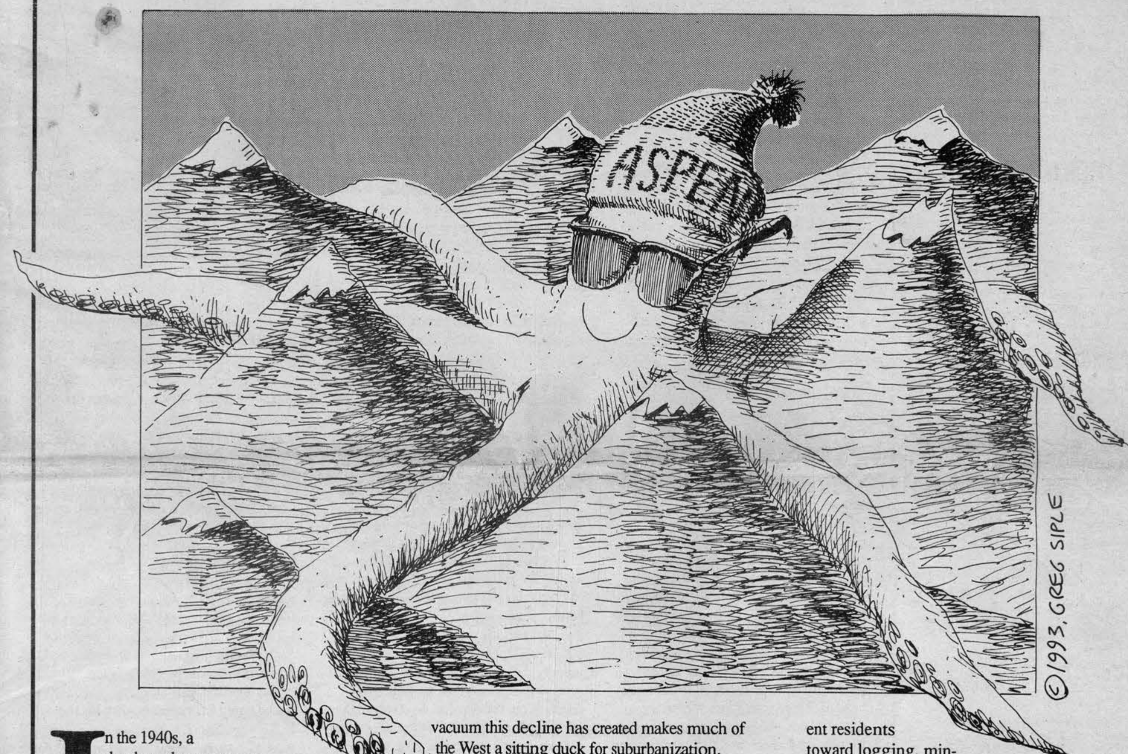
Special Issue

High Country News

April 5, 1993 Vol. 25 No. 6 A Paper for People who Care about the West One dollar and fifty cents

Small towns under siege



In the 1940s, a drunk worker on a rampage in a Western oil boom town would be handcuffed to a light pole, and then released at dawn, in time to pull his shift. This safeguarded the public, kept industry staffed and saved the cost of jail.

Such an approach is too rough and ready for today's boomers. Although they're probably more of a threat to the West than the drunken oil-field worker, you cannot tether to light poles early retirees, families with young children escaping Southern California, computer programmers who stay in touch with Silicon Valley via fax and modem, or the wealthy, with their unquenchable thirst for cattle ranches.

You especially can't handcuff those the population growth attracts — ski resort developers, theme park developers, golf course developers and seven-acre ranchette developers (enough land for one-tenth of a cow and part of a calf).

Today's boom is part push, part pull. Push comes from sprawling overdevelopment of the nation's major metropolitan areas, but especially of Southern California.

Pull comes from steady decline in how the West once made its living: mining, ranching, logging, dam building, and nuclear weapons. The vacuum this decline has created makes much of the West a sitting duck for suburbanization.

It doesn't take many U-Haul trucks to affect the thinly settled inland part of the West. The region is thinnest in Wyoming and Montana — 250,000 square miles with only 1.3 million people — but by U.S. standards, the West is thin everywhere. Putting Salt Lake, Denver, Albuquerque and Phoenix-Tucson aside, the region's "biggest" cities — Boise, Grand Junction, Casper, Billings, Missoula, Flagstaff — all have 100,000 or fewer residents.

If this latest boom threatened only the stability and livability of the West's communities, it would be serious. But also at stake is the federal land around these places. Even the smallest Western communities — in fact, especially the smallest Western communities — have a disproportionate effect on the national forests and Bureau of Land Management land around them. Depending on the make-up of the communities, they campaign effectively for or against the building of a dam, for or against a larger timber cut, for or against a ski area.

At first glance, the movement into the region is pro-environment, in that the newcomers are likely to be less partial than present residents toward logging, mining and dam building. The fight over old growth in the Northwest, for example, has happened only because of long-term demographic changes there.

But the population movement is of such a scale it carries an inherent threat: that the West will become another homogenized piece of America — New Jersey, with bumps and fissures. And that means it will become a place that people will eventually flee, as they are fleeing the once-promised land of California.

There is nothing Westerners can do about the national trends that are putting the region under pressure. But Westerners do have the power to determine on what terms their communities welcome newcomers. Will we greet them with plans faxed straight from Los Angeles for the same kinds of subdivisions they left behind? Or will some parts of the West figure out how to accommodate the new residents in ways that remain Western?

This special issue of *High Country News* explores that question by looking at communities under siege and at communities that have, for the moment, learned to successfully surf on this latest rush West.

Stories begin on page 8.

HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

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Dear friends,

Happy Camp

The trouble with being on the staff of *High Country News* is the gradual realization that we are putting out a paper not just for "people who care about the West" but also for people who are probably smarter than we are and certainly better informed. For example, the writer of the March 8 essay titled "How two logging towns were lost," left the location of Happy Camp ambiguous. So we looked on a map and placed it in Oregon. We were wrong, by 20 miles.

Dave S. Krueger of Arcata, Calif., one of several who got in touch, was good enough to give us the benefit of the doubt. Knowing of *HCN*'s reluctance to report on California, he wrote:

"I am left wondering whether you published the article because you mistook it for an article about Oregon, or whether Happy Camp was relocated to Oregon to avoid offending the Western sensibilities of your readers."

The March 22 article on the Animas-La Plata Project — "The dam that won't die" — brought a response from Durango, Colo., attorney Frank E. "Sam" Maynes, whom the article described as the mastermind of the coalition pushing for construction. Maynes demurred, writing, "In this regard, the article truly misses the mark." His letter goes on to list the many individuals who, he says, are responsible for "maintaining the viability of the Animas-La Plata Project."

Exchanges

You should have already received *HCN*'s fifth annual reader survey. This time, your mailing label is glued to the survey. The reason for this change is the request: "If you do not want your name exchanged with other organizations, please initial here."

In past surveys, we've had readers who asked us on the survey not to exchange their names fail to tell us what their names were. So circulation manager Gretchen Nicholoff insisted that this year the label be glued to the survey.

Although we are asking the question, and Gretchen will delete your name if you tell her to, we hope you will let us continue to exchange your name with other organizations. We use their lists to search for new subscribers, and they use our lists to seek new members. The groups we exchange with are compatible with *HCN*.

Subscribers who did not contribute to the first two Research Fund appeals of the 1992-1993 campaign will find a Research Fund contribution card with the survey. But because we ask subscribers to contribute only once a year, those who have already contributed should not find a contribution card.

The number of Research Fund contributions since September 1992 is down significantly compared with the prior year. If you have not already done so, we hope you will consider making a tax-deductible contribution. Subscription income pays for the paper, ink, housing and heat, but the 20 to 25 percent of all readers who support the Research Fund pay for everything else. Without the Research Fund, there is no *High Country News*.

Still old fashioned

Not so long ago, *HCN* had 3,300 subscribers and staff could stuff a Research Fund and survey mailing in a long evening. No more. With 13,000 subscribers, and with the need to include contribution cards in some envelopes and omit them from others, a mailing now takes several days.

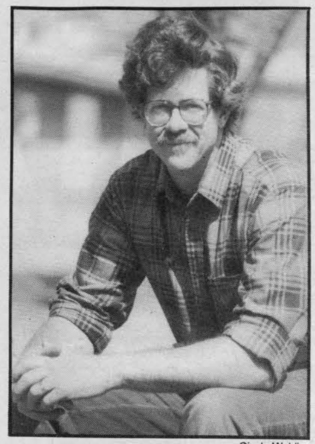
It is not exciting work. The tedium is heightened because the paper is housed in one big room (darkroom excepted), and that room is a radio-free zone. We are therefore especially grateful to the following people, both for putting up with the lack of music without filing workmen's comp claims and for their work: Amy Conley, Carol Pierce, Amber Pell, Karmina Milosevich, Linda Lindsey, Isaac Paigen, Millicent Young, Colo Tunnell, Sarah Bailey, Elsbeth Atencio, Robert Hayutin and Meg O'Shaughnessy.

We could invest in a stuffing machine, which would work well with or without music, or farm the job out to a mail house. But *HCN* is slow to adapt to the modern world. We realize that every time we make a call and end up in some endless, and endlessly frustrating, electronic voice mail loop.

The paper is so backward that if you call 303/527-4898 during business hours, roughly defined, you will reach a human being within a few rings. As further evidence of our backwardness, you can call in an address change on a Friday and get the paper at your new location 10 days later. The only drawback to this flesh-and-blood approach is the fact that a new team of interns comes on board every three months, and the beginning of each quarter inevitably results in a few disconnects.

Spring visitors

Two Oregon journalists stopped by the *HCN* office on Friday afternoon, March 16, to say hello, and didn't get out of Paonia until late Sunday morning. They were Paul Koberstein, a former reporter for the *Oregonian* in Portland, and Don Hamilton, still with the *Oregonian*. Paul, now a free-lance writer, was on his way to Washington, D.C., to interview some Beltway types, and Don was about to become one of two reporters who cover Washington, D.C., for the *Oregonian*. While in Paonia, they attended a going-away party for intern John Bokman, had dinner and breakfast with staff, and engaged in lots of shop talk. In addition to John, Adam Duerk and Ernie Atencio ended their intern tours. Staff will miss them.



Cindy Wehling

Chip Rawlins

Sky's witness

The *HCN* office was the scene of a reading by C.L. Rawlins, the paper's long-time poetry editor. He read from his book, *Sky's Witness: A Year in the Wind River Range*. Chip said he is starting a new life. He still lives in Pinedale, Wyo., but for the first time since 1977, he will not be doing backcountry work for the U.S. Forest Service. He intends to devote most of his new-found time to writing. An excerpt from *Sky's Witness* appeared in the Feb. 22, 1993, issue of this paper.

— Ed Marston, for the staff

HOTLINE

Bombing stopped at refuge

Sea lions and birds that inhabit the rugged cliffs of Copalis National Wildlife Refuge won't have chalk bombs falling on their heads anymore. The U.S. Navy said March 18 that its pilots will no longer use the small islands off the coast of Washington for target practice. The move follows a lawsuit brought last fall by environmentalists to stop the bombing, which began during World War II (*HCN*, 12/28/92). "This is a remarkable victory," said Fred Felleman of the American Oceans Campaign. "Bombing has been going on at the refuge for 50 years, environmentalists have been fighting it for 12, and just three months into the new administration the winds of change have blown through." Some credit Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Wash., with pushing the Navy to make the decision, reports the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer*. But environmentalists say their lawsuit will continue because they want permanent statutory protection for the refuge.

Once a road always a road?

Opportunists seeking access to the West's public lands may have a friend in a 20-word clause in an 1866 mining law. It grants "rights-of-way" for the establishment of highways over "unreserved" public lands. Originally intended to give miners access to unroaded backcountry, the statute was rescinded by the 1976 Federal Land and Policy Management Act. But a loophole "grandfathered" all existing claims. The BLM says it has recognized 1,453 claims under the law, with another 3,947 claims pending, most of them in Utah. Environmentalists fear mining companies and "wise-use" proponents are trying to gain highway status for wagon and jeep trails to prevent wilderness designations on millions of acres of public lands. To settle the issue, Congress asked the BLM last year to prepare a report. On March 18, the agency issued its draft report which outlines the history of the law, the agency's current treatment of highway claims and five possible alternatives for Congress to consider. One proposes legislation closing the loophole. The BLM will hold public hearings on its report in Sacramento, Calif., April 6; Salt Lake City, Utah, April 7; Las Vegas, Nev., April 9; Boise, Idaho, April 12. The deadline for written comments is April 16. For more information about the hearings, to get a copy of the report, and to send written comments, contact Ted Stephenson, RS 2477 Project, BLM, Utah State Office, P.O. Box 45155, Salt Lake City, UT 84145-0155 (801/539-4100).

WESTERN ROUNDUP

Wolf beats bureaucrats to Wyoming

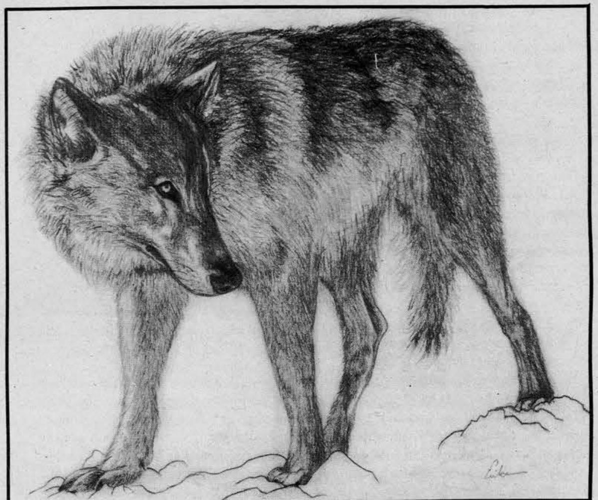
Proof that a Montana wolf roamed to northwestern Wyoming demonstrates the animals don't need the hand of man to reclaim their historic range in Yellowstone.

That's what University of Montana wolf expert Bob Ream says. He made the comments after the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that DNA tests proved a male wolf shot in October by a Wyoming hunter was related to wild wolves in northwestern Montana.

But politicians, federal wildlife officials and wolf advocates alike downplayed the discovery, saying it means no changes in federal efforts to restore endangered gray wolves to Yellowstone.

"I'm surprised at how they are pooh-poohing it," Ream says. "It makes a huge difference."

He says the DNA tests strengthen an argument he has made for years: If left alone, wolves will recolonize Yellowstone without expensive and controversial reintroduction.



Erika Zavaleta

The dead wolf's DNA matched that of blood samples taken from the Ninemile pack, near Missoula. Biologists doubt the wolf was a member of that pack, but they know the animals share a common ancestor. Biologists cannot trace the full bloodline of the Ninemile pack, but they know the "alpha," or breeding female, is from Glacier National Park.

"It's not a big deal at all," points out federal wolf expert Joe Fontaine. "It tells us what we already know — wolves are great dispersers."

Defenders of Wildlife spokesman Hank Fischer says the current plan to reintroduce wolves should not be scrapped because one wolf found its way over mountains, rivers and freeways to Yellowstone.

"What really counts here is consistent breeding," he told AP. "It's just part of a long pattern of occasional sightings. A few here, a few there. It just doesn't add up to any sustained recovery."

Ream differs. "Wolves will probably get there before the political hubbub dies down," he says.

Wolves radio-collared in Glacier have roamed up to 500 miles, which would put Yellowstone easily within their reach. Additional wolves may have already slipped into Yellowstone country, unnoticed and oblivious to the controversy boiling around their arrival, Ream says.

The hunter who shot the wolf said it ran with a small pack. Those animals are unaccounted for, Ream notes. Two months before the shooting, a wolf-like animal was filmed feeding on a Yellowstone bison carcass. That animal doesn't match the wolf killed by the hunter, Ream says.

The plan to release wolves in Yellowstone would classify those animals as an "experimental, non-essential population."

Unlike wolves that return on their own, reintroduced wolves could be killed if they get into trouble with ranchers.

But Ream predicts confusion if "non-essential" wolves roam among naturally recurring wolves, which would have the full protection of the Endangered Species Act.

Ream also believes people are more willing to accept wolves that return on their own. "With reintroduction, the attitude is, 'Those damn federal bureaucrats are shoving this down our throats.'"

— Ben Long

Ben Long is a newspaper reporter specializing in natural resource issues in Kalispell, Montana.

The existence of dams forces hard choices

Which endangered species needs water more, the eagle or the salmon? The answer has the Bureau of Reclamation caught in a crossfire in the Northwest.

The dispute was ignited when the bureau said it would sell water stored in two reservoirs near Boise, Idaho, to the state to protect water quality, a bald eagle population and a popular fishing area. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supported the sale because the fish-eating eagles would benefit if the reservoir were not drawn down.

But the National Marine Fisheries Service opposed the plan because it interferes with the agency's salmon recovery program. Officials there say Snake River salmon need water released from the Cascade and Deadwood reservoirs to help fish migrate to the Pacific Ocean. As a result, the Bureau of Reclamation is under fire from both agencies, and lawsuits seem possible from one environmental group or another, says the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Idaho officials say that controversies like this could become more common in the future as more species fall under Endangered Species Act protection. The recent listing of five Snake River snails, for example, could further complicate matters. The snails need quiet water, but salmon need moving water to flush them to sea.

Rolland Schmitten, regional director of the National Marine Fisheries Service, said the government could avoid this kind of quarrel by protecting species on an ecosystem basis rather than a species-by-species basis.

Chuck Lobdell, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service field supervisor in Idaho, agreed. He says the controversy is "not a fight between salmon and eagles. It's between endangered species and hydropower."

That opinion is shared by many Idaho officials monitoring the situation, who say releasing the small amount of water behind Cascade and Deadwood reservoirs wouldn't help salmon nearly as much as lowering reservoir levels at larger downstream dams. These drawdowns would increase river velocity, flushing salmon towards the Pacific. But hydropower utilities and irrigators oppose the drawdowns because they would require major dam modifications, disrupting irrigation, hydropower production and river commerce. The Bureau of Reclamation is expected to negotiate a solution within the next few months.

For more information call the Bureau of Reclamation in Boise, Idaho, 208/334-1908.

— Adam Duerk

Adam Duerk is an *HCN* intern.

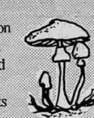
HOTLINE

Rancher sues rancher

When rancher Irv McMillan wrote a letter to the editor of a California newspaper saying that some rangeland in San Luis Obispo County, Calif., had been damaged by cattle grazing, he didn't expect to be sued for libel. And he certainly didn't expect to lose the case. But he was sued, he did lose, and he now owes another longtime rancher, Marcus Rudnick, $32,500. Rudnick had started the fight, seeking out a livestock newspaper to complain that The Nature Conservancy and BLM had destroyed his former ranch by not grazing it heavily enough. McMillan replied to the charge by writing that the ranch had been damaged by grazing long before The Nature Conservancy and BLM got it. Despite Rudnick's search for publicity, the judge in the case ruled that Rudnick was not a public figure, and the jury found, 9-3, that he had been libeled. The judgment is being appealed by the Irving McMillan Defense Committee, 51 Ridgeview Drive, Paso Robles, CA 93446; 805/238-5935. Meanwhile, letters to the editor on any subject are scarce in San Luis Obispo County.

Mushrooming profits may be hazardous

Oregon's wild mushroom pickers earned a hefty $60 million last year. But some scientists worry that they're profiting at the forest's expense. Mycologists have long known that trees depend on the root-like fungi of mushrooms and truffles to draw water and nutrients from the soil, but



until recently forests have not been inundated with mushroom pickers. As mushrooms became over-picked in Europe, however, the pace of harvesting soared in the Western states. In 1989 alone, one ranger district on Oregon's Deschutes National Forest reported that pickers dug up $15 million worth of matsutake, with prime specimens earning $100 in Japan. Scientists know that forest clearcuts cause the mycorrhizal fungi's death, but aren't certain if widespread mushroom harvests have similar effects. To find out, Forest Service soil scientist Mike Amaranthus is mapping fungi from Alaska to Oregon, hoping to discover how they affect forests. "It seems like all this (research) should have been done before," he told AP. "It's so fundamental."

BARBS

Farther on down the yellow brick road.

As Dorothy and the Tin Man looked on, Nevada Gov. Bob Miller bowed to a character called King Looey The Lion in Las Vegas. The occasion was a celebration of the $1 billion MGM Grand Hotel and Wizard of Oz theme park, which will employ 8,000 when it opens next year. Miller said, "I figure any king that can bring that many jobs deserves a bow."

HOTLINE

Headway at Headwaters

Tom Hirons, a contract logger, may have felt like a lamb entering the lions' den when he walked into the West Coast Ancient Forest Activists conference in Ashland, Ore. Surprisingly, the crowd of more than 400 environmentalists didn't eat him alive. In fact, they were eager to hear what he had to say. "What we ought to be looking for is a way to manage these forests in a biologically defensive manner," he told the crowd. Hirons, a founder of the Oregon lands coalition, a group that gives loggers, ranchers and miners a voice in the debate over Oregon's public lands, stressed that it is time to close the rift between industry and environmentalists. Headwaters, the environmental group that hosted the February conference, invited Hirons and several other labor leaders to promote solutions to the Northwest's timber problems that could provide jobs in the woods consistent with environmental protection. Julie Norman, president of Headwaters, said the labor presence was "very significant," and the success of the conference was "a sign that things are beginning to happen." Members of both sides hope the constructive dialogue will continue at the Clinton administration's Forest Summit early this month.

Volunteers' poisoned

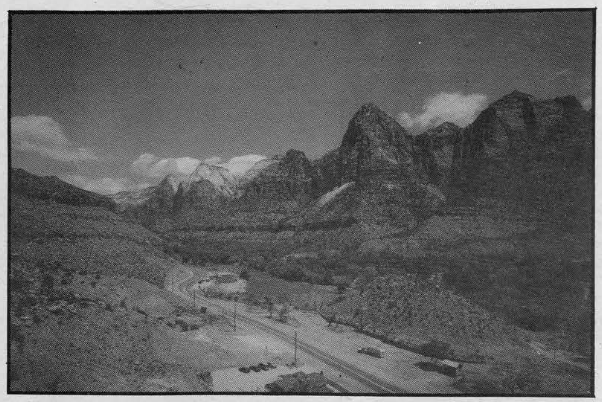
The Pentagon recently promised to end the secrecy surrounding World War II experiments in which as many as 60,000 soldiers were exposed to poison gases in the field and in closed chambers. Deputy Defense Secretary William Perry promised to collect and release previously classified information by July 31. Tests were conducted by the Army and Navy in Alabama, Alaska, California, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Maryland, Utah, Washington, D.C., and Panama. In a separate medical report the Department of Veterans Affairs confirmed that an estimated 4,000 people were exposed to mustard gas at Dugway Proving Ground in Utah and several other military sites. The reports confirmed the suspicions of ailing veterans and provided the first details of the long-rumored human testing of chemical warfare agents. Soldiers received a few days' leave for participating in the experiments, which included being sprayed with gas from airplanes while crawling across a battlefield. The revelations open the door for disability claims by veterans exposed to the tests or by their widows. Used as a chemical weapon in World War I, mustard gas blisters skin, corrodes eyes and damages lungs. Shells containing mustard gas are among the vast array of chemical weapons now awaiting destruction at the Tooele Army Depot, 45 miles southwest of Salt Lake City. A controversial $340 million chemical weapons incinerator at the site is scheduled to begin destroying weapons there in 1995.

BARBS

Here's a man who hates thinking even more than he hates salmon.

Idaho legislator Mike Simpson, who may run for governor in 1994, was quoted in the Idaho Falls *Post-Register* as saying: "I'm not going to destroy eastern Idaho to save a few salmon when I can buy them in the grocery store."

Will *Zion*, the movie, hurt Zion, the park?



A clearing to the right of the road into Zion Park, center, will soon host a theater

The legal way has been cleared for construction of a big-screen Imax theater and accompanying development at the entrance to Zion National Park in Utah.

The theater will show images of the park's stunning beauty. But opponents say the structure itself will mar the park by standing directly in front of the towering red cliffs that greet visitors at Zion's main entrance.

Last fall the Springdale, Utah, town council issued the final permit for construction of the theater, which includes a 55-by-70-foot movie screen, 12,000 feet of retail space and 200 parking spaces. Developers temporarily shelved plans for an 80-room motel on the site.

The National Park Service and environmental groups fought for two years to locate the 51-foot-tall building closer to the middle of Springdale rather than next to the park (*HCN*, 9/23/91). But the owner of the proposed site threatened to build a McDonalds on his lot if the Imax permit were not granted, says Springdale council member Marcel Rodriguez.

Terri Martin, National Parks and Conservation Association regional director, says developers pushed for that site "because you can't miss it when you drive into the park." Last June the town council issued the first permit despite a zoning ordinance prohibiting buildings taller than 35 feet. The NPCA challenged the permit in court, Martin says, but a Utah judge said in effect that the town council has the authority to violate the ordinance.

"We tried all the tools in the toolbox and were unable to stop this project," Martin says. Ground has yet to be broken at the building site, despite a sign that reads "open in spring of '93."

— Ernie Atencio

The reporter is an *HCN* intern.

Two reports warn of radioactive bullets

For more than 30 years, defense contractors have been buying and sometimes getting free supplies of depleted uranium to make explosive bullets. Depleted uranium, or "DU", 99.75 percent of which is the uranium isotope U_{238}, is what is left over after "enriched uranium" is extracted from raw uranium ore for nuclear reactors and weapons.

Prized for a density greater than lead, DU is used in armor-piercing shells, tank armor, ballast in aircraft and missiles, and as a shield for radioactive medical equipment and waste canisters. DU weapons have been tested for years at firing ranges such as the Naval Weapons Center at China Lake, Calif., Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas, Nev., and the Socorro Field Laboratory in New Mexico.

But the 1991 Gulf War marked its first battlefield use. Although U.S. and British forces fired some 40 tons of depleted uranium shells in Iraq and Kuwait, the effects are only beginning to be studied.

The General Accounting Office reports that 29 U.S. Army tanks had been hit by "friendly fire" with DU ammunition, killing 35 U.S. soldiers and injuring and exposing another 35 to uranium contamination. The GAO said none of the soldiers was exposed to radiation exceeding levels allowed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, but the Veterans Administration will continue to monitor them "because little is known about the effect of DU fragmentation in humans."

The GAO report, *Operation Desert Storm: Army Not Adequately Prepared to Deal with Depleted Uranium Contamination*, acknowledged that going into battle is always risky. But it also criticized the lack of special training for soldiers who handle DU weapons and contamination.

A coalition of 40 grass-roots peace and environmental groups, led by the Rural Alliance for Military Accountability, recently released a much more alarming report on depleted uranium. *Uranium Battlefields Home and Abroad* describes how DU bullets burn on impact, releasing fine particles of uranium oxide, which has "spread over all DU testing ranges and now across the Gulf War battlefields."

The report contends that the contamination "will remain a threat for an extended period" and "put many people at risk for health problems that may not show up for a number of years." The report lists 51 sites nationwide where depleted uranium weapons have been manufactured and tested.

The GAO report (GAO/NSIAD-93-90) is available from U.S. GAO, P.O. Box 6015, Gaithersburg, MD 20877 (202/275-6241). The RAMA report is available from Grace Bukowski, Rural Alliance for Military Accountability, 6205 Franktown Road, Carson City, NV 89704 (702/885-0166).

— Jon Christensen

The writer is Great Basin regional editor for *High Country News*. He lives in Carson City, Nevada.

Drought in the Northwest hurts salmon, power

A sixth year of drought in parts of the Pacific Northwest could prove expensive for electricity consumers and deadly for endangered salmon.

After enduring one of the driest Februarys on record, reservoirs in the Columbia River basin hold half the water they would in a normal year, according to the Bonneville Power Administration. Snowpack in the basin ranges from a low 50-70 percent, says agency meteorologist Charlie Feris. But the 90-day outlook for the region predicts a return to wetter weather, he adds.

Even a wet spring won't significantly affect the region's water supply, says BPA spokeswoman Dulcy Mahar. "The power system is really under stress," says Mahar. She adds that the drought has forced BPA to buy expensive power from other sources to meet consumer demands, causing the agency's monetary reserves to plummet to less than $100 million from a pre-drought level of $2 billion. To compensate, the agency is seeking an 11.6 percent rate increase, and that request could go even higher with continued dry conditions.

Mahar says the Columbia basin experienced a similar dry year in 1977-78, but there were fewer people then and no water reserved for endangered salmon. The BPA has "a firm commitment" to save 3 million acre-feet to push young salmon to the Pacific Ocean during the spring migration, she says, with an additional 3.6 million acre-feet of discretionary water at its disposal.

But that may not be enough to help the fish, according to Pat Ford of Save Our Wild Salmon. "It's going to be a bad year for the fish," says Ford. "Not only are natural flows low, but the federal agencies aren't doing enough to augment them. Mother nature isn't going to pull us out of this one."

Ford says drought years in the pre-dam era did not significantly hurt salmon because the speed of the waters rushing to the Pacific wasn't much diminished. "But with the dams in place, the drought cycles have become deadly."

Salmon negotiating the four dams in the arid reaches of the lower Snake River will have an especially difficult time, Ford says, because the 1.5 to 1.7 million acre-feet from Idaho's reservoirs will not significantly speed up the river's flow to the Pacific Ocean. The BPA's reserves will help, he says, but they won't prevent significant salmon mortality.

— Paul Larmer

The writer is assistant editor of *High Country News*.

Bison cross a snowy plain in Yellowstone National Park

Marc Gaede

Bison beat Texas Aggies (in court)

A federal judge shut down a U.S. Department of Agriculture-funded study that would have meant the destruction of scores of Yellowstone National Park bison.

The ruling Feb. 24 resulted from a lawsuit brought by the Fund for Animals, a Maryland-based animal rights group (*HCN*, 12/30/91). The fund said the federal study's methods were flawed and that the agency should have prepared an environmental assessment. A USDA spokesman says the agency will not appeal the decision.

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, along with the Montana Livestock Board, had given Texas A&M $94,000 to study brucellosis, a disease that causes spontaneous abortions among domestic cattle. Texas A&M scientists planned to capture up to 60 pregnant bison, haul them 2,000 miles to Texas, and infect them with brucellosis to study the results.

USDA said the plan did not require an environmental assessment because bison straying outside Yellowstone National Park would be shot anyway under Montana wildlife management policies. For this project, however, bison were lured with hay onto private land outside the protective boundaries of the park.

Of the 79 animals captured before the ruling, 74 were deemed unsuitable for the experiment and trucked to a meat-packing plant. There the slaughtered carcasses were auctioned off. The court ordered the other five bison returned to Yellowstone Park. Since the mid-1980s, the state of Montana has sanctioned the shooting or slaughter of more than 1,000 bison in fear that they would infect cattle with brucellosis (*HCN*, 3/9/92).

"Any bison in Montana are here illegally, and must be removed," says Don Ferlinka of the Montana Livestock Board. The Fund for Animals says there has never been a documented case of brucellosis transmission from bison to cattle in the wild.

— Ernie Atencio

Ernie Atencio is an *HCN* intern.

Corporate muscles flex in Wyoming

CHEYENNE, Wyo. — The 52nd Wyoming Legislature turned into a defensive battleground for environmentalists.

Their major success was defeating bills pushed by the mining industry that would have launched an "assault on the state's public process and rules arena," said Stephanie Kessler, executive director of the Wyoming Outdoor Council.

Chief among these was a "regulatory takings" bill that is making the rounds in states surrounding Wyoming. House Bill 110 would have required state agencies and local governments to weigh all licensing, regulating and permitting actions for their economic effects on the private property rights of citizens. The bill died in the House Judiciary Committee following more than three hours of heated testimony.

Kessler said environmentalists built a broad coalition, including the Wyoming Association of Municipalities, the AFL-CIO and the Wyoming County Commissioners Association, opposed to the bill. Regulatory takings bills are still alive in state legislatures in Montana, Colorado and Utah.

Other mining-industry-sponsored bills that would have given the legislature a more direct rule-making role also failed.

"It's really clear that industry tried to change the entire public process to meet their needs," Kessler said.

The spate of rule-making bills sprang from a controversial ruling last fall by the state Environmental Quality Council. The council set a standard of one shrub per square meter on 20 percent of post-mined land.

The mining industry and its backers in the legislature said the ruling violated the intent of a 1991 law. It exempted post-mined land largely used for grazing from standards geared at enhancing wildlife habitat. In response to the council's ruling, legislators introduced a bill this year to once again lower the reclamation standard. Biologists from the state Game and Fish Department, said the bill would degrade potentially valuable wildlife habitat. But it passed, handing environmentalists one of their biggest losses of the year.

Another industry-backed bill now signed into law by Gov. Mike Sullivan restricts conditions under which Wyoming must reimburse the legal fees of citizens who protest mine enforcement and permitting actions. The bill restricts payment of attorney fees to $50 an hour and limits entry into contested cases to one group or person per issue. Environmentalists claim the bill violates the public participation requirements of the federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act.

Environmentalists also found themselves fighting a proposal to double the representation of the mining and agriculture industries on the nine-member Environmental Quality Council. While the attempt failed, the Senate rejected Amber Travsky, mayor of Laramie and a wildlife biologist, to fill a vacant spot on the council. Detractors said they wanted someone from industrial southwestern Wyoming to round out the panel.

Another loss for environmentalists was the passage of the omnibus water bill authorizing construction of the Sandstone Dam. The revised Sandstone Dam and accompanying 23,000 acre-foot reservoir would benefit 81 irrigators on Savery Creek and Big and Little Sandstone creeks about 10 miles north of Savery in north-central Wyoming.

Construction of the dam "will flood an absolutely beautiful valley," Kessler said, and it "flies in the face of economic and environmental sense." Federal obstacles to the dam's construction remain.

The chemical industry was also active in the Wyoming Legislature. As part of a nationwide effort, it pushed a bill to pre-empt any local control of pesticide use. The bill died on the House floor.

— Katharine Collins

The writer reports for the Casper *Star-Tribune*.

HOTLINE

Cleaning up its mess

United Nuclear Corp. must pay $2.2 million to clean up radioactive waste at its defunct Church Rock Mine north of Gallup, N.M. A U.S. district judge imposed the fine in January. The Denver-based company pumped radioactive tailings — debris from its uranium milling operation — into unlined storage ponds from 1977 to 1982. After contaminants gradually leached through the soil into groundwater, the EPA filed suit in 1991 against United Nuclear. Problems aren't new at the New Mexico mine. In 1979, an earthen dam broke, sending 90 million gallons of radioactive waste down the Rio Puerco (*HCN*, 1/19/87). The company could not avoid responsibility for that spill, called the largest release of nuclear waste in U.S. history, but resisted cleaning up groundwater contamination from its ponds. It argued that the wastes were not "hazardous" by legal definition and that the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Division had authorized the seepage. A spokesman for the state says in some cases contaminated seepage is allowed, but the state never approved a waste storage plan for United Nuclear. Since 1983, the Environmental Protection Agency has listed Church Rock as a candidate for cleanup under the Superfund law.

New at the Gray Ranch

The Animas Foundation agreed Feb. 22 to buy New Mexico's 500-square-mile Gray Ranch from The Nature Conservancy for $13.2 million (*HCN*, 2/22/93). Incorporated in 1922 to conserve undeveloped wildlands and rangelands of the Southwest, the Animas Foundation is headed by the Drum Hadley family, which owns and operates a neighboring ranch. "We want to preserve the Gray Ranch as a working cattle ranch and its traditions of grazing livelihoods while at the same time promoting the health and biological diversity of the lands which sustain them," Hadley said. Located in New Mexico's boot heel, the ranch includes desert grasslands and near-alpine conditions on 8,600-foot Animas Peak. "The establishment of the Animas Foundation is a landmark in private conservation," said Nature Conservancy president John C. Sawhill. Although the Animas Foundation is a non-profit corporation, it said it will continue The Nature Conservancy practice of voluntarily paying property taxes on the ranch.

BARBS

Big deal. He's already president of the West.

The Secret Service kept Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt from attending Clinton's economic address in case a disaster occurred to the rest of the nation's leaders during the speech, AP reports. "I'm the eighth in line for the presidency now," Babbitt explained to his family. "That's a lot closer than you got when you ran for it," a relative replied.

Unclassifieds

ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIALIST. Collect, compile and collate environmental data as it relates to water resources. Assist in development of overall environmental plan, including development of environmental and water quality codes and standards. M.S. environmental, biological or water resource-related fields. $24,000+ DOE. Send cover letter and résumé to: Nez Perce Tribe, Ron Halfmoon TERO, Manager, P.O. Box 365, Lapwai, ID 83540-0365 (208/843-7368). Closing: April 16, 1993. (1x6b)

MEET NEW FRIENDS, West, Northwest, and nationwide, Outdoor Singles Network, established bi-monthly newsletter, no forwarding fees, $35/1-year, $7/trial issue and information. OSN-HCN, Box 2031, McCall ID 38368. (6-eoi)

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ASPEN CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES needs Education Coordinator. Administer/teach environmental education for area schools and other duties associated with wildlife sanctuary. Qualifications: Educational background in natural sciences, environmental education, or related field; minimum four years experience teaching environmental education. Salary commensurate with experience. Benefits. Send résumé, three work references, two personal references (name/phone), and creative writing sample to: ACES Ed. Coordinator, Box 8777, Aspen, CO 81612-8777. (2x6b)

BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE, a program awarded national "Take Pride in America" recognition, will be offered again at the Teton Science School Aug. 2-7, and Oct. 22-24, 1993. What does glaciation in Wyoming tell us about the consequences of climate change in the past? What is the likely impact of climate change upon biodiversity? Open to the public and designed especially for those interested in environmental education, it offers graduate academic credit from the University of Wyoming. Major emphasis will be given to field study — using the Teton Park area as an outdoor classroom — and to the development of materials by teachers for use in their own teaching. Contact: Donn Kesselheim, Wyoming Outdoor Council, 201 Main St., Lander, WY 82520 (telephone 307/332-7031). (1x6b)

SILVERTON PRIME COMMERCIAL GIFT SHOP space available. Just remodeled spring of 1993; 80 feet from where train stops. Ideal location. Approximately 500 sq. feet. Won't last. 303/387-5579. (2x6b)

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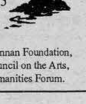

Supported in part by the Lannan Foundation, NEA, the Alaska State Council on the Arts, NEH, and the Alaska Humanities Forum.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR — The Association of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics is seeking an Executive Director. The position requires a wide range of professional Forest Service experience and a thorough understanding of crucial issues facing the Forest Service. The job entails: program leadership and direction, public speaking and media work, fund-raising activities and supervision and motivation of a staff of 10. Position reports directly to board of directors. Salary is negotiable. Submit résumé, samples of published articles and letter of interest to: AFSEEE — Search Committee, P.O. Box 11615, Eugene, OR 97440. Deadline for applications: April 23, 1993.

JOB OPENING — Staff Director, Powder River Basin Resource council, a Wyoming grass-roots membership organization of 20 years working on conservation, agricultural and accountable government issues through community organizing and empowerment of members, seeks staff director with experience in social change work to supervise six staff and raise funds. Desire June start. Salary: $17,500 or more, D.O.E. Health insurance and 23 annual vacation days. Send résumé and references to PRBRC, Box 1178, Douglas, WY 82633, by April 30. 307/358-5002.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE during 1993 for teachers for courses in biology, geology, archaeology and ornithology at Four Corners School in Monticello, Utah. Recertification credits available — graduate or undergraduate. For an application and information, contact FCS, P.O. Box 1029, Monticello, UT 84535, or call 801/587-2156. Application deadline is May 15, 1993. (3x6b)

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE for traditional and non-traditional teachers for a course entitled "Teaching Environmental Ethics," June 19-26 and July 17-24, 1993. For an application and information, write Four Corners School, P.O. Box 1029, Monticello, UT 84535, or call 801/587-2156. Deadline: May 1, 1993. Graduate and undergraduate college credit available. (3x6b)

FOUR CORNERS SCHOOL seeks a full-time Administrative Coordinator for its office in Monticello, Utah. Computer literacy, telephone and writing skills. Flexibility a must. Knowledge of the Colorado Plateau and outdoor interests helpful. Send résumé to Janet Ross, FCS, P.O. Box 1029, Monticello, UT 84535, or call 801/587-2156. (1x6b)

EASTERN WASHINGTON FIELD ORGANIZER. Statewide environmental organization seeks an organizer to work on a variety of local, state and regional issues in eastern Washington. Experience in grass-roots organizing, politics and lobbying is required. Spanish-speaking skills are a plus. Salary range $20,000-$22,000/yr. plus benefits. Send résumé, cover letter and references by April 16 to: Field Director, Washington Environmental Council, 5200 University Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105. (2x5b)

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Please submit a résumé and salary history in complete confidence to: TWS Search Committee, Ward Howell International, Inc., 99 Park Ave., Suite 2000, New York, NY 10016-1699.

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SAVE OUR WILD SALMON COALITION (SOS) seeks experienced person for executive coordinator to be located in either Portland or Seattle. Responsibilities include operation and management of SOS and implementation of board policies and programs. Qualifications include experience in managing budgets and staff, excellent interpersonal skills, successful fund-raising, public speaking, expertise in political strategy as well as commitment to environmental values. Send cover letter, résumé, writing sample and three references to: Thane Tienson, Salmon for All, 3500 First Interstate Tower, Portland, OR 97201 (503/224-4100). Deadline: May 1, 1993.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR for Snake River Alliance, an Idaho-based citizens organization working on radioactive waste and nuclear weapons production. Strong fund-raising, administrative, public relations, communication and leadership skills required. Negotiable salary and benefit package. Send letter and résumé by April 16 to Box 1731, Boise, ID 83701 (208/344-9161). (2x5b)

WILL LEASE FORESTED MOUNTAIN LAND as habitat for threatened animals. Wilson, Box 215, El Rito, NM 87530. (3x5-eoi)

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DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Regional environmental law center seeks director for national fund-raising program. Reports to President and implements development plan including grants, individual contributions, workplace giving, special events and board fund-raising activities. Also edits quarterly newsletter.

Several years' development experience, excellent writing and oral communications skills required. Knowledge of Rocky Mountain environmental issues helpful. Women, people of color encouraged to apply. $25,000-$30,000. **Please do not submit if salary requirements exceed range.**

Send letter, résumé, three references to Mary Hanewall, Land and Water Fund of the Rockies, 2260 Baseline, Ste. 200, Boulder, CO 80302. Deadline April 30.

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Within this critical resource book discover the effects of tourism on wildlife and human cultures. Learn about environmentally responsible natural resource management, land-use planning, and techniques for developing sustainable tourism. This must-have collection will be a valuable addition to your library. $40.00. Contact: **The Adventure Travel Society** (303) 649-9016, (303) 649-9017-fax. Call for free brochure on the 1993 World Congress to be held in Manaus, Brazil, September 20-23.

ONE OF A KIND SOUTHWESTERN TOURS

OFF THE BEATEN PATH offers two exclusive opportunities to experience the diversity and exotic beauty of the Southwest with nationally renowned John Good, former Superintendent of Acadia and Everglades National Parks and Chief Naturalist of Yellowstone. Explore Bryce, Zion and Grand Canyon National Parks in June; in September, combine canoeing on the Green with whitewater rafting through Cataract Canyon on the Colorado. Have fun and learn about the geology, natural history, river lore and park management practices of the Southwest Canyonlands. Call or write for details: 109 E. Main, Bozeman, MT 59715 (800/445-2995).

LETTERS

LET MINING COMPANIES CLEAN UP THEIR MESSES

Dear *HCN*,

Other than fellow miners, it is unclear who agrees with Tim Haddon of AMAX Gold "that mining companies should return the land to the public domain after using it." Paul Larmer ("Mining reform may hit paydirt in 1993," 3/8/93) made it sound like Tim Haddon is agreeing with environmentalists. Who, other than the mineral industry, would benefit from a policy that allows companies to donate potential Superfund sites to the public trust? Given the scale of active mining operations in the West today, the damage that accrues is permanent.

If we are going to allow mining companies to turn public lands into environmental nightmares, we should at least hold them responsible for monitoring the sites until they are environmentally safe. I, for one, am not interested in owning any more tailings ponds, open pits or hazardous waste sites.

Doug Hawes-Davis
Missoula, Montana

The writer is director of mining projects for The Ecology Center, 101 E. Broadway, Missoula, MT 59801.

LEAVE THE PARK ALONE

Dear *HCN*:

Yellowstone National Park is mistakenly proposing to spend large sums of money to upgrade employee and visitor housing inside the park (*HCN*, 2/22/93). But now is the time to begin phasing out all of the hotels, motels, cabins, restaurants and stores that clutter the interior of Yellowstone. These facilities can be relocated to the gateway communities of West Yellowstone, Ashton, Gardiner, Emigrant, Cooke City, Silver Gate, Red Lodge, Cody, Dubois and Jackson. All would gladly accept the facilities with open arms.

Permanent park employee housing should also be phased into the gateway communities outside the park boundary. Park visitors needing lodging, stores, restaurants and cross-park bus transportation would be served at gateway communities. Old Faithful Inn could be turned into a museum. The only visitor facilities provided within the park would be visitor information centers, gas stations and campgrounds for vehicles, bikers, hikers and snowmobilers.

If we are to protect the natural resources of the park and keep it from becoming just another Disneyland, we must get commercialism out of the park and into the gateway communities on private lands.

Joe Gutkoski
Bozeman, Montana

The writer is a landscape architect.

COWS AREN'T THE MEASURE OF THE LAND

Dear *HCN*,

I live about 10 miles from both the Audubon Research Ranch and Ruken Jelk's adjoining ranch in Arizona, and have spent considerable time comparing them (*HCN*, 12/28/92). Tony Burgess' comments that the soil on the Jelks' ranch is in much better condition now than it was eight years ago is correct, but his comment, "I don't know what you're doing here, but keep it up. You should be very proud," could only be made in the context of forage production. The Jelks' ranch has been improved considerably for forage, but from my perspective it is a disaster for biodiversity, as all grazing is in the arid Southwest. (Various GAO reports confirm this.)

In the arid Southwestern grasslands, any livestock grazing is a compromise with biodiversity because it does not replicate fires that occasionally swept the grasslands. The tax-paying public and elected officials have to honestly ask the question whether it is worth the biological price and the several-hundred-million-dollar annual subsidy to continue growing livestock on our Western public lands for 2.5 percent of the total U.S. beef production.

Jim Notestine
Sonoita, Arizona

WILDERNESS BILL DESERVES SUPPORT

Dear *HCN*,

I am amused to find that I am uncertain if my motive in writing in response to the Feb. 22, 1993, article on the Colorado wilderness bill is to avoid blame or disclaim undeserved credit, but regardless of my motive, my ego is not big enough to allow me to acquiesce in the assertion that I "wrote" the water language of the October 1992 Colorado Wilderness Bill.

While there are some members of Congress who merely provide a constitutionally required ratification of staff agendas, neither Sen. Wirth nor Sen. Brown fall in that category. Without their strong commitment to and personal involvement in the negotiation of the bill, there would be no Colorado wilderness bill with any hope of enactment into law. And to the extent that staff efforts are relevant, one must start with the persistent and dedicated efforts of Bill Brack, Sen. Brown's chief of staff, and Jim Martin, Sen. Wirth's state director. Bill and Jim took the time to become experts in the law, and have paid a heavy price for their personal commitment to achieving the goals of their respective senators.

Many others also played important roles in the development of this legislation, including Sen. Armstrong's chief of staff, Howard Propst, and Sen. Brown's legislative assistant, Julie McKenna, who spent months on the boundary and release issues, and Dan McAuliffe of Rep. (now Sen.) Campbell's staff, who also played a key role throughout. Finally, while we may have at times wished that they did not have to be included in the negotiations, Mark Trautwein and John Leshy of chairman Miller's staff, and Stan Sloss of Rep. Vento's staff, were extraordinarily able advocates for the interests of their members.

As I advised Sen. Brown while I was a member of his staff, and have publicly stated since my return to private practice, it is my opinion that this legislation adequately protects these Colorado wilderness areas in a manner which does not threaten existing property rights or Colorado's ability to continue to develop and use its interstate water entitlements in accordance with Colorado law. I support the bill completely. Your headline, "Colorado is likely to get a so-so wilderness bill," is an unfair and unfortunate denigration of the tremendous efforts of Sens. Brown, Wirth and Campbell, and implies that you would rather continue the stalemate than protect wilderness. That position is good for lawyers, activists, fund-raisers and lobbyists on both sides, but achieves nothing for wilderness protection.

Bennett W. Raley
Denver, Colorado

The writer is an attorney with Hobbs, Trout and Raley.

COMPROMISE CAN GO TOO FAR

Dear *HCN*,

Recent letters about off-road vehicles by Tom Lyon and Rob White deserve additional elaboration. I would like to affirm the former and tell the latter that "reasonableness" is why machines are now running wild on the public lands. It is why we are still overgrazing the grass and over-cutting the timber.

Dave Tillotson
Lakemills, Wisconsin

HELICOPTERS AND CROWDED CANYONS

Dear *HCN*,

Rob White should have replaced the two R's in his letter March 8 with three C's: conflict, changes and compatibility, and focused on relevant issues in the Utah heli-ski debate.

Conflicts increasingly exist between the canyon community of residents and two-to-three noisy winter heli-ski ships flying day long in the Salt Lake's Tri-Canyon and Park City areas.

Changes in and around the canyons have been constant and dramatic. Houses circle three-fourths of the canyons and six adjacent bulging resorts get busier. Paved highways and a tourism bandwagon bring more and more visitors to the winter canyons. Noise, pollution and dispersed recreation use explodes as thousands of skiers, snow boarders and snowshoers head into every corner of the backcountry. Utah's narrow-banded Central Wasatch Range continues to shrink year after year.

Compatibility and separation of uses are brought into question as noisy heli-ski operations no longer harmoniously fit a full canyon community of residents, resorts and recreation users. All over the world, heli-ski operations fly in remote, non-populated areas. In the central core of the Wasatch, they fly in nothing more than a crowded urban park.

Winter helicopter companies claim they "own" the Central Wasatch. They fly whenever and wherever they want and in the process bother, badger and buzz those in and around the canyons. The health and safety of the public is at risk when ships fly close to ridge lines, land near groups and throw hundreds of bombs upsetting snow stability conditions.

Reasonable citizens connected to the canyons they live in and visit, work to phase the noisy heli-ski operation out of Salt Lake's local canyons. There is no effort to kill the business, for heli-ski choppers could fly in more remote regions of the Wasatch. Heli-ski owners living in a time warp look to the past and say they belong. Those with a rational view to the future aim at phasing this dinosaur out of our cluttered and noisy canyons.

Stephen W. Lewis
Salt Lake City, Utah

DELAY AND A FAMOUS SKELETON

Dear *HCN*,

In your "A Famous Skeleton Returns to the Earth" (*HCN*, 3/8/93), Tom Green, Idaho state archaeologist, retains the high ground. His judgment and compassion are commendable; would there were more like him.

As a Quaternary geologist, my fingers itched to have at the outcrop where the skeleton was found. But for archaeologists to delay dating the skeleton for three years and then carp about the loss to science inherent in reburial is disingenuous. No wonder the Shoshone-Bannock Tribal Council was less than impressed. Certainly the scientific loss is substantial, but don't blame the council.

John M. Good
Moose, Wyoming

OFF THE WALL

Jack Ohman

ASPEN
A colonial power with angst

by **Harlan C. Clifford**

ASPEN, Colo. — Aspenites sometimes quip that they live in "the center of the known universe." Hyperbole aside, there is a bittersweet truth to the phrase, at least for residents of west-central Colorado who live within commuting distance of Aspen.

In the past decade, Aspen has completed its transformation from funky ski town to full-blown power resort, from hip to rich. The residents half-joke that billionaires have pushed the millionaires downvalley. The ski bums have been replaced by "yurpies" (Young Resort Professionals): lawyers, caterers, architects. Wealth from around the world flows into Aspen by the hundreds of millions of dollars annually, and the backsplash from that flood affects small communities many miles away.

At high season, the town of 4,600 is festooned with fur coats, Range Rovers and private jets. Yet Aspen, sitting at 7,900 feet in the Roaring Fork Valley, is swathed in angst. Many long-time residents believe the opening in December of the 257-room Ritz-Carlton Hotel marked the end of Aspen's small-town pretensions. Others hailed it as a great achievement. Old-timers say the town they know is gone, but newcomers are upbeat. There is a lot of discussion in Aspen about preserving "the community," but little agreement on what — or whose — community.

Even as Aspen is busy pondering what and who it is, its effect on the surrounding region has been profound. Aspen leaves a fat financial footprint on the West Slope of the Colorado Rockies. The resort's insatiable demand for employees, goods and services primed the pump for an influx of Hispanics into the Roaring Fork Valley during the 1980s (*see sidebar*), and has changed the lives of residents as far away as Rifle, 66 miles distant, and Paonia, a two-hour drive away.

Many people who cannot afford to live in the resort now live in towns downstream of Aspen, and even over McClure Pass, in the next major drainage to the south, creating a commuter culture. Money flows to those towns, too, in search of fresh fruit, baby vegetables, organic cider, art, automobiles, handmade furnishings, beer, natural gas and a cornucopia of other things which can no longer be produced or warehoused affordably in Aspen, but are still demanded by the town's privileged residents and visitors.

One of those privileged residents is industrial billionaire David Koch, who last summer offered to build an ice skating rink for Aspen on a downtown park. Most towns would have jumped for joy, but the Aspen city council told Koch thanks, but no thanks. Some residents saw Koch's attempted largesse as the latest illustration of a disturbing phenomenon: new, monied Aspenites, often vacation-home owners like Koch, trying to purchase goodwill. "There are a lot of people who think they can buy their way into the community by writing a check. That's very new to me," says Pitkin County Sheriff Bob Braudis, a veteran social and political observer.

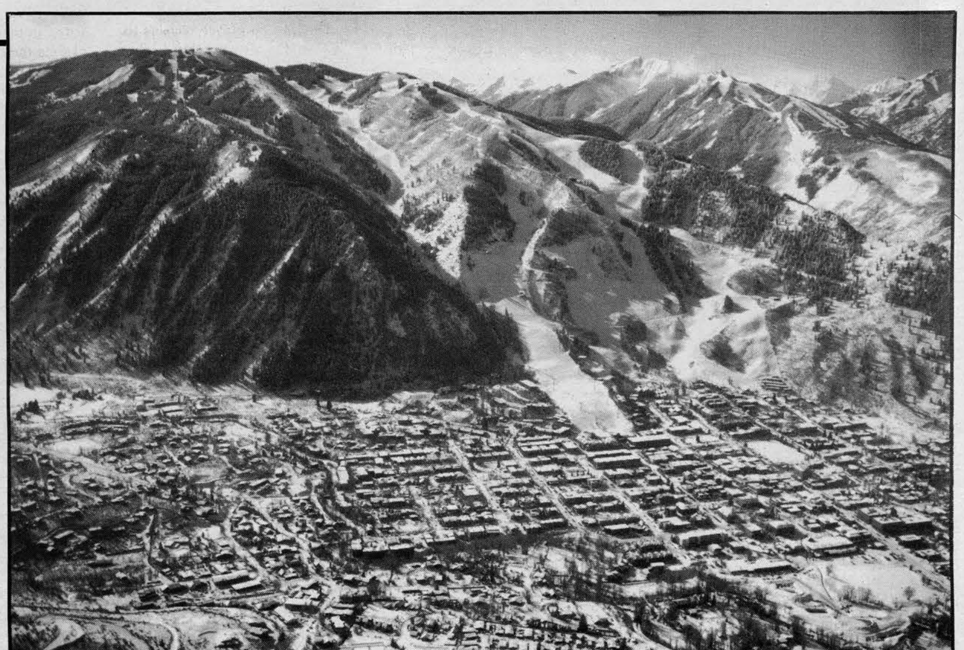
The money of the 1980s has largely overwhelmed Aspen's skiing culture, which in its own heyday overran traditional mining and ranching cultures. Today, Aspen lives off tourists, and outlying communities increasingly live off Aspen.

In the '50s, '60s and '70s, it was skiing first and foremost which brought new arrivals to the valley. After World War II Aspen broke out of its Victorian time capsule and began to grow as a resort. But for many years it still had a small-town feel about it.

"I liked the old Aspen. It was about the right size," recalls rancher Connie Harvey, who runs cattle 20 miles away in Old Snowmass and maintains 70 acres on the edge of Aspen. "It seemed kind of a friendly thing, on the whole ... Now you get people who are a world unto themselves."

Skiing provided a common bond through the '70s. But the small ski town of Aspen is gone. Many veteran residents regret that passing and feel the new Aspen, whatever its merits,

The town of Aspen fills the valley beneath the Aspen Ski Area



Frank Martin/Aspen Times

has been forged by different, richer people and doesn't include them. Most people like Aspen as it was at the time they arrived; more recent residents, consequently, are comfortable with the changes which upset old timers. "If you've been here a year," says one local attorney, "you remember the good old days."

Aspenites from earlier decades point repeatedly to the influx of new money during the 1980s as the root of many problems. Aspen's "old money," they say, didn't show off. But the *nouveau riches*, largely created by the economic boom of the Reagan years, felt — and feel — a need to demonstrate their financial muscle by building big houses, driving fancy cars, shopping in expensive boutiques.

"When I came here (in 1955), this was a classless society," says *Aspen Times* publisher Loren Jenkins. But that changed in the 1980s with the arrival of "huge classes of people that suddenly had buckets of money. The creation of a rigid caste system here is what threatens our community. A caste system is what has been imposed by people from outside who just want servants; they don't want neighbors."

That attitude was illustrated for some people when Florida developers Tom and Bonnie McCloskey bought 70 acres at the mouth of Hunter Creek Valley, a popular White River National Forest recreation area, and attempted to close an access route to the public land behind their property. Six years later, the access battle between the family and the county continues in the courts.

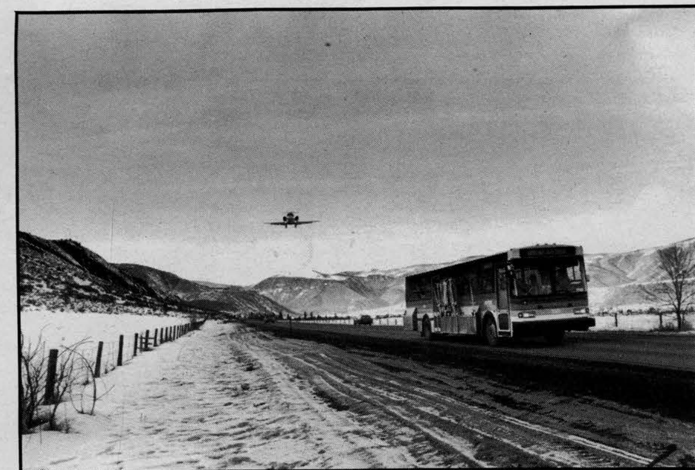
Bonnie McCloskey, now volunteer president of the Aspen Valley Hospital Foundation, downplays the Hunter Creek fight and says she feels a part of the community — even as many old-time locals disdain the McCloskeys and what they have come to represent. At the same time, however, an increasing number of residents share the McCloskeys' financial power and desire for a mountain retreat. It is these people who are forging the new Aspen; those who disdain them are thinning in numbers.

Social events in the ski-town Aspen were built around the Aspen Ski Club, the volunteer fire department and the local churches. Modern Aspen swarms with groups like Les Dames d'Aspen, a gathering of wealthy women, and the Friday Men's Club, a weekly lunch meeting of the rich and powerful in town, encompassing people like Lee Iacocca.

"What defines you as a local, in my mind, is whether you give more than you take," says Michael Kinsley, a former county commissioner and now a consultant on small-town development who measures commitment in currencies other than money. "That's the essence of community." Kinsley believes that the new money in Aspen, for all its financial benefits, doesn't pass that test. Bonnie McCloskey disagrees, and thinks the changes Aspen has seen are for the better.

"People who contribute to this community love this community. If people are bitter (about the town's changes), maybe they have withdrawn," she says. "I feel sorry for those people who are bitter. I think they need to get a handle on their attitudes and reinvolve themselves."

That prescription may be difficult to fill. The displacement of many less



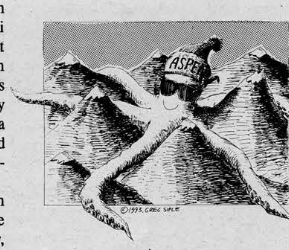
Frank Martin/Aspen Times

Highway 82, also known as "Killer 82," near the Aspen Airport

wealthy locals to towns down the Roaring Fork Valley has sapped Aspen of its vitality, Braudis believes. "Aspen merely imports a lot of mercenary labor every day that pulls a shift and doesn't have energy for Aspen, per se," he says.

An aggressive mesh of zoning, open space and growth control restrictions, while broadly supported by county residents as a way to preserve Aspen's small-town feel, has combined

Aspen leaves a fat financial footprint on the West Slope of the Colorado Rockies.



with an overheated real estate market to force many employees beyond county lines in search of affordable housing. Inside Aspen city limits, a single-family home sold for an average of $1.2 million last year. The result is near-gridlock on Highway 82, the two-lane road which winds northwest down the Roaring Fork Valley to Glenwood Springs, 45 miles distant. Towns like the former ranching and coal mining town of Carbondale, 32 miles away, have become bedrooms for commuters. And commute they do: 31,000 vehicle trips were counted into and out of Aspen from downvalley on a weekday last August, up from a daily average of 15,000 in 1972.

Growth pressures on Aspen have been unremitting. Pitkin County, which includes Aspen and the nearby ski resort of Snowmass Village, added a million square feet of commercial space between 1975 and 1989. Commercial passenger counts at the Pitkin County airport jumped from about 100,000 in 1977, to 218,000 in 1991. Second, or perhaps fourth, homes are so prevalent that the 1990 census found 40 percent of the county's residences unoccupied.

This growth is at the root cause of Aspen's delaminating community as many long-time residents cash in and clear out. "So many people complain about the people who bought Aspen," says Jim Kent, an Aspen-based sociologist. "What about the people who sold Aspen?"

In the past decade, the percentage of workers living in the Aspen neighborhood dropped from 63 percent to 30 percent. Beginning in the early 1980s, city and county governments began building employee housing to try to stem the downvalley flight. About 1,300 rental and ownership units have been constructed, and a new "community plan" calls for another 620 units within nine miles of Aspen by 2015. The goal: preserve and even reintroduce the middle class to the town by providing price- and rent-controlled housing for a broad range of workers. It is a stated objective of local governments to recreate "messy diversity" in the community.

"What I see happening," says Aspen city manager Amy Margerum, "which I think is a microcosm of the rest of the nation, is the gap between the rich and the poor. There's a lot of animosity, because the gap is so wide here.

"Our biggest problem is there's no middle class," continues Margerum, who lives nine miles away in Snowmass Village. "If we were known more as a community and less as a resort, maybe we'd be better. Maybe the lesson is not to put all your chips on one thing, because you'll become that thing."

The '80s and '90s saw a profound shift in the attitude of Aspen's visitors as well as part-time or year-round residents. Visitors demanded more resort amenities, and the town, in the interests of competing with Vail and Sun Valley and Park City, broadly acceded to those demands. These days business people are less likely to close up shop and take advantage of a morning of fresh powder skiing; there's money to be made.

Aspen today is a locus of what Edward Abbey termed "industrial tourism." There is such demand to see the namesake peaks of the Maroon Bells/Snowmass Wilderness that the road to their base is closed to passenger vehicles during summer days, and visitors are hauled in by bus (the peaks have been promoted as the most photographed in the world). The area around Maroon Lake — the bus drop-off point — attracts tens of thousands of tourists a summer, and has become a sacrifice zone in the eyes of some local people who avoid it altogether.

Summer tourism has grown steadily, aided largely by the success and acclaim of several performing arts organizations. In recent years the arts have grown to become an economic force in their own right: One study claims they contribute $24 million annually to the Roaring Fork Valley's economy. And it is a booming economy. Since 1987, retail sales in Aspen have increased by one-third, to a 1992 annual total of $254 million. That doesn't include real estate, which is sold by 649 agents in the Aspen, Snowmass and Basalt areas. In the 1980s, real estate courses at the community college were packed. Aspen even has something most U.S. cities don't have: two daily newspapers, one of them edited by a Pulitzer Prize winner. There is also a weekly paper and a pair of commercial radio stations.

The result: Aspen has become a conduit for money from around the globe, the dominant financial force in the region. "I think (Aspen's economic influence) is growing," says Rifle city manager Mike Bestor. Rifle is the home base for Aspen Limousine's vehicle fleet, a linen supply firm, and a glass company, all of which do a lot of business in Aspen. The Garfield County Airport at Rifle is often the destination for aircraft which can't make Aspen's landing strip before its evening curfew. "I think there are probably quite a few people (in Rifle) that are extremely dependent on (Aspen)," says Bestor.

"The reality is that everybody here

continued on next page

Skiers on powder-covered Bell Mountain make their way toward Aspen

Frank Martin/Aspen Times

Aspen: A colonial power ...

continued from previous page

knows that (Aspen) is a source of sales," says Bernie Heideman, who runs Big B's Fabulous Juices in Hotchkiss and sells about 10 percent of his product in Aspen, two hours away over 8,755-foot McClure Pass. Other Paonia and Hotchkiss residents work in Aspen in construction, an industry which many Pitkin County residents believe is as significant as skiing, thanks to the second-home boom and constant demand for retail store remodels. A Paonia foundry casts large bronze sculptures, some of which dot Aspen — including a piece installed at the entrance of the new Ritz-Carlton. In Redstone, halfway between Paonia and Aspen, deer antlers are assembled into chandeliers and other exotic furniture, to be retailed to designers and architects in an old Aspen building which once served as the hardware store.

Red Hat Produce, located in Austin, gets as much as 45 percent of its business from the Roaring Fork Valley during peak winter and summer seasons, and 80 percent of that is attributable to Aspen, according to general manager Gary Goad. During the summer Goad buys apples, cherries, peaches, corn, broccoli, cabbage and other produce from farmers around Colorado's West Slope, and much of it ends up in the restaurants and catering dishes of Aspen. "People in Aspen love to have Colorado produce," says Goad, who sends as many as 20 trucks a week to the town, up from only three trucks five years ago.

In January, Pitkin County's bus service was extended 45 miles down the Roaring Fork to Glenwood Springs, in Garfield County. Some politicians and business people in Glenwood, including Ramada Inn owner Klaus Schattleitner, opposed the extension, fearing that easing access to the high-paying hourly jobs in Aspen would drive up wages at the bottom of the valley.

Glenwood, which hosts a half-dozen car dealerships, natural gas facility, liquor distributors and bottling plant, has long been a service town for the region. In the early 1980s, Glenwood helped service the oil shale boom in Parachute and Rifle. When Exxon, Unocal, et al, pulled out, it turned its attention to Aspen and Vail. Its Wal-Mart, only a few years old, recently doubled in size; on weekends, many of the license plates in the parking lot sport Aspen prefixes.

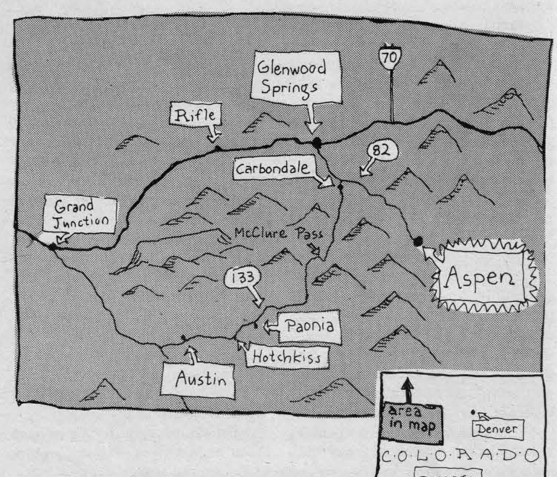
"Aspen has always driven the economy of the valley to one degree or another," says Dean Moffatt, a Glenwood Springs architect and member of that city's chamber of commerce. "I think that the general economy of the area owes a lot of stability to the influx of money into Aspen." He points to the broad selection at Glenwood's City Market grocery store, a frequent stopping point for tourists headed to Aspen, as an example of the improved quality of life for the region.

If they think the bus is the problem, the four-lane is going to be a hundred times the problem," fumes economic development specialist Kinsley. The range of Aspen's economic effect is largely a function of how easy it is for commuters, second-home owners and suppliers to reach the town. Highway 82 is slowly being expanded to a four-lane road, despite heavy political opposition from Aspen residents. When that project is completed, people will be able to live farther away than they do now, yet reach the resort in the same time.

"Basalt and El Jebel will become second-home communities," Kinsley says. "Rifle will become a bedroom community for Aspen. The most important sub-issue is transportation; the easier it is to get from a highly inflated economy to a cooler economy, the faster that cool economy is going to heat up. (And) the second-home phenomenon is the most dangerous thing for those small towns."

The fax machine, the computer modem and the airplane may be the most powerful technologies faced by the West since the moldboard plow, for they free people to move their offices and their work out of urban centers and into the small towns where they would rather live. While most people cannot break completely from cities, greater numbers are able to spend more time in places such as Aspen, Telluride, Jackson Hole, Vail and Crested Butte than they could have previously.

"Every little town that is livable, if



it is comfortable and safe and clean, if there is an airport, even a funky airport, within an hour, it is going to be inundated by the same phenomenon," says Kinsley. "This is the harbinger."

Residents of many small Western towns, Kinsley says, tell him they will avoid becoming "Aspenized" by not zoning their land or controlling growth. They believe such restrictions can make land more expensive, thus limiting a local person's ability to buy a piece and build a home on it. That is true, Kinsley says, only so long as a town remains undiscovered by outsiders.

Lack of growth controls doesn't change the demand for small-town life, he argues. It simply clears the way for developers to cater to the demands of rich "equity refugees" from cities without taking local needs into account. Given that developers will try to maximize profits by catering to the wealthiest potential customers, the result can be the same development problems, but with less consideration for preserving the existing community. Once outsiders in significant numbers begin to move into a town, local people begin to be forced out of the places they grew up in.

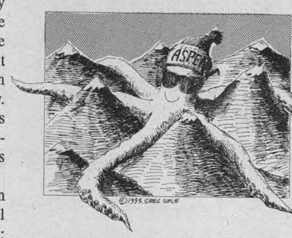
The market for second homes in small towns has become international and is spilling across the mountain West: by all indications this is the economy of the future for many small communities. "There's insatiable demand," says Aspen city manager Margerum. Consequently, many small Western towns look to Aspen with trepidation and occasional admiration, for their future may be a variation on Aspen's theme.

"It's certainly something that's happening already," says John Thrasher, assistant to the city manager in the northern Colorado resort of Steamboat Springs. "We have people that work in Washington but live here three days out of five, or work in Denver." Steamboat officials are trying to improve air and telecommunications links to draw such residents, who some dramatize as "lone eagles" because they do not depend on the local economy.

Aspen has been the vanguard of this movement, and its effects have spilled down the Roaring Fork. "I know of individuals here who do their business out of their home with a modem, a fax and a computer," says Davis Farrar, town manager of Carbondale.

Glenwood Springs, for example, is

Aspen merely imports a lot of mercenary labor every day ...



headquarters of Commodity Quote Graphics, a company with offices in Denver, Boulder, Chicago, New York, London and Paris. The firm sells information via satellite about the world's commodity exchanges — exactly the sort of service that allows people to live anywhere they can erect a satellite dish.

"Already, in the Glenwood Springs area, people are looking for the ideal second-home site, and they don't mind the drive (to Aspen)," says Moffatt, who worries about the domino effect of vacation homes spreading down the valley. Community balance, Moffatt says, is "threatened by what we're talking about. Paonia is a good example: on the one hand you have artists who can sell their things; on the other hand the prices to live there are changing." Recently a tenant of Moffatt's, born in Glenwood Springs, moved out after he raised her rent.

What is a small town to do? "If (small towns) don't stand up to defend themselves, they will be taken over and exploited by others," says *Aspen Times* publisher Jenkins. "There's a tradition of exploitation. We've lived on exploitation. We're still living on it now. You leave it to the guys with the money, yeah, they'll ruin it."

"Somehow, we have to get a regional grip on it," says architect Moffatt, noting that Pitkin County tends to take aggressive positions limiting growth, while Garfield and Eagle County officials don't. "I think we need regional land-use policies, and I think we need political coordination between the three counties, at least."

The growth of Aspen, in so many directions, has resulted in an influx of people to the valley who come for more varied reasons than those who were drawn in past decades by the skiing. Their common ground is not love of a sport, but a debt to predecessors who made Aspen a highly desirable place to live by building ski lifts, forming cultural institutions and limiting growth. Former Eagles drummer Don Henley, who has lived in nearby Woody Creek for many years, may have been thinking of Aspen when he wrote "Call a place paradise, kiss it good-bye."

Many old-time residents have done just that. More recent arrivals, those who can afford the housing and the clubs, are thrilled to find a place which developer Harley Baldwin once said "has the heart of a small town and the soul of a big city."

"I'm very optimistic about Aspen," says Bonnie McCloskey. "I think it's better than it used to be, and it's going to continue to be better. I think there are more working people with family values, traditional values coming in. It's become more of a permanent community." She and her family, she said, "are becoming part of the future."

But Sheriff Braudis sounds bitter — the future McCloskey sees does not include him. It is a future where you must pay to play. It is not the future so many people like Braudis thought they were getting when they left America's mainstream to retreat to a small town in the mountains. The mainstream has followed them. "We have too many people trying to suck on the hummingbird feeder we call Aspen," says Braudis. He says he has watched dozens of friends leave town.

The rich are "fickle," Braudis believes, and he hopes they will turn their attention to the next discovery, some other small town which will be their Shangri-La. It's a wish others like him share, a wish that a new Aspen will make room for the old Aspen to resurrect itself. It's a wish that, by all indications, won't be fulfilled. ■

Writer Harlan Clifford lives in Aspen, Colorado.

Jeffrey Aaronson/Network Aspen

Furs are a common sight on the streets of Aspen, despite a failed initiative to ban them

Aspen bewilders its Hispanic work force

It probably was his sixth or seventh time in court, but Freddie Platera still seemed confused.

"I don't understand what's going on here," Platera said in a mixture of Spanish and broken English as he awaited a hearing in Pitkin County Court on a theft charge. "They told me today I had to be in court yesterday. I wish they would get their story straight."

Platera's misunderstanding of the Aspen-area legal system is not uncommon. It is the product of two cultures that communicate poorly. As Aspen struggles to sustain its traditional small-town community, a new community has quietly permeated the region.

Hard numbers are difficult to get, but by most estimates several thousand Hispanics from Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala and elsewhere have moved to the Roaring Fork Valley, most in the last five years. How many are illegal aliens is impossible to say, according to the Immigration and Naturalization Service office in Denver. Despite the fact that they now comprise an estimated 15 percent of the valley's population, the Roaring Fork's Hispanics live in a parallel world from the rest of the valley's residents. Most reside in the downvalley communities of Basalt, El Jebel and Carbondale. They work, for the most part, as cooks, busboys and chambermaids, running the back-room machinery that keeps the resort industry on track.

But they have almost no contact with their Anglo neighbors. They tend to live in tight enclaves, and tend not to do the things which draw Anglos to the valley: skiing, hiking, watching the performing arts. What little interaction Hispanics have with Anglos often comes at the hands of local lawmen and women, who have found themselves ill-prepared for the cultural challenges.

It doesn't help that many Hispanics believe all law enforcement officers are corrupt, as they often are in Hispanics' countries of origin. Even young Hispanics attending local schools are suspicious of the badge.

"The Mexican police don't protect the Mexican people. I imagine it's the same here," says 9-year-old Carlos Sanchez.

"The police, they just don't understand us," says Rogelio Leal, a native of Guadalajara, Mexico, who now calls the Roaring Fork Valley home. "The worst part is that they aren't even trying. Look at the names in the paper; people who've gotten busted, most are Spanish."

"One thing we've not done is train our cops on cultural diversity and what it is that makes people from Mexico tick," says former Aspen Police Chief John Goodwin. "What works with a guy who grew up in Aspen may not work with a guy from Mexico."

Both Goodwin and Pitkin County Sheriff Bob Braudis say they feel caught in the middle of a cultural squeeze, and have had encounters with angry Anglo residents who want to know what the law intends to "do about" the Hispanic influx. Their response? "We're going to learn to live with them," both men say.

"The Hispanic population is no more criminal in this community than the Anglos," says Braudis. "But they sure attract attention."

Braudis says he is tackling "incipient racism" on his force. Many of his deputies believe there will be action whenever they pull over a car filled with Hispanics, even if it's only an expired license plate or driver's license.

Aspen police officers and Pitkin County deputies carry cards bearing the Miranda rights in Spanish, and Spanish language classes have been made available to them. Drivers on the local bus system, which is heavily patronized by Hispanics, are also being offered Spanish lessons.

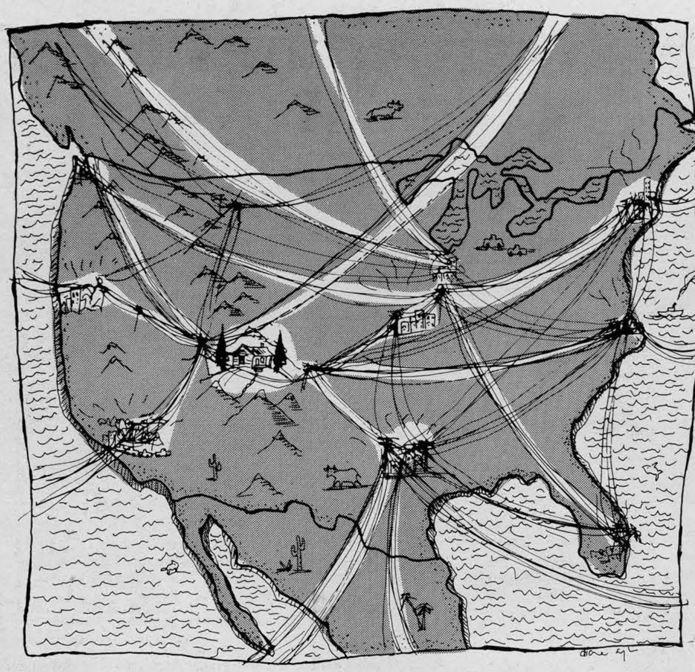
"We're taking baby steps right now," says Goodwin. "The challenge of cultural diversity is facing everybody these days, and not too many people are doing well with it."

"The Hispanic work force here is new," says Braudis. "It's challenging. And in my mind it's replaced the ski bums who have been squeezed out not only by the cost of skiing but by the cost of existing here."

— Carlos Illescas and Harlan C. Clifford

Byte by byte and fax by fax, the West is being transformed

by **Michael Riley**



When Frank Crail wants to talk to the accountant for his multimillion-dollar candy company based in Durango, Colo., he calls Dallas, Texas.

His lawyer is in Los Angeles. The ad company he uses is in Denver. His vice president of marketing lives in Chico, Calif.

Although a southern Colorado mountain town is an unlikely place for a growing manufacturing company specializing in chic chocolates, Crail chose to build his factory in Durango because he wanted to raise his children there.

Fax machines, desk-top computers, and overnight mail make it possible, this ex-computer executive found, to live and work just about anywhere.

Crail's move from San Diego to the rural West is an increasingly common phenomenon, economists say. As Crail and people like him search for less frantic lives, small towns emerging from years of decline get a healthy economic boost.

Bayard Fox, an exotic ex-CIA agent, now runs Equitour, a $2 million a year company specializing in worldwide horseback tours from a ranch near Dubois, Wyo. Although his business employs only four people, local officials believe companies like Fox's contribute far more to the local economy than the Louisiana-Pacific sawmill that closed here in 1989.

Skyline Scientific Services, a company that helps pharmaceutical producers comply with federal regulations, came to Bozeman, Mont., because its founders, both ex-NASA engineers, wanted to live in the West. Because most of Skyline's work is done on-site at the factories and offices, a good airport is all the company's 60 employees need to link them to their clients.

An increasing number of experts see these companies as a way for small communities in the rural West to cash in on their amenities.

Clean air, good schools, and a beautiful view have become the factors that determine where the next generation of businesses will locate, says Montana State University economist Ray Rasker.

"If a car gets produced and the steel for the engine is poured in Mexico, but the engineering is done in the United States, what does it matter if those engineers are in Detroit?" asks Rasker, who also consults for The Wilderness Society. "They could just as easily be in Jackson, (Wyo.)."

What really counts

In a recent study, Rasker found that traditional factors governing where businesses locate are giving way to new values, as information becomes the primary currency of American companies. Surveying 500 businesses in Montana, Rasker found that proximity to supplies, availability of capital, and the price of labor ended up at the bottom of the reasons companies were located in the state. A small-town atmosphere, positive community attributes and proximity to public lands ranked at the top.

Phil Burgess, director of the Center for the New West, an economic development think tank in Denver, says there's another trend that's breathing life into the "wild and mild" areas of the Western United States: the appearance of a new breed of American worker he calls the "lone eagle."

A growing sector that Burgess says is now 9 million strong, these footloose technocrats live by their wits, requiring only a computer and an airport to make their living. Having picked up their skills with corporations that expanded during the 1980s but are now scaling back, these highly educated, white-collar workers fuel cottage industries in places like Buffalo, Wyo., and Bend, Ore.

"They're manufacturing reps, writers, analysts, brokers," he says. "They're really valuable people because they sink their roots in the community. The wife will be on the school board in two years and the husband will be on the library board. Most of them are above-average-income people — $40,000 to $100,000 plus."

Although experts agree there's a flowering of small companies in the West, it is uncertain whether there's enough of them to change the overall economies of the region.

According to Oregon State University economist Bruce Weber, amenity-based economic growth is limited by the limited demand for consultants, writers and small-business entrepreneurs. Professionals who make up this expanding sector also don't want to get too far away from the culture offered by urban environs.

"These people tend to like espresso. They go to the opera, they like symphonies," Weber said. "A lot of the people who would choose this electronic, cottage-industry lifestyle would rather do it in northwest Portland, where they can be five minutes from the biggest used bookstore in the region, than a place like Newport, Ore., where they've already looked at every book that's in the bookstore there."

Cities still reign

The big move, these analysts suggest, may simply be from the cities and suburbs to a necklace of small towns that surround places like Seattle or San Francisco or Portland — leaving much of the West untouched.

But Rasker and others believe that can't account for dramatic changes already taking place in areas nowhere near West Coast urban centers. A recent Wilderness Society study of a 40-county area around Yellowstone National Park found that the biggest growth in the area over the last decades had been in the service sector. Traditional industries like mining, logging and ranching have dwindled to a trickle.

Although personal income in the study area doubled from 1969 to 1989, 89 percent of the boost in labor income occurred in sectors other than agriculture and the extraction industries. Employment directly attributable to those traditional pillars in fact dropped from one in three jobs to one in six over the 20-year period.

That downturn came at a time when the region as a whole was experiencing rapid growth. "If the greater Yellowstone region were a state, it would be the fastest growing state in the country," Rasker points out.

Although people often link service-sector jobs with waiting tables and cleaning hotel rooms, the study found that most of the growth near Yellowstone has been fueled by small, high-paying, owner-operated businesses — companies that make computer software or specialize in nationwide telemarketing.

The problem now, says Rasker, is getting communities to recognize that their strength does not lie in the industries that have always meant prosperity in the past.

"We know what the long-run prognosis is," says University of Montana economist Tom Power. "We know it with incredible confidence. Mining, agriculture, wood products are going to be a declining source of employment in our communities and it's beyond our control. The trend in employment and income in those industries has been downward for over half a century."

Although there will always be logging in the Pacific Northwest and grazing on the Western plains, Power says those industries will continue to shrink over the next decade. Debates like the spotted owl are less about whether resource jobs will be lost, he says, but when they will be lost. In the meantime those communities are cutting their best assets into 2x4s.

"If postponing the loss were a freebie, we'd all of course be in favor of postponing it," he says. "The reasons these issues are so divisive is that, in desperation, you buy that reprieve at the cost of the future." ■

Michael Riley reports for the Casper *Star-Tribune* from Sheridan, Wyoming.

Mill dies; town comes to life

by **David Hatcher**

When Louisiana-Pacific closed its waferboard mill last year in Kremmling, Colo., town manager Bill Koelm called the shutdown "kind of equivalent to the Martians landing in town square.

"It forced us to sit down and think about what the devil are we doing and what the devil do we want to be doing, and how are we going to do that," says Koelm, a retired Air Force base commander.

In some ways, he says, L-P's leaving town was the best thing that ever happened to Kremmling — even though the company had employed 220 mill workers and loggers, nearly 20 percent of the town's population of 1,200.

Koelm says the shutdown was positive because it made people pull together to start planning. The first step was what he calls an old-fashioned town meeting where consensus was reached on a major goal.

"We wanted to preserve our quality of life," he says. "We don't want to be another Vail or Aspen or Steamboat Springs."

They began meeting in November 1991, before the mill had closed for good. Residents formed a Kremmling Economic Development Committee. Members included Mayor Peg Toft, Koelm, local businesspeople, Chamber of Commerce members, and employees of the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

The group aimed to develop a plan for a diversified and stable economy that would also be environmentally sound. What emerged after many meetings was "Kremmling's Vision for the Future," an ambitious set of projects to revitalize the town's economy over the next decade.

The plan saw Kremmling moving away from its traditional dependence on logging and ranching and proposes 21 projects. They include a new motel, Amtrak service, a museum dedicated to ranching, master plans for the town and airport, creating or helping businesses to use forest products in a sustainable way, enhancing recreational facilities, and working for a backcountry scenic byway designation for Trough Road, along the Colorado River.

Larry Banman

When word spread that Kremmling was trying to define its future, offers of help poured in, says Koelm. "In a little town you run out of resources very rapidly," he says. "You don't have the talent, you don't have the numbers, and you don't have the money."

But, Koelm adds, "If you show a little spunk, people are willing to help."

First on the scene was the Forest Service. Bob Dettman, the agency's rural development specialist, now works with some 20 communities in the Rocky Mountain region undergoing difficult economic changes.

Help also came from Ray Rasker, senior economist for The Wilderness Society, based in Bozeman, Mont. Rasker says the society is designing a map showing summer and winter recreational opportunities around Kremmling.

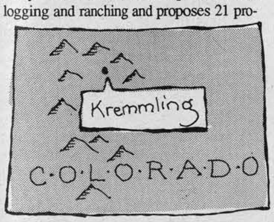
State and federal grants have provided most of the startup funding to bring the community's shared vision to life. A $5,000 Forest Service grant, for example, helped pay for a brochure printed last summer for businesses and families thinking about moving to Kremmling.

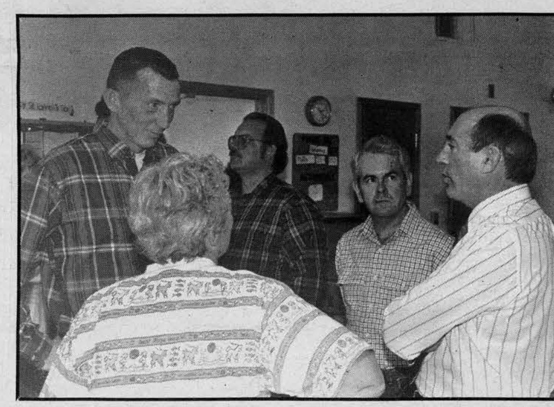
Construction could start as soon as this summer on a $1.1 million "assisted-living center" for senior citizens who don't want to leave Kremmling for a nursing home in Steamboat Springs or Denver. Shapins Associates of Boulder wrote a master plan for the town thanks to a $15,000 grant from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. A master plan for the airport awaits federal approval.

"Kremmling has always been a town of survivors," says Mayor Toft. "I'm optimistic about what it can do and about what will happen."

For more information about Kremmling's effort to develop its economy, contact Bill Koelm, Box 538, Kremmling, CO 80459 (303/724-3249); Ray Rasker, The Wilderness Society, 105 W. Main St., Suite E, Bozeman, MT 59715-4689 (406/586-1600); Bob Dettman, U.S. Forest Service, Region 2, Box 25127, Lakewood, CO 80225 (303/236-9519). ■

David Hatcher is a master's degree student in the school of journalism at the University of Colorado, Boulder.





Larry Banman

Town manager Bill Koelm, left, and other Kremmling residents check out an "assisted living" center in Fruita, Colorado

Small can be sustainable

Small towns that spend all their resources recruiting new industry are courting disaster, according to the authors of a new booklet.

Instead of competing with thousands of small communities for that new mine or interstate highway, Milan Wall and Vicki Luther, authors of *Six Myths About the Future of Small Towns*, say small towns should work on a broad strategy that emphasizes locally based ideas and self-reliance.

Wall and Luther, co-directors of the Heartland Center for Leadership Development in Lincoln, Neb., say the six misconceptions represent common misunderstandings that are part of today's debate about rural community survival.

In their 12-page report, Wall and Luther describe the myths this way:

• **Towns that are "too small" have no future.** But small size can be an advantage, Wall and Luther say, because it allows towns to respond faster to new trends and changing market-place opportunities.

• **A community's location is key to survival.** The authors say growth in the service, information and government sectors makes proximity to a major highway or metropolitan area less important than ever to a town's economic viability.

• **Industrial recruitment is the best strategy for economic development.** No, say the authors. Study after study shows that this strategy, which puts all of a community's eggs in one basket, is a waste of time, energy and money.

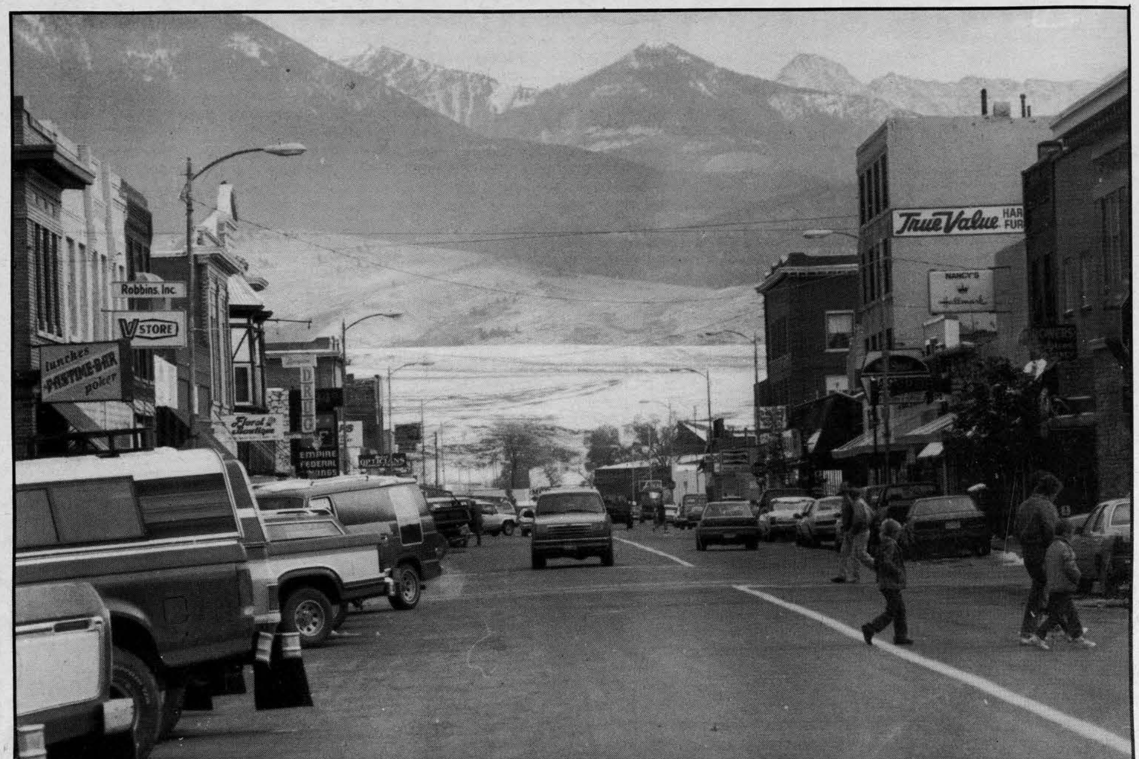
• **Small towns can't compete in a global economy.** With access to toll-free incoming telephone lines and over-the-road package shippers, small manufacturers and businesses can compete effectively.

• **The "best people" leave small towns as soon as they can.** Although Wall and Luther agree loss of rural population is a problem, they say it is too often used as an excuse that overlooks existing leadership talent.

• **Rural and urban economies are not interdependent.** Urban economies are still dependent on the farm products and natural resources found in rural areas, the authors say.

Six Myths About the Future of Small Towns is available from the Heartland Center for $3. Write to the Heartland Center at 941 O St., Suite 920, Lincoln, NE 68508, or call 1-800-927-1115.

Three new slim volumes published by The Aspen Institute promise to assist rural planners in sustainable development. *Designing Development Strategies, Gearing up for Success* and *Business Finance as Tool for Development* list resources and outline innovative ways to attract economic growth, such as creating partnerships with state universities. Designed for policy-makers and community advocates, the books were funded in part by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The books cost $3 each, plus $1 for each additional copy. Contact The Aspen Institute, 1333 New Hampshire Ave., N.W., Suite 1070, Washington, D.C. 20036 (202/736-5800).



Florence Williams

Residents of Livingston, Montana, are trying to preserve a small-town atmosphere

Future shock hits Livingston

by **Florence Williams**

LIVINGSTON, Mont. — Under fluorescent lights in the middle school's lunchroom, 65 local residents met on a cool Saturday morning to discuss the future of their town. The future is a big topic these days, because a lot of Livingstonians don't like what they see coming. In a story increasingly familiar in the mountainous West, residents here worry they are losing their quality of life because of more people, more traffic and more unplanned, haphazard development.

"I see rapid change coming," says Jamie Barney, a local optometrist who spends much of his summer fly-fishing. He and his family moved to this former railroading town near the northern edge of Yellowstone several years ago. "I see lack of zoning and poorly planned development that disrupts the natural scenery. I want to see the uniqueness and quality preserved."

That is why Barney and many of his neighbors have formed a broad-based citizens' committee to prod the town and county governments into action. The group has taken on the town's lazy enforcement of the local sign ordinance and it wants to see measures protecting the environment written into local codes. Even Livingston's chamber of commerce has gotten involved, sponsoring today's workshop on responsible planning at the middle school.

For guidance and experience, the chamber has asked Luther Propst to moderate the workshop. He is a consultant from the Sonoran Institute, an 18-

month-old, Tucson, Ariz.-based nonprofit whose mission is to protect natural resources and local lifestyles through community-based efforts. But like the psychiatrist and the light bulb, Propst can only help change communities that want to change. His approach is to help local people articulate, collectively, how they want their towns to grow, and then to do something about it.

"Dialogue is the first step," says Propst. "People have more in common than they realize. They want to preserve the intangibles, like low crime, easy parking, neighborliness. Successful communities have developed a shared vision."

Park County, Montana, is ill-prepared for sudden popularity

Tall and bespectacled, Propst outlines his agenda for the day, dividing participants into groups of 10 to discuss three central questions in three sessions:

What do you value about your community and what threatens those values?

What do you want your town to look like, and what obstacles stand in the way?

What actions could guide the area toward the desired future?

After each session, the groups reconvene in the lunchroom to present their findings and hear reports from the chamber of commerce, economic development council and town planner.

"I'm just the facilitator," Propst reminds them in a soft Southern accent. "This is your day."

While most communities in the West resist planning and zoning, Park County residents have witnessed such rapid growth that they're willing to consider some regulation. A proposed gold mine that would quadruple the population of Cooke City, south of Livingston, has residents there scrambling to adopt building codes. In addition, plans to expand the already sprawling headquarters of the Church Universal and Triumphant have prompted its neighbors, including long-time ranchers, to clamor for stronger zoning. The church, a cult-like religious organization whose complex sits on the Yellowstone border, is reviled by many locals.

The church has brought an estimated 2,000 people to the area and built trailer parks, subdivisions and bomb shelters on what was once open ranchland. It now proposes building a new town — with homes, a school and a publishing house — on prime winter elk habitat. Much to the town's horror, the expansion has won preliminary state approval.

"We're living on the edge of a boom," said workshop participant Christopher Rudy, a videographer and former follower of the Church Universal and Triumphant. Continued Rudy, who favors zoning: "You can't drive down the road with your eyes on the rear-view mirror. You have to look ahead. The question is whether you have controlled growth or chaos."

Implementing control is the biggest challenge facing Livingston, where traditional pro-growth attitudes can clash with environmental values espoused mostly by newcomers. That is why the local chamber of commerce has made an only partially successful effort to attract ranchers, loggers and other old-timers as well as the newer class of residents to the workshop.

Common ground is established in answers to the first question, What do we value in Livingston? Congratulating themselves on living in a great spot, discussion-group members call out "diversity," "the Yellowstone River," "clean air," "affordable housing," "small-town feel" and so on. Threats to those assets also generate much agreement: "houses getting too expensive," "too much second-home development," "chain businesses," "neon jungle," "strip development."

"Do we really want 20 miles of growth on the road to Yellowstone?" asks Bill Leitch, a writer of fly-fishing books who has lived in the valley for six years.

The afternoon's presenters all emphasize that Livingston has indeed been "discovered." Shirley Young, the chamber's director, says requests for relocation and visitors' packets have increased over 50 percent in a year; she attributes that to Robert Redford's recent movie, *A River Runs Through It,* which was filmed here. Housing prices have increased 20 percent in the last year, and commercial permits increased six-fold over 1991.

The growth is coming to a town nestled between the northern tip of Absarokas and the eastern edge of the Crazies. Economically speaking, the days of Livingston's sturdy railroad economy are slowly giving way to a more diverse and demanding one. A walk on the main street reveals the change. It hosts a dozen smoky bars and greasy spoons, interspersed with art galleries, espresso bars and fishing tackle shops.

Apathy could allow the valley to change out of control

Barney, the fly-fishing optometrist, is one of the dozens of professionals and entrepreneurs who have recently settled in Livingston, population 7,000, riding a wave known to economists as "amenities migration." But more dramatic than the region's transplants are its visitors. Last summer, a record 3 million tourists hit Yellowstone, and a good number passed through Livingston.

As a result, when Burlington Northern closed the century-old railyard in Livingston, there was only a short-lived economic blip. While most counties in Montana have lost population in the last five years, Park County has grown by 13 percent, and its tax base is higher now than ever.

Much of Park County's growth, including the Church, has occurred in Paradise Valley, the spectacular 30-mile-long corridor running south to Yellowstone. There, subdivisions and commercial developments have begun replacing large, working ranches.

"The county needs to get its behinds in gear because we do have a problem," says the county's newest commissioner, Terry Sarrazin, a rancher. "It's just going to be a matter of time. New planning will come out."

But armed with only a 25-year-old master plan, Park County is ill-prepared for sudden popularity. Already, a half dozen new chain businesses along the highway are clamoring to erect signs that exceed the city's size ordinance. Traditionally, Livingston's city council has granted variances to just about everyone who asks.

Livingston is not alone. In Montana, every county touching the Continental Divide has grown an average of 10 percent during the past decade, while every other county in the state has lost population. Particularly around the borders of Yellowstone National Park, towns have experienced dramatic changes in land ownership, land use and property value.

Gallatin County around Bozeman, 30 miles west of Livingston, grew by 18 percent, from 42,885 to 50,463, between 1980 and 1990. During this time, over 10,000 lots were parceled in the county. According to a master's thesis by Priscilla Westesen at Montana State University, Bozeman, 90 percent of that development was not reviewed by the county, thanks to state law exempting lots over 20 acres (by contrast, Colorado exempts 35-acre lots). The infrastructure needed to service the ranchette explosion has cost taxpayers and stressed social services. Recently, ranchette owners petitioned Gallatin County to maintain 170 miles of new roads resulting from unreviewed development. In addition, the proliferation of roads and fences has taken a toll on migrating wildlife, particularly elk.

There will be attempts to revise Montana's Subdivision and Platting Act of 1973 in this year's session of the Legislature, but similar tries have failed in the past. Two current bills propose changing the acreage subject to review from 20 to 160 acres.

In the meantime, planners like Propst stress that intelligent zoning should start at the local level. Strong sign ordinances, design reviews, greenbelts, wildlife zones and growth caps are all tools available to communities. But, says Propst, the best planning does not depend solely on government regulation.

"What's more important than ordinances is building a culture that finds some kinds of signs unacceptable; then the ordinances (and their enforcement) can come. The idea is to go beyond regulations so that the locals are involved and then things happen, like the banks provide low-interest loans for converting the downtown."

Can Livingston build a planning culture? Some workshop attendees are skeptical. "There's an incredible amount of apathy in this community," says Bob Segil, who runs an office support service. "Apathy is going to let the valley change out of control."

Agrees Marian Officer, a retired schoolteacher: "We're very set in our ways, perhaps beyond what you can imagine."

The workshop's final session, in which small groups discuss strategies for managing growth, reveals the most conflicts. Pete Story, a third-generation rancher and former state senator, says he flat-out opposes any planning, zoning or commercial regulation.

"I'm for strip development. It may not be pretty but it's the American way ... I don't want to see government become so big that it becomes corrupt in Park County."

One frustrated group asks Propst for examples of communities that have made growth management work. Propst can only answer that bits and pieces of ideas have worked well in different towns. But there are no models where everything has come together. Jackson, for example, has good planning for ecological protection but "dropped the ball on preserving social fabric" by not producing affordable housing, he says. Park City, Utah, is worth studying for its affordable housing, and Red Lodge, Mont., is taking an innovative approach toward protecting Rock Creek River, with conservation easements and a water quality monitoring program. Propst suggests Park County send a delegation to explore these and other examples.

By and large, the crowd is still energized at the end of a long day. Although many of those attending did not know each other, they found some common threads. "A meeting like this can revitalize a community," says David Scrimm, an environmental activist.

With Propst moderating, the attendees agree they will meet regularly, publicize the planning discussions and form a number of committees, such as natural resources and downtown revitalization.

Most immediately, they will try to work with Livingston's planner and Park County's planner to revise the outdated master plans. But the Livingston planner, John Nerud, who attended the seminar, says he's not sure the town is ready for stronger regulations.

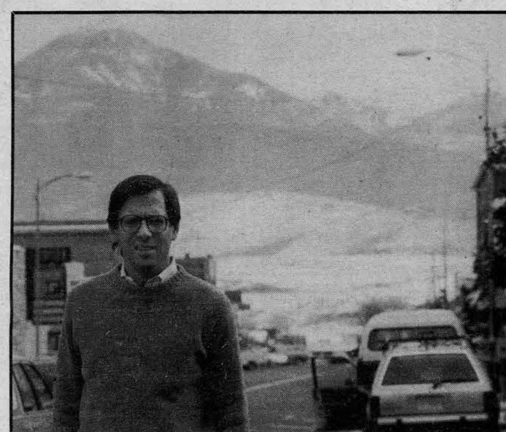
"I'm still a little bit of a skeptic," adds Nerud, an 18-year resident. "It's not the old-timers saying we need more restrictions. (The seminar) didn't represent the mainstream Livingston community, and there will be opposition."

Nevertheless, the expansion of the Church Universal and Triumphant has many residents advocating planning who otherwise would not. While not everyone may agree on what planning should look like, a dialogue has begun. And that, reminds Propst, is the critical first step.

"We are now more organized than ever before," says participant Kelly Wade, a pro-planning activist who runs a local gallery. "It's frustrating that the town government won't always listen to our concerns, but we're just going to have to keep pounding on the door and keep the communication channels open."

Buoyed by Propst's continued help, the Livingstonians here promise to keep pushing. "I'm basically optimistic," says Tom Shands, the former editor of the *Livingston Enterprise*. "Two things are happening. More people are moving here who can see what the lack of planning has done, and others are starting to realize that with the (church's subdivisions), planning may be a good thing." ■

Florence Williams free-lances from Steamboat Springs, Colorado.



Florence Williams

Luther Propst

Propst says small towns make or break ecosystems

Luther Propst's approach to community planning grew out of his desire to protect public lands. He concluded that a successful preservation ethic can only come from within a community, and so he left Washington, D.C., to work with small towns in the heart of the West.

"In towns that are gateways to national parks, local decisions can have big impacts on ecosystems," explains Propst. "These are the towns at the forefront of efforts to reach a balance between generating wealth and preserving the quality of life."

Soft-spoken and deferential, Propst says he knows outside consultants are about as well-liked as politicians. Originally from Charlotte, N.C. ("growing like a weed," he says), Propst, 34, holds degrees in law and regional planning.

Before founding the Sonoran Institute, he directed the Successful Communities program for the World Wildlife Fund in Washington, D.C. At WWF, Propst took workshops on the road to Jackson, Wyo., and Crested Butte, Colo. Since then, he has hosted programs in Patagonia, Ariz., Driggs, Idaho, Gardiner, Mont., Red Lodge, Mont., and Dubois, Wyo.

These towns have embarked on some innovative approaches to planning, including designing greenbelts, forming private land trusts and affordable housing groups and developing strategies for clean, sustainable economic growth. After Propst presented a Successful Communities workshop in Jackson, locals and officials there have embarked on one of the most aggressive and controversial growth-management campaigns in the West (see accompanying essay by Ben Read, page 17).

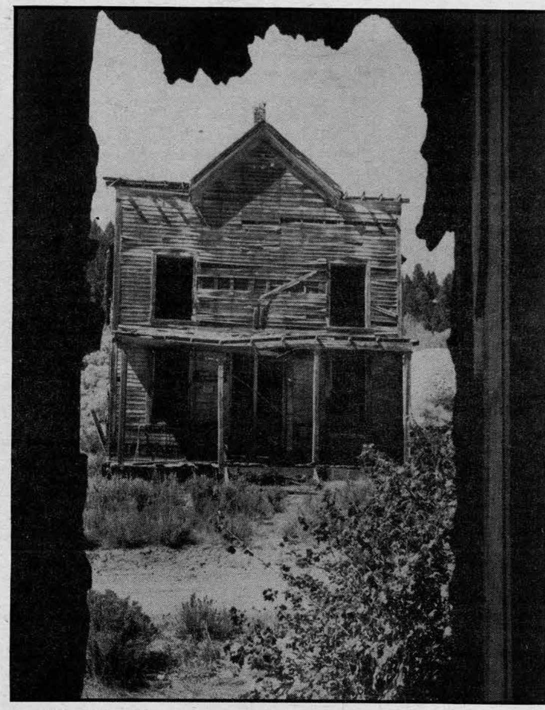
The Sonoran Institute, funded in part by the Liz Claiborne and Art Ortenberg Foundation (the couple own two ranches in western Montana), is now concentrating on communities in the Greater Yellowstone area.

"If you're going to protect resources," says Claiborne's program director, Jim Murtaugh, "there has to be consensus among people about their town's visions for the long term. Luther gives them a framework for that kind of decision-making."

For more information, contact the Sonoran Institute, 6842 E. Tanque Verde Road, Suite D, Tucson, AZ 85715 (602/290-0828).

— F.W.

Essay by **George Darrow**



An old hotel in Elkhorn, Montana

How the West was ~~won~~ liquidated

As the reality of the physical frontier recedes into the historical past, many of us still cherish the tradition we inherited from that era.

At the turn of the century my grandparents came to the headwaters of Rawhide Creek, on the flanks of the Hartville Uplift in eastern Wyoming. Their self-reliance, creative ingenuity, perseverance and a cheerful welcoming of each day continue to inspire and sustain my family.

That era was also a time of "taking." At first, there was no alternative to living off the land. But as the frontier was developed, it was organized for taking with ever greater efficiency. The natural production of the frontier was appropriated for ever-expanding export, and in time, native species were displaced and their habitat pre-empted. Sixty million buffalo were exterminated to make room for cattle and plows. Eighty thousand wolves living symbiotically with the buffalo were exterminated in Montana alone between 1884 and 1918.

Extraction of minerals emplaced over eons of geologic time began with men and mules and accelerated into massive industrial removal. The mines at Butte and Bisbee, Hartville, Carson City and Wallace and the smelters and mills they spawned brought industrial civilization to the West.

The taking economy became ingrained. The countryside was scoured for whatever could be shot down, dug up, pumped out or cut down and hauled out to the faraway centers of commerce, mostly located "back East." On the frontier, a natural capital was liquidated to provide a daily subsistence for a growing number of residents, while the main stream of profits flowed out with its commodities.

It seldom occurred to those on the frontier that they had only half an economy. The other half — "putting back," or reinvesting capital — was the economic secret that caused the centers of commerce to continue to grow and continue to be both centers of commerce and centers of civilization.

The frontier communities, because they did not reinvest, made it certain that they would remain on the periphery of economic activities and human affairs. They were participating in the liquidation of their future. Once-thriving boom towns became ghost towns and smelter cities dwindled to a shadow of their former glory.

Over a 25-year career as an exploration geologist, I inspected many of the ghost towns of the Rocky Mountains. Sometimes picturesque, sometimes merely depressing, they are examples of the transient nature of the commodity frontier.

Farmers and ranchers who wanted to settle permanently on the land were disdained by the dominant extractive culture. So were the small-town merchants who envisioned building community institutions as well as durable enterprises housed in solid structures. Building for permanence and the future requires patience and reinvestment. The frontier was impatient. Bigger mines and higher rates of logging were hailed as progress.

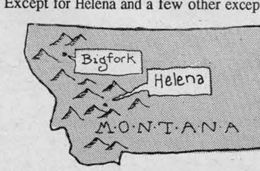
There was an occasional exception. An example of what might have been exists in Helena, now capital of Montana, where a group of prospectors, with dwindling hope and a nearly exhausted grubstake, made a bonanza gold discovery in what came to be known as Last Chance Gulch. Today this gulch is the main street of downtown Helena. During several terms in the Montana Legislature, initially in the House and later in the Senate, I used my spare time to learn about the city and its history.

Unlike the huge ore bodies of copper and silver that required deep mine shafts and smelters, the placer gold of Last Chance Gulch and a cluster of similar placer deposits in the nearby mountains were accessible to individual prospectors. These 19th-century entrepreneurs were able to get their gold with only hand tools and perhaps the assistance of a partner and a mule.

The luckiest and most skillful made a tidy stake. Empowered as individuals, attracted by the handsome setting and the invigorating climate, they created substantial homes (even some mansions), launched enduring commercial enterprises, and built banks, a cathedral, a college and one of the then-finest resort hotels in the West.

Today, the state capitol building and capitol city retain the imprint of those who put back into the place where they lived the geological capital they had taken from the ground. Residential neighborhoods, now over a century old, retain the grace and charm given shape by their first owners. Helena is perhaps the nation's finest living example of frontier era whole-cycle entrepreneurial achievement — of "putting back" as well as "taking."

Except for Helena and a few other exceptions, the



lives of frontier residents were circumscribed by a boom and bust existence. But today there is a second chance for the frontier. Some communities in the Rocky Mountain West have retained their physical appeal. Their landscapes, though depleted of commodities, still maintain the essential integrity of their natural systems. The mining scars and toxic wastes are sometimes small enough to reclaim, and some "stump towns" once again have forests.

A new opportunity exists to begin putting back, to move toward an amenity economy. In many places it is happening. Whitefish, formerly a logged-over "stump town," and Red Lodge, a railroad coal town in an earlier era, both in Montana, have attracted new amenities and reinvestment. Aspen and Telluride, Colo., have surpassed their commodity economies of the 19th century. Bigfork, Mont., Ketchum, Idaho, Jackson, Wyo., and Santa Fe, N.M., have developed thriving cultural centers and are pleasant, human-scale places to live.

The sustaining amenities of civilization, once confined to metropolitan areas, can now be brought to any place. The six-gun was called the great equalizer of the Old West. Information Age technology is the new equalizer. The mega-centers of commerce have lost their monopolies of economic power.

Bigfork, where I live, has been described by David Vokac in *The Great Towns of the West* as "one of the hidden pleasures of the Northern Rockies, in a picturesque, pine-shaded location on a tiny arm of Flathead Lake ... one of the West's great leisure sites, with a wealth of urbane diversions." Enthusiastic community contributions and effective grant solicitation built a 435-seat performing arts theater, now five years old.

This $1.25 million facility houses a repertory theater providing Broadway musicals during the summer and concerts, community theater, ballet, road shows and theater workshops during the balance of the year. Another community effort built an outdoor amphitheater for a summer concert series in the park.

Underlying these facilities is a reconstructed community water system and a state-of-the-art tertiary treatment sewage plant that is community owned and operated.

Private investment has built an 18-hole, soon-to-be-27-hole, golf course a mile outside the village. Earlier private entrepreneurship built and operates a family-owned dude ranch with a national reputation. Other entrepreneurs have developed a resort hotel, and businesses with regional and national reach have headquartered in Bigfork Village.

Fiber-optic cable provides a link to metropolitan areas across the United States and the world. Entrepreneurs, substantial reinvestment and sustained community volunteer effort has, in 16 years, tranformed a tiny crossroads village in the northern Rockies into a prototype "amenity community."

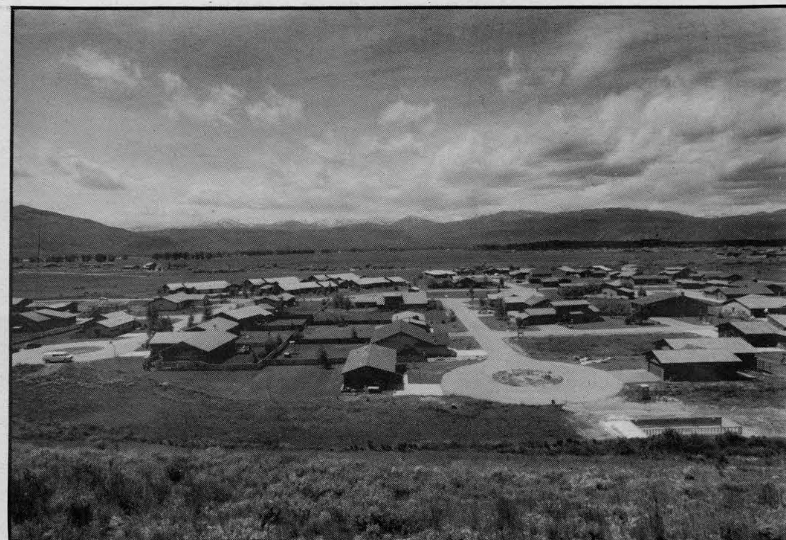
The enduring pioneer virtues, reapplied to the 21st century, are precisely the virtues so much in demand today. Self-reliance, creative ingenuity, industriousness, perseverance in the face of daunting obstacles, inventiveness and resourcefulness exactly define the qualities necessary for entrepreneurial success. It is no accident that Montana, of all 50 states, has the nation's highest concentration of small businesses — almost 96 percent of all businesses in the state — and the nation's highest percentage of small business employment — more than 68 percent of statewide jobs.

Their cumulative impact has largely gone unrecognized and unacknowledged. Without recognition, with negligible public assistance, and rarely with community encouragement, this entrepreneurial workforce is driving economic growth in Montana and restructuring our economy in the process.

If the towns of the Rocky Mountains can retain or regain their capital — their landscapes and ecosystems and frontier values — they can be the leading edge of the new amenity economy. It is not an economy of retirees or tourists, but rather one where productive people live in a sustainably productive environment. ■

George Darrow is a former Montana state senator who lives and farms in Bigfork, Montana.

Will Jackson save itself?



Tim Palmer

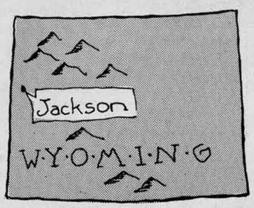
Development near Jackson Hole, Wyoming

Essay by **Ben Read**

As a plan to control growth nears completion in Jackson Hole, Wyo., a concerted effort to seize the middle ground has been launched by conservatives. The new Citizens Advisory Group of Teton County asserts in a mission statement that it is a "populist and progressive, non-partisan, county-wide, community-based coalition formed in the common interest to protect and enhance the environment of Jackson Hole."

This consortium of landowners, developers, lawyers and real estate agents says it is strongly pro-environment, even agreeing that "good regulations make for good business." But scratch the surface and one finds the frontier ideology that nobody has a right to interfere in someone else's business affairs.

It's too early to gauge how successful the conservative backlash will be. Two years ago this community elected officials who promised to rein in sprawl and commercial growth. What's anomalous or surprising about the group's claim to credibility is that an overwhelming majority of the local population is made up of "incomers" who, for the most part, have come to Jackson Hole to get away from the congestion that overwhelmed the places they left behind.



Why is the ethos that draws people to mountain communities like Jackson Hole so easily countered by that small percentage of the overall population that has the most to gain from rapid growth and development?

I think an answer is that beneath the support for preservation of open space and other environmental principles, there is not — as of yet, in modern-day America — an easily articulated foundation of beliefs. In the absence of this organizing principle, regulations that slow development begin to seem like nothing more or less than just another competing set of wants.

You want the right to develop; I want wildlife and wetlands protection. My wants versus your wants ... who's got the upper hand? So long as one's premises remain unarticulated, the momentum overwhelmingly supports the atomized citizen who righteously and aggressively proclaims, "I support individual rights, not the tyranny of the group."

How is it, in other words, that planning presents us with such positive possibilities, yet possibilities that are so difficult to mobilize?

Before jumping into this vital matter, let's take a look at what's going on in Jackson Hole. The short answer is: One heck of a lot. The area is exploding with projects and development schemes of a size and impact never before contemplated. A small sampling would include a proposal for a 15-unit factory outlet center, plans to build a Western lodge and 42-unit residential complex, two motel complexes, approval of more than 200 top-end lots, an equestrian center and 11-unit subdivision, a 54,000-square-foot arts museum and visitors' center, a $4 million ice skating complex and new ski shelter at the base of Snow King; and plans to shift the county library and town post office to new sites outside the center of town.

Let's stop fooling ourselves! In Jackson Hole, we're talking about explosive growth, with more to come.

Some of these projects serve a legitimate public interest, and I have no desire to draw distinctions between the good, the bad and the neutral. Nonetheless, it's obvious that a lot of this frenzied expansion is related to an aggressive pursuit of personal advantage. Much of this boom is about money, getting-while-the-getting-is-good, money, profit-taking, and lots and lots of money.

It has nothing to do with the experience of northwestern Wyoming or the national parks; it has nothing to do with citizenship in this small community or the open-ended curiosity that brings visitors to our doorstep.

We've hit a streak of gold, and in some quarters the attitude is, "If I don't do the taking, someone else will." This psychology was explored in a famous essay, published in *Science* magazine (1968), called "The Tragedy of the Commons." When a traditional culture begins to break down, citizens conclude that if they put their own cattle on the common pasture, while the same number is kept on privately owned ground, then they each stand to come out better. But, of course, all the citizens suffer because the small value that the commons offered to everyone is lost when the resource is depleted.

Sadly, this is what appears to be happening in Jackson Hole. We would rather stand aside and concentrate on personal aggrandizement than protect the community. We shouldn't do this. We shouldn't forget the gifts that this landscape and the community bestow.

In planning, we are given the opportunity to envision a relationship of empathy and care. The whole purpose of governance is to protect the less tangible, non-monetary interests and longings of the wider population against the private sector that acts in only its own interest. Good law seeks "to strengthen those bonds that in former times were secured through faithfulness and gratitude," writes philosopher Lewis Hyde.

This is why planning in Jackson Hole is so important. It gives us the chance to act on our "faithfulness and gratitude" to this valley and the values it represents. The strongest opposition to a new plan will come from those who believe they have the absolute right to graze as many cattle on the commons as they want (because there shouldn't be any laws that say they can't).

Personally, I believe it's desperately important for us to come back to these bedrock issues. Along the way, we'll have to grapple with our prejudices about the role of government. Collectively, these arguments are all about the right to stampede to the feeding trough.

It seems to me that in this new plan, we have an exceptional opportunity to step forth as friends and celebrants. Can we respond to this challenge in a prosperous community as small, as simple and as cohesive as this? Or is there nothing here or anyplace else in the world but the drive to have more and more and more?

I find a hopeful future in the local expression: No one stays in Jackson Hole because it's the "smart" thing to do. What that means to me is that collectively we are a spinoff from the wider material culture that has settled here to explore in "faithfulness and gratitude" a world that gives and gives unstintingly of itself and demands nothing in return. ■

A version of this article first appeared in the *Jackson Hole Guide*. Ben Read is a writer who worked on planning issues for the Jackson Hole Alliance for Responsible Planning.

An ecosystem's attractions are also destructive

People seeking wide-open spaces and wildlife are invading the greater Yellowstone ecosystem, but the values they came for are rapidly disappearing, reports the Greater Yellowstone Coalition.

In its quarterly journal, *Greater Yellowstone Report*, the group says the development of second-home and retirement-home "ranchettes" is encroaching on riparian zones and consuming large tracts of winter range used by wildlife. During the 1980s, counties surrounding the greater Yellowstone ecosystem grew 33 percent faster than Montana, Wyoming and Idaho combined, with Gallatin growing the fastest of any Montana county, the coalition reports.

According to Montana Power Co., Gallatin and neighboring Park County nearly doubled in population between 1991 and 1992. The cause is Montana's 1973 subdivision law, which allows the division of large tracts of land into 20-acre parcels without county review. This encourages ranchettes and discourages the large working ranches the county was founded on. The Montana Legislature is now addressing this issue and may amend the law.

For more information, contact the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, P.O. Box 1874, Bozeman, MT 59715 (406/586-1593). —***John Bokman***

WHAT RANCHERS NEED TO DO NOW THAT THE WORLD HAS COME CALLING

ESSAY BY VESS QUINLAN

Many Westerners of my generation insist they were born a hundred years too late. I am no exception and often wonder what the Colorado high country looked like when my great-grandfather J.P. Quinlan rode into it in the 1800s, presumably looking for gold, solitude and opportunity. I like to imagine J.P. a staunch Jeffersonian, speaking out stoutly in favor of the principles Jefferson thought should be the base on which our Republican form of government was to be anchored with the strong bolts of justice and equality.

J.P. died long before I was born. I have been encouraged to identify with him by great-aunts who insist that I am his virtual reincarnation. It seemed right when they went on to say he was stubborn, opinionated, and not all that easy to live with. Those qualities fit, you see, with my image of him and his fellow pioneers as a rugged individualist, cutting forbidding mountains down to size, facing down angry Utes, and holding his own with the predatory Eastern capitalists.

But this stereotype causes many of us in the West to adopt and defend a storyline that is often more myth than fact. J.P. did not go around cutting mountains down to size and making Jefferson-inspired speeches about the dignity of man and his proper governance. He was a prospector who never had the money or perhaps the ability and ambition to develop his claims. So he sold the claims to mining companies that extracted millions in profits from his famous strikes, like the Little Johnny and the Copper Queen. J.P. invested his slim share of the wealth in a ranch near McCoy, Colo.

He was Irish in a "Help Wanted — No Irish Need Apply" world and probably shared Madison's gloomy Federalist view that mankind was base and needed strong government with suitable checks and balances to prevent the smaller, cleverer fraction of mankind from devouring the larger, duller fraction. J.P. wrote speeches, all right, and rode the train to Denver to lecture the legislators on grazing issues.

Most of his speeches were of the "I was here first — and I will personally shoot the buttons off the first son-of-a-bitch who messes with my right to run cows any way I please" variety. Judging by those speeches, my august ancestor was a little light in the "Come, let us reason together" department.

Does that reduce my admiration for what he accomplished? No. In fact, the truth is even more amazing than the myth. Eastern money wanted the gold he found, paid him for finding it, and invested huge amounts of capital to extract the precious metal from the hard rock that held it captive.

And at first, Eastern money was also interested in cattle. But luckily, for J.P. and his fellow ranchers, Eastern money did not long remain interested in the hard-work, low-profit business of scratching a living out of a subsistence cow outfit. The relative poverty of his endeavor protected J.P.'s autonomy and probably he and most Western families preferred the freedom of action to fat bank accounts anyway.

I contend there were social and political ramifications that came from the fact that J.P. and ranchers like him were isolated, poor and difficult to manage. First, we were better able to accept and implement Jefferson's theory of government than our city cousins who opted for Madison's Federalist system to protect themselves from neighbors who had no vital interest in their well-being.

Western communities that developed around the family ranches clearly shared good and bad times. It was easier to see how the well-being of each depended upon the success of others. The Jeffersonian ideal of enlightened citizens founding and operating a government in their own best interests worked because everyone saw their fortunes rise and fall together — and because they were too scattered and isolated for government, any government, to minister to and thereby influence the way they lived and thought.

Fees charged and collected by the community doctor depended upon the price of steers. A merchant could collect for goods only when the steers were sold for enough to allow a profit. The banker could only be repaid from steer profits. The range cow was damn near a sacred beast, and she was sacred to the entire community.

While such commonness of purpose resulted in politically and socially stable communities, it also produced a certain narrowness of viewpoint. It has always been easy for us to look down on town folks and their irrelevant or wrongheaded ideas, and to simply ignore them. For one thing, most of us were horseback — and looking down on city folks we disagreed with sort of came natural. For another, we knew most urban people would not last a year trying to earn a living our way.

We knew from experience that most people would not willingly endure the harshness of our labor or the solitude of our daily lives. We were protected on all sides and were considered by most federal land managers as having a valid priority right.

In my grandfather's day, there were few who could both afford and who wanted a piece of the West. An occasional European black sheep of noble family, a wealthy eccentric here and there, but there were not enough Hearsts, Rockefellers or Henry Fords to displace us from the huge openness we called home.

Today, airplanes, interstates and the incredible advances in communication technology allow modern tycoons to live where they please, and many of them please to live in the West and make use of public land we have always considered our own.

Since the end of the Second World War, we have seen an almost unbelievable increase in the wealth of the United States. Rapid technological advances and perhaps a few trillion in public and private debt allow thousands of minor middle-management types to behave like the Hearsts of the 1920s. American tycoons breed like rabbits and we are overrun with 'em.

They want to ski the mountains, camp and hike on the land, fish the waters, and often just know it's all still there to relieve the drab pressure of city jobs and lifestyles. They demand environmental preservation and protection and are willing to fight for it. The honest desire to preserve and protect allows environmental organizations to spring up like weeds, and to solicit, support and scare funds from folks who are long on good intentions and short on facts.

Ranchers' autonomy-protecting poverty is gone because others value assets we have always controlled. We must develop the political and social skills necessary to keep our families on the land. Depending upon our own self-serving trade associations and often illusionary legal rights to fight the battle for us is not going to work.

Making smug Jeffersonian speeches to city cousins who long ago rejected these principles in favor of Madison's Federalist ideas is a waste of time and effort. They don't know what in the hell we are talking about and cannot imagine such a scheme working in the modern, competitive America they call home.

The America crowding in on us is not in good shape politically, economically or philosophically. It has confused "wants" with "needs" and failed to understand the difference between fairness and justice. Education has been confused with knowledge and democracy with equality. Modern America thinks manipulating and accounting has the same value as producing.

Special interest groups have created so many sacred cows that they have begun to gore and trample each other. The twin giant sacred cows of education and politics are eating the seed corn and do not know that it is the wrong thing to do.

If I am correct in my contentions, or even half-correct, how then do we deal with the reality confronting ranchers? I am not suggesting that we or they compromise. We need to re-think and re-state our basic priorities and then adjust to the new reality of living in closer proximity to city people with urban values.

Giving over control of land or water to the America I have described is not a compromise. It is a disaster.

I have no intention of seeing my sons or grandsons busy bolting wheels on Buicks because I was so intent on living J.P.'s life over that I failed to take a hand in my own time. If we use our common sense in dealing with the sincere, concerned urban environmentalist, we can still have the fun of shooting the buttons off an enviro-terrorist now and then, without shooting ourselves in the foot in the process.

I suggest we put our Jeffersonian ideals where our mouths are and take it head on. I don't care if we ever attend another Cattlemen's Association meeting. The cattlemen and other trade associations long ago evolved into political organisms capable of tending their own care and feeding.

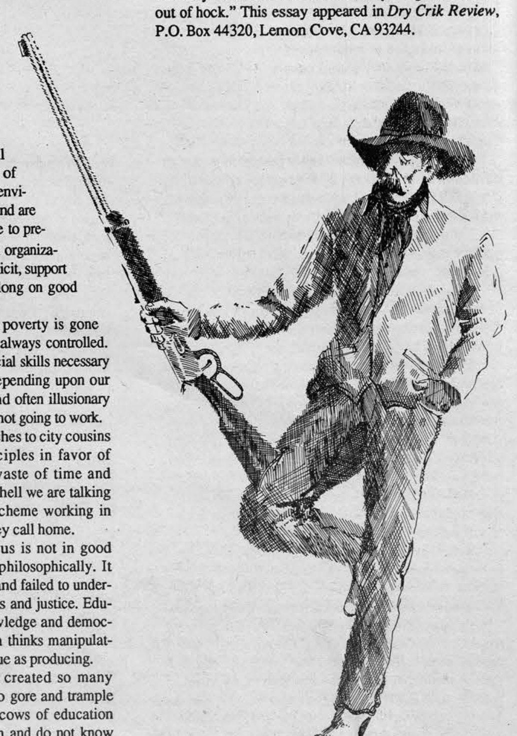
I think that we (individual agriculturists) should attend every environmental meeting in America. We should be there not to confront or "tell 'em how it is." We should be there to make it as rough as possible for them to look good people in the eye and run 'em off the land.

We can either pray for a Depression that will make Bob Cratchetts out of all of these high-rollers and drive 'em back to a cold-water flat, three floors up; take after 'em with our saddle guns; or find a way to listen to their genuine concerns. To talk, and yes ... to learn.

We must first check our own premises and make sure our grazing methods will, in fact, leave the country better than we found it. When we are sure that we and our range management are improving, instead of destroying, the country we run on, then and only then can we hope to deal effectively with our critics.

It then becomes our individual responsibility to, in the gentlest and most effective possible way, confront our critics and help the concerned general public understand what we have learned in generations of loving land that they have recently discovered is a precious piece of America. ■

Vess Quinlan lives in Monte Vista, Colorado, but currently drives a truck cross-country "to get the ranch out of hock." This essay appeared in *Dry Crik Review*, P.O. Box 44320, Lemon Cove, CA 93244.



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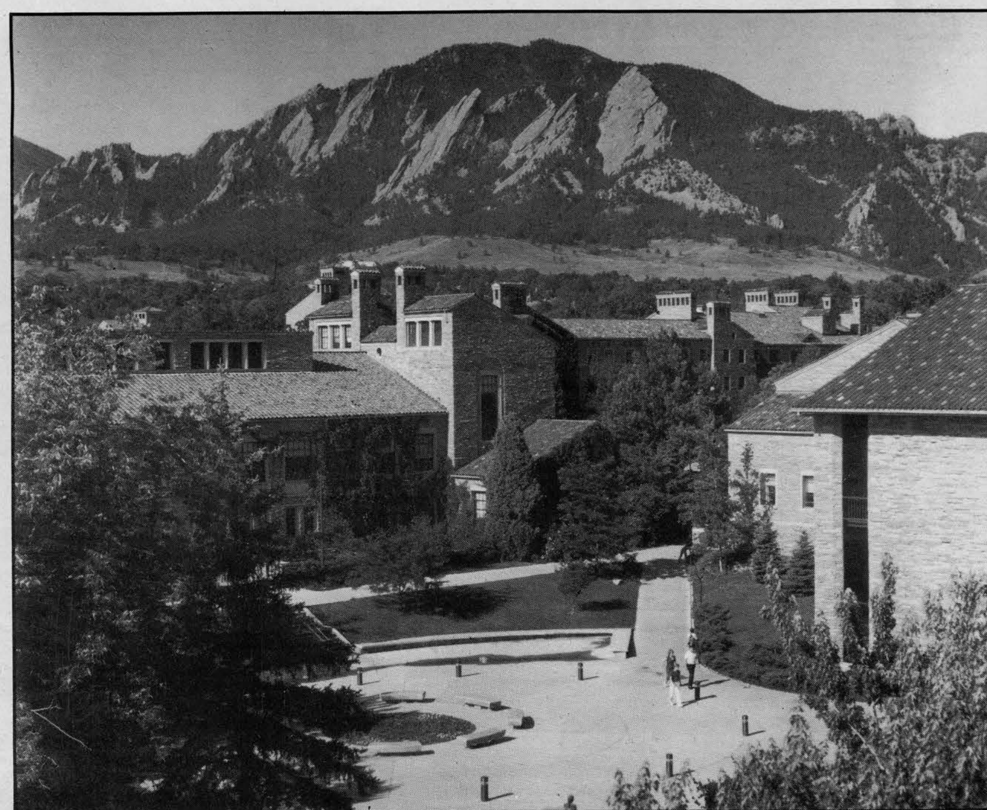

Gregory O. Jones/University of Colorado

The University of Colorado's Boulder campus lies below the foothills known as the Flatirons

How Boulder preserves its vision

Essay by **Ed Marston**

Developers can terrorize and bully communities. Appearing swiftly and unannounced, like horse-mounted raiders from the desert, plans under their arms and lawyers in tow, they hold out the carrot of an increased tax base and the stick of a lawsuit. More often than not, they make a city or town feel as if it has no choice but to accept the subdivision, or mall, or golf course, or ski area, or gravel pit, or whatever they are offering.

But speed and surprise don't always win, as Boulder, a city of 86,000 on Colorado's Front Range, is showing. For the moment, Boulder has become the City from Hell as far as an energy developer named Peak Power Corp., based in San Francisco, is concerned.

In October 1992, Peak Power filed an application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to build two reservoirs, a pumping station, some power lines and access roads on part of 270 acres of open space Boulder acquired, for $740,000, to fill in the southern tier of its belt of open space.

Boulder learned of the filing on its Doudy Draw property by accident — a state employee who enjoys reading the *Federal Register* noticed the application, and told Boulder's Open Space/Real Estate department. At this initial stage, neither Peak Power nor FERC were required to notify the land owner or community, and neither did.

That's the last uncontested bit of information. Jim Crain, head of the city's Open Space department, says that when one of his employees called Rick Koebbe, Peak Power's vice president, Koebbe allegedly asked, "What is Boulder doing with open space in Jefferson County?" and allegedly said, "We'll see you in court." The "see you in court" could have to do with the fact that a FERC license to build the several hundred million dollar pumped storage hydroelectric project would carry condemnation power.

The "allegedlies" refer to the fact that Koebbe vigorously denies making the statements. Jim Crain made them up, Koebbe said in a telephone interview. "I don't know what's with the guy."

Koebbe agreed he hadn't notified Boulder. For one thing, when Peak Power applied, the land was in private hands. Also, this initial application is in the nature of an exploration permit — it gives the applicant time to survey the project without worrying about claim jumpers. Later, Koebbe said, everyone would be notified.

Boulder isn't waiting for the next FERC step. So far as the Boulder City Council is concerned, a developer has come calling in a rude and unannounced way, and it will be met in just as rude a way.

First, the Boulder City Council appropriated up to $40,000 to file a competing hydropower application for the site. By law, FERC must give a city or county "municipal preference," so although Boulder is late, it's in the race.

Second, Boulder dug out of FERC files seven other projects Peak Power has filed on, and is notifying the local communities of those filings. Then, says Crain, "Those places can decide what they want to do." (See story below.)

Third, Boulder will approach the Colorado congressional delegation about changing the law, so that applicants have to inform property owners and local government that a project is entering the initial stage.

Boulder may also lobby the White House, so that the current four vacancies on FERC, out of five seats, will be filled by people sympathetic to communities and the environment rather than to developers.

Whether you think Boulder is overreacting will depend on your values. People who believe in the sanctity of private property, local control and hostility to the federal government may be torn in this case. Boulder is fighting for all three of those values. But in the West, such phrases as "local control" are usually used to push all-out development rather than environmental protection.

The reaction may also depend on how you view Boulder, which some in the West see as having an "attitude."

But one thing is clear: Boulder is acting as communities must act if they are to control their destinies. Boulder is determined to set its development agenda, rather than have that agenda set by a corporation.

Boulder's quick, decisive actions are based in a century of history. Starting in the late 19th century, Crain says, the town began to purchase its "backdrop" — the foothills of the Rockies west of Boulder. Over this century it has created a relatively dense urban core surrounded by open space.

The land Peak Power filed on without consulting Boulder is part of that century-long plan. Boulder bought the land in part to buffer itself against the 22,000-acre Jefferson Center Development planned for the City of Arvada.

Boulder's approach to urban planning has been rewarded economically. Because its citizens tax themselves to buy open space, its real estate values have boomed by comparison with communities that allow maximum sprawl and minimum open space.

What lesson does Boulder's long experiment hold for other Western communities? The primary lesson is that Boulder created a vision of itself — a vision backed by citizen groups such as Plan Boulder and by elected officials.

It is that long-held vision that allowed Boulder to react quickly to the raid on its open space by Peak Power.

Very few rural Western communities can afford

continued on next page

Boulder's vision ...

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$40,000 to challenge unwanted development. But that is because many Western places are today where Boulder was a century ago, when it began to practice self-determination. Moreover, towns in the rural West often have an advantage over Boulder, in that their open space may already exist, as surrounding federal land. The need is to help decide how that public land should be managed, and how to integrate the private land and the public land.

Boulder became an upscale community because land use and community planning are so unusual that it inadvertently created a rare commodity in the West — order in the midst of disorder. Small, rural towns today are being overrun because they have some of the same appeal as Boulder. They have a relatively small scale, they are surrounded by open space, and the very nature of small towns provides some of the appealing social life that Boulder has achieved in other, more formal, ways.

Boulder protects itself from development by its vision and activism. Small, rural communities have been protected from development until recently by their distance from jobs and markets, by poverty, schools that espouse rural rather than urban values, and by lack of other services.

For many reasons, those protective mechanisms are either gone (fax machines, Federal Express and the like destroy distance) or are no longer relevant. Therefore, if current national economic trends continue, many small places will be subdivided into large, unwieldy, undesirable places, just as has happened to hundreds of once livable villages within 100 miles or so of Los Angeles.

The question is: Can some of the West's small, rural communities figure out how to keep themselves livable in the face of present development pressures? And can enough of them figure it out so that those that do preserve their appeal aren't overwhelmed, as Boulder has been, because they have created attractive islands in seas of sloppy development?

There is no one prescription for success. But at the base of any vision will be the surrounding public lands. A ski resort will mean one kind of community; an attempt to continue mining, logging and grazing will mean another kind; wilderness will be a third kind.

Boulder tells us that planning can lead to high real estate prices and a tendency toward an upper-middle class or wealthy community, as in Aspen, Sun Valley and other places.

But planning can also be used to create other kinds of communities. A logging or mining town that wishes to keep its way of life, even if its economic base has changed, would have a different vision of its future, and a different set of tactics than, for example, a busted town that has already been taken over by newcomers from cities.

Unfortunately, the one approach that won't work is the one that comes most naturally to Westerners: the "you can't tell a man what to do with his land" approach. What that passive attitude really means is: "only developers wielding outside money can tell us what to do with our land." ■

Other Peak Power Projects

Here is a list of other hydropower projects that Peak Power Corp. has filed on, according to the city of Boulder.

Butte Project, Butte, Mont. This is a 100 megawatt project that proposes to use the Berkeley Pit Superfund site as one reservoir. It would use mine effluent. FERC project number 11201.

Tropicana Project, Las Vegas, Nev. The upper reservoir of this 100 megawatt project would be the Blue Diamond Mine. FERC number 11221.

West Mesa Project is proposed for Bureau of Land Management lands 23 miles northwest of El Centro, Calif. FERC number 11299.

Salt Lake Project, proposed for Ogden, Box Elder County, Utah. This is a 200 megawatt project. FERC number 11353.

Pokes Point Project, also proposed for Ogden, Box Elder County, Utah. It is a 200 megawatt project. FERC number 11354.

Hell's Kitcher Project is proposed for Utah County, near Provo, Utah. It would generate 200 megawatts. FERC number 11355.

The Eldorado Project is proposed for a wilderness study area located 15 miles south of Las Vegas. FERC number 11371.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's address is: FERC, Office of External Affairs, 825 N. Capitol St., N.E., Washington, DC 20426.

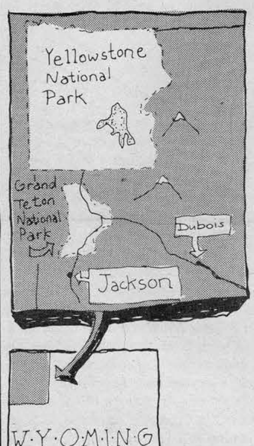
Peak Power's address is: 10 Lombard St., Ste. 410, San Francisco, CA 94111.

Areas fear glitzification

Accelerating growth in Wyoming's Upper Wind River Valley has Dubois planners worried that the area's rural heritage is becoming "Jacksonized."

As evidence, they point to a doubling of rural sewer applications in the last year, a 10 percent increase in phone hook-up requests, and a tripling of land values, reports AP in the Casper *Star-Tribune*.

Fremont County Economic Development Director Pat Neary says Dubois will never be as populated as nearby Jackson, Wyo., but he worries that the subdivision of ranches will blight the landscape with "rural sprawl."



"We value the feeling of open space, rangelands and the cowboy life," says Neary. "It's this whole feeling of openness and the West that is threatened."

Neary also has no kind words for the growth that has transformed Jackson.

"When people look at Jackson, they see crowds and plastic and glitz," he says. "They don't like it because it's not Wyoming." Neary says Dubois is also threatened by an infusion of wealthy people "who can skew the entire community." Rural Dubois has a development permit system that places some restrictions on development, but Neary says it doesn't go far enough.

— Paul Larmer

When Aspen boomed even bigger during the 1980s, workers that made the town run were forced downvalley in search of affordable housing. For a while they were safe. They found homes to buy or rent in El Jebel, Basalt, Carbondale and Glenwood Springs.

But recently, spurred by soaring property prices in town, developers have also shifted downvalley in search of the next real estate bonanza, reports the March 22 *Aspen Times*. This could force office, restaurant and ski-resort workers to move yet again — this time to Silt or Rifle, 60 miles away.

A development planned near Basalt, for example, expects to sell $300,000 houses on two-acre lots. More high-end subdivisions are under way outside Aspen, and all feature luxury homes on large lots.

"You're not seeing proposals for affordable housing," said Michael McVoy, president of a downvalley citizens group that advocates slow growth. "It's going to be a perpetuation of the situation that drove everybody downvalley in the first place."

Aspen Times reporter Scott Condon warns that "glitzification" of towns "will take place if Aspen developers have their way with local authorities." He says that was the political pattern years ago in Pitkin County, home of Aspen.

The *Aspen Times* is published at 310 E. Main St., Aspen, CO 81611.

— Adam Duerk