and overuse of the Matterhorn in Switzerland, the history of the 1964 Wilderness Act, and "teaching geese to fly." Photographer and mountaineer Galen Rowell will also be on hand to discuss his work and travels. Tickets are \$80 for evening programs and \$40 during the day. Contact MOUNTAINFILM '92, P.O. Box 1088, Telluride, CO 81435 (303/728-4123).

QUAYLE TOPS

"EARTHBUSTERS" CHART

Vice President Dan Quayle and his activist Council on Competitiveness head The Wilderness Society's list of nine "Earth-busters" — those who pose the greatest threat to the country's air, water and land. Close on Quayle's tailfeathers are Secretary of Interior Manuel Lujan for his efforts on behalf of the timber industry, and Alaska Gov. Walter Hickel, who continues to lobby for oil exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Also included are the "Wise Use" Movement, top U.S. auto executives, fish-killing dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers and subsidized over-grazing of public lands. The U.S. Forest Service made the list for below-cost timber sales and National Park concessioners who commercialize and trivialize national treasures round out the list. The Wilderness Society can be reached at 900 17th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20006-2596 (202/833-2300).



From Giving Voice to Bear

GIVING VOICE TO BEAR

A Tlingit Indian expression sums up the theme of David Rockwell's engrossing book, *Giving Voice to Bear: North American Indian Myths, Rituals, and Images of the Bear*: "For you, grizzly bear, we're one." In this collection of stories, rituals and art work, Rockwell, a consultant for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes in Montana, examines the bear's role in Native American life and finds that it appears everywhere. A Dakota boy "becomes" a bear to gain manhood; an Ojibwa girl enters womanhood after a seclusion in which "she is a bear." The bear can be a guardian spirit, play a role in healing ceremonies and teach which plants are good to gather. Because it hibernates and emerges each spring, the bear also symbolizes rebirth. The stories tell of a deep respect for the animal and reveal that bears and humans often entered each other's lives. Rockwell tells us that his inspiration for the book occurred when he saw different reactions to the sight of a dead bear on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana. Looking at the giant carcass of a grizzly, the white people said it was now a "good bear;" Native Americans were reverent.

Roberts Rinehart Publishers, P.O. Box 666, Niwot, CO 80544. Hardback: \$25. 224 pages, illustrated by Janet McGahan, also photos.

— Caroline Byrd

FORESTS NEED SUMMER HELPERS

The Forest Service needs volunteers to build trails and serve as wilderness rangers and campground hosts in 12 national forests in Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska and South Dakota. Enthusiasm and a desire to work hard in the outdoors are the only requirements, the agency says. Jobs range in length from two days to an entire summer; long-term workers receive room and board. For more information, contact your nearest Forest Service office or write Volunteer Programs, P.O. Box 25127, Lakewood, CO 80225 (303/236-9628).

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OUTDOOR SINGLES NETWORK, bi-monthly newsletter, ages 19-90, no forwarding fees, \$18/1-year, \$4/trial issue-information. OSN-HCN, P.O. Box 2031, McCall, ID 83638. (8x6p)

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"**OUTDOOR PEOPLE AD-Venture**" lists 60-word descriptions of active, outdoor-oriented singles and trip companions nationwide. \$3/issue, \$12/ad. **OUTDOOR PEOPLE-HCN,** P.O. Box 600, Gaston, SC 29053. (7x1p)

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Vol. 24, No.9



Raechel M. Running

The Two Whales, who work as motor boatmen, make many canyon trips memorable. The original Whale (left), Curtis Hansen, summers in the Grand Canyon and winters in Chile's Bio Bio. His friend and brother Whale is Jack Weir.

River Rats

They tend to pick colorful nicknames, like "Whale." They can spin yarns and tell tall tales with the best of them, and they say they love their work as river guides because they cherish the Grand Canyon.

Many began work on the river as summer guides, then found themselves lured into full-time jobs. But instead of a daily trek to an office, guides make regular runs down the Colorado River.

Four years ago, boat men and women, along with teachers, photographers, musicians, cooks and other partisans of Grand Canyon, decided they needed a unified voice on river policies. So they formed an organization to protect and enhance the canyon, and called it Grand Canyon River Guides. Since then, the group has grown to 700, with half the members non-guides.

It works to train guides, educate visitors about the canyon environment, clean up the area through special trips, and lobby Congress to protect river flows.

The organization has also begun an archive to document river-running in Grand Canyon from the 1940s to the present. The archive is housed at Northern Arizona University.

Grand Canyon River Guides can be reached at Box 1934, Flagstaff, AZ 86002 (602/773-1075).

— Christa Sadler

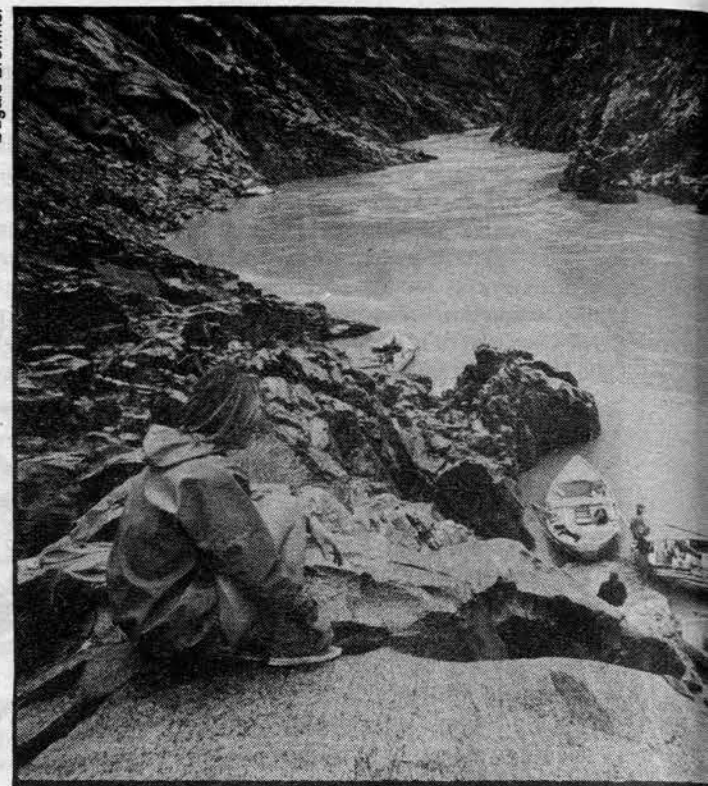
The writer free-lances from Flagstaff, Arizona.



John Rossotti

Photographer Raechel Running on the river.

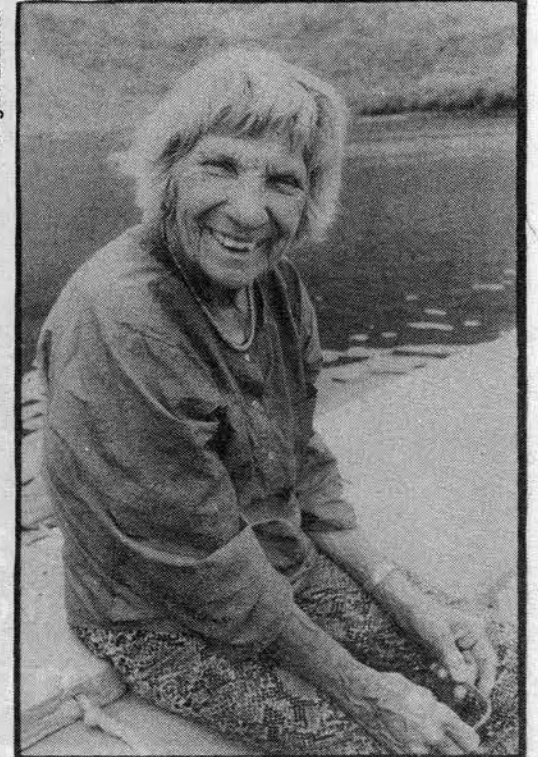
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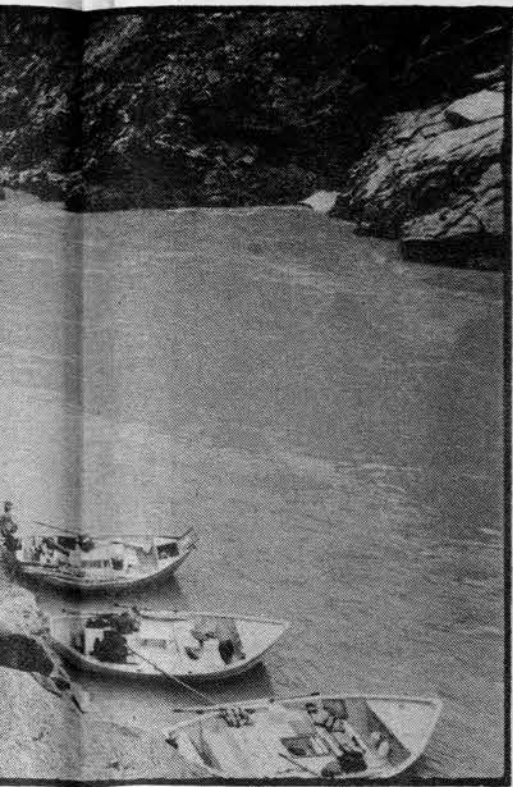
Raechel M. Running



Dugald Bremner



Georgie White, above, pioneered the "G Rig," pontoons with an outboard motor that helped open the Grand Canyon river experience to everyone. Famous for her leopard-skin bathing suits, Georgie ran her own rig until last summer — when she was past 80. At right, a couple hikes up the mouth of National Canyon. Far right, Elena Kirschner began as a cook for Grand Canyon Dorries and graduated to become a river guide rowing her own dory.



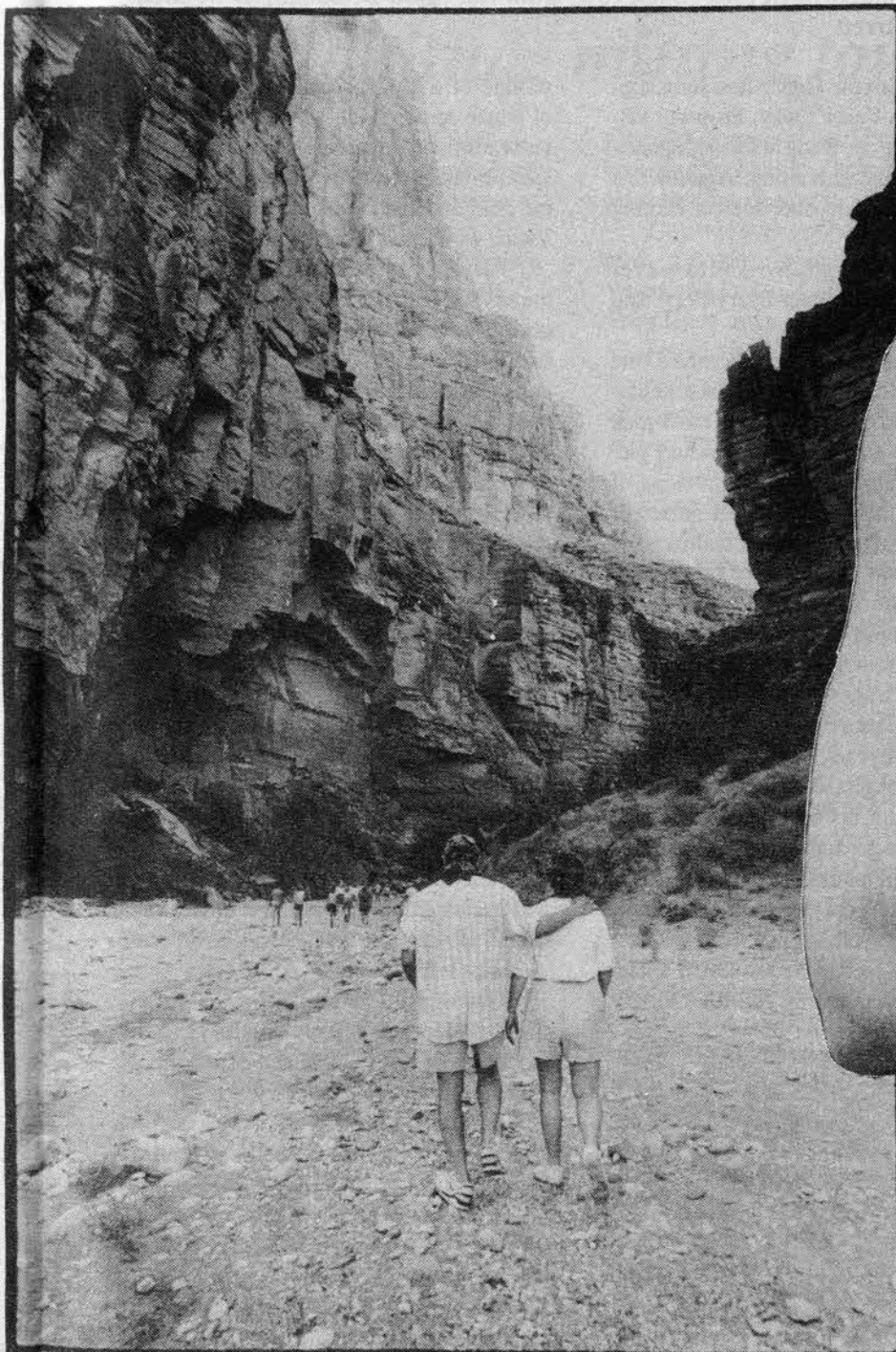
Raechel M. Running

Above, Little Mike and Big Mike. Big Mike rows for Outdoors Unlimited and inspires young and old with river lore and song. At left, a passenger sitting on a rock looks upstream in the Granite Gorge.



Raechel M. Running

At left, Kelly Smith, a geologist, and Mike Fahey, a river guide known as the King of Rubber for his boat-repair skills. Above, Ellen Tibits, who 18 years ago became the first woman to row for the Grand Canyon Dories.



Raechel M. Running



Dugald Bremner

The town of Victor, Colorado, takes on a gold mine

by Barry Noreen

For more than 100 years, the last thing the people of Victor, Colo., would think of doing is to say "no" to gold mining.

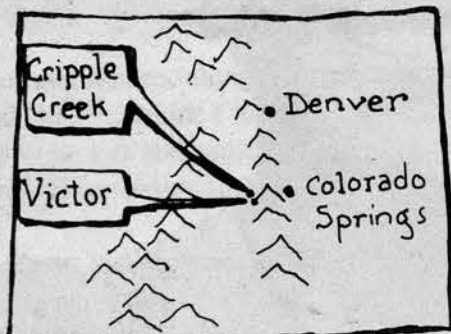
Now they are saying "whoa."

The town's 250 residents, long accustomed to the gold mining that has so thoroughly pockmarked neighboring mountainsides, are enjoying the spinoff benefits of a new bonanza. The latest boom — gambling — has emerged as a cash cow in Cripple Creek, another historic mining town just six miles away.

Most of Victor's residents reacted with alarm to a proposal that would place a mammoth cyanide heap-leach pad within a mile of the city limits. The hue and cry was not to stop the operation altogether, just to move the giant cyanide pad and holding pond, along with their potential environmental hazards, farther from town.

Opposition to a mining project is a relatively new phenomenon for the Cripple Creek & Victor Mining Co., a joint-venture partnership consisting of companies already running four heap-leach pads in the area, including the Vancouver-based NERCO Minerals. At first, the mining company gave critics the cold shoulder.

Cripple Creek & Victor Mining Co. did see, early on, that the new operation would encounter some opposition, because the company scheduled a public meeting



5 to unveil its plans. Scheduling such a meeting is something the mining companies didn't bother to do in the past. Historically, their operations have been routinely approved by Colorado's Mined Land Reclamation Board, a panel widely viewed as the mining industry's friend.

But when the company presented plans for an open pit mine and leach pad that would dwarf anything else in the area, residents recoiled.

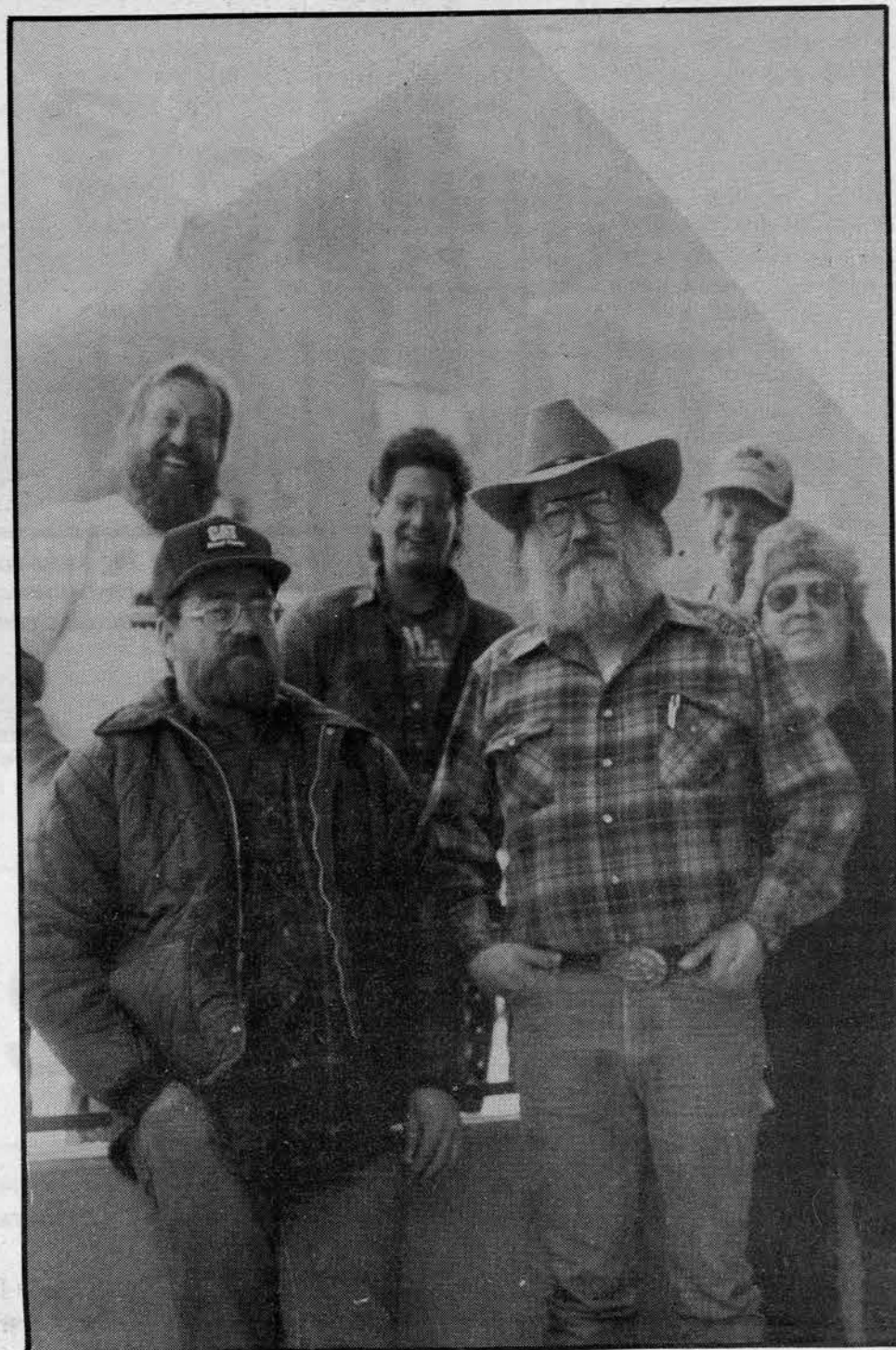
The mining plan calls for the open-pit Cresson Mine, named for one of the richest shaft mines during the area's turn-of-the-century heyday. It would truck 30 million tons of gold ore to rock crushers near Victor over the next 10 years. The retention pond created by the leftover cyanide solution would be 4,000 feet long and 2,500 feet wide, larger than the town of Victor.

Most Victor residents (they don't call themselves Victorians) are used to the cyanide spills that accompany cyanide heap-leach facilities; they figure that the ore trucks with 190-ton capacity go with the territory. Still, a grass-roots group called Citizens for Victor! sprang up within two days after the company announced its intentions.

A petition to relocate the leach pad was signed by 175 of the town's 250 year-round residents. Another 55 voters who own land outside the city limits added their names as well, to bring the total signatures to 305.

"This is scaring the hell out of this town," said Bob Beekman, the local florist. "We're not against mining, but we've got to fight this for our own protection."

The gambling boom



Barry Noreen

Citizens for Victor! includes (front row, from left) Bill Clymer, Barry Petri and David McCormick and (back row, from left) Bob Beekman, Al DeLuca and Don Barrett

in bustling Cripple Creek has sent economic ripples Victor's way. Property values have shot up, along with occupancy rates in long-vacant housing. Against that fiscal backdrop, dependence on mining has diminished.

"Ten years ago, we could never have tried this," sculptor Barry Petri said of the opposition effort.

The gold industry has boomed and busted numerous times in the past century. But the days of traditional hard-rock mining, with tunnels and shafts and picturesque headframes, are now a thing of the past. In the last decade, a series of operations that use the ore crushing and heap-leach pad method have taken hold around Victor. Initially, they made use of the great piles of waste rock left from the old-time mines, re-processing the ore to remove traces of gold that were impossible to take out in 1900.

In recent years, the companies have begun to change the shape of the landscape, digging open pits and piling up their own huge dumps of waste rock. Old-time gold miners have been heard to dismiss the new operations as "not really being mining at all."

At 9,693 feet above sea level, Victor is surrounded by the historic

residue of a bygone era. Scattered piles of waste rock, aging wood-frame structures atop old shafts, and precariously leaning shacks dot the landscape. Without gold and the people who came for it, Victor would never have existed.

All of Victor's non-miners have miners for friends, and mining jobs have always been sought after for their relatively high wages. But mining, with its constant booms and busts, has never been a dependable source of income for the residents of Victor.

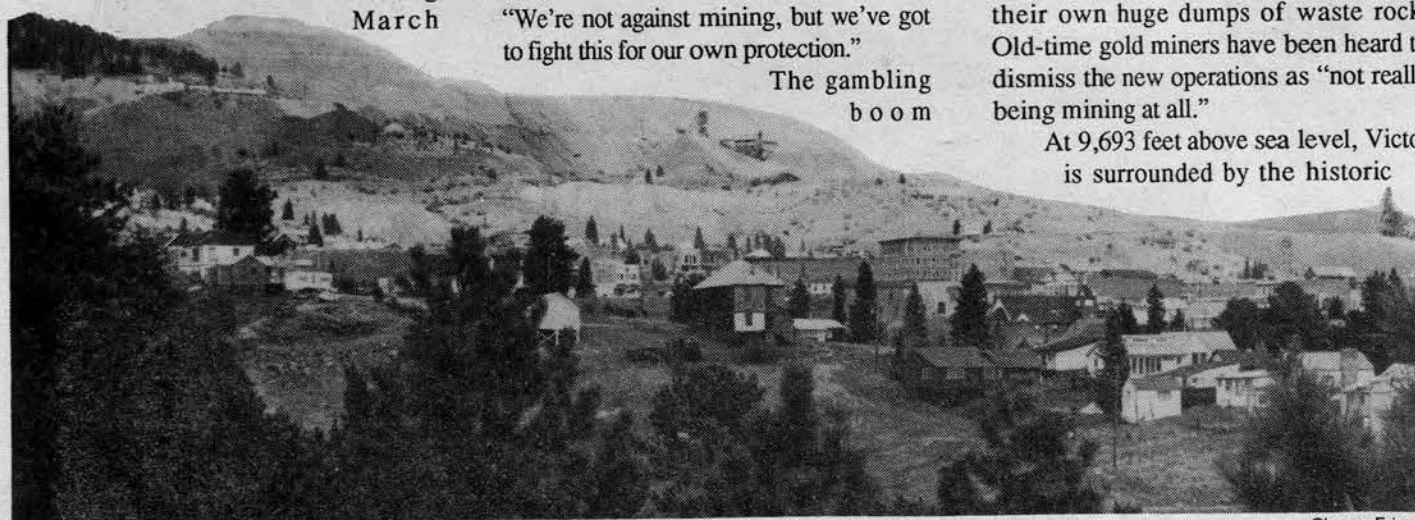
Most have struggled to make ends meet in a variety of ways, often holding down more than one part-time job, or trying to earn enough in the summer tourist season to make it through the long winters. Victor residents have been self-employed, worked for the county or commuted to jobs in Cripple Creek at the school, nursing home, shops and restaurants. A few hardy souls drove to Woodland Park or even to Colorado Springs, which is some 50 miles over winding mountain roads.

But last year, everything changed. In the wake of a statewide referendum, limited-stakes gambling was born in Cripple Creek, the famous gold-mining town just six miles west of Victor.

Overnight, Cripple Creek was transformed (see accompanying story), and the influx of new people and new dollars spilled over into Victor.

Suddenly, "occupancy rate" is not ridiculous to talk about. People are beginning to remodel older buildings, taking care to preserve their historic character. And just as suddenly, people like stained-glass artisan Donny Barrett are looking at the mining companies in a whole new light.

"They say they're going to bring in



Shawn Frizzell

Mine wastes loom over the town of Victor

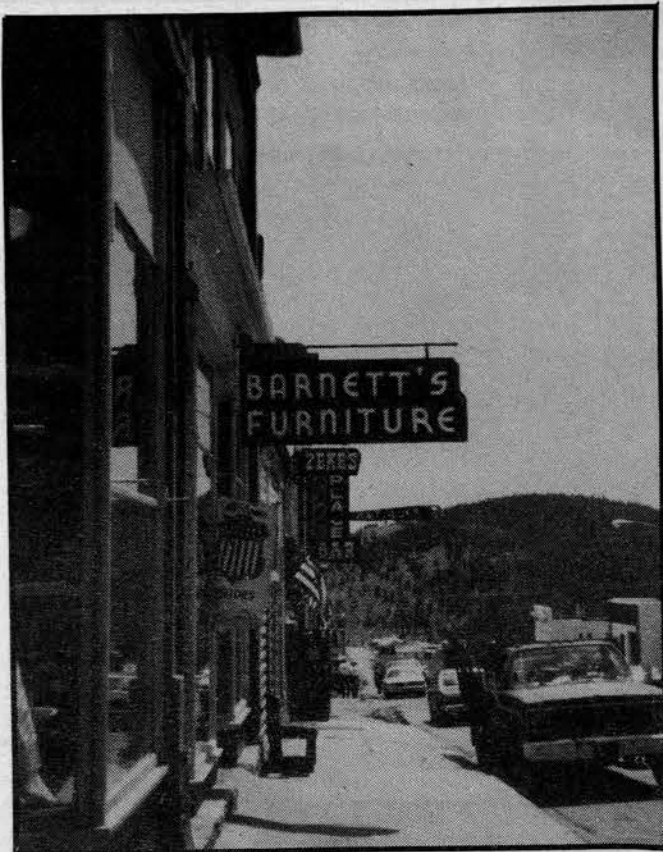
100 jobs. There's not 100 people up here without a job. What does Victor get out of it? What has Victor ever gotten out of it?" Barrett asks rhetorically.

Petri has a classic "not-in-my-backyard" argument. His home literally overlooks the would-be leach-pad site. Petri says he'll move if the company gets its way, but he doesn't want to stop the mining company in its tracks. "There is too much gold in this district not to have mining," Petri said. "I have a lot of miners for friends, but I feel we have to oppose this location."

Longtime resident Chuck Dager worries that, aside from the unsightly location, the trucks and the ore-crushing facility will create dust clouds that prevailing west winds will blow straight into town. Bob Beekman adds, "We're trying to take the middle ground here. We're not trying to be greenies. All we're asking for is that the pad be moved."

Since NERCO owns about 9,000 acres all around Victor, residents say the company should easily be able to find an alternative site. However, Cripple Creek & Victor Mining Co. chose the site down the hill from its proposed mine because the hauling distance is less than a mile. In the gold recovery business, haul distances are a substantial part of overhead expenses.

Gold mining companies' profit margins have shrunk of late. Gold prices in mid-March fell to their lowest level in



Diane Sylvain

Downtown Victor, Colorado

recent years, about \$340 per troy ounce. In 1980, when American hostages were held captive in Iran, an ounce of gold was worth more than \$600.

However, just as the Cripple Creek gambling boom has put Victor-area mining in its place, world peace and a rela-

tive lack of inflation in the United States have caused a slump in the gold market. Nonetheless, NERCO has deep pockets and clearly is in for the long haul, banking on the eventual rise in prices to boost its profit margin.

Jim Munzert, the on-site manager

for the company, downplays the criticism of townspeople. The proposed leach pad's proximity to town "is part of it, and any time anybody says 'cyanide,' people get excited," he says. "We will create noise, dust and the like, which we

Continued on page 13

Gambling dollars are transforming a high-altitude mining town

CRIPPLE CREEK, Colo. — Since gambling became legal here Oct. 1, police have written 305 parking tickets.

Drunk-driving incidents have risen dramatically. The county jail is full. "For sale" signs on homes and lots are everywhere, and construction equipment for dozens of remodeling jobs is constantly banging, clanging and groaning along the main street.

Gamblers fed \$17.7 million into Cripple Creek's slot machines in February alone. Thirteen casinos have opened in eight months; 24 more are under construction, with six others in the planning stages.

The boom is back in Cripple Creek. By an easy majority in 1990, Colorado voters approved limited stakes gambling for three old mining towns — Cripple Creek, Blackhawk and Central City. Since then, Cripple Creek, with a population of about 700, has been transformed from a rather sleepy, out-of-the-way tourist town into a bustling, cash-and-carry boom town.

During its zenith at the turn of the century, Cripple Creek was bigger than Phoenix or Albuquerque. On the streets of Cripple Creek today, there are few miners and the only hard hats are worn by the workers who are shoring up century-old brick walls to accommodate the new industry.

If everyone one encounters there looks like an out-of-towner, it's because they are. Cripple Creek's population rises and falls by an average of 4,700 visitors

a day. They come and go like the tides, because they have to. There is almost no place for anyone to stay.

Casinos employ about 650 people, most of whom commute to work from Woodland Park or Colorado Springs. They leave town usually on Highway 67, a road that has seen a growing number of alcohol-related accidents involving some of Cripple Creek's more riotous revelers.

The economic activity has produced an average of \$175,000 a month in tax revenues. Locals report that even the past severe winter season failed to stem the flow of gamblers to Cripple Creek, which is nearly 10,000 feet above sea level.

One-armed bandits, and poker and blackjack machines, leave visitors — in average — poorer. But the wealth gamblers leave in Cripple Creek has also taken its toll as the town. A few specialty stores from the "old" days remain, but most antique stores and gift shops have disappeared. Residents say with all the late-night activity now, an all-night convenience store complete with slot machines can't be far behind.

The town will find it difficult to remain a family vacation spot. These days, a child can't enter most of the town's businesses unless accompanied by an adult.

In Central City, home of a well-attended, famous summer opera company, there is concern that a measure of charm unavoidably will be lost. Traditionally, members of the opera compa-



Barry Noreen

A building is remodeled to become a casino in Cripple Creek

ny would retire to a local tavern after performances, to entertain there by singing popular songs. Given the fact that real estate values have increased geometrically, some question how long traditions like the opera will stand.

In mid-April, Central City placed a moratorium on more casinos, because the town doesn't have enough water to expand further. That led owners of planned but unbuilt casinos to take the

town to court, where the town's decision was upheld. Now, the town appears ready to build a pair of small reservoirs so growth can begin anew.

Cripple Creek encountered a similar problem, but was able to buy local water to meet future needs. The water to quench the gambling boom was purchased from a gold-mining company.

— Barry Noreen

ESSAY

by Diane Sylvain

For a long time I lived in Cripple Creek, high in the Colorado Rockies.

It was an old gold-mining town, once a thriving city, then home to about 750 people. A tattered and tawdry glamour clung to the place, carefully preserved for the tourists who invaded every summer. The town huddles in a windswept valley 9,500 feet above sea level, and the surrounding hills are pockmarked with abandoned mines whose wooden gallows-frame hoists leaned at crazy angles.

Hard-rock tailings spill freely down the slopes. Only two or three small mines remained active when I first moved there in the 1970s, but you could still talk to miners in the bars who dreamed about striking it rich.

I felt I was rich just being there. From the road that led into town you could see forever, across a vast sweep of landscape that rolled and tumbled into the Continental Divide. The range of mountains on the horizon was as abrupt and jagged as a child's drawing — sharply perfect and peaked with snow.

When you crested the ridge above the valley and looked out at that view, you could feel your heart take wing from your body and soar across the miles. In all the years I lived there, it never ceased to take my breath.

Around the turn of the century, 50,000 people lived in Cripple Creek and the many smaller towns that sprang up in its shadow. Fire destroyed the first wooden buildings in 1896, and the city was rebuilt out of brick. It was laid out on paper, an unusual formality for a gold-rush town, plotted and pieced together in a tidy checkerboard of streets.

But the land the model city sat on was rocky and rumped and sudden and steep, without a level lot in the entire district. Streets plunged insanely up and down hills and tilted drunkenly from side to side. The main street, Bennett Avenue, was so confused that it was formally split into two levels, with a guard rail between. Old-timers joked that you could get drunk at night and break your leg crossing the street: a 12-foot difference in height divided the two sections.

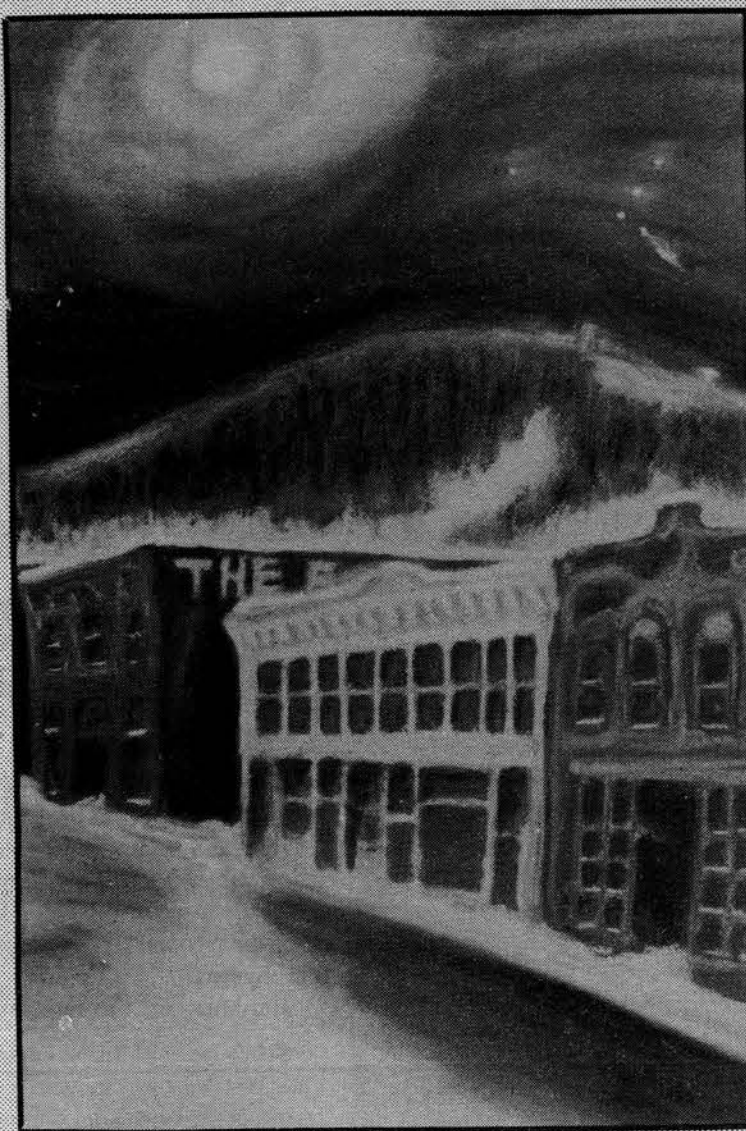
Cripple Creek, Colorado: It is no wonder that songs have been written about the place. I loved to write the name down, to speak it as my address: It summed up all the ragged romance of the West. When I first moved there, I covered my kitchen walls with topo maps, so I could keep track of the hikes I took. I savored the names of the places I explored: Dead Ox Gulch, Poverty Gulch, Nipple Mountain, Battle Mountain, Long Hungry Gulch.

To make a living over the years, I did a lot of different things. I changed bedpans at the nursing home; I cleaned restaurant kitchens; I scrubbed the post office floor; I waited on tables; I worked at the library; I cooked hamburgers; I worked in shops; I painted faces on handmade dolls.

I lived for two years in a cabin with an outhouse. There was cold running water inside during the summer months only; the rest of the year, I hauled it from outside. I heated water on the wood stove and bathed myself in a battered tin tub, like a two-bit Degas model.

For a while I lived upstairs in the Home Cafe, in a two-room suite with a smuggled-in hotplate. The bathroom was down the hall, to the right. That was the winter I learned to like country music, because the jukebox in the bar was directly under my floor. I drifted off to sleep at night to endless songs about drinkin' and cheatin' and goin' back to Texas, the smell of beer and cigarettes drifting up through the 100-year-old building.

In Cripple Creek, every winter your plumbing froze. If you were able to thaw it, it probably broke. So you made friends with people who had showers. You made friends with people who were plumbers. You shared your plumbing, your knowledge of plumbing, your food, your floor and your wine. After you'd lived there long enough to overcome the initial distrust of "hippie newcomers," you shared the lives of people you would never



Diane Sylvain

Full Moon, Cripple Creek

Gold built Cripple Creek; gold could destroy it

have known still lived in the 20th century.

In Cripple Creek I did a lot of things for the first time. I took solo backpacking trips with a pack I'd made myself, and cooked my meals in coffee cans over fires far from home. I learned to dance country swing, to drink tequila by the shot, and to shoot and win at pool. In fact I was the only woman to play in an Elks Club tournament (I came in second; scratched on the 8-ball, dammit).

I learned to take my artwork seriously. I had my first art shows. I fell in love. I fell out of love. Love fell on me.

I did other things, too. One night I sheltered a battered woman in my house, while her drunken husband roared around town in his pickup looking for her. I put my first-aid skills to use taking care of a friend who was accidentally shot in the leg by a stranger.

I saw people come unraveled every March when cabin fever struck, when the winds howled all night and the stinging snow blew sideways and the only cars in town were parked in front of the bar, sometimes all night long. I discovered how gossip could travel faster than the speed of sound, and how people who spent too much time in bars began to live as if the jukebox songs were the soundtrack of their lives.

We were saved, it seems to me, by the very extremities of our lives up there. Just before we could go crazy, summer came, the indescribably glorious summer that you can only experience almost two miles above sea level. The long perfect days were pierced with sunlight. Grass glowed green as fire, flecked with wildflowers. The arched blue sky boiled up into fantastic thunderstorms every afternoon, while lightning danced through the rolling mountains.

In the middle of summer, winter seemed a dream, a tale you would tell to frighten children.

And with the fine weather came the tourists, too; new faces from other places — some of them belonging to people with lots of money.

That had its dark side, too. Like all tourist towns, we worked hard to get money out of our visitors, yet sometimes, by the end of the season, we almost hated the sight

of them. We were irritated with them for being there, and at the same time aggravated that they didn't spend more money — never thinking that perhaps we had already offered them more T-shirts than any one person might need in a lifetime.

I think we were lucky that our tourist season was so short. We got to have the town to ourselves for most of the year. And our tourists left with the falling leaves, just about the time we were tired of being asked where the restroom was and what we did all winter. It was a precarious balance, but it held for years.

At least it held as far as I was concerned. I was earning money in order to live in Cripple Creek; I didn't live there in order to earn money.

So I forgot about the lure of gold, whether it comes from a mine or out of a slot machine.

Gold built the Cripple Creek District; gold could destroy it. I moved away two years before the advent of legalized gambling and the current mining brouhaha, but already the town was changing around me. Cyanide heap-leach pads and open pits were breaking out everywhere, like acne. One of the last things I did before I left town was to help organize a fight against a mine right above Cripple Creek. We failed. The strip mine and the leach pads are easily visible today, right as you crest the hill above town and first see that view I spoke of earlier.

By the time I moved away, the quiet nights were getting rarer. You could hear the heavy equipment at the mines, and their lights helped to blur the perfect view of the stars. Many of the places I once hiked were destroyed outright, or blocked by "NO TRESPASSING" signs.

The lust for gold infected merchants and business-owners in a different way. It seemed that having enough money to live on was no longer enough; people wanted, insisted on, having more.

I do not mean to blame them; I can see that others might have found my way of life unbearable. But to my eyes the gambling boom has been as destructive as the gold mining, and in deeper, more insidious ways.

The Home Cafe has been sold, stripped and gutted. It is now a casino; I don't know its name. The bookstore where I worked is a casino. The first gallery to show my paintings is a casino. All the restaurants I worked at are casinos, except for one: it is now a gun and pawn shop.

Between the noise of the gaming devices and the blast of new construction, you can hardly hear the sound of the bulldozers and giant ore trucks.

People will tell you that I have romanticized a hard life; they will remind you that everything must change. But I think about an outdoor wedding I attended on the Range View Road above Cripple Creek around 1978. It was held in a huge meadow, surrounded by the tallest Douglas-fir trees in the area. It was a good place to hunt for mushrooms at the end of summer. People parked all over the dirt road, since traffic was always so light; children and dogs roamed through the wildflower grass. You could see for a very long way from there, and except for the sound of my friends' merry-making, it was very, very quiet.

That whole area is destroyed now; buried under mine debris, dug up and devoured. Sprinklers spray the cyanide-processed ore to keep the contaminated dust from blowing into town. The big trees were uprooted some years ago. Now huge trucks roll down the road, and there is talk that the mine will soon close to the public entirely.

Cynics will point out that the marriage I went to ended, too. But even broken relationships can be mended, and people go on to create new lives. When trees and towns and mountains are destroyed, all that is left is rubble. ■

Diane Sylvain is an illustrator for *High Country News*.

Town takes on a gold mine ...

(Continued from page 11)

are doing our best to mitigate."

Mine officials dislike talking about cyanide leaks, a chronic problem in the industry. In June 1991, the General Accounting Office found that during the five-year period ending in 1989, cyanide mining caused more than 9,000 wildlife deaths, mostly to migratory waterfowl,

on public lands in California, Nevada and Arizona.

In April, the Battle Mountain Gold Company was fined \$169,000 because cyanide levels in its retention ponds near San Luis, Colo., were far above what the company had promised in its mining permit.

The Cripple Creek and Victor Gold Mining Co. paid two fines in March for cyanide spills, promising in each case to take remedial cleanup actions. The company also promised to take steps to guarantee the leaks wouldn't occur again.

But Victor residents know that in mining, as in anything else, accidents happen. Gold miner Bill Clymer has seen it and is wary enough to have joined the citizens group.

"What they call the modern mining method will have a very detrimental effect," Clymer said. "Even if they move the leach pad, we want long-term protec-



Diane Sylvain

tion. We don't want to do this all over again in two years."

Privately, Citizens for Victor! members express the fear that the company eventually wants to mine the very ground

Victor is built upon. They suspect company strategy is to de-value property by placing the leach pad close to town, then buy off de-valued properties one by one. Company spokesmen deny this.

Regardless, the group is seeking long-term zoning changes from the county's planning commission. Citizens for Victor! says it has no objection to underground mining, even if it extends to the town's boundary. But they want leach pads and open pit mines away from town, tucked behind ridges.

For more information, contact Barry Petri, Citizens for Victor!, Box 165, Victor, CO 80860 (719/689-2050). The Cripple Creek and Victor Gold Mining Co. can be reached at 719/689-2977. ■

Barry Noreen covers environmental news for the Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph.

Mining takes a lot and leaves very little, a critic says

Shawn Frizzell did not have great expectations when she went to a public meeting sponsored by Pikes Peak Mining in Victor May 6. But what she heard left her shaking her head in disbelief.

For one hour, she listened to Ron Geyer, a spokesman for Dupont Corp., the world's largest manufacturer of cyanide, reassure his audience about the safety of his company's product. "The whole world is made of chemicals," she recalls him pointing out. "People are walking chemicals." He concluded with a reminder that "we don't live in a risk-free world."

Frizzell, who has been fighting for mine safety since the cyanide leach pads first appeared in the area 12 years ago, waited politely for the question-and-answer session. To her disappointment, only three or four questions were allowed.

She asked about the environmental safety record of cyanide heap-leach operations and was told there had been no major environmental incidents involving cyanide. But when she pointed out recent fish-kills in Colorado and other problems, she says Geyer backtracked, claiming that he meant there had been no major incidents involving the shipping of cyanide.

Apparently Geyer did not expect to have to answer questions of that sort.

As she was leaving, Frizzell overheard him complain to a mine official, "Well, you didn't tell me there'd be all these anti-mining people here!"

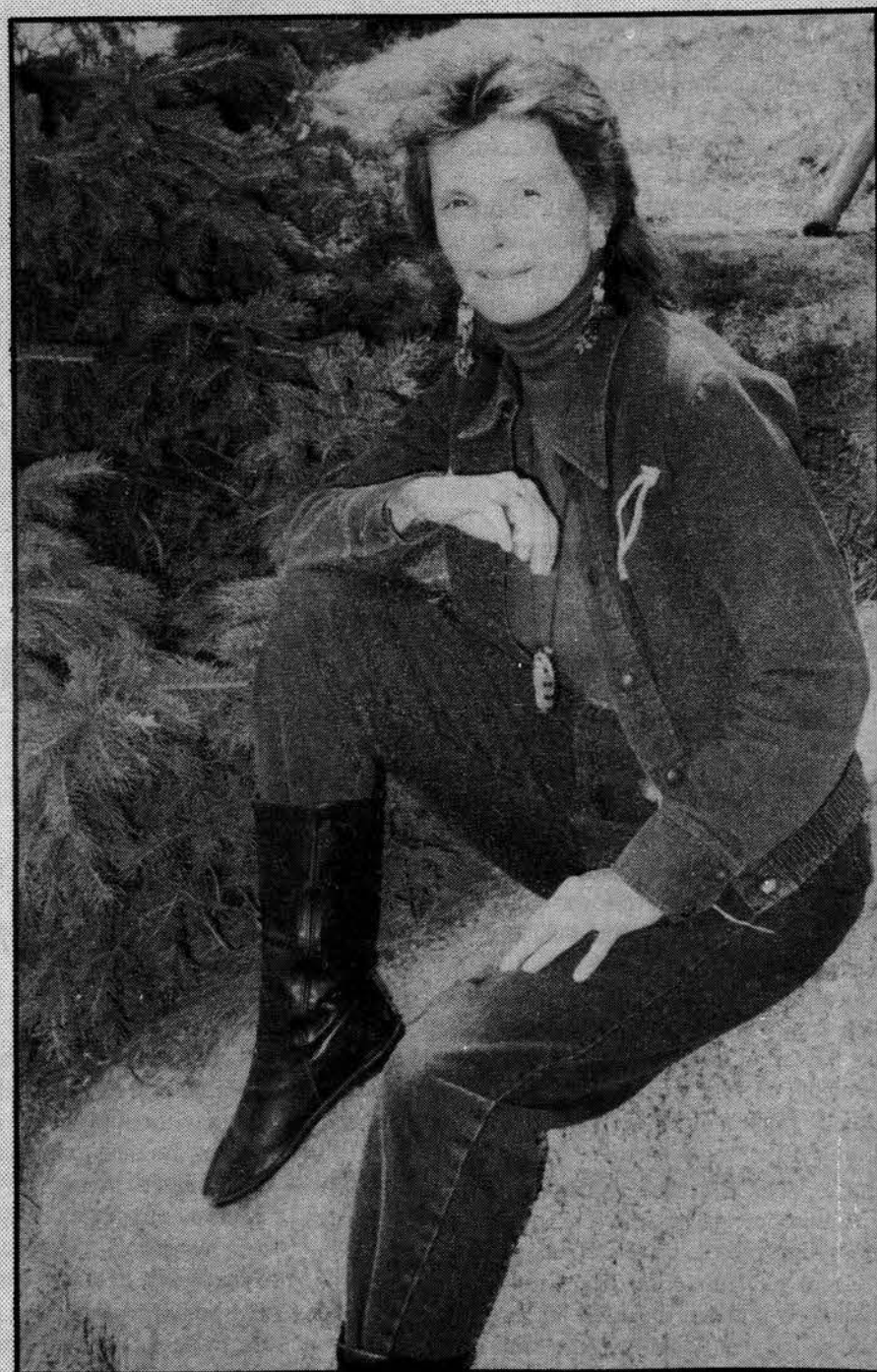
Frizzell laughs ruefully as she recounts the meeting, describing it as "all doublespeak and gobbledygook." It annoys most of the local activists to be called "anti-mining" when all they want is to ensure the environmental safety of the operations. But after years of living with the gold mines, Frizzell is one of the few who will state forthrightly that she is against what she calls "inconsiderate" mining.

She thinks a lot of other people feel the same way, despite Victor's history as a hard-core gold-mining town. "Everybody's starting to recognize it: the mining takes so much from the area and leaves so little behind — leaves nothing but a mess for us to clean up or live with. The economic benefits have always been exaggerated. But people have always been afraid of opposing it."

She points out that, at the moment, the mining operation employs only 12 people from Victor. "Twelve more people were just brought in from outside, but of course they're calling themselves locals now, too," she says.

The biggest economic boon to Victor from gold mining has long been selling town water to the mining companies. Cyanide heap-leaching requires huge amounts of water, and in the dry West that can command a good price. But with the explosion of gambling-related growth in nearby Cripple Creek, Victor now has plenty of other customers for its water.

"The mining



Charles Frizzell

Shawn Frizzell

companies have always held us hostage," Frizzell says. "But they can't do it anymore."

Shawn Frizzell moved to the district in September 1972. A single mother with a young son, she lived for years in a tiny cabin with an outhouse and no water. In 1979 she married nationally known artist Charles Frizzell.

Frizzell, a trained midwife, works with her husband, publishing his limited-edition prints and promoting his work. But in recent years, fighting the gold mines has taken up more and more of her time.

As she puts it: "Somebody has to keep an eye on them all the time. Call them, maybe, and remind them that they forgot to turn on their sprinklers today and the dust from the pads is blowing all over the valley til you can't see a thing. Tell them they're running

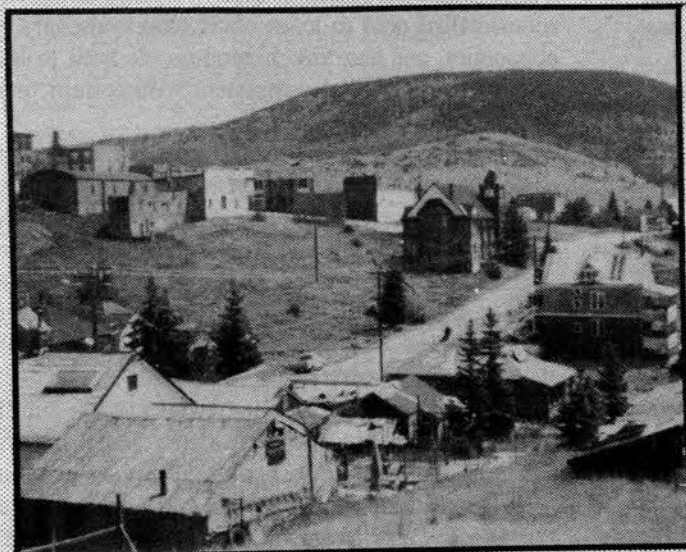
their heavy equipment after hours and we can't sleep. It's an endless thing."

One of the aspects of the mining that irritates her most is the companies' optimistic talk about land reclamation. "In all the years I've been here, no more than a token amount of reclamation has been done.... Their idea of reclaiming an open pit mine is putting a fence around it."

Despite the grass-roots opposition to the cyanide leaching, Frizzell gets discouraged in her struggle with the gold mines. "It's more than gold fever," she says. "It's gold virus — it's a disease that takes over to the exclusion of all other considerations. I don't know if it's curable or not."

— Diane Sylvain

The author is staff illustrator and an occasional writer for *High Country News*.



Victor, Colorado

Diane Sylvain

OPINION

Rural economies can reform or go the way of Detroit

by Ed Marston

The March 23, 1992, special issue on public rangelands in Oregon needs an afterword because some thought it succumbed to the romance of ranching.

The intent of the articles was the opposite. The events in Oregon are important because some ranchers there are giving up much of the "myth of ranching." They are adopting many of the values of the urban culture that is challenging public-land ranching — entrepreneurialism, marketing, quality control, a search for consensus.

This matters because the clash between public-land grazing and urban environmentalism is as much over culture as land use. Cultural differences — pickups versus Subarus, cowboy poets versus Edward Abbey, snowmobiles versus cross country skis — and different economic interests separate and keep us at war, with natural resources as the wounded hostages.

We attack ranchers for producing a fatty, chemical-laden product even as they damage the land. They talk of their devotion to free enterprise, their patriotism, their long tenure on the land.

That's the romance of ranching: Wallace Stegner's multigenerational "stickers," whose longevity and ability to survive as families and as an industry give them the right to tell the rest of us to leave them alone and take care of our knotty, urban problems.

The March 23 issue of HCN was about ranchers who do not make that argument. They talk about marketing, quality control, meeting the needs of people who shop in health food stores, and ensuring that rangeland is perceived as healthy by urban observers. Some even talk of true revolution: women as full partners in a natural resource industry.

The special issue, then, was about a still-forming rural community trying to adapt to urban pressures. It no longer challenges the right of the larger, urban world to impose certain broad values on the way the West's public land is managed. It only seeks maximum freedom to operate within the constraints urban values impose.

But it is not just ranchers learning from city-based critics. Environmentalists who dare to participate in the working-group process get a new perspective. It is what Lynn Jacobs in *Waste of the West* warns against as co-option, and co-option is inevitable because present view is based mostly on looking at the land and walking through it, rather than working with it. Out of that experience has come our highest aspiration: wilderness — land that is not used and is only lightly visited.

The wilderness movement was a tightly focused, highly successful political and land-protection movement. But once environmentalists chose to go beyond wilderness, we ran into more difficult challenges. We now must understand land-users, their perspectives and their communities. Ranchers are easiest because — if not for the lifestyle chasm — there would be affinity between the two groups. By comparison with ranchers, loggers, miners, oil and gas workers are destructive, hit-and-run types.

It turns out that such an intercultural exchange is possible in Oregon, where ranchers are trying to figure out what environmentalism wants and how to meet those demands. If ranchers can figure it out, loggers, miners, and water developers may follow.

The clash between rural producers and environmentalists is not — as rural people would like to think — between them and a few elitist, pointy-headed critics. Environmentalism is the vanguard of urban America, which is giving the rural West the choice of adapting to the larg-

er society's vision or of dying. All the land-based Western activities — logging, mining, water development and even hunting — face the same choice. In a slow, remorseless, almost absent-minded way, America will squeeze the rural, working West until it gets what it wants, or destroys it.

Think back to autos in the 1950s, when critics began to tell Detroit that it was out of step on safety, styling, efficiency, cleanliness, factory management and dependability.

Detroit reacted with scorn and resentment. America loves Chevrolet, the industry said, and its critics were an unrepresentative group of carpenters. Detroit attacked the messenger. And because of Detroit's stubbornness, we learned that the American public will cut the throats of producers who will not or cannot give it what it wants. We also learned that such throat-cutting can be bad for the nation as a whole.

Ranchers, miners, loggers and those who control the nation's dams are where Detroit was in the early 1960s. Rural Westerners are being told that Americans don't like the way the West's factory floor is being managed. They can't switch to Japanese beef, or metals, or electricity, so they contribute to environmental groups and put pressure on urban congressmen, the courts and regulators to get the message across.

Rural producers reject the message. Sometimes they reject it flamboyantly, by killing and roasting spotted owls, or with bumper stickers that tell people to freeze in the dark or eat an environmentalist if they're hungry.

Instead of rural reform we have suicide squads such as People for the West!

Behind the reactions are fear and arrogance — arrogance because they assume that society can't get along without them. But no matter what the cost to the nation, the auto experience tells us that the public will slaughter the commodity producers of the West in the interests of what it perceives as progress.

Ranchers get that message from Rep. Mike Synar's bill to sharply increase grazing fees. The bill is fighting the wrong war at the wrong time. The shift from the present subsidized, politically brokered industry to one governed by market forces should come as part of a revolution in how the land is used. Synar's proposal lacks a land-reform dimension. It will also have unintended consequences: increased subdivisions and ranchers squeezing the public land harder to pay higher fees. Passage of higher grazing fees could shut off real reform by making people think something has happened on the land.

Nevertheless, the force behind this bad bill illustrates how powerful urban dissatisfaction is. For another, happier, example, recall the Earth First! stunt of a decade ago, when members unfurled a cloth "crack" down the face of Glen Canyon Dam, upstream of the Grand Canyon.

Today, we are close to officially creating that crack. The Bureau of Reclamation is presiding over a process that will lead to the dam being operated relatively close to a run-of-the-river facility. Within the decade, Glen Canyon and others on the Colorado will not respond to power users in Las Vegas and Scottsdale but to a natural rhythm.

In the Northwest, Idaho Gov. Cecil Andrus is proposing, incredibly, that Snake River reservoirs become flowing rivers again for parts of each year.

This is happening even though rural producers have controlled the federal executive branch for almost

LIVESTOCK
MUST BE
RESTRAINED
AT ALL TIMES

Don Bachman

Road sign in Nevada

12 years with Watt, Burford, Hodel and now Lujan. And in the Senate, a strong Western delegation led by McClure, Hatch, Garn, Symms, Simpson, Hatfield, et al, was and is dedicated to keeping the present subsidized, declining rural economy and culture in place.

During this period, when Western commodity producers should have been strongest, public-land ranching went on the defensive, logging came under intense pressure, the 1872 Mining Law has a serious chance of being reformed, and environmentalism is close to wresting the West's rivers away from electric power production.

It happened because the American people — responding to an historic, irreversible revolution in how we view the earth and its resources — want the West to change. Rural Westerners can adapt to the demand, or they can see their livelihoods and ways of life destroyed after an extended, expensive, destructive no-win struggle.

It will be better for all of us if the rural, working West adapts. The West has been a managed, or mismanaged, landscape for well over a century and cannot be left to its devices. The wilderness vision can't be applied to land that has been worked intensively for a century or more.

Urban America is right to demand reform. It is right to ask that the land be managed for more than cattle and mining and logging, and that rivers serve more than power users and irrigators.

But reform also depends on those who work the land. Evicting ranchers, miners and loggers will destroy the best hope for reforming the use of the land and its resources, and restoring some of what has been lost.

Instead of a rural movement toward reform, however, we have suicide squads such as People for the West!, responding like Detroit, sticking to tail fins and inefficiencies, and expressing contempt for those of us who are both their landlords and customers.

In place of them, we need a model for how rural producers can transform themselves, their communities, and then the land. Such transformation can only come from within the rural communities.

The Oregon experiment gives one shape to reform and its problems. It shows both how much urban environmentalists need to learn about rural landscapes and economies, and how much rural people need to learn about using the land consistent with certain broad urban values.

The future is risky for both sides. By cooperating, environmentalism risks losing the momentum and single-minded conviction gained over two decades. Ranchers, by coming out from behind their property-rights and multigenerational flags, and by letting a process grounded in legitimate science and market economics operate, may help all of us to discover that cattle have no large-scale place in the West.

There is danger for all. But we know a healthy, diverse land will not emerge from the present war. And for those who choose to move out of their economic and cultural fortresses, life will become exciting and enriching. Out of that can come healthy, diverse, dynamic land. ■

Ed Marston is publisher of High Country News.

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

by Todd Wilkinson

If you've seen one Jackson, you haven't seen them all.

Dwelling here, at the eastern lip of the Continental Divide, is the alter ego of Jackson Hole and other flashy resort communities. It measures all of two city blocks.

Goodbye espresso bars, factory outlet stores, expensive foreign cars with out-of-state plates. Welcome to Jackson, Mont., home to the rapidly shrinking American myth: the small Western town.

You can tell it's a different type of leisure community just by reading the writing on the wall. At Jackson Hot Springs Lodge, the hub of local social activity in the southern Big Hole Valley, we discovered a note Scotch-taped to the bathroom tile:

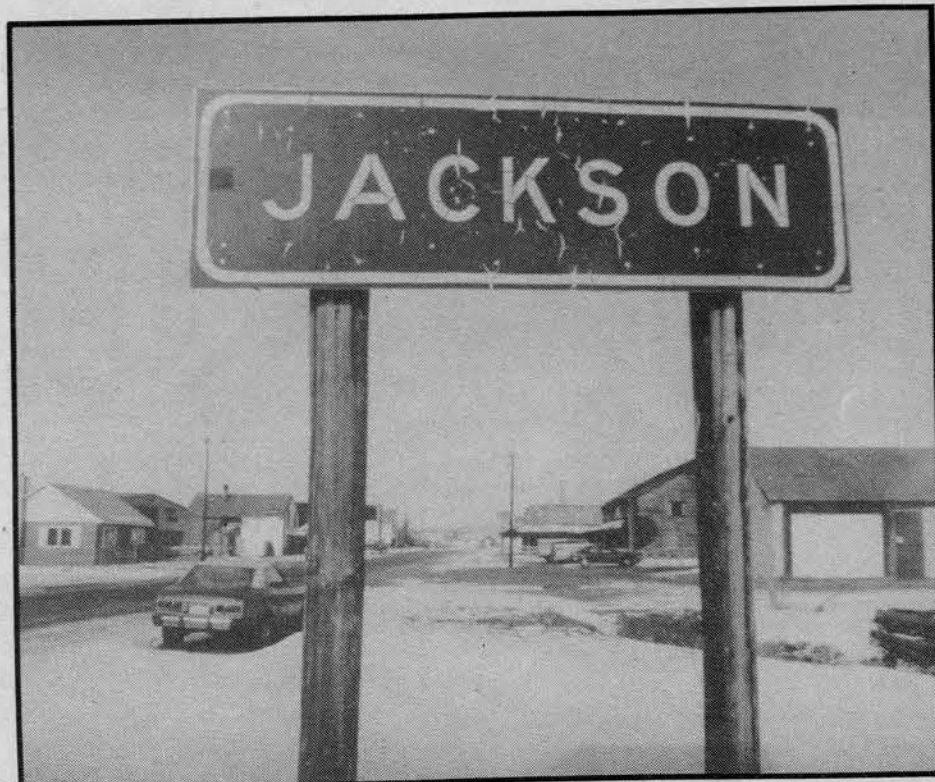
"Please! No Dead Game in Your Cabin!!" the message said, alluding to past mishaps with carcasses. "Blood Stains Are Hard to Remove!" Also: "The Jackson Mercantile Has Game Bags for Sale — They Work Better Than Pillowcases!"

Whoever decided to drag their elk or moose into their sleeping quarters for safe-keeping after hunting had obviously underestimated how cozily warm the people and room temperatures become in Jackson. The suites at the lodge have their own fireplaces, and the showers pipe in hot water from an underground spring.

This outpost of 80 residents includes big dogs baying from the beds of pickup trucks and cats snoozing on front porch stoops. It is proud of its prosaic heritage, which fanciers of real culture might call "the last and best of the funky West."

Contrary to its famous counterpart in Wyoming, Montana's version of Jackson didn't lift its name from the coattails of a nomadic mountain man. No, this enclave was founded by a family of homesteaders who replaced buffalo with cattle in the same spot that Lewis and Clark found hot springs in 1806.

Assimilation with the rest of the world has never been Jackson's goal. In the winter, its meadows resemble giant shredded wheat squares floating in a



Downtown Jackson, Montana

Todd Wilkinson

"Please! No Dead Game in Your Cabin!! Blood Stains Are Hard to Remove!"

bowl of milk. The stacks begin at the edge of town and seem to leapfrog across the valley floor toward woodlands whose pitch announces a geologic climb into the Bitterroot escarpment.

Below the peaks, spindly silhouettes of beaver slides (the contraptions once used by ranchers to gather hay) lunge over tall bales of dried alfalfa, encircled by the footprints of big game animals and coyotes sticking tight to the jackleg fence.

"It has been said," according to promotional material in our room, "that more wildlife may be seen in the Big Hole Valley than in Yellowstone Park."

Take one look at the lodge wall. It is a gallery of stuffed animal heads, interspersed with the gaping branches of mounted wapiti, all trophies, notes Stan the bartender, bagged in the area.

As we talk, Venezuelan tourists are playing backgammon near a burning

hearth, flanked by a magazine rack filled with old *National Geographics*. It was enough, a barfly adds, to lure the likes of Bob Hope, Bing Crosby and Chief Justice Earl Warren.

These days, Stan says, the only celebrity identifiable around Jackson is country-western singer Hank Williams Jr., a second-home owner. But even he had his attitude adjusted when he tried to cut in line at the grocery store check-out aisle, just at the same moment a local woman was buying a case of beer.

"Do you know who I am?" Williams reportedly asked the woman.

"I don't give a rat's ass," she replied. The confrontation speaks well of the area's chamber of commerce, for the less presumptuous you are in Jackson, the more you're liable to get the royal treatment or, at the very least, a free beer at the bar.

Stan says wolves have been heard in the area, animals that one day would lead a natural re-colonization of Yellowstone. But he raises an index finger to his mouth and puckers, "Shhhhh, we don't want anybody to know about that."

At poolside, icicles have formed on the exposed wooden beams where steam from the natural hot springs mixes with air well below freezing. Outside the lodge, in a creek along the highway, a great blue heron strolls in water warmed hydrothermally.

Two Jacksons

Two towns, whose similar topographies might have hurled them into identical futures, have undergone separate evolutions. One town has become a mirror of the other's former self.

If Grand Teton National Park had never been created; if the Tetons were less imposing; if a major ski resort and airport had never been built; if ranchers had not subdivided their land; and if Patagonia-clad yuppies had decided not to invade, then Jackson, Wyo., could have remained like Jackson, Mont. But providence has given each a separate identity.

Tonight, in both towns, residents are breathing sighs of relief. ■

Todd Wilkinson is a free-lance writer based in Bozeman, Montana.

LETTERS

WILDERNESS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WATER RIGHTS

Dear HCN,

Since Lori Potter (HCN, 1/17/92) insists that those people who dare to criticize the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund (SCLDF) for its stand on wilderness water rights be named, I feel it proper not only to admit that I am one of them, but also to explain why.

First, a few words about my background: I have worked for years as a consulting hydrologist. I also lived for 10 years on property which was the site of one of the West's many battles over water rights, property which still shows signs of the violence of that struggle. Through these experiences, I became informed not only about the legal aspects of Western water law, but also about the practical limitations of such laws, which often fall far short of their theoretical implications.

I also spent many years as a wilderness advocate, beginning long before the initial Wilderness Bill was passed in 1964. I

served as chairman of the wilderness committee of the Colorado Open Space Council (now the Colorado Environmental Council). I explored the vast majority of the wilderness areas in Colorado, both established and recommended, long before they were officially authorized. My recommendations permeate the documents defining those areas, and on occasion I still come across some of my words in descriptions of them.

But I quit working for wilderness as soon as I learned about SCLDF's campaign demanding wilderness water rights. I quit because I knew that as long as this issue remained hanging over the head of wilderness legislation, my efforts and those of all others would be totally fruitless. I am still waiting till this controversy is resolved so that I can begin again.

I know that the SCLDF and the other groups who have joined it in the water rights effort are sincere in their goal to establish more wilderness. But I know equally well that they are all naive in their assessment of the prospective effectiveness of the tactics they are using. For in selecting water rights as a means of preserving wilderness in its purest form, they have inadvertently applied the kiss of death to the prospect

of obtaining any more wilderness at all. No argument could possibly have been raised which would engender so much opposition to wilderness from those who would otherwise never have become involved. And no argument could have provided better ammunition for those who wish to see wilderness done away with altogether.

And to what purpose? In spite of what the law may say, water rights in wilderness areas are far less likely to protect those areas from water development than is the wilderness designation itself. SCLDF may believe that it has won a battle with its court judgment favoring water rights. But the fact is that such tactics are leading to the loss of the war. This meaningless "victory" has caused the indefinite postponement of any chance of further gain. And every year that the delay continues, more of the remaining wilderness will be whittled away by inroads from timber interests, mining operations and motorized vehicle users. While holding itself up as the consummate champion of wilderness, SCLDF has unwittingly become the greatest ally of wilderness opponents instead. It is time for it to conduct a

review of the results, and not just the intent, of its strategy, and then either reverse its stand or else simply get out of the way so that those of us who really want wilderness — and really know how to get it — can resume our work.

James R. Guadagno
Paonia, Colorado

NOT HYSTERICAL

Dear HCN,

I'm renewing my subscription for two years and including a small bonus bucks gift because HCN is providing the kind of Western environmental coverage the West needs more of — understanding of both sides, urgent without being hysterical.

I'd like to see more economics, more figures if possible, and more brief personal essay/natural history pieces. To understand the complex issues facing the West, residents need the quantitative evidence for or against options, and we need the qualitative rhetoric on which — just as often — we base our feelings.

Blase Reardon-Burkett
Salt Lake City, Utah



Michelle Mara

by Michelle Mara

Up the mountain from my cabin in Colorado, the forest was awakening to the warmth of spring. Winter's soiled snowbanks were shrinking; vibrant green plants were appearing in profusion. It was a misty May morning and I was eager to explore.

Accompanied by my Alaskan husky dog, I set out with sketchpad and notebook to observe nesting birds and wildflowers. As we sauntered up the slope, fog moved in from the valley below. It was like seeing the woods through frosted glass.

Completely engrossed, I was startled when the dog laid back his ears and growled. Then I saw why. Three figures emerged from the mist: a black bear and two cubs.

This was the precise situation other wildlife researchers had warned me to avoid. Black bears fear humans, "but don't go near a female with cubs," I had been told. Although I had met a few individual black bears on trails, and had even tracked them to observe denning habits, this was my first encounter with a mother and cubs.

When frightened, the imagination plays tricks, and I was sure that this was the biggest black bear I had ever seen. Remembering that the first rule is to stand still, I visualized a "DON'T PANIC" sign, gave a whispered "sit and stay" command to my dog and stood my ground.

The bear stood hers. One of the cubs shinnied up a tree while the other stood still nearby; the mother and I stared steadily at each other. Then with painful slowness I began to back away, moving a fraction of an inch at a time.

When I had retreated far enough back that the fog was dimming my image, the big bear made a "whoof" sound. The family vanished in the opposite direction. My dog and I turned and did likewise, with more speed than grace.

With relief, I realized that what I had read and learned about bears stood me in good stead. While a mother bear can be dangerous and no one should deliberately approach one or make the slightest move toward her cub, on the whole, black bears are gentle, peaceful creatures. They only want to be left alone. Except in cases of serious injury or illness, being tormented or defending their cubs, they will not attack a human.

How you and a bear can survive a chance meeting

When meeting black bears, friendly or otherwise, it is best simply not to move, to remain as quiet and motionless as possible. Most black bears are afraid enough of people to disappear instantly. If a bear is distressed or in pain, it may chomp its jaws together loudly and repeatedly, and perhaps slap the ground with a front paw. These are warnings and indicate possible attack.

Never turn and run in such a situation. A frightened, running person is simply an invitation, and black bears can run as fast as 35 miles per hour. The best strategy, if you fear a charge, is to take the initiative: A sudden loud yell and forward lurch by the person may scare a bear into quick retreat.

Black bears sometimes play games with people. One autumn day when there was freshly fallen snow, I hiked a couple of miles into the forest near the south boundary of Rocky Mountain National Park. About 20 minutes after turning around to follow my tracks back, I discovered that a black bear had crossed my path — and there in my footprints were its droppings.

The bear had written me a message: "This is my territory; what are you doing here?"

The black bear's usual habitat is thick forest with dense undergrowth and occasional clearings. In Colorado they choose mountain slopes and valleys covered by young stands of forest and a wide variety of vegetation. Their menu includes just about everything: grasses, sedges and roots; berries and other wild fruits; any kind of nuts. They may raid gardens and orchards for melons, corn and apples. A beehive offers a feast of honey, comb and the bees as well. Protein comes from bird eggs, carrion, fish, insects, and occasional mice, squirrels or chipmunks.

Bears have been known to climb trees where woodpeckers are nesting, tear open the nesting cavity, and eat the baby birds. The black bear's sense of smell is about a hundred times more sensitive than a

human's, its hearing is very keen, and its sight perceives a wide range of colors, movements and shapes.

If you are roaming about the forest and come upon a large heap of dry grasses, leaves and pine needles, all raked from the surrounding area, it could be a black bear's "day bed." High winter dens are not used in summer, but a bear still likes to have a comfortable place to snooze. If the area is undisturbed, a bear may return to the same day bed for many months, many months.

Autumn is the time for meandering and constant eating. Solitary males, and females with cubs, leave their home territories for a few weeks prior to entering winter quarters. They eat until they have added several inches of fat to their bodies, then begin looking for a den site, usually a new one each year.

Unlike their grizzly bear cousins, black bears don't dig dens. They use whatever shelter is available. Natural caves, cavities under large tree roots, spaces under boulders, or the dense boughs of wind-fallen trees serve for winter's dormancy. Bears are not true hibernators; their body temperatures do not drop more than 10 degrees and their heartbeats slow to only about half of normal. They leave their dens throughout the winter in days of sunny weather. But they sleep through intense cold, storms and deep snows.

Usually every other year, two or three new cubs are born while the female slumbers in her winter den. She may give birth while sound asleep, rousing long enough to bite through the umbilical cords, then snoring off again while her ravenous cubs partake of her rich, nutritious milk.

In early spring the family emerges to eat their fill of fresh new vegetation and explore their mountain world. Mother bears are patient teachers, and the cubs soon learn to come when called, or to scamper up the nearest tree at a warning snort.

Black bears fill a niche in our mountain ecology. We need to realize that bears mean us no harm; they are simply wild animals going about their business in the manner nature has designed for them.

I would not trade my face-to-face meeting with a female black bear and her cubs for anything. Yes, I was afraid, but it was also a tremendous thrill. ■

Michelle Mara is an artist and writer who lives in Lyons, Colorado.