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American Garlic:
A farmer's perspective/8

High Country News

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A Paper for People who Care about the West

One dollar

Arizona's water disaster

*A \$4 billion project
provides water,
but few can afford
to buy it*

by Tony Davis

ELOY, Ariz. — Farmer Norm Pretzer is a booster of the Central Arizona Project. He also calls it a boondoggle.

Pretzer, 59, has gone to Washington, D.C., more times than he cares to remember to push for federal money to build CAP. At \$4 billion, it's one of the biggest and most expensive water projects in the nation's history. It was sup-

posed to keep him and his fellow farmers from running out of water.

Today, Pretzer's got plenty of water available from CAP, but not enough money to pay for it. Late last winter, hard times forced him to seek Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection for one of his family's two farms.

He's not using all the CAP water he could, and neither is the rest of Arizona. In 1991, it used less than one-third of the 1.5 million acre-feet of Colorado River water it could have sent through a 330-

mile-long aqueduct.

Pretzer is president of the Central Arizona Irrigation and Drainage District, one of nine in the state that are having a hard time paying for CAP water. Cities are not doing as well at using CAP as expected, either.

Why isn't the project water selling? Largely because it costs up to twice as much as pumping groundwater.

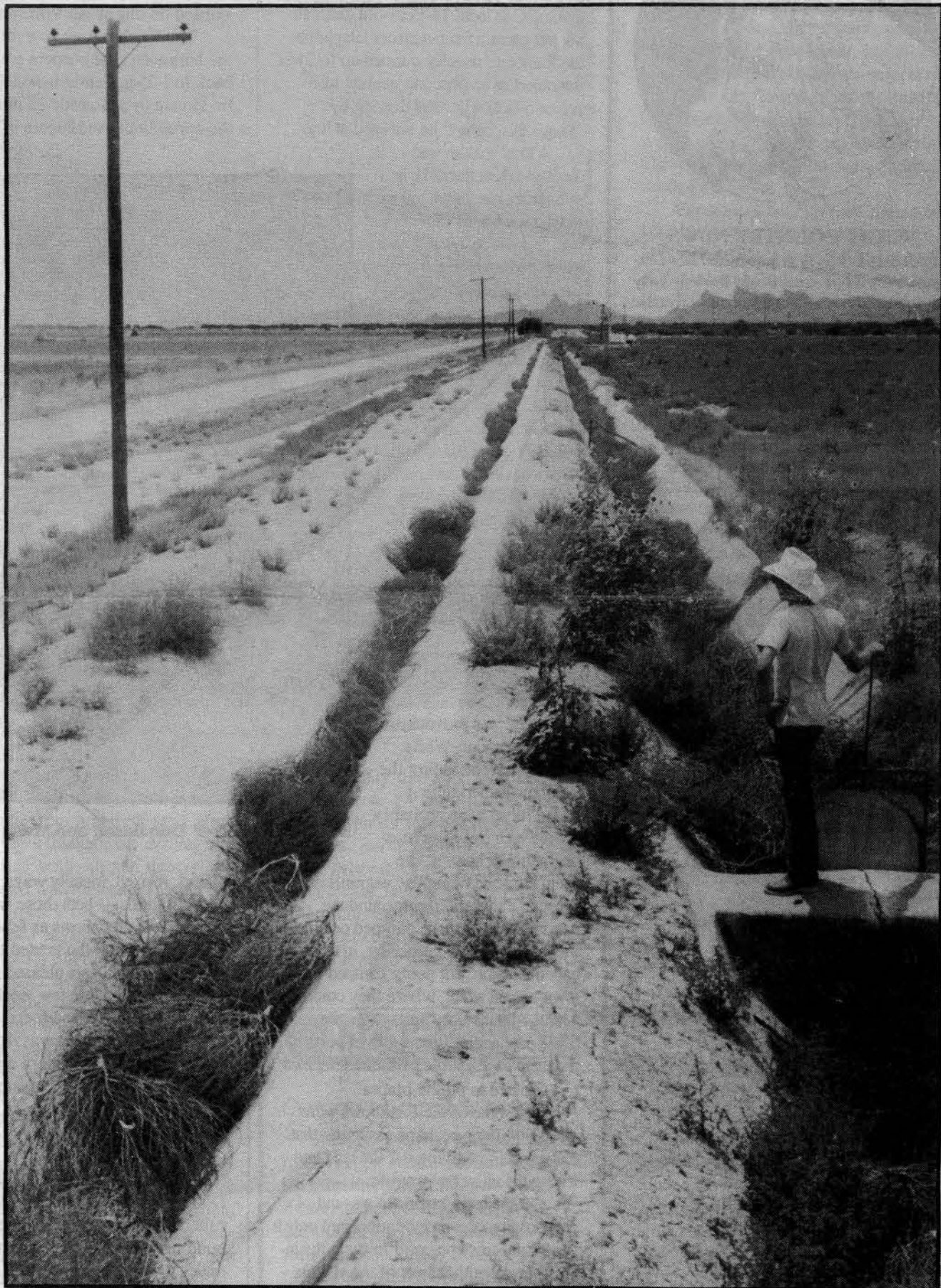
"Nobody wants the water. That's a boondoggle," Pretzer said.

"If we had to do this over again, I

might have done certain things differently, but I damned sure would have hated to see us not get the water in," Pretzer said. "This water is absolutely crucial for our long-term betterment. But the present way they're operating it, it's a boondoggle."

"Boondoggle" is a familiar term from critics of CAP and other water projects, but not from farmers who have benefitted from subsidized water around

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Farmer Roddy Shedd stands near a ditch made obsolete by the Central Arizona Project

Terry Townsend

Dear friends,



HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

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Portrait of a town

If courtesy is the hallmark of a civilized society, then the 20,000-person temporary city established by the Rainbow people outside of Paonia last month was more civilized than Paonia itself. Straight visitors to the Rainbow encampment were treated with politeness and occasionally with warmth. By comparison, the Rainbows were harassed by the Colorado State Patrol on the roads and often denied the basic services of food and sanitation and information that visitors expect wherever they go.

At times, the hostility turned inward. One local 14-year-old girl, calling her parents from a street telephone the Rainbows usually queued up for, was the object of an obscene gesture by a police officer who was driving by: "Peace this, baby!" he shouted at her.

A local woman was shocked to hear the clerk in a self-service gas station tell a Rainbow, when he came in to pay, up-front, for his gas, to leave. "No more than two of your kind in here at one time," the clerk said.

A Japanese tourist, or perhaps a Japanese-American visitor, walked into a main street restaurant, an expensive camera around his neck and a camera bag over his shoulder. "Outside with the backpack," he was told, loudly, rudely and without explanation. He left, bewildered, but not so bewildered that he was about to leave his equipment unattended outside the restaurant.

One of *HCN*'s interns — whose hair is long — was threatened with violence on the street.

There was provocation for this behavior. While most of those attending the Rainbow gathering that ended July 5 were probably people with real lives masquerading as hippies, the event attracted homeless vagrants and substance abusers from around the nation. Some of those camped outside the main Rainbow gathering, in the so-called A-camp, but many camped on the town's main street, where they could be near the liquor store and where they could panhandle. Judging by reports in the local paper, some of them defecated and urinated in public places.

And some of the Rainbows were also shoplifters, perhaps assuming that this was part of living off the land and letting the universe provide.

But the local response was out of proportion to the provocation, and only a few businesses appeared to try to distinguish between the mass of the visitors and their troublesome hangers-on. Perhaps most serious was the fact that the state of Colorado aggravated matters by creating a temporary police state in Delta County. The state pulled members of the Colorado State Patrol in here from around Colorado to harass both the Rainbows and local people. Even before the July 4 peak, the state patrol had stopped 730 vehicles to write fewer than 100 tickets. Another 400 were stopped to check for bald tires, non-working horns, and the like. Drivers were bullied into allowing searches of their vehicles, and it was a common sight to see a small herd of state patrol cars gathered around a single hippie van and its hapless occupants.

The State Patrol claimed that they would have turned out in similar force if this were a similar gathering of Baptist ministers, but this is not true. This town has had many large gatherings, including during the annual hunting season, but this is the first time the patrol has come here in force.

The patrol was here to harass the Rainbows because they were different. When the troopers ran out of Rainbows to harass — most of the Rainbows stayed in camp — they harassed local people. For several weeks, Delta County was the only county in Colorado where the speed limit was strictly obeyed. But obeying the speed limit wasn't enough to avoid arbitrary and trumped-up stops by the bored troopers, as one local woman learned driving an old Volkswagen.

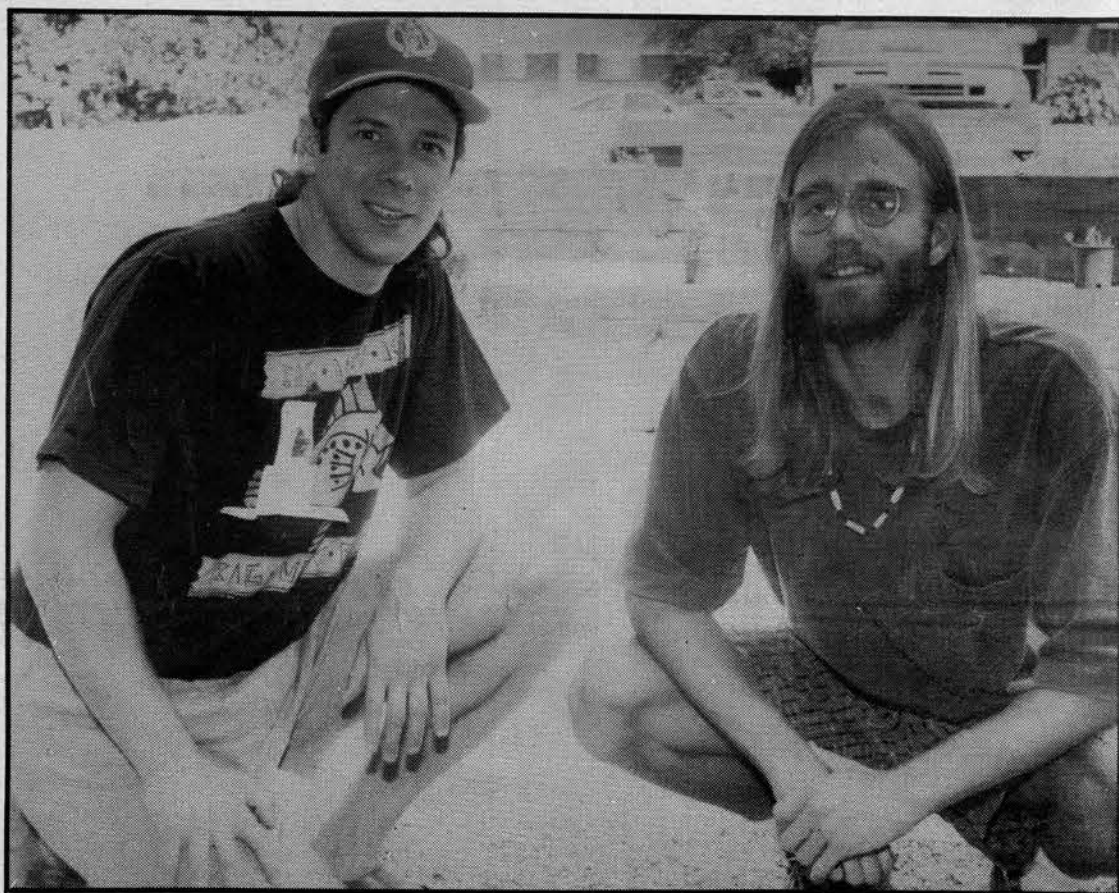
The Rainbows are now mostly gone, the harassing state troopers are gone, back to I-25 in Denver to watch the traffic stream by at a steady 15 miles above the speed limit. And Paonia is back to its

though, he says he is becoming familiar with Paonia and getting used to people mistaking him for a remaining member of the Rainbow Family.

Before arriving in Paonia, Peter Donaldson and his family enjoyed a leisurely drive through Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and northwestern Colorado on their way from the country's northwest corner.

Peter is a recent graduate of the environmental journalism program at Western Washington University in Bellingham. He has been reading *HCN* for almost two years and was prompted by his advisor Michael Frome to apply for an internship.

Paonia will be Peter's second lengthy stay in Colorado. A few years ago he studied at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Following his summer of writing, he hopes to work for a newspaper in the Northwest. Eventually, he hopes to write about the connection between social problems and unhealthy environments.



New interns Peter Donaldson and Mark Dooley

Cindy Wehling

placid, relaxed, friendly ways.

All locals — both those who tried to deal with the Rainbows as fellow human beings and those who treated them as invading scum — are pleased the event is over. But for those few weeks, this town's veneer of friendliness, self-control and civilized ways was ripped away, and it will be awhile before we will be able to see the town as we once saw it.

New interns

Minutes after arriving in Paonia, Mark Dooley ended up in an *HCN* staff meeting called to arrange last-minute logistics of the building dedication. Spared from any major duties during the event, he says he spent his first two days meeting dozens of people and absorbing their enthusiasm for the 22-year history of the newspaper.

Mark grew up in central Kansas and earned a bachelor's degree from McPherson College in the history of western thought. His interest in environmental issues grew in the Pacific Northwest, where he fled after post-graduation stays in Stuttgart, Germany, and New Brunswick, N.J. Now a Washington resident, he is pursuing a master's degree in environmental studies at Evergreen State College in Olympia. He also works part time as an advocate for disabled and homeless people.

An avid backpacker, Mark has begun to explore the nearby Gunnison National Forest. For the time being,

Attention, teachers

We have just sent out a letter that discusses how you can use *HCN* in your classroom: by having your students subscribe for a semester at \$7 per student, by encouraging them to get introductory student subscriptions at \$21 per year, by getting free samples for your class or conference, and by having us supply reprints, either of one or two articles that have appeared in *HCN*, or of a collection of articles bound into a book or reader. For further information, call associate publisher Linda Bacigalupi at 303/527-4898.

Yuppies

A subscriber wrote to say that the description of the new building — airy and filled with light — made it sound as if *HCN* had gone yuppie. So he contributed \$49 to the Research Fund but not a penny to the Building Fund.

His comment led to some soul searching, for we were just about to recommend our first restaurant — a down-home but friendly place that serves fish in Hagerman, Idaho, called the Riverbank. But we figure that a restaurant recommendation — even of a cafe situated in the Snake River Valley — would be a sure sign of Yuppiedom. So we're not doing it.

— Ed Marston, for the staff

WESTERN ROUNDUP

Mother Nature calls Nevada to attention

RENO, Nev. — More than a million dead fish rotted under an unrelenting sun recently after ranchers drained the last of the Humboldt River from a reservoir some 100 miles northeast of Reno. The massive die-off was not the first alarm signal of the summer in this sixth year of drought in northern Nevada. Nor would it be the last. But as communities here face one lack-of-water crisis after another, debate has deepened about water and the future of the region.

Randy Moore, recreation supervisor for Rye Patch Reservoir, said he woke up one morning in mid-July to find the "world-class" fishery under his charge gone. Ranchers had taken the last water in the dwindling reservoir.

Moore showed the carnage to reporters and TV crews that flocked to see this gruesome symbol of the drought. A 34-pound catfish was found among the dead, far larger than a 14-pound, four-ounce walleye that set a state record this spring. It will be 10 to 20 years before huge catfish will be found here again, Moore predicted. "The sad thing is most of the water won't even reach those ranches because of seepage losses," he said.

But Ben Hodges, manager of the Pershing County Water District, which controls the 200,000-acre-foot reservoir, said the 330 acre-feet of the water that remained would have evaporated anyway. "The district has always tried to leave a minimum pool, but this was the worst year in recorded history," he said. "You have to remember the farmers of the area built and paid for Rye Patch. If it wasn't for them, there would be no reservoir."

Surveying the dead fish, Bob Fulkerson, director of the statewide environmental group, Citizen Alert, observed, "There's no question that the Pershing County Conservation District had the right to use all of its water from Rye Patch. But it has no right to destroy an important habitat for migratory waterfowl, antelope and deer — not to mention the fish."

According to Jim Curran of the Nevada Department of Wildlife, the die-off at Rye Patch Reservoir was not unexpected. Wetlands around the state are expected to shrink from a total average of 50,000 acres statewide to around only 4,000 acres by the end of the summer, he said. Sometimes a "hard choice has to be made" between people and wildlife, Curran said. "Buying dedicated water rights is the only way to prevent this."

Fulkerson and other environmentalists pledged to fight for legislation funding such "conservation pools" that would guarantee a minimum level of water needed to support fish and wildlife habitat. But this year, little water is available at any price. Farmers in the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District, 50 miles east of Reno, also have run out of water. The nearby Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge has shrunk to a few hundred acres, and a federally funded program to buy water rights for the refuge has faltered.

The Lahontan Reservoir, which supplies both farmers and the refuge with water from the Truckee and Carson rivers, is down to 4,000 acre-feet. Wildlife officials predicted that it could be the site of the next major fish die-off, even though irrigators have pledged not to take any more water and aerating equipment is being installed to pump oxygen into the stagnant reservoir.

In another drought-related crisis upstream on the Truckee River, the twin



Dead fish at the base of Rye Patch Dam

Kit Miller

cities of Reno and Sparks narrowly skirted disaster when mid-July thunderstorms washed mud from heavily logged areas into the river's tributaries. The river was soon choked with silt and debris and overburdened water treatment plants had to be shut down.

After two days, freshwater supplies were perilously short. One hour before untreated water would have been put in domestic pipelines to meet consumer demand, the Washoe County Health Department issued an emergency order banning all outside watering and non-essential indoor use. Police and firefighters were deployed to warn people to turn off their sprinklers or face fines of up to \$1,000.

The shortage lasted nearly a week. But then the Washoe County Board of Commissioners, sitting as the regional water management agency, decided conditions had returned to "normal" and reinstated "stage two drought restrictions" that allow twice-a-week outdoor watering. Officials pinned the emergency on unusual circumstances — summer rains and flash floods during a period of low river flow — and poor communication among agencies in charge of emergency response.

Others saw the emergency as a symptom of larger problems. "We've been living on borrowed time and we've reached the limits of our resources," said Susan Lynn, a member of the Truckee River advisory board. "And we haven't been making much of an effort to save our resources."

With all of the season's irrigation

supply already delivered from reservoirs in the Sierra Nevada to users downstream, what is left belongs to Westpac Utilities, purveyor of city water and owner of some of the most senior water rights on the Truckee River. For the rest of the summer, the river will be "dewatered" between the city's intake pipes and its sewage treatment plant, which

returns water to the river downstream. With the Truckee River reduced to a trickle, state wildlife predicted that thousands more fish could die downstream from the city. In an attempt to get a step ahead, officials announced plans to promote fishing in the area before a massive die-off occurs.

Earlier this summer, a special drought committee convened by Nevada Gov. Bob Miller was told that stream flows from the Sierra Nevada mountains already were lower than in the Dust Bowl days, the previous historical low.

Lake Tahoe, the main source of water for the Truckee River, has dropped to almost three feet below its natural rim. No water has flowed from the lake for 20 months, and it will take at least two wet years to fill it back up, according to Garry Stone, the federal water administrator for the river.

For some, a new view of the ancient lake has almost been worth the price of low water. "It's wonderful, it's a totally different lake," said Tahoe enthusiast Jim Claybrook, who described sunning by the lake on a newly exposed granite slab polished by ancient glaciers. Lake Tahoe is now at a more natural level, he pointed out, rather than the level maintained for decades by the dam at the outlet to the Truckee River.

Scientists with the Desert Research Institute in Reno have also made new discoveries at Lake Tahoe. Researchers found tree stumps 25 feet below the current surface of the lake, indicating that a forest once grew there when the lake was much lower.

Radioactive carbon dating indicated the trees grew between 5,000 and 6,300 years ago, according to paleontologist Peter Wigand. When Wigand concluded that the forest probably grew during a 1,000-year drought, local headlines pondered whether the area might have "994 dry years left?"

"The last 70 years have actually been pretty wet in comparison with the last 1,000 years," Wigand said. "We're closer to normal than we would like to admit."

— Jon Christensen

The writer free-lances in Carson City, Nevada.

HOTLINE

Oregon governor targeted

A timber industry-backed attempt to recall Oregon's Gov. Barbara Roberts fell short this spring when not enough signatures were collected to put the question on the ballot. Billed as a grassroots response to Gov. Roberts's support for the Endangered Species Act, the effort was funded for the most part by the timber industry. Over \$71,000 of the campaign's \$85,000 in contributions came from timber-related companies. The largest contribution, \$58,000, was from Seneca Sawmill Company of Eugene. Gov. Roberts's environmental policies have usually met with approval by state environmental organizations. Her appointee to the President's "God Squad" cast one of the two dissenting votes against exempting BLM timber sales from the Endangered Species Act. Recently, her opponents announced a second recall effort to unseat the governor.

Will Albuquerque go on the wagon?

An Albuquerque, N.M., task force urged the city to begin conserving water. Since daily water consumption averages 245 gallons per person and average annual rainfall is eight inches, action may come just in time. According to city officials, Albuquerque has almost depleted its groundwater resources and will soon be forced to tap surface water. "We're mining our water like crazy," says water utility manager Norman Gaume. But the city's Public Works Department is funded by sales of city water and it has never implemented a formal conservation program. Increasing contamination of public and private wells, however, added a sense of urgency to the nine-person task force, which urged a host of immediate conservation measures. If voluntary measures fail to reduce consumption, the task force warned, mandatory water restrictions will be necessary.

Lawsuit seeks to force logging to prevent fires

Local governments in logging communities of northwestern Montana have joined a lawsuit that seeks to force tree-cutting in the Kootenai National Forest.

The lawsuit calls for the felling and removing of beetle-infested lodgepole pines in a 33,000-acre area. Plaintiffs, in cooperation with the timber industry, contend that the dying lodgepoles are a fire hazard and their existence endangers wildlife habitat.

The suit was filed by the Denver-based Mountain States Legal Foundation, a pro-development group with historic ties to James Watt. While the suit's backers say it will help save the floundering timber economy, environmentalists say its biological claims are false and its legal arguments flawed.

In fact, Washington, D.C., judge Gerhard Gesell dismissed the suit's claims in May, but allowed more time for local governments to establish their case.

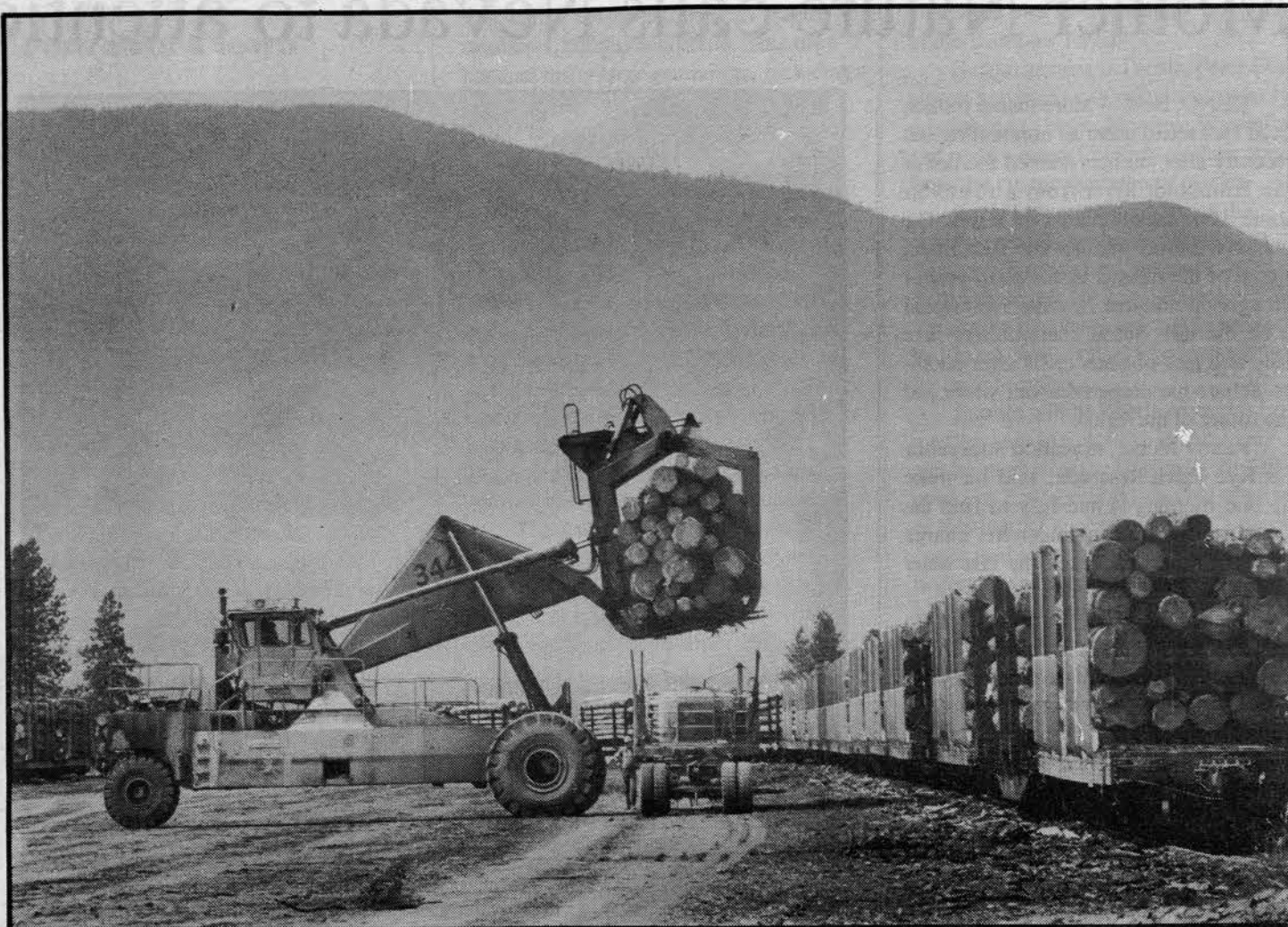
The center of the controversy is the timber-rich Yaak River Valley, a 450-square-mile drainage near the Idaho and Canadian borders. The remote valley's humid climate provides habitat for one of the most abundant wildlife populations in the lower 48 states. The climate also fostered a once-thriving timber industry.

Don Vance, who began fighting logging of the Yaak in 1975, says, "For the greater public good, (logging) has to be curtailed." Vance's cabin was burned down in 1988 after he won a lawsuit forcing the Forest Service to produce an environmental impact statement on the entire Upper Yaak drainage.

The current lawsuit is the most recent offensive in the protracted fight over the region's forests. The Montana plaintiffs include the town governments of Libby, Troy and Eureka, plus the Lincoln County Commission. In Idaho, Bonners Ferry, Moyie Springs and Boundary County have also joined the suit. The defendants' list is a *Who's Who* of federal regulatory agencies plus 10 individuals.

One plaintiff, logging advocate Bruce Vincent, says, "These communities are going to rely on the forest for their economic and environmental health for generations to come. We think they should be managing for a healthy forest."

If the lawsuit is successful, conservationists worry the Forest Service would be bound to carry out development plans already rejected by a host of state and federal environmental agencies



David J. Spear

Logs are loaded for transport near Kootenai National Forest in Montana

for their weaknesses.

"They're not just looking to cut lodgepole," says Steve Thompson, a member of the Montana Wilderness Association. "Only 35 percent of the trees up there are lodgepole; the rest are healthy mixed conifer."

Lodgepole pines are slender trees, of relatively little value to timber mills, while mixed conifer stands usually contain more profitable species.

Arnold Bolle, retired forestry dean at the University of Montana, questions the lawsuit's rationale. "If they have to clearcut huge chunks of healthy forest just to get out dying lodgepole, it's not worth it," he says. "The more trees they take now, the bigger the crash in timber supply there will be later."

But local residents see the coming crash as a result of environmental regulations. Pro-logging organizers often lace their speeches with apocalyptic overtones.

"Survival of the human population depends on the intelligent integration of the two 'Eco's,'" Bruce Vincent said at a recent public meeting discussing the lawsuit. "Economy and ecology."

The same night Mark Knoll, a fun-

damentalist minister, told the audience that environmentalists' attacks are aimed at more than the timber industry. They want to see the destruction of Christianity and capitalism too, he said, according to a local newspaper, *The Tobacco Valley Guide*.

For their lawsuit, the plaintiffs rely on the argument that fires would devastate the region if some trees are not removed.

"The area has a history of catastrophic fires and we're watching the area prepare itself for that," says Bruce Vincent. "It's not a threat of fire. The fires are going to happen."

Kootenai Forest Supervisor John Righter is less certain that fire would devastate the area. "Nobody could say that fire will wipe out the whole northern end of the district if we didn't allow the proposed logging," he says. "It would be speculative."

While the fire threat may serve to rally local communities, the lawsuit also addresses other biological issues, including the Yaak's grizzly bear population. The suit alleges that blown-down lodgepole pines would create a barrier to bear travel, trapping them in a fire. "Timber harvesting and road building provide areas which the (grizzly) bears use after the timbermen have left," says the suit. "Without the timber harvest, (grizzly bear) habitat would decrease rather than increase."

Such statements have prompted a cascade of debate.

"Clearcutting isn't necessarily adverse to grizzly bears in the long term, in fact, it can be beneficial," says Bob Summerfield, wildlife biologist for the Kootenai National Forest. "I think logging and grizzly bears can be compatible."

"It's a lie when they say that," says Missoula-based bear researcher Charles Jonkel. The research on improving bear habitat has yet to be done, he contends.

Jonkel also scoffs at the suit's depiction of hapless grizzlies trapped by blown-down trees or burned up in a fire. "That's pure nonsense. You can't make it bad enough that they can't get through. And bears know how to get the hell out

of the way of fire."

The suit has also generated controversy on its legal arguments.

According to Tom France of the National Wildlife Federation in Missoula, the suit contains "the broadest kind of generalizations" about environmental statutes. While this approach may constitute a political strategy, France says, it is not a strong legal tactic.

"It's hard to know what the plaintiffs are complaining about, except they're complaining about everything," says France. "I'd call it a kitchen-sink suit."

"The local governments who signed on to the suit ought to be required to actually read the brief," says environmentalist Don Vance. "Then they might realize they are parties to an action which may be summarily thrown out of court as incompetent."

In District Judge Gesell's order to dismiss the suit temporarily, he cited "certain deficiencies in the pleadings," and urged the municipalities to demonstrate a proper grievance against the federal government.

Two local city council members and the mayor of Troy declined to comment for this article.

Perry Pendley, president of the Mountain States Legal Foundation office in Denver, says the suit meets the necessary standards. "I think the complaint that we've written is sufficient enough to put the Forest Service on notice."

Along with casting a broad net, the legal foundation's suit questions the Forest Service's research and its interpretation of the laws. But this, says France, will increase the likelihood that a judge will rule in favor of the Forest Service. "The courts are going to be inclined to say that the Forest Service has the expertise in this area, not Perry Pendley."

Replies Pendley: "It's interesting to hear an environmental group saying that, because that's what environmental groups have been litigating for the past 20 years."

— Jack Thorndike

The writer is a free-lancer in Missoula, Montana.

HOTLINE

Victor residents win one

After weeks of opposition from residents of Victor, Colo., a gold mining company agreed to move the location of a proposed heap leach pad so it won't be visible from the main street (HCN 5/18/92). In March, many of the town's residents rebelled at the company's plan to put a 4,000-foot-long leach pad just west of town, even though Victor has been a mining camp all its life. As a showing of corporate good will, the mining company pledged \$10,000 toward the development of a ball field for Victor. While they are happy with the company's change of heart, members of the fledgling group called Citizens for Victor! forged ahead with a plan to gain permanent protection for the town. Members called for a buffer zone of no mining activity, although virtually all of

the land in question is owned by the Cripple Creek and Victor Gold Mining Co. Meanwhile, the mining firm's parent company, NERCO, has fallen on relatively hard times and has contracted with a Wall Street investment banker to find out whether all of the conglomerate's gold mining properties should be sold to help with cash-flow problems. Victor has seen a series of companies come and go in the past 100 years or so, and residents say they are not surprised at news of a new bust.

BARBS

Yeltsin's no dummy.

On receiving a gift of Spam from the president of Hormel in Kansas, Russian President Boris Yeltsin politely declined. "I never eat a hearty breakfast," he said, avoiding the age-old question. "What is Spam made of?"

GAO report chews on critics of its grazing studies

Under attack from livestock groups and Western politicians, the U.S. General Accounting Office recently examined three of its grazing studies and found them fair and accurate.

The assessment is the latest move in a paper war over the condition of federal rangeland, a battle that informs the congressional debate over what fee ranchers should pay for the privilege of grazing animals.

The assessment came in response to a request from members of the U.S. Senate public lands subcommittee. The subcommittee had asked the GAO, the government's investigative arm, to defend three of its reports against a Nevada consulting firm's unsolicited critique.

The three reports — on federal grazing allotments, riparian restoration projects, and the wild horse program — all emphasized the need for better stewardship of the West's vast public lands. Resource Concepts, a Carson City, Nev.-based firm headed by John McClain, assailed the reports for "unscientific research techniques" and a "heavy bias against livestock grazing" (HCN, 4/20/92).

GAO comptroller Dexter Peach stood by the reports, saying, "The critique contains little factual data to substantiate its assertions. Instead, the critique misrepresents our reports' findings to support its positions."

In its self-examination, titled *Assessment of Nevada Consulting Firm's Critique of Three GAO Reports*, the GAO strongly defended its research techniques. For its 1988 federal range condition report, the agency said it sur-

veyed 800 managers from Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service allotments, then backed up questionnaire data with on-site interviews and research at a sampling of the allotments. The GAO said that its survey, which found an even lower rate of overstocking than

reporting," the GAO noted that it researched 22 of the existing 35 Western riparian restoration projects extensively, and met with ranchers, agency officials and scientists at each allotment in the 10-state area.

McClain had also charged the GAO



Diane Sylvain

recent BLM or Forest Service studies, gave a truer picture of range condition than spotty and unreliable agency monitoring data.

In defense of its 1988 riparian report, which McClain's original critique billed as "analogous to *Enquirer* style

"sensationalized" livestock as the cause of rangeland ills. The GAO reports found 8 percent of federal allotments in decline and described them as "threatened with further deterioration." McClain labeled such interpretation "biased and unscientific" because 8 per-

cent might be normal "even in the complete absence of man."

The GAO responded that scientific evidence supported its finding that overstocking can result in long-term or permanent damage to the land. Further, said the GAO, its researchers concluded that cattle were both a major source of the trouble and one that could be easily addressed by the reforms its reports focused on.

The GAO also said that each of its recommendations to accelerate riparian restoration and improve declining rangeland was almost unanimously supported by the BLM, the Forest Service and other federal agencies. In a 1991 letter to the GAO, BLM director Cy Jamison wrote, "Your June 1988 report on our riparian management program was one of GAO's more comprehensive and expert studies of a very relevant issue."

While Resource Concepts and many Western lawmakers continued to bash the GAO, environmentalists praised its work.

"The GAO's rebuttal devastated McClain's critique," said Rose Strickland, chair of the Sierra Club's grazing subcommittee. "It brought out the bias and the unprofessionalism of Resource Concepts and its buddies in the grazing industry. The GAO's competence and professionalism showed clear."

The rebuttal, GAO/RCED-92-178R, can be obtained from the U.S. General Accounting Office, Washington, D.C. 20548 (202/275-6241).

— Mark Tukman, HCN intern

Ranchers, BLM clash over grazing cut

A protest filed against the Bureau of Land Management by the Arizona Cattle Growers' Association threatens to dismantle a nature preserve in the Sonoran desert.

The Nature Conservancy created the Muleshoe Ranch Preserve in Arizona's southern Galiuro Mountains in the mid-1980s to help protect Arizona's dwindling riparian habitats. Biologists say these remaining riparian areas are important because more than 70 percent of Arizona's wildlife depends on them for survival. This includes the state's native fish, which are its most endangered group of animals. Of 32 native fish species, 21 are listed or are candidates for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Five native fish species are found in the Muleshoe's six perennial streams, where they suffer no predation from introduced exotic fish. But four of these streams cross public land that surrounds the ranch's private base property. That makes the BLM's management of the land vital to the success of the preserve.

When the Conservancy purchased the Muleshoe Ranch, it came with a BLM grazing permit for the surrounding allotment. The Conservancy did not intend to immediately graze cattle on the public land. Instead, it planned to allow the riparian vegetation to begin to recover from past overgrazing.

Recently, the BLM proposed permanent protection for the streams by creating an environmental buffer zone around the ranch. Grazing would be suspended there for at least five years.

That's when the Arizona Cattle Growers' Association protested. It contended that properly managed grazing

can be a beneficial tool.

"How do you get your grass to grow?" Arizona Cattle Growers' spokesman Jeff Menges said. "You mow it."

Local environmentalists counter that no evidence exists to show that desert riparian areas derive any benefit from cattle grazing.

"New plant growth doesn't necessarily mean a healthier ecosystem," said Thomas Fleischner, professor of environmental studies at Prescott College. "It may mean new shoots for the cattle to eat. But what about the other public-lands management objectives, like wildlife and recreation?"

Fleischner explained that grazing often prevents trees and shrubs from reaching maturity. Mature plants, he said, provide the shade needed to lower desert stream water temperatures enough to allow fish and other aquatic life to thrive. He said they also provide critical habitat for migrating birds and other wildlife.

Nature Conservancy officials are quick to point out that they have no argument with the state's ranchers.

"The cattle growers filed the protest against the BLM, not us," Conservancy spokesman Tom Collazo said. "We are not aligned with those groups advocating no grazing on public lands."

For example, Collazo said, the BLM's plan for the area allows grazing to resume on a portion of the Muleshoe allotment called Soza Mesa. He said the Conservancy does not oppose that decision.

"The Soza Mesa area is not critical in regards to protection of the riparian areas," Collazo said. "We have no policy

on public-lands grazing in non-critical habitats."

If the Conservancy retains the Muleshoe's grazing permit, it must eventually allow grazing on Soza Mesa. That's because BLM regulations require that any lands designated for forage production must be grazed unless grazing needs to be temporarily suspended to protect natural resources, as the BLM wants to do on the Muleshoe allotment.

According to the cattle growers' protest, one of the reasons they are trying to prevent the BLM from reducing the size of the Muleshoe allotment is that local ranchers are interested in obtaining its permit.

Collazo said the Conservancy is relying on the local BLM staff to defend the management decisions in their plan.

"We're not actively preparing a response to the cattle growers' protest," he said. "We're counting on the BLM to do the right thing."

The BLM's area manager, Meg Jensen, explained that the director's office in Washington, D.C., handles protests of local decisions. She said her office is preparing an information packet for director Cy Jamison's review.

"We always put a lot of effort into making good land management decisions," Jensen said. "I think we need to defend their soundness."

For more information, contact Meg Jensen, Gila Resource Area Manager, BLM, 425 E. 4th St., Safford, AZ 85546.

— Jeff Burgess

The writer free-lances from Tempe, Arizona.

HOTLINE

Bears denied lunch

The gravy train has ended for sewage-eating bears in Montana's Glacier National Park. Until recently, outhouse holding tanks, full from a summer of use, were dumped on nearby rocks where bears then feasted on gallons of human waste. But under pressure from environmental groups, park superintendent Gil Lusk prohibited the practice last fall. This summer, when two outhouses at a backcountry lodge were due for dumping, backpackers may have seen a helicopter carrying 55-gallon drums full of sewage out of the park. Long-term options under consideration for future waste include removal using pack horses for transport, or building composting outhouses.

A reprieve

Bristol-Myers Squibb Co., the largest producer of the cancer drug taxol, announced last month that it will reduce its dependence on the bark of the Pacific yew. The tree is currently the company's sole source of taxol. In a recent agreement, Indena of Milan, Italy, will supply Bristol-Myers with a chemical extract from the needles of Asian and American yew trees, similar to their American cousin. Faced with the uncertain future of harvesting Pacific yew bark from spotted owl habitat, Bristol-Myers and other drug companies have been seeking larger and more reliable sources to meet the exploding demand for the promising new drug. Used primarily to treat ovarian and breast cancer, taxol could be needed by as many as 50,000 women, but a single patient currently requires the bark from three full-grown yews. Bristol-Myers hopes to wean itself entirely from Pacific yew bark by 1995.

HOTLINE



Rita Claggett

Mormon crickets are benign on the range

After decades of expensive chemical campaigns, many ranchers and pest control agents now say the wingless grasshoppers called Mormon crickets aren't much of a threat. The crickets haven't changed; people's understanding of them has. A Colorado State University biologist helped push the switch in thinking. He is Chuck MacVean, whose doctoral thesis convinced Uintah County and some local ranchers in Utah that fighting the insects was not worth the money or effort. By next year, says county pest controller Steven Romney, his office will be out of the cricket-control business. "If croplands are not involved, there is no reason to control crickets," he said. "They can do a lot of damage to crops like wheat and alfalfa, but do little, if any, economic damage to rangeland." In fact, Mormon crickets may benefit ranchers. Roughly 90 percent of the crickets' food consists of sagebrush and other forbs, which livestock don't like, and which compete with the grasses that sheep and cattle prefer, according to MacVean's study. Native to North American grasslands, the insects earned their name and their bad reputation in 1848, when a surge in their numbers frightened Mormon pioneers.

Coors won't tap Arches

After a one-year battle with two Utah environmental groups, Coors Energy has halted its plans to drill for oil near Arches National Park. Representatives of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA) say that Little Canyon, one mile west of Arches National Park, contains Utah's last viable herd of native desert bighorn sheep. Drilling there, they say, would violate four of the Bureau of Land Management's wildlife plans and the area management plan. Coors's original application to drill in the canyon was held up in federal court for 10 months after SUWA and the Utah Chapter of the Sierra Club sought a federal restraining order last June. Although the BLM gave Coors Energy the go-ahead last April, the company decided to scrap the project last month for business reasons. SUWA has asked the BLM not to reissue the lease.

A wolf at the door could mean \$5,000

Wild wolves could be worth \$5,000 to ranchers in Montana, Wyoming and Idaho who allow the animals to breed on their land. Engaging in "free-market environmentalism," the conservation group Defenders of Wildlife announced its new Wolf Reward Program. Its goal is to provide an incentive for private landowners to comply with the Endangered Species Act. To qualify for a \$5,000 payment, landowners must agree to allow wolves to den and raise pups to adulthood on their land. Some ranchers oppose the plan, fearing rabies and livestock predation if wolf populations grow. Said Defenders' spokesman Hank Fischer in *The Billings Gazette*, "Our fondest dream is to give away a lot of money — that means wolf recovery is happening." Depending on its success, the compensation program will last for three years.

West remains dry, but July's rain helped

As the West enters the last month of summer, empty reservoirs, dry irrigation canals and dangerously brittle forests bear witness to six years of drought. While southern Utah, Nevada and most of Colorado managed to squeak by with average or slightly below-average precipitation, much of the West faces one of the worst droughts in seven decades.

Water is so tight in Wyoming's Bear and Laramie drainages that users with junior water rights have been without water since May. But above average precipitation during the months of June and July postponed disaster for farmers without irrigation water.

John Barnes, a Wyoming water administrator, says early summer rains allowed farmers with reservoir storage rights to save their meager allotments of irrigation water for drier times in July and August.

Besides providing early season help to farmers, Wyoming's summer rains kept the fire season, which usually stretches from late August to early October, from getting an early start. According to Wyoming forester Ray Weidenhaft, July rains helped stem fires. But conditions are expected to change very quickly if the weather dries out during August.

Like Wyoming, Montana has benefited immensely from bountiful July rains over most of the state. Last spring most of Montana was in the grip of an extreme drought, with parts of the Missouri, Jefferson and Smith rivers hitting record lows. Larry Kindelfield from Montana's Department of Natural Resources says, "Although conditions are still severe in parts of southeast and north-central Montana, most of the state has shown considerable improvement over the last month."

But Larry Peterman from Montana's Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks believes that Montana's woes are far from over. "So far substantial rains have kept most of the state's streams and rivers in reasonable shape, but if the rains quit, flows will drop significantly and fish will be threatened," says Peterman. "Right now we're holding our breath, crossing our fingers and doing a rain dance."

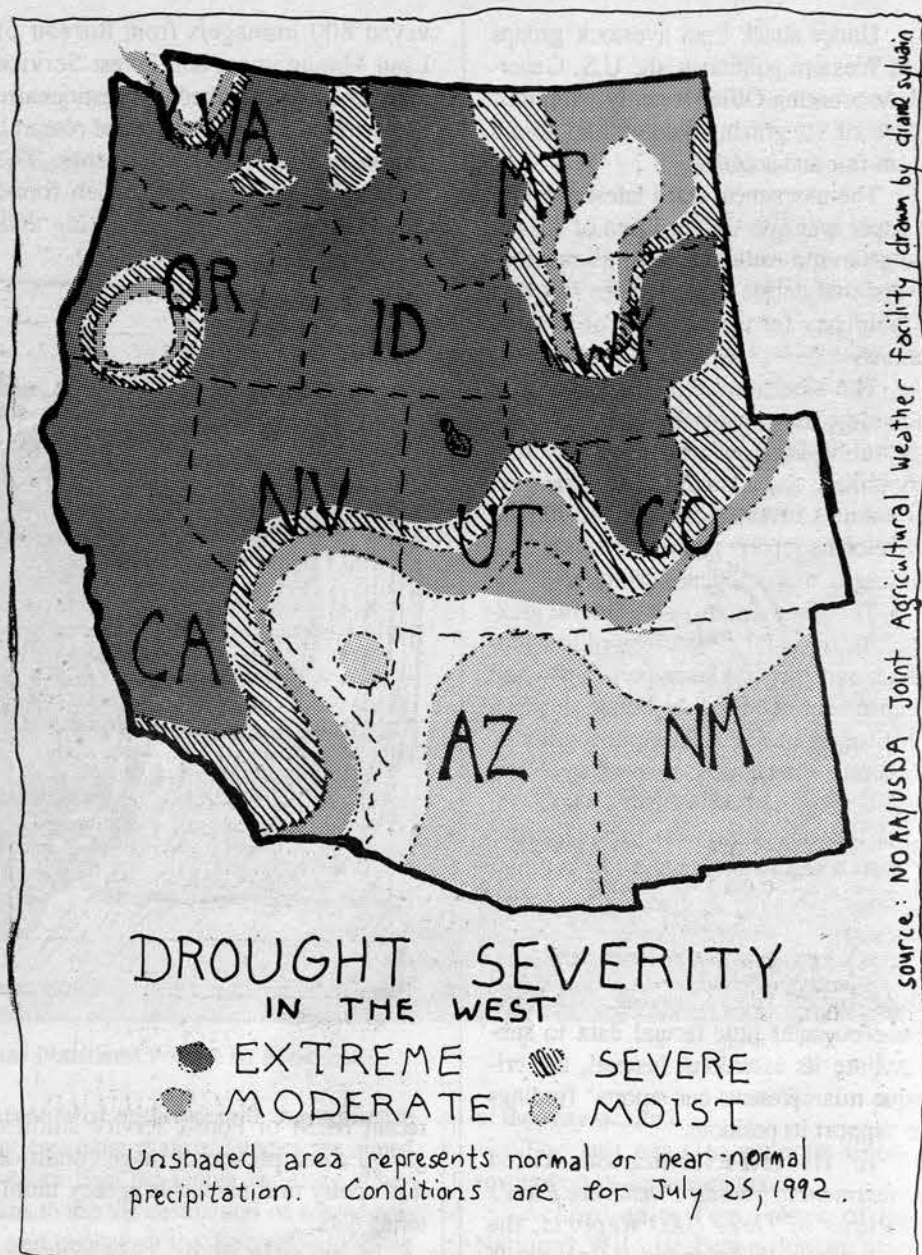
In Utah, Clark Ogden of the state's Division of Water Resources, says Utah "has a hell of a good drought going." Streamflows for northern Utah's Bear, Weber and Provo rivers are 30 percent of normal. Holders of junior water rights for Bear Lake, which straddles the Utah-Idaho border, have been out of water since early July. Ogden said the state's most acute water problem was the city of Price's Schofield Reservoir, which is at 9 percent of capacity. He also mentioned that wildfires continue to threaten homes that border wild areas outside of Salt Lake and Provo.

Like Utah, Nevada is experiencing drought conditions in the north (see related story, page 3). Irrigators near Fallon are operating with 30 percent of their normal water supply and say they will apply for federal drought relief.

"It's pretty serious when you get into your sixth year of drought," says Linda Eisman of Nevada's Department of Water Resources. "People can't survive that long."

In Reno, the Sierra Pacific Public Utilities company has set up a "water-watcher network" to report water-wasters to city authorities. Citations for sloppy watering can bring a \$1,000 fine and a six-month jail sentence.

Some of Reno's problems are the result of the city's decision to rely on litigation instead of conservation. The city has refused to install water meters in residential areas, instead relying on increased diversion of water from the Truckee River.



As drought conditions worsened in northwest Colorado during July, Montana's situation improved dramatically

When asked "how bad" Idaho's water situation is, Keith Higginson of the state's Department of Water Resources answers with a question of his own: "How bad can it get? That's how bad it is. Some of our irrigation canals didn't fill this spring, and the ones that did will be dry by the middle of August."

Idaho coped with seven previous years of water shortages by tapping "water banks" on its three major drainages. Water banks allow conservation districts with extra water to make loans to needy districts within their basin. But this year's drought broke the system's back. On the Upper Snake River alone, summer water demands have exceeded offerings by 246,000 acre-feet.

While some farmers have written the season off, others have turned to groundwater. Hundreds of wells have been deepened over the last five years to catch up with shallow aquifers that have dropped as much as 70 feet.

Oregon's eastern rivers face the same dilemma as Idaho's Upper Snake. The Owhyee River's largest reservoir is completely dry for the first time ever, and four other major reservoirs in the area are anywhere from 10 to 39 percent of normal capacity.

"We've got base flows for rivers and streams in the southeastern part of the state that are 30 to 40 percent below record lows and major springs are drying up for the first time," says Barry Norwin, drought supervisor for Oregon's Water Resource Commission.

"It's going to take two or three years of average to above-average precipitation to get our reservoirs back to normal levels." The drought produced a significant number of early-season fires. According to Rick Gibson from Oregon's Department of Forestry, fires during June burned 650 percent more acres than normal. "June is usually a moist

month, but this year the drought took an early toll on us."

Although heavy July downpours were welcome, more fires are expected in August. "We had 19,000 lightning strikes in Washington, Oregon and Idaho during the last nine days. Most of those strikes were accompanied by rain, but when the weather dries out, we expect some of the strike areas that are smoldering to start up."

Washington's rainfall in July was heavy at 150 to 175 percent of normal. Though the rains boosted soil moisture and lowered water temperatures for sockeye salmon runs, the rainfall won't solve Washington's problems. Doug McClesney of Washington's Department of Water Resources, says the state's major problems are water storage for Seattle and Tacoma, limited irrigation storage for farmers in eastern Washington and high water temperatures for returning salmon. But, he adds, although Washington's rivers are low and some reservoirs in eastern Washington are empty, "we probably won't set any low flow records like the ones in Oregon and Idaho."

Warm water and low oxygen levels in the Northwest's rivers pose serious threats to the region's salmon. Randy MacIntosh, drought specialist for Washington's Department of Fisheries, says the drought will kill juvenile coho salmon that occupy small streams and adults sockeye and chinook when they attempt to migrate upstream from the ocean.

When river levels drop, the juvenile coho crowd together in isolated pools and suffer as the water's temperature increases and the amount of dissolved oxygen decreases. MacIntosh says fish deaths will occur statewide with biggest losses in Oregon and Idaho.

— Mike Foster, HCN intern

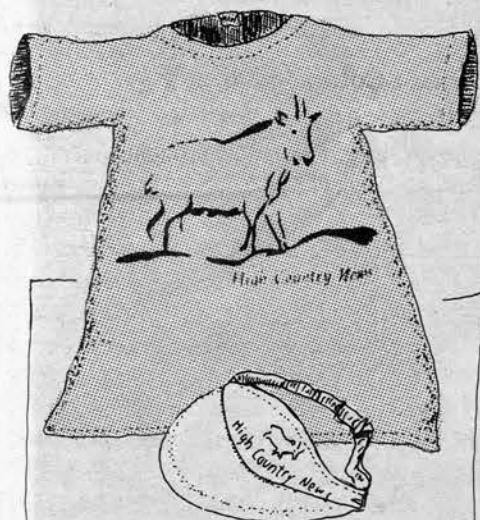
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WOLF MEETINGS later this month are likely to be stacked by anti-wolf special interests. The public is invited and encouraged to attend a hearing as part of the scoping process to identify concerns in the EIS being undertaken by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Registration starts at noon:
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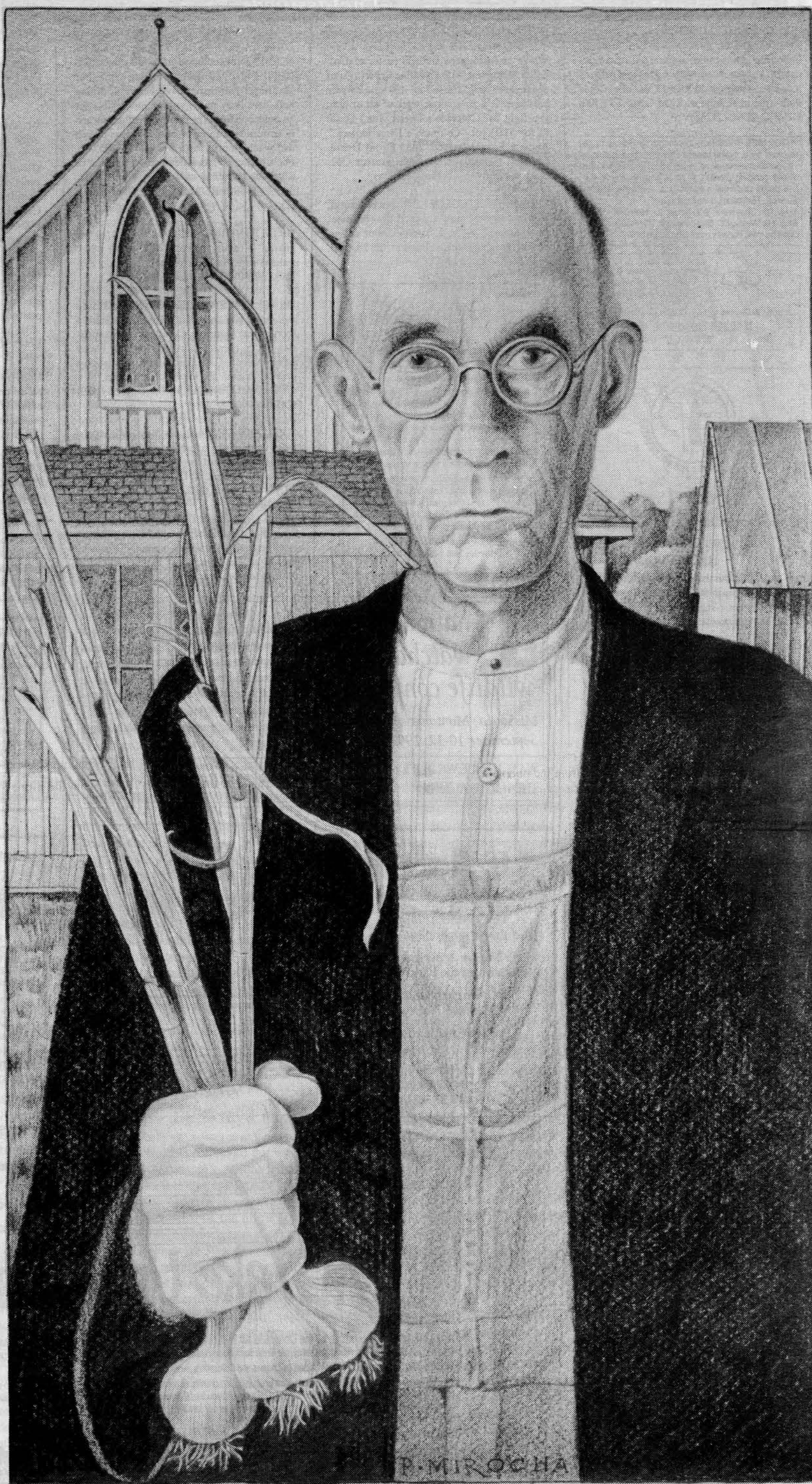
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AMERICAN GARLIC

Everyone feels free to tell the farmer how to farm

by Stanley Crawford

For every farmer there is the big question: How to farm? Every square foot of earth is different. No farmer's experience will be exactly like any other. Much of any farmer's experience is bound to remain deeply private.

A result can be Cranky Farmer Talk — such as what follows.

As a farmer, you are subject to all kinds of advice and pressure to farm this way or that, according to what is in fashion or what is considered safe or profitable or efficient. The labor of farming isolates the individual farmer more than it brings farmers together, and in isolation the weight of these influences is magnified and distorted.

The synthetic fertilizer and chemical and seed companies tell you that if you do it their way, you'll be productive and profitable. Collectively, they house perhaps the greatest economic power of all. Throw in the equipment companies here, too, those that make the machines that apply all the powders and potions that feed, kill, ripen, dry out. Plus the college and university research system which helps agribusiness think up new potions and powders and machines to put them on with.

Environmentalists come at you from the opposite direction. No, you can't do that, it'll poison the soil, the water, ruin the biosphere. The strictest environmentalists probably want you to give up farming altogether.

The organic lobby wants you to farm their way, for what they define as the good health of the soil and all eaters of food.

The Soil Conservation Service wants you to keep soil from blowing away and washing into streams and rivers. They also want you to conserve water.

The banks and the Farmers Home Administration want you to farm in a profitable way, no matter what that means, so you can pay back your loans.

Your neighbors would rather whatever you do didn't smell, blow around, make too much noise.

Your fellow farmers, if there are any left, will most likely be running around and looking for the right way to do things and will regard each other's practices as misguided, pointless, expensive, dangerous, too much work, or all five.

"I tried that and it didn't work," they'll cheerfully say. Borrowing money may be the only experience they have truly in common.

People who don't farm but who love the idea of other people farming will want you to keep farming no matter what, perhaps so they can talk about farming during the more serious moments of dinner parties, so they can say, "I know this family who actually still farms." You are a feature of their imaginations, their fantasy lives.

Agricultural bureaucrats want you to farm for any reason at all, mainly because if everybody gave up, then they would be out of their jobs: your work gives them job security and maintains the value of their fringe benefits and pension plans.

Most of these interests are trying to sell something, make money, make a living. The organic press is in business to print books and magazines, and I doubt their business practices differ much from Exxon or Ortho. The glossy publications of environmental organizations are bound to require the leveling of so many acres of forests per year, and the production of the inks in their colorful pages the degradation of water quality somewhere, first in the printing, second in the eventual disposal.

All this is a weight I often feel pressing in from out there, the momentum of ponderous institutions seeking members, subscribers, converts, customers, clients, laborers, to contribute to the cost of their overhead and help them keep in balance their own gyroscopes of stability and continuity.

And it explains in part my occasional sensitivity to seemingly innocent questions, by those whose quest for the absolutely pure foodstuff has carried them to the tailgate of my pickup at the farmers' markets. The question usually comes in this form:

"Is your produce organic?"

And it is not that I object to a seriously asked question that requests an answer attended to and discussed, where information is exchanged, not buzzwords tossed back and forth. I will give the customer enough information to judge. If the customer doesn't know how to use the information to make a judgment, then that will be the customer's problem — and of course the customer is always free to seek elsewhere for simplistic answers.

So you ask: "Is your garlic organic?"

Please note. We're standing in the middle of an asphalt desert in Santa Fe, N.M., surrounded by parked cars and pickups. We're in the middle of a city that, like most, some time ago zoned out barnyards and chicken pens and manure piles supposedly in the interests of health and sanitation, and otherwise made it difficult for people to raise livestock and farm; a city like most that is unable to dispose of its own treated sewage waste in an ecologically sound manner, that has chosen to ignore the more serious dangers of the automobile, plus the problems of all those manufactured products householders are allowed to spray on their yards to kill weeds and bugs.

When I was a kid, tasting the landscape on the way to and from school was how my friends and I got to know it. There was anise growing by the side of the road, whose dry stalks we peeled open in the winter for their chewy white pulp. There were the bittersweet stalks of the yellow clover flowers we sucked on. We sipped nectar out of nasturtiums. We smelled the pepper tree berries, the lantana leaves and flowers. We broke in half the succulent iceplant leaves and smeared them on our hands. We foraged oranges and limes and loquats and mandarins and eugenia berries from orchards and hedges along the road.

On a recent walk along those same curving streets, wondering how many gallons of herbicide and pesticides have been applied to the neat yards one sees so rarely tended by anyone, I knew I should no longer taste this landscape as I walked — not because I was older and more fastidious, but because I feared it had been rendered poisonous over the years.

"Is your stuff organic?"

There will be a moment of hesitation. I will look you in the eye to assess what kind of response you want. If a rhetorical one, I'll say merely: "We have never used any chemical herbicides or pesticides and never will."

Often that suffices. But sometimes I'll see genuine curiosity. Then I'll go on to explain that the only "organic" pesticides I have used are rotenone for bean beetles and sabadilla dust on summer squash, and only occasionally. Yet even these, because they are still poisons, however "organic," I'm still reluctant to handle

for a narrowly personal reason, that of my own health.

There are of course always some annoying exceptions to my rules, such as fungicides that are unpredictably applied to certain seeds from a company I regularly order from and which I often discover too late to reorder elsewhere. Under many current organic regulations, such seed treatments remain acceptable. And I would argue, if with little confidence, that the quantities of these chemicals deposited in the soil are probably much less than the pollutants distributed into the atmosphere by one short drive in a car — though I know I should find no excuses for my own pollutings in those of others.

I would go on to explain my experience with cottonseed meal and sewage sludge and synthetic fertilizers and how I have dealt with animal manures, and how I hope that the fields and woods and orchards under my care consume enough carbon dioxide and produce enough oxygen to balance partially at least the carbon dioxide I generate with my tractor, my vehicles, fireplace, propane heaters, plus all that's produced in the industrial processes that provide me with electricity and a vast range of manufactured goods and products.

"So what about you?" I would conclude. "What about your life? Is it organically lived?"

Here I might pause to summon up the courage to bring up the forbidden subject. "And if I may ask, what about the money you would offer to pay me with? Is it organically earned? In short, how have you managed to solve these problems in your life? Have you actually figured out how to live a clean life in a dirty age?"

Then I will listen. I may hear the rationalizations of a fanatic, fretting over notions of exalted states of bodily purity. And for good reason. Perhaps in the poisonous desert of a city there is little else you can do besides seek out what you hope is "pure" food. Yet I hope I will also hear the deliberations of someone who understands the endless dilemmas of living in these times, someone who understands the term organic as pointing toward an ideal of how a community might better elaborate itself around the use of its land and water. How it might regard the rural landscapes that surround it, the cycles of nature and the interactions of the vegetative, the animal, the human and the cultural. How it might seek to draw back into its life what the fashion of the moment has exiled to "the country."

The question is posed. I will ask it or not, you will answer it or not. But whether spoken or not, all this and more comes to bear on that instant of suspicion or of trust in which I hand over at last a small sack of garlic in exchange for a few pieces of paper.

These will be new and crisp or wrinkled and smudged. Either way, as always, they will be engraved with magical images and words, and will reveal nothing about the uses to which they have been put.

But enough. Thank you. It's been good talking to you. Enjoy your garlic.

End of Cranky Farmer Talk. ■

Stanley Crawford is the author of the new book, *A Garlic Testament, Seasons on a Small New Mexico Farm*, from which this chapter was taken. The book was published this spring by Harper Collins, 10 E. 53 St., New York, NY 10022. The author farms six acres in Dixon, N.M., with his wife, Rose Mary.



Betsy Rieke

Tim Archibald

Arizona's water disaster ...

(Continued from page 1)

the West for nearly a century. Some of President Jimmy Carter's staff thought CAP was a boondoggle; in 1977, CAP made Carter's short-lived "hit list" of water projects he considered both economically and environmentally unsound.

These days, Pretzer and other farmers are fighting for their lives politically as well as economically. They want hundreds of millions of dollars in help from cash-strapped Arizona city governments to pay for this water, and there are those in the state who think farmers are overdramatizing CAP's problems to make the case look better for a bailout.

Virtually everyone in the state's water establishment, however, agrees that the project isn't working as planned, and that it will not be cheap or easy to make it work.

"The project is going to go through some very difficult economic times, but it is too valuable to the state's future to permit it to fail," said George Britton, a deputy Phoenix city manager. "It's going to be Arizona's mini-S&L crisis."

The story of CAP is the story of a project that was expected to be a water rescue operation for an arid state. Instead it turned into a water planner's version of a new power plant bursting with excess capacity. It's the story of a project that was approved and largely built during a time of boom, but came to life in a time of bust.

The state's economy and population growth rates have been on the skids in recent years. Arizona's unemployment rate topped 8 percent early this year. Today, despite the project's problems, virtually everyone in the state's water establishment still expects Tucson and

Phoenix to use enough water to make the project work over the long term.

By the time CAP is 50 years old, those cities' metropolitan areas are expected to grow from about 680,000 people today to 1.5 million in Tucson and 2 million today to nearly 6 million in Phoenix.

For now, however, city manager Britton acknowledges that officials had "an overextended expectation" about who would use CAP water, just as real estate developers overestimated how many shopping centers people needed.

"There was also a fairly optimistic calculation about the cost," recalled Britton, who worked as an aide to former Gov. Bruce Babbitt during the 1980s. "We assumed the water would be cheaper. There's been a decline in demand, or at least not as fast a growth as expected. And there have been other supplies."

CAP, with its concrete canal slicing across the state's mid-section, has been the symbol of the relentless growth that hit Arizona from the post-war era until the late 1980s. The main aqueduct is nearly as wide as a two-lane road and is deeper than most swimming pools. Some water observers have called it Arizona's Holy Grail, a manifestation of the great unifying force of the state's water politics.

For 40 years, everyone who was anyone in the state pushed to build CAP. Trips to Washington, D.C., by Arizona farmers, miners, developers, mayors and county supervisors to push for CAP money became an annual rite of spring.

Non-use of CAP, however, has spawned worries among some water interests that Arizona could lose some of its hard-won Colorado River water to California or Nevada; then the water won't be there when Tucson and Phoenix need it.

Others fear the project's financial stability might sink with the farms, and that too few customers buying CAP water could mean sharply higher water bills for cities such as Tucson and Phoenix that are eventually expected to drink heavily from the CAP aqueduct.

Many people find those fears far-fetched. They are still concerned, however, that with CAP water staying in the

river, the state won't be able to stop its 50-year-old habit of pumping deep underground aquifers.

For six months this year, the state's water interest groups — farms, cities, Indians and others — tried to sort out solutions in a task force that meets twice a month. State water resources director Betsy Rieke half-jokingly called the task "mission impossible."

Farmers wanted the project's operator, the three-county Central Arizona Water Conservation District, to raise local property taxes to bail out agriculture. That would cost \$750 million over 30 years.

Another proposal was to build massive, expensive underground water recharge projects to store the remaining water farms can't use until it's needed. That would cost another \$15 to \$25 million annually over 10 to 25 years, with the expense dropping as cities gradually open their taps to CAP.

Cities wanted farms to sell off the cheap electric power they use for groundwater pumping to pay some of their CAP bills. A fourth proposal would have taxed groundwater pumping, to make CAP a better buy by comparison.

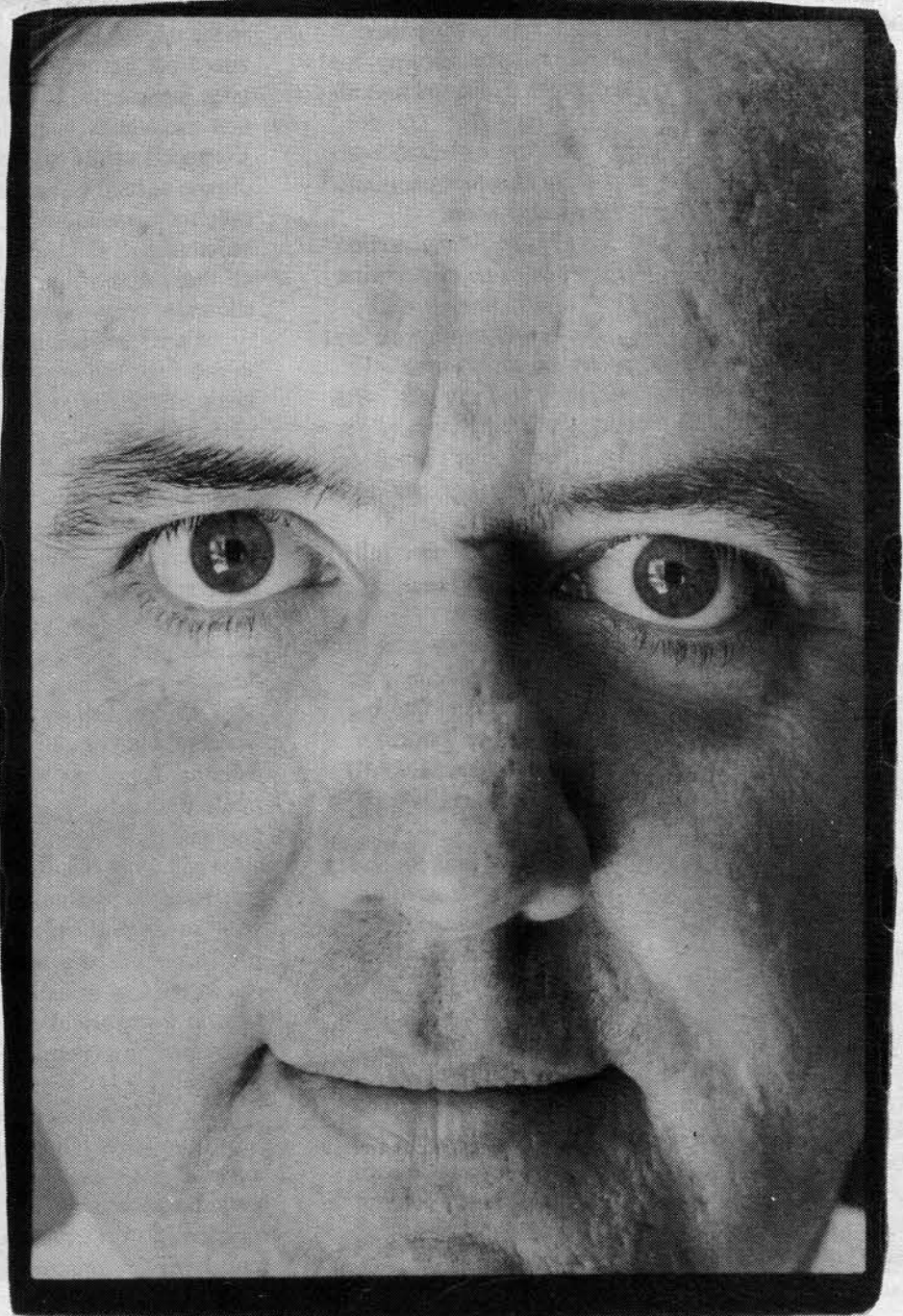
Finally, some observers wanted to let the farms go under, and turn their unused water over to the Indians to pay off their decades-old water-rights claims.

The most radical idea is one that's never been carried out in the United States: leasing the water across state lines to Arizona's old arch-enemy California. Arizona could take the water back in the future when it's ready to use it.

Despite the task force's failure, project officials remain optimistic. Only two summers ago, during a run of 110-120 degree heat, the CAP canal was full, and farms and cities wanted more than the project could deliver, recalled Tom

Continued on page 12

*Some wanted
to let the farms
go under,
and give
their water to
the Indians*



George Britton

Tim Archibald

CAP critic tried to save farmers

For more than 20 years, William Martin was the Central Arizona Project's Cassandra. In books, speeches, reports and research papers, Martin and a host of colleagues told farmers what they refused to believe: They couldn't afford the water.

Today, with farmers fighting off their creditors, the former University of Arizona agricultural economics professor is laughing.

"I'm not happy that the farmers are down. I'm just happy to feel vindicated," said Martin, who just retired from teaching economics at Illinois State University, near Peoria. "I'm not out to hurt anyone. I'm a friend of the farmer, and I wanted to help farmers make rational decisions."

His idea of what's rational for the farmers wasn't theirs. He contended that central Arizona farmers weren't acting in their best interest when they pushed for CAP, because the water would cost them a lot more than pumping groundwater. He urged the state to lease its Colorado River water to California to raise money, rather than pump it 2,100 feet uphill through the desert.

Today, Martin's views still raise red flags from some project supporters. But in the 1960s, Martin and his economist partners Robert Young and Maurice Kelso were sometimes accused of betraying the state. Newspaper editorials, politicians and some of Martin's colleagues vilified him; farmers ignored him when they weren't blasting him.

Martin, ironically, grew up on a farm, near Modesto, Calif. Now 58, he came to the University of Arizona in 1961, after getting his economics degree at the University of California at Berkeley.

"We looked around, and it looked dry as hell, and everyone was talking about the need for more water," Martin recalled. "We thought we'd be good guys and measure the value of additional water to Arizona. We assumed ourselves that it was very valuable."

"As our thoughts crystallized, and as we sat down and evaluated things, the answer was crystal clear. We couldn't afford the additional water."

"The way to help the farmers was not to provide them water more expen-

sive than groundwater. You help a person by making their costs less expensive. That was so obvious to us, we couldn't understand why others couldn't see it."

In 1967, Martin and Young published a report in a scientific journal saying CAP wasn't necessary for the state's economy to grow, and that it might be "detrimental to our health." They blasted "the water importation virus" that they said was leading states all over the Southwest to plot to build big water projects. They said the state would have little need for CAP water until about the year 2000.

They also warned that bringing the farms CAP water would speed the decline in farm incomes and farmland values.

"While irrigated agriculture was a cornerstone in the development of most of the Southwest, it is no longer necessary or even advantageous to try to maintain a high level of irrigated agriculture in the desert," they wrote. "Our view is that irrigation development, its maturation and its ultimate decline are natural phenomena in an economically developing arid region and irrigation decline should not in itself be a subject for general alarm."

Politically, this was no time to knock the Central Arizona Project. The state's politicians were at war with Cal-

ifornia in Congress over whether to authorize CAP, and Arizona needed unity. Congress authorized CAP in 1968.

"You were just persona non grata if you pointed this stuff out," Martin recalled. "The goal was not to help the farms and the cities. The goal was to build the project."

Bartley Cardon, a retired dean of the University of Arizona Agriculture School, agreed with Martin's theories about the farmers and CAP, but today chairs the pro-CAP Southern Arizona Water Resources Association. He believes CAP is essential to keep Tucson afloat.

He laughed as he recalled the state's politically charged water climate back then. It wasn't what Martin and company said, it was how they said it that infuriated people, Cardon, now 79, recalled. Martin compared the economic value of water poured on cotton versus the value of water used to draw snowbirds and tourists. Farming always came up short.

"The farmers interpreted this to mean that we've gotta get out of agriculture and go into tourism. Sure they got upset," Cardon said. "Wouldn't you if your life

depended on farming?"

In the middle 1960s, a report by Martin and Young outlining their findings was rejected by William Wheeler, a Tucson engineer and staunch CAP supporter. Much later, he became director of the CAP lobbying group, the Central Arizona Project Association.

"Some of the numbers they used were dishonest. It was atrocious," recalled Wheeler, his voice rising in memory of the incident.

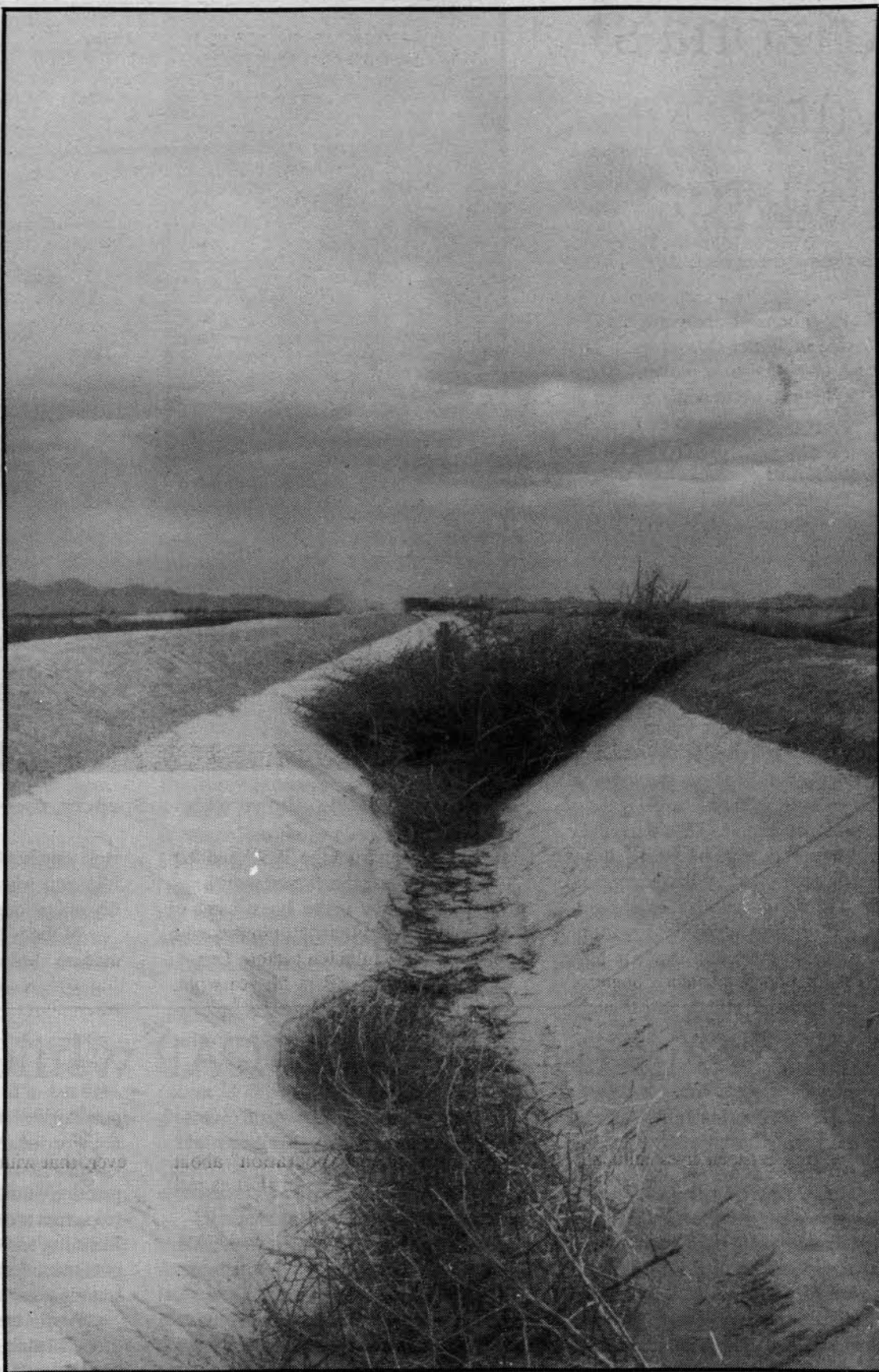
"They just didn't like what conclusions we came up with," fired back the soft-spoken Young, who just retired from a Colorado State University faculty post.

Next, Martin sought an audience with Rep. Morris K. Udall, the Tucson-based Democrat who built his career in part on bringing CAP water to Arizona.

"He sent his aide Prior Pray to talk with us," Martin said. "He said essentially, 'I don't want to hear it,' and he left," Martin recalled. Pray, now retired, said recently he didn't recall the incident.

"And Bill Mathews (late editor of the *Arizona Daily Star*) once told me, 'I'll get you if it's the last thing I ever do,'" Martin said. "We gave a couple of talks around town, and then the newspaper editorials started coming against us. From then on, it was bad blood."

— Tony Davis

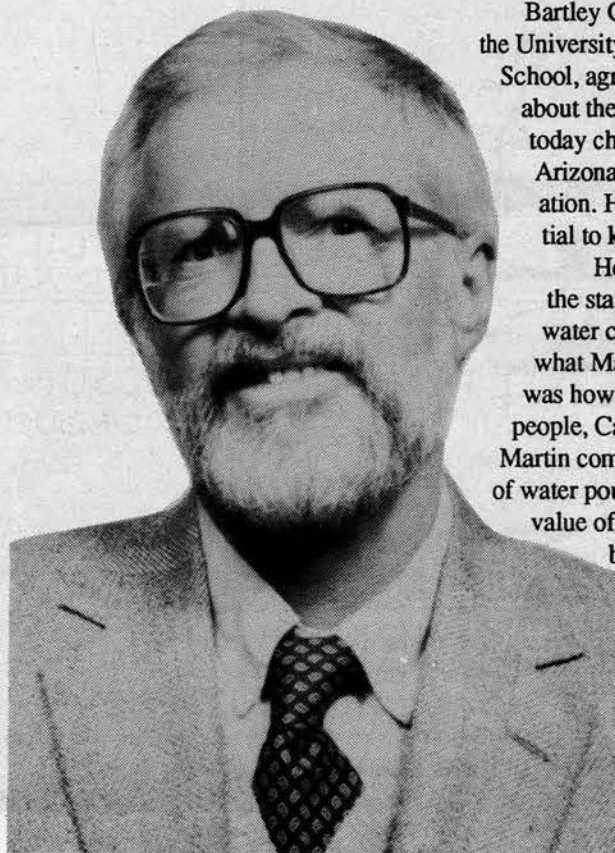


Terry Townsend

Another unused CAP ditch on another abandoned farm

'We thought we'd be good guys and measure the value of additional water to Arizona.'

— William Martin



Arizona's water disaster ...

(Continued from page 10)

Clark. He is general manager of the Central Arizona Water Conservation District, which operates the project.

"Sometime we're going to wish we had more water to bring to the river, but now we have more water than we can use," said Clark. "You build a freeway and (if) you build it right, the first five or 10 years it doesn't carry as many cars as it can carry."

A drive through Central Arizona farming country is a journey through time. It's a place where one farm-based society vanished five centuries ago and where another may soon follow.

On the north edge of the farm belt, near the 7,000-plus person town of Coolidge, lies the buried kalichi walls of the Hohokam people. They thrived for several hundred years on squash, beans and corn nourished by irrigation canal water. Then their civilization abruptly collapsed around 1450. Farther south, near Eloy and Arizona City, farm after



Terry Townsend

Farmer Kirk Weddle, shown with son Spencer, uses CAP water to flood irrigate his fields

abandoned farm from the 1950s and '60s today is scrub, sagebrush and weeds.

Lying nearby is the latest batch of abandoned farms, still covered with ready-to-plant furrows, where ancient

well engines — large as tanks — stand idle and where tumbleweeds collect in dry irrigation ditches.

Nobody knows why the Hohokam culture died out. For years, as Arizona

struggled not to run out of water, the folklore was that the Hohokam had fallen to drought. Today, archaeologists are more likely to blame floods.

For years, the smart money had it

Arizonans quarrel over CAP while California waits

Central Arizona Project farmers want another subsidy, perhaps the biggest of all.

Early last spring, they tried to stir interest in a proposal to raise the property tax charged to landowners in the three counties that use CAP water. The rate would rise from 10 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation today to up to 28 cents per \$100. The farms coupled the tax hike request with a pledge to turn the water over to cities in 25 years.

Cities blasted the proposal as a massive shift of money from Tucson and Phoenix to rural Pinal County. An Arizona Municipal Water Users Association study concluded that Pinal County would get 67 percent of the new money from the new tax while paying only 3 percent of the freight.

"Last year, America West Airlines (whose headquarters is in Phoenix) came to the state asking for direct financial assistance, and they had thousands and thousands of jobs, far more than the farms do," said Bill Chase, Phoenix's water resources manager. "They were asking for less money by a whole bunch than this group is asking for, and they were turned down."

In turn, the cities asked farmers to "put their assets on the table" by selling their low-cost Hoover Dam electric power. That turned farmers apoplectic. That very cheap federal power, used to pump up groundwater, has been their economic cornerstone since the Great Depression. They intend to continue pumping some cheap groundwater in addition to the CAP supplies.

To farming interests, these cat-and-dog fights with the cities are the biggest threat to the CAP's survival. While the two sides squabble, California and Nevada are asking the other five Colorado River basin states to give them additional Colorado River supplies.

California, after five years of drought, says it wants a legal pact giv-

ing it more water until 2010, to give it time to get conservation programs going. It's been using 800,000 acre-feet of Arizona's unused water for years. Nevada, which expects to exhaust its Colorado River supplies by about 2008, wants its new water to be a permanent supply (HCN, 1/6/92).

Arizona and other Western states have resisted these proposals, but some wonder how long Arizona can hold out.

"Arizona is treading on eggshells with CAP. In the West, the law of beneficial use, use it or lose it, still holds true," said farmer Norm Pretzer.

But the farmers' arch-enemy, Arizona Municipal Water Users Associa-

tion director Roger Manning, said he is not worried about California.

"Is Congress going to begin the practice of stealing one state's resources and giving them to another?" Manning asked. "If so, every congressman must decide and wonder if his state is going to be next."

As for the farmers' irrigation districts, Manning predicts catastrophe. "As we see it, the majority of Arizona irrigation districts are on various stages of the bankruptcy court steps," Manning said. "They're economic basket cases. If you and I were in their situation, we probably would be in bankruptcy right now, and maybe even

in a homeless shelter."

However, there are farming and urban interests who favor leasing water to California, as well as people in both camps who fear leased water won't return. Arizona Water Resources Director Betsy Rieke says it's short-sighted to discuss leasing until all other solutions are exhausted, and the department's task force recommended against leasing the water.

"If you invite the giant into your kitchen for a week, it may be hard not to have him eat you for dinner," said Bob Lynch, a Phoenix lawyer and a lobbyist for the farmers.

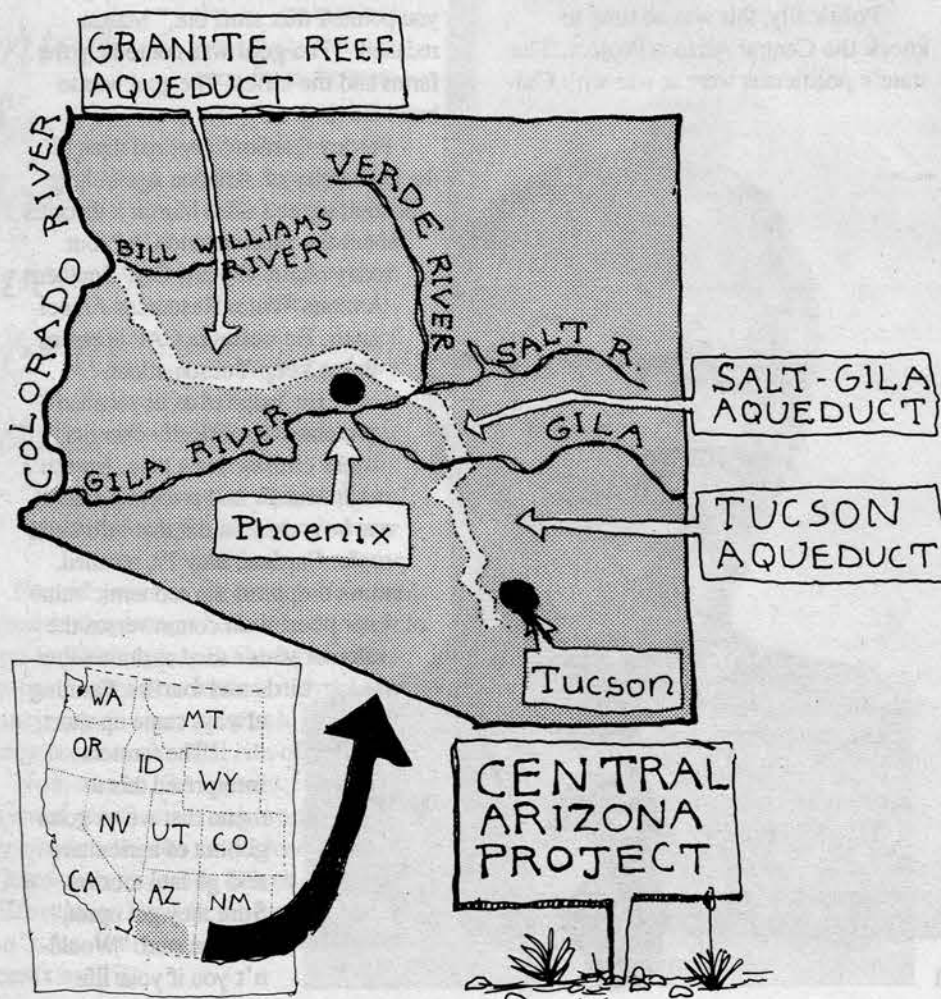
In the past few months, some Arizona farming irrigation districts have explored the leasing idea. They even flew to California to discuss a possible deal with the Metropolitan Water District, the giant utility that keeps southern California green.

"As a devil's advocate, I raise the issue of leasing, and as soon as I get done saying anything, everyone tells me they're opposed to it," said Dean Weatherly, a pro-farming Pinal County supervisor who sits on the water task force. "Betsy Rieke beat me up when I asked her about it; a farmer beat me up when I asked him about it. But I just don't know how you can take any option off the table."

At present, the discussion is theoretical. Arizona can't use the water, and so at least half of the CAP supply will either stay in reservoirs or continue to flow to California.

Arizona cities are already starting to try to get their hands on the farmers' unused rights to CAP water, but the cities aren't ready to use that water yet. Given the sick Arizona economy, nobody can predict when CAP will start carrying out its promise to make the desert bloom, either with crops or with subdivisions and golf courses.

— Tony Davis



source: the tucson weekly

drawn by diane sylvain

that current farmers would succumb to aridity too. Most farmers in this area can tell stories of groundwater levels dropping 300 or 400 feet in a few decades. Long, thin cracks running along nearby mountains come from subsidence, a sort of geological whiplash that causes ground to sink when water below ground is removed by pumping. One crack runs 12 miles long.

The talk of the cotton fields today is about bankers tightening up on loans, cotton prices at their lowest level in years, water prices climbing out of sight, whiteflies and boll weevils gobbling up crops and competition from Japan, the South and even Nebraska.

These farms were supposed to be a holding basin for CAP's water. They were expected to use up to two-thirds of CAP water until Phoenix and Tucson got big enough to use it. As recently as 1987, Pinal County, where many of these farms lie, was the 20th biggest farming county in the United States, raking in \$402 million in crop sales.

But in the last two years, the number of acres planted in the Central Arizona Irrigation District fell from 80,000 to 40,000 acres. Pretzer, the district's president, said the district will be lucky to plant 30,000 acres this year. Other farmers predict as few as 25,000 acres.

The farms are sinking under \$300 million in federal and private loans they took out to build concrete ditches hooking them to CAP's big ditch.

"Now," said Bo Warren, whose family has planted cotton at B&J Farms just outside Arizona City since 1951, "it's survival from one year to the next."

Sitting on the back of a pickup truck, wearing a T-shirt and sporting light brown sideburns, Warren said that

when CAP arrived a few years ago, everyone in the irrigation district thought it would increase land values. Instead, the cost of building access canals drove property taxes up and land values through the floor.

Everywhere, unplowed farmland is dotted with "For Sale" signs, and nobody's buying. Bill Erwin, who does maintenance work on the farms, said he knows of a half-dozen farmers like Pret-

zer who have filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the past year.

"The handwriting was on the walls with the pumps. They were going lower and lower," Warren said. "We were forced to take CAP; the canal water was needed so badly."

"Now, what's in most farmers' minds is that we could have survived a little longer with

the pumps; they were cheaper."

Back in the 1960s, farmer Jamie Gellum of Coolidge recalled his late grandfather, C.D. Shiflet, going to Washington to tell Congress that CAP would be the farmers' savior.

"He died before CAP ever got on the farm. I wonder what he'd be thinking now," said Gellum, who opted to cut his losses and quit farming in 1991 after almost 11 years.

"Here it is, one of the big contributors to my cash shortfall. But I still maintain it was a good thing for the area. It offers good quality water, and the guys will need that. But it probably will kill us in the long run."

Farmers love to argue, and one can get every shade of opinion about CAP here. Some say it is the cause of their problems and some say it's a blip. Some

*Everywhere,
unplowed
farmland is
dotted with
'For Sale' signs,
and nobody's
buying*



Terry Townsend

Agricultural land on the block

say their irrigation district leaders never told them exactly how much their loans would cost until too late; others say leaders such as Pretzer have done all they can to keep the districts afloat.

Many farmers agree with Randy Edmond of the neighboring Department of Water Resources office that CAP has hurt farms in another way: by creating a "monoculture" of cotton. Besides making the land less fertile, cotton left them with no other crops to fall back on when prices crashed a year or two ago.

Until CAP, about 25 percent of the crops in the Central Arizona irrigation district were grains, sugar beets, vegetables and other non-cotton crops. Now, cotton is about 90 percent of what's grown, Pretzer said. CAP's high costs made the difference, farmers and Edmond say, by making other crops less economical.

Most farmers agree that if something isn't done to lower water costs, many farms and their irrigation districts won't last much longer than two years. In the past two years, 15 to 20 percent of the 650 farmers on CAP water couldn't get loans to plant crops, Pinal County Supervisor Dean Weatherly said. Another 15 to

20 percent are on notice they won't be farming much longer if they don't get their houses in order. Two of nine irrigation districts on CAP are behind schedule in repaying their federal loans.

"CAP will have to be restructured to work," farmer Charlie Bush said. "There have to be changes in the system, but I don't know when or where."

Unlike their corporate counterparts in California, many of these farms are family-owned. Their parents or grandparents came to Arizona during the Great Depression to escape the Dust Bowl in the Midwest or after World War II to join the boom that was about to smack Arizona between the teeth. Their farms are a world apart from the megafarms in California's Central Valley.

Like their counterparts all over the country, however, these farmers are heavily subsidized. They get low-cost, federally financed power from Hoover Dam to pump their well water. They pay no interest on the loans they took from the federal government to build their local CAP irrigation canals. City residents on CAP water pay a federally subsidized interest rate of 3.3 percent, well below what a home buyer pays a bank on his mortgage.

Plus, when the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation declares the project finished in the next year or two, and users have to start paying back the cost of the main canal, farms will pay only \$2 an acre-foot. Cities' rates will start at \$5 an acre-foot and eventually hit \$40 an acre-foot.

Farms also dip heavily into federal set-aside programs that pay them not to grow crops. From 1989 to 1991, 3,000 farmers in neighboring Maricopa County pocketed about \$200 million in subsidy payments, U.S. Agriculture Department records show. More than half the money went to these farms in 1991, when cotton prices crashed and farmers were slashing production.

"I think the American farmer would rather not be involved in any type of government program, but when it comes to survival, you've gotta do it," said Warren.

Pretzer said, "It's highly unfair to say, 'Just you guys on the farms get subsidized.' Look at what cities get — transit subsidies, library subsidies, education subsidies. The real cost of CAP water to the cities is \$250 an acre-foot, and they're paying maybe \$130 to \$140 an acre-foot. Is the other \$110 a subsidy? I would say it is."

"It gets down to the point of, sure, I'm a whore ... All of us are whores." ■

Tony Davis covered CAP and other water issues for the *Tucson Citizen* from 1981 to 1985. He now reports for the *Albuquerque Tribune* in New Mexico.



Terry Townsend

Farmland watered by expensive CAP water

A shrewd farmer drips his way to prosperity

COOLIDGE, Ariz. — For Howard Wuertz, "less is more" is not a cliché; it's a way of life.

Wuertz, 62, is a Coolidge farmer who has plowed \$3 million into water-saving drip irrigation systems on his farms in the past decade. The drip system is a computer-driven network of underground steel pipe covering more than five miles on a single farm.

It uses about half as much water as conventional irrigation, in which water rolls off an irrigation canal and floods the field. He says, however, that he grows twice as much cotton, melons, grains and other crops using half as much water on drip as when he followed the traditional path.

That, he says, is why his business thrives in an age of high-cost Central Arizona Project water, while other farms in the area fight extinction. Indeed, he says 1991, a disaster year for most farmers, was his best year ever economically.

Wuertz doesn't like to knock his fellow farmers. "They're my friends and drinking buddies, very good and dedicated people," he said. "But when they went to the crossroads and they had to make a decision (about how to irrigate), they went the wrong direction."

The brains of his system are computers no bigger than a standard laptop-sized home computer. Five of these machines control networks of underground tubing underlying 12 to 27 fields each. In each field, a tube lies three feet underneath every row of crops, and each tube is hooked to a sub-main line that ties to another line.

Less water can be good for a crop because soil needs to be exposed to oxygen to break down elements such as nitrates, phosphates and potassium so plants can use them and grow, he says. Too much water can smother the soil.

Wuertz traces his entrance into drip irrigation to what he calls "a propensity for survival." It started back in the late 1970s and early '80s, when he noticed his crop yields weren't rising as fast as they used to.

He, like many other farmers, also had noticed that the water table underneath him had dropped 10-to-15 times since his family had moved to Arizona from North Dakota in 1929 to escape cold weather and the Dust Bowl.

"I thought if we're going to have any chance at all to survive, we're going to have to figure out a better way," he says. "A blind person could see that if you had to use power to get to the water from 300 to 400 feet below ground, it's going to be more expensive."

He visited nurseries, strawberry growers, vineyards, orchards and other specialty farms using drip irrigation all over the West. He observed that most or all of them had shown dramatically increased crop yields using a fraction of the water used in flood irrigation.

He started investing slowly in drip, maybe a few hundred acres a year. He sold some real estate he owned in neighboring Casa Grande to raise money for the system starting in 1985. Until then, he relied solely on his yearly earnings to pay for his new way of growing, he says. Today, about half of his 4,000 acres are on drip irrigation.

Unlike his neighbors, who rely mostly on cotton, Wuertz puts 20 percent of his land in grains, 20 percent in specialty crops such as vegetables and 60 percent in cotton. If farmers are to have any future, he says, it will only come if they don't put all their eggs in one basket.

Coolidge farmer Jamie Gellum, who went out of business last year after 11 years, calls Wuertz a risk-taker and an industry leader, but says some farm-

ers are skeptical that he's doing as well as he says.

"Farmers in general tend to be boastful," Gellum says. "You're not in competition with your neighbor, because what you make on a farm is not related to what your next-door neighbor makes. But you have a sense of pride; you like to make it look like things are going right."

Richard Lavis, executive vice president of the Arizona Cotton Growers Association, says that while drip irrigation worked for Wuertz, it isn't necessarily the right answer for other farmers.

"You have different kinds of water conditions and different kinds of growing conditions in different places," Lavis says. "The financial realities are that Wuertz did what he had to do."

Other observers offer only praise.

"Howard's planning horizon is a little longer than most farmers," says Bob Moore, former director of the



Terry Townsend

A warning posted on a dry CAP ditch



Roddy Shedd (left) and his father, Jim, both have farms that use CAP irrigation water

Terry Townsend

Agri-Business Council, an agricultural trade-lobbying group. "For most farmers, God bless 'em, it's season to season. For drip irrigation and the CAP, you need a planning horizon that looks to the next generation, five to 15 years out. Howard is one of the few farmers who knows that and understands it."

"Howard is a smart cookie," according to Bartley Cardon, retired dean of the University of Arizona School of Agriculture and a professor in Wuertz's animal and farm management classes in the early 1950s. "He was a poor boy when he was in my classes, but when he was making money, he plowed it into that drip irrigation."

Wuertz is no enemy of water projects or reclamation in general. He uses CAP water and spent 19 years on the governing board of the Central Arizona Water Conservation District, which operates CAP. He's been president of the state's cotton growers and belongs to the state Farm Bureau and the Agri-Business Council.

He says, however, that he always thought University of Arizona economics professor William Martin and his colleagues were "100 percent right" when they said most farmers couldn't afford to mortgage their futures to high-cost CAP water.

"Any guy in his right mind would know that you can't take water out of Lake Havasu, take it into Pinal County with a 2,000-foot lift and do it cheaply, even if someone gives you the power," Wuertz says. "The maintenance, the personnel and the debt retirement alone would dictate it would cost \$200 an acre-foot."

When the furor was boiling over Martin's work years ago, he says, he never went to a meeting of farmers when Martin and his colleagues' studies didn't come up in the conversation.

"They didn't think about it. They got mad about it. They didn't deal with it rationally. Water has always been cheap and free in the West, and the attitude was that with reclamation projects this would go on forever."

"My attitude has always been that regardless of how we deal with water, it will become more expensive."

— Tony Davis

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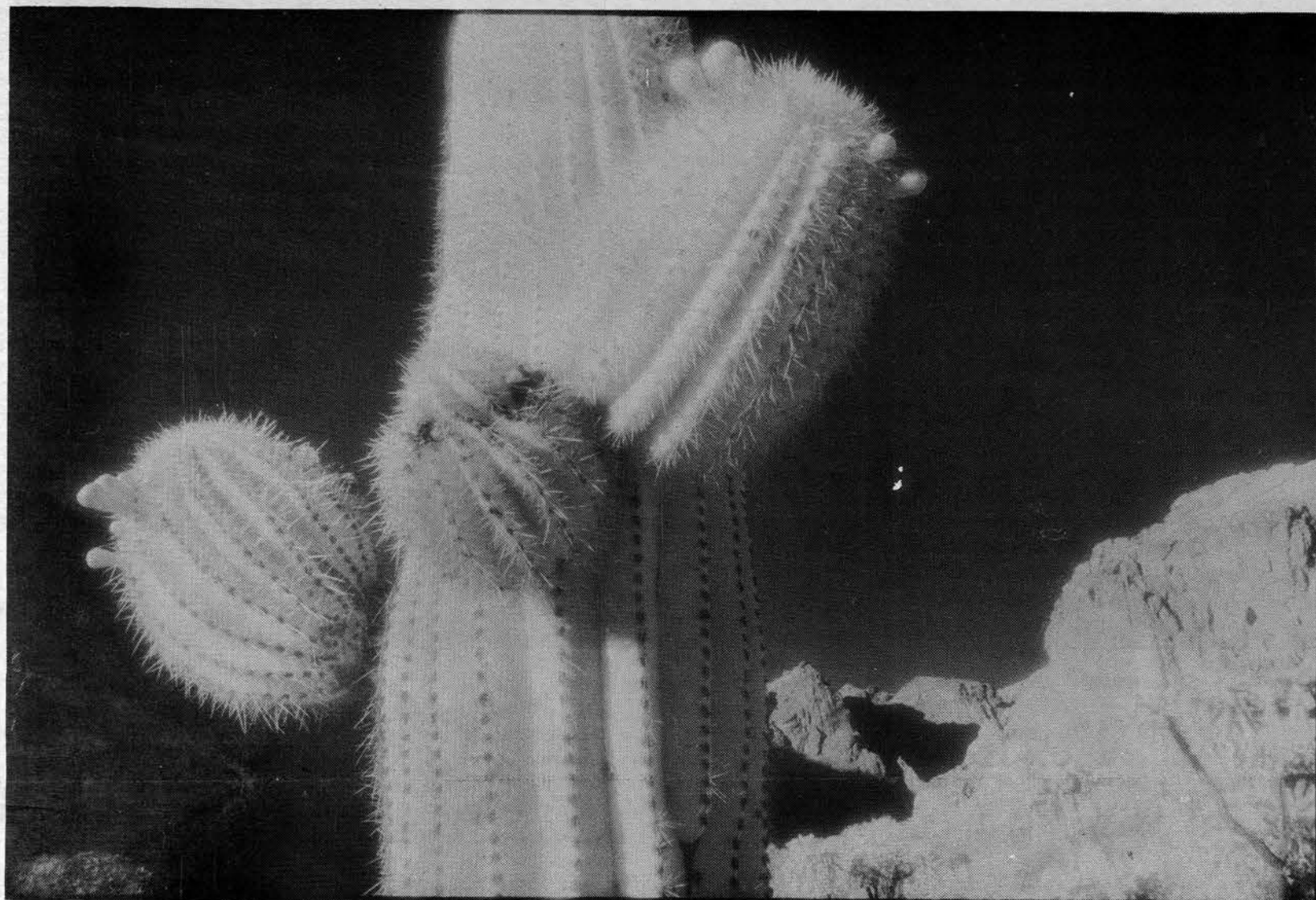
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OTHER VOICES



Sierra Club

Montana's Lake Clark

'I grew up in Indiana dreaming of land like this.'

by Parker Heinlein

Montana Rep. Ron Marlenee and his working-class hero bit never cease to amaze me.

Now the Republican lawmaker wants the United States to keep "some places for people," where his six-month-old grandson won't become grizzly bear bait.

Try Indiana, Ron. It's been a few years since anyone felt the bite of a bear in the Hoosier state. Send the boy to Muncie. At least he'll learn how to play basketball.

Marlenee's attitude toward wild land has grown more than old — it's become embarrassing. We'd like to think those representing this great state have at least a clue, but Ron, sorely lacking one, turns time after time to tired clichés about hard work and harmony with the land.

An opponent of wilderness and proponent of industry, Ron, who is running for Montana's sole seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, always reminds us of his Montana ranch upbringing. I'm tired of hearing it.

I grew up in Indiana dreaming of land like this. I arrived here alone 22 years ago and stayed primarily because of the land; some of it is inhabited by a creature that still stalks and eats people on occasion.

I guided, logged and worked construction to make a living. There were times when I didn't have the money to leave if I had wanted. I got lucky a few years back and landed an inside job, but I haven't been out of the woods long enough to buy the working class hero rap of a pot-bellied pawn of cut-and-run industry.

This is where I want to raise my family. This is where I call home. This country still dazzles me and I've made sacrifices to stay here. A lot of us have. I never wanted to change this place and can't understand anyone who would.

To those who constantly bemoan Montana's economy or lack thereof, I suggest a move to the Hoosier state. Factories abound and the paychecks are fat. Lose your job at Alcoa, and Sunbeam Plastics offers you

work the next day.

There's no wilderness issue to deal with and Mr. Peabody's reclaimed strip mines offer miles of fine country for four-wheelin' fools. Roads go everywhere, so new ones are never contested.

Environmentalists are little hassle because there's so little left to save.

So, Ron, send your grandson to Muncie. The boy might grow up dreaming of wild animals and wild land. Flat, drab country certainly spawns its share of dreamers.

I hope being raised elsewhere isn't a prerequisite for appreciating Montana, but my daughters don't gaze at the mountains the same way I do. Mountains are what they've always known.

Maybe I'll ship them to Muncie. I don't want them to grow up without a clue. ■

Parker Heinlein is features editor for the Bozeman Daily Chronicle in Montana.

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