

Noisy Grand Canyon

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High Country News

September 1, 1986

Vol. 18 No. 16

A Paper for People who Care about the West

One Dollar

Rick Morrell



At steep Wolf Creek Pass

Ski area proposal goes smash

by Tamara Wiggans

Wolf Creek Pass in southwestern Colorado is a place of extremes. Its precarious curves, fierce winter white-outs and breathtaking views have inspired and frightened travelers since it was a dirt track in pioneer times.

Today, the road is paved, even widened in its worst spots, and a small ski area sits atop the pass. Nevertheless, the area looks much as

it did in pioneer days. The Continental Divide remains rugged and forested, and the valley meadows that stretch out thousands of feet below the pass are still irrigated in the summer to raise hay.

The road was made famous in the 1970s by C.W. McCall's ballad about a hair-raising truck ride down U.S. 160. McCall used some artistic license, but not much. The highway climbs and descends the Divide between the San Luis Valley on the northeast and the town of Pagosa Springs on the southwest via a series of hairpin switchbacks, mudslides, slumps and concrete snowsheds that send frequent avalanches over the road and into the valleys below.

Winter is the most dangerous time. The Wolf Creek Pass Ski Area's location atop the Continental Divide

yields it twice the snow of other resorts in the state. These south San Juan Mountains are a trap for moisture moving up from the moist, warm Southwest.

While the area is in Colorado's snow belt, it is not in its ski belt. The state's major ski areas -- the Vails, Aspen, Copper Mountains -- sit hours to the north in the central portion of the state, along the Interstate 70 corridor that has turned the mountain valleys for 100 miles west of Denver into a linear, cedar-shaded development of condos, chalets and shopping centers.

Because the southwestern part of the state is far from a major airport, city or interstate, it has remained relatively free of resorts. The ranching, logging and mining economies in the area are supplemented in

the summer by car campers and backpackers, and by travellers on their way to Mesa Verde and other Four Corners spots. But for the most part, it is a declining or stagnating area, with traditional economies on the way out. Nothing is moving in.

Nothing, that is, until developer Harvey Doerring came on the scene. Inspired perhaps by the booming Telluride ski area in the northwest San Juans, the California real estate developer and tax-shelter promoter proposed a huge resort for the valley formed by the West Fork of the San Juan River. The centerpiece of Wolf Creek Valley was to be a new ski area on a ridge known as Windy Pass.

Windy Pass was identified as a potential ski area in the Land and

(Continued on page 10)

Dear friends,



High Country News

HIGH COUNTRY NEWS (ISSN/0191/5657) is published biweekly, except for one issue during July and one issue during January, by the High Country News Foundation, 124 Grand Avenue, Paonia, Colorado 81428. Second-class postage paid at Paonia, Colorado.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to HIGH COUNTRY NEWS, Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428.

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Articles appearing in *High Country News* are indexed in *Environmental Periodical Bibliography*, *Environmental Studies Institute*, 2074 Alameda Padre Serra, Santa Barbara, California 93103.

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Subscriptions are \$20 per year for individuals, \$28 per year for institutions. Single copies \$1.00 plus \$1.25 postage and handling.

Our request last issue for help in sending *HCN* to schools in our region brought an immediate order from the town council of Crested Butte, Colorado. The town is concerned about a proposal by the Front Range city of Aurora to divert water from the Gunnison River watershed under the Continental Divide. So it bought subscriptions for the three Aurora schools on our list. Town attorney Wes Light said he thought *HCN* could help Aurora's young people understand the fallout from their community's rapid expansion.

Writer Ray Ring, whose account of a Grand Canyon helicopter trip and whose recipes for car cookery grace this issue, tells us: "I'm taking care of little Molly (aged three months, weight 11 pounds, length 22-plus inches) four days a week, and trying to freelance when and where I can. We aren't shy about taking the babe everywhere -- to Santa Fe art galleries, a Taos country-western bar, the ruins at Chaco Canyon... She'll probably turn out to be an accountant." (Angry letters from accountant-readers should be sent to Ring care of this newspaper.) Ring's piece on car cookery, by the way, is very funny. We hope to convince him to do a followup on foreign-car cookery.

Circulation director C.B. Elliott tells us that, perhaps due to the lack of a declared *HCN* crisis over the past few years, we are receiving large numbers of two and three-year renewals. Oh ye of too much faith.

Jim Robbins called from Helena, Montana, to request six copies of the last issue, which featured his detailed account of Indian artifact-looting in the Southwest. Casually he mentioned that he and his wife, Chere, became parents Aug. 18 of a little girl. Her name is Annika and she weighed 3 lbs. She's a healthy handful, Jim says, "but I caught a trout a few days before that was bigger."

A visitor last week from afar was Albuquerque, New Mexico, chiropractor Gordon Eatman. After reading *High Country News*, he says he leaves the paper in his waiting room and doesn't mind if someone walks off with it. We gave him some back issues to spread around on his travels.

Judy Moffatt, whose official title is *HCN's* Development Director, took her second annual Swing Around the West in July with son Nathan, and submitted the following account:

It's embarrassing to confess we travelled 3,500 miles in 16 days through Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho and Utah. Embarrassing because the land deserves a slower pace. But it was a pleasure to fit names on subscriber lists and on maps of the region together with real people and places.

This was the second year we've made a swing through the region, and again it gave us a first-hand sense of the territory *High Country News* covers, the people the paper serves and the issues that concern them. The trip also was an opportunity to place *HCN* in bookstores and on newsstands for distribution, to visit environmental groups and to talk with reporters at newspaper offices.

This was my first visit to Idaho. I was prepared for abundant signs of the timber industry's presence. But I was unprepared for the wheatfields

edged by evergreens that weave for miles south of Coeur D'Alene. An Idaho subscriber told us agriculture, not timber or mining, is the state's largest income producer.

We suspect the people who read *High Country News* lead full lives year-round, but their pace quickens in the summer tourist season. Everywhere we travelled, people were busy entertaining out-of-town guests. But, despite the demands of summer tourism, no one seemed ready to desert the Rockies for Secaucus, New Jersey.

And, along our route, subscribers generously made room for us. They threw get-togethers to introduce us to other subscribers, offered us spare rooms and backyard tent space, fed us and shared their views with us.

In between visits with subscribers, we were tourists. We saw Old Faithful in Wyoming, climbed Mount Ascension and took in the Stampede and Rodeo in Helena, Montana, and paddled a boat in a Salt Lake City pond.

In the Rocky Mountain states, the short snow-free months also contain several other seasons. To Nathan's delight, July was raspberry season. He proclaimed the best raspberries were those found in a Heron, Montana, subscriber's backyard. Judging by the number of logging trucks we encountered in Idaho, summer is also logging season.

The summer of 1986 is also a political season. Yard signs for candidates from local sheriffs to U.S. senator dotted roadsides. We joined a McCall, Idaho, subscriber at a fund-raising dinner for Cecil Andrus. It was also a time to make hay. Swathers and balers of all descriptions created multi-patterned fields.

For all the summer distractions, *HCN* readers were occupied with conservation issues: the Union Pass road in Wyoming's Bridger-Teton National Forest, the Champion paper plant's water quality permit on the Clark's Fork River in Montana, widening a highway through Provo Canyon in Utah.

I remember the comment of a woman reader on changes she's seen in her home state. She said the state was "like a personality" to her and she hated to see it "being cut away."

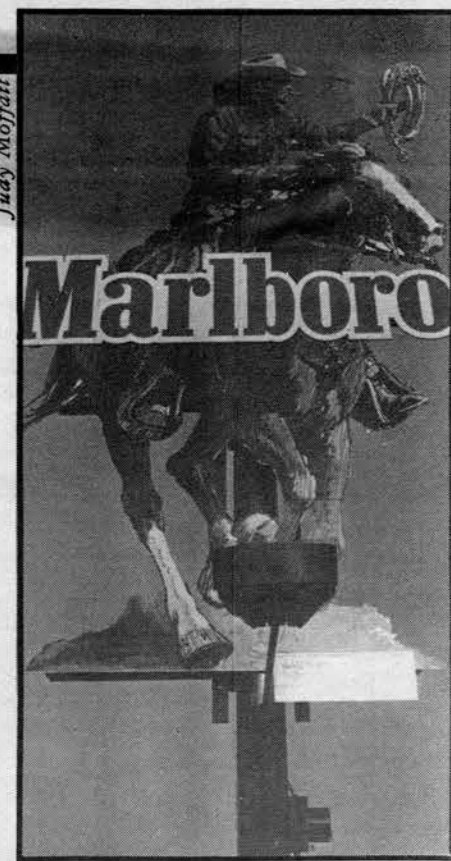
I'm encouraged by the optimism of a Utah Sierra Club chapter president who believes his group, in cooperation with others, is winning some battles. The same young man said he feels a "sense of community" from reading

Wolke sounds recidivist

Outfitter and Earth First! co-founder Howie Wolke used his six months of enforced inactivity in the Pinedale, Wyoming, jail as a time "to reflect on the big picture on the public lands." Wolke was convicted of a classic monkeywrenching crime -- uprooting survey stakes laying out a road to a Chevron drill site.

On July 22, Wolke had "18 days, 21 hours and 15 minutes" remaining before his Aug. 10 departure. His jail stay had not been solitary. The logbook showed a steady parade of visitors, among them writers for national media. "I've seen my name in print enough to last a lifetime," Wolke said.

Wolke spent his first four months in jail writing a book. He said Edward Abbey has agreed to write the foreword. Describing himself as completely remorseless, Wolke said,



Billboard outside Helena, Montana

HCN and is reassured that he's "not out there all alone." He would have even a better sense of not being alone had he travelled those 3,500 miles with us. Among those we visited were:

In Rock Springs, Wyoming: Katharine and John Collins and Paul Krza; in Pinedale, Elizabeth Blake and Howie Wolke (I saw him in the Pinedale jail); in *HCN's* Lander birthplace, Geoff and Berthenia O'Gara, Sarah Doll and Dave and May Reynolds; in Dubois, Budd and Emili Betts; in Kelly, Lorraine Bonney, Greg Ziegler and Scotty Dejanikus; in Moose, Mardy Murie; in Jackson, Scott and Lisa Pierson, Laurie Thal, Holly Dill and Louise Murie MacLeod; in Wilson, Med Bennett and Betty Woolsey; and in Teton Village, Erwin and Peggy Bauer.

In Corwin Springs, Montana, Leonard and Sandy Sargent; in Livingston, John and Hap Reuben; in Bozeman, Con Gillam; in Helena, Adam and Nancy McLane, Gail Soltz, Sue Bryan, Dorothy Carrico and Ralph Beer; in Stevensville, Kirk Thompson; in Heron, Judy Hutchins.

In Rathdrum, Idaho, James McNamera; in Coeur D'Alene, Scott Reed; in McCall, Nelle Tobias; in Ketchum, Sally Liman; and in Hailey, Jon Marvel.

In Salt Lake City, Utah, Gene Hatch, Calvin Giddings, George Nickas; in Bountiful, Don Mabey; in Sandy, Trudy and George Healy; and in Provo, Lillian Hayes.

--the staff

"My only regret is at the time I was apprehended I'd only gotten a mile and a half of survey stakes out of the ground."

By Wolke's calculations, at least two million acres of wilderness are being lost each year on public lands. "That's an area almost the size of Yellowstone Park succumbing to the bulldozer every year." The environmental movement is "irresponsible" in publicizing gains in wilderness protection, he added. "Rather than claiming victory while the rape goes on, we should be screaming rape louder than ever."

To make real gains in wilderness protection, mainstream conservationists must change their tactics. Wolke said, "The environmental movement as a whole needs to become more forceful and less compromising."

--Judy Moffatt

Lean cattle create fat and happy ranchers

Lean beef has been around for a few years, mostly as a marketing oddity. But Mel Coleman, a rancher in Saguache, southern Colorado, has turned his organically grown cattle into big business and a rare agricultural success story.

Like many other ranchers, Coleman was caught six years ago between rising production costs and a declining beef market. Facing foreclosure, he took a daring step to save the ranch that had been in his family since 1873. Selling off his market stock, he completely rebuilt his herd without hormones, steroids or antibiotics, providing only grasses, hay and feeds that were certified free of herbicides and pesticides. In 1980, he became the first USDA-authorized producer of "natural" beef, an entirely new classification of meat.

Coleman Natural Beef was not an overnight success. In his first marketing year, Coleman sold a mere 50 head; the rest of his organically grown market stock had to be dumped on the regular beef market at a substantial loss.

Without the drugs and chemicals, and only a short-term fattening period, Coleman's cattle were taking about 20 percent longer -- about four more months -- to reach market weight. In the retail markets, natural beef had to cost about 25 percent more than the regular product.

Slowly, increasingly health-conscious consumers began finding Coleman's natural beef -- chemically "clean" and much leaner and lower in cholesterol -- to be an alternative to the fatty, heavily treated regular product. Soon Coleman was supplying retailers in California, Texas, Massachusetts and New Jersey.

The big breakthrough came in 1985 when Grand Union, a major East Coast supermarket chain, put Coleman Natural Beef in 200 stores from



Range cattle in Colorado

New York to Georgia. Coleman's sales that year hit 10,000 head, worth about \$10 million, and they brought the Saguache rancher his first profit in a decade.

"We're not saying regular beef is good or bad," Coleman emphasizes. "We're just providing the consumer with an alternative product."

Consumers are continuing to find the alternative worth the extra money, for Coleman's 1986 sales are projected to surpass 20,000 head. Since meeting that demand was far beyond the capability of his own ranch, Coleman organized Coleman Certified Ranchers, Inc., an association of San Luis Valley area ranchers who agreed to adhere to the strict regulations of his chemical-free production program.

Today, Coleman Certified Ranchers, Inc., has 36 independent ranchers and a collective organically grown herd of 80,000 head roaming on well

over 1 million acres of private and leased grassland.

"I'm particularly satisfied to know that our natural beef program allowed some of those ranchers to avoid foreclosure," Coleman says.

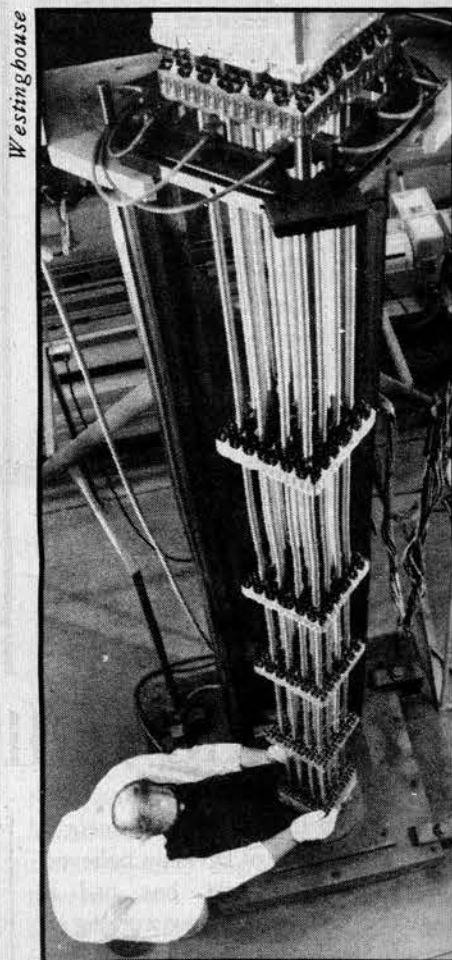
Coleman has strong ideas about natural beef-ranching that go beyond marketing and profit and loss statements. "Ranching may have leaned too far toward the factory approach of using grains and chemicals to cut costs and time," he says. "Our concept shifts the emphasis from the feedlots back to where I think it belongs -- on the ranches, where healthier animals are raised a little more slowly on the natural grasses they were meant to eat. And that just might go a long way toward preserving the rural way of life."

--Stephen Voynick

HOTLINE

Catch and fine

Thanks to noiseless kayaks, the Idaho Fish and Game Department has hooked hundreds of illegal anglers on remote stretches of Idaho rivers. In the six years since the program was launched, kayak teams, working in tandem through all water conditions, have surprised violators with citations. On his first patrol, conservation officer Mel Hedburg says he turned up eight fishing violations on an isolated stretch of the Salmon River, including one boat with three people and five lines. The fishermen said they would have reeled in the two illegal lines if they had heard a power boat. One run down the Snake River by a kayak patrol netted 15 people fishing without licenses, and at a campground on the Middle Fork Salmon River two officers spotted a group who were cooking trout taken from catch-and-release waters. The campers were happy to talk about the great fishing and good eating until the officers produced citation books and badges.



Nuclear fuel assembly

INEL gets plutonium nod

The Idaho National Engineering Laboratory in Idaho Falls has been chosen as the preferred site for a \$500 million project called Special Isotope Separation, or SIS. The DOE facility will use a new laser-based technology to separate weapons-grade plutonium from fuel-grade plutonium, sending the finished product on to the Rocky Flats weapons plant near Denver, Colorado. Idaho State University professor Cornelius Hoffman estimates the project will pump about \$150 million into the area economy annually and increase the local population by as much as 3,000. Pending a satisfactory environmental impact statement, construction could begin in late 1988 or early 1989. DOE officials say there will be little radioactive waste generated at the plant, which now processes uranium, and that it will not require new shipments of nuclear material. Instead SIS will tap into regular shipments that routinely pass through Idaho on the route between the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Washington and the Rocky Flats plant.

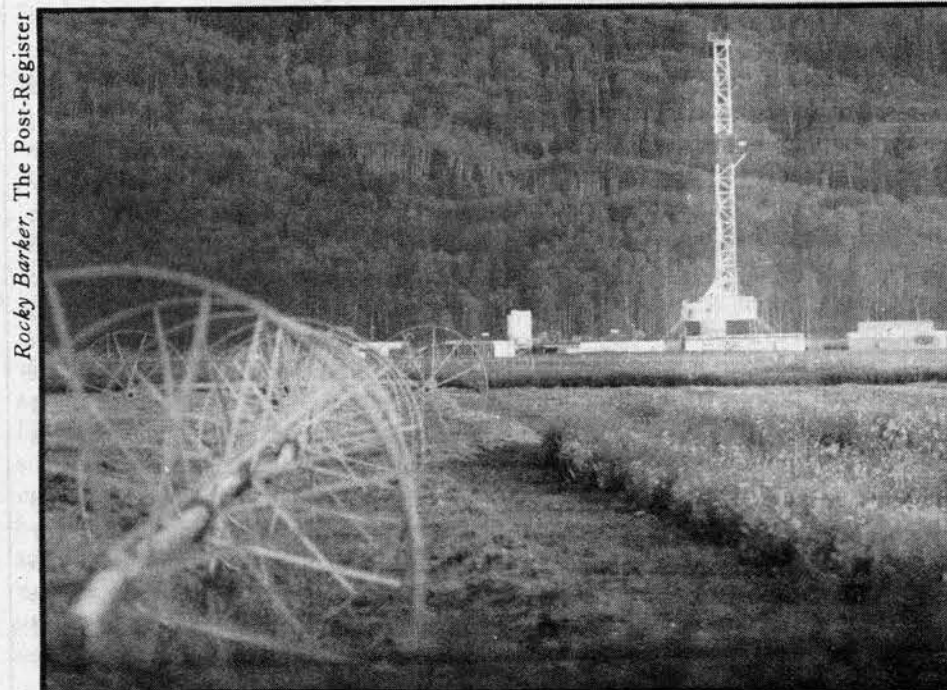
Jackson stings oil firm's exploration plan

Controversy still rages about an oil well in the Bridger-Teton National Forest near Jackson, Wyoming. Anschutz Corporation's proposed well in the Mosquito Creek drainage of the Bridger-Teton National Forest has drawn criticism from the tourist-based community since the company proposed exploratory drilling 11 years ago.

Although the application is for a single well on a site that has already been clearcut for timber, it is staunchly resisted by four citizens' groups. They say they fear a full-field industrial complex would be built if oil or gas is found. The Jackson district ranger's office reports receiving more than 450 letters about the well, with 97 percent opposing it. District Ranger Joe Kinsella told the *Jackson Hole Guide*: "This community is totally committed to the environment."

Nonetheless, in late June, Kinsella and BLM District Manager Don Sweep approved the Denver company's application for a 5,000-foot-deep well. The Bridger-Teton National Forest and Bureau of Land Management officials, who manage the surface and subsurface rights respectively, say they approved the drilling of a single well without an environmental impact statement because it posed no "significant threat to the quality of the human environment."

The Jackson community responded immediately, filing appeals with both the Forest Service and the BLM. Later



Anschutz oil well in Wilson, Wyoming

this summer, Anschutz's survey stakes on the road to the site were pulled up by a group calling itself "Barmaids for Howie" and two members of Earth First! chained themselves to the door of Bridger-Teton National Forest headquarters in Jackson.

On Aug. 8 an appeal filed by Wilson, Wyoming, resident Mark Altman reached the Department of the Interior's Board of Land Appeals. The Board granted a temporary stay,

blocking Anschutz's plans until Aug. 29.

If Anschutz wins the appeal and then discovers oil or gas on Mosquito Creek, additional wells will be subject to the regular application process, and Kinsella says full-field development projects are contingent upon an environmental impact study. Opponents to the drilling say they doubt development of a large discovery could be halted, and they intend to keep the exploration well tied up in court.

--Steve Hinchman

Rocky Barker, The Post-Register

Westinghouse

HOTLINE



Sally Ranney

Recreation commission meets

Conservationist Sally Ranney, a member of President Reagan's Commission on Americans Outdoors, took part in its recent hearing at Jackson, Wyoming. But Ranney skipped the rafting trip on the Snake River planned for the group as she is still wearing a traction device for a broken back. The injury occurred during a snowmobile outing in Wyoming's Snowy Range with commission members. At the Jackson meeting, Interior Secretary Don Hodel told the group that federal land-management agencies "are not as well-organized as they could be." He said he agreed that an interagency committee should be appointed to address recreational issues. The commission hopes to make recommendations to the president by the end of 1986.

Colorado mills reprieved

The Colorado health department's Air Pollution Control Division believes Louisiana-Pacific Corp. has had a change of heart, and is now working to clean up its Kremmling and Olathe waferwood plants. So the Division recommended, and the Air Quality Control Commission agreed, that L-P be given until Dec. 4 to bring its plants into compliance.

The steps L-P will take to clean up emissions from the two plants, which convert aspen and other species into a plywood substitute, were contained in an agreement the firm and agency reached prior to an all-day hearing held in Grand Junction on Aug. 21. They include the raising of the smokestack at Olathe by 50 feet, alterations to the electrostatic filter bed and periodic incineration of its gravel to burn off clogging gunk, and continued maintenance of dual baghouse filters so that one is always in operation (the baghouses have been plagued by fire).

But the big news at the low-key, anti-climactic hearing was the Division's belief that L-P's footdragging days are over. The agency's John Clouse attributed the firm's change of heart to a revocation of its air quality permits last Mar. 5. The revocation came after a time-lapse movie camera secreted by the Division showed that L-P was frequently bypassing its pollution control system, and was not reporting the resulting violations to the state.

Scenic Airlines



Air tour over Grand Canyon

Canyon flights attract a comment blitz

Grand Canyon National Park Superintendent Richard Marks spent much of this summer sifting advice from the public on how to reduce noise from airplanes and helicopters flying in the 1,900-square mile park.

The June 18 mid-air collision that killed 25 people in the canyon added impetus to the search for some control of the now-unrestricted flights of aircraft. An agency environmental assessment proposed six alternatives, with the most restrictive barring aircraft from 11 percent of the canyon.

For the booming air-tour industry, which books 100,000 flights a year, any cutback in hours of flying or days or places was seen as a threat. This summer three air-tour operators placed petitions in their terminals that

collected 5,800 signatures in support of unrestricted canyon flights. Operators also paid for travel agents to send 1,209 pre-printed, stamped postcards supporting flights. About 100 cards arrived at the Park Service with just a travel-agency stamp, says Butch Farabee, a park management assistant. But some 30 cards had the message crossed out or the words changed to urge limited or no flights at all, Farabee said. Comments also included 775 letters and 143 statements made at public hearings.

A letter to "colleagues in travel" from Scenic Airlines, Inc. president John Seibold enclosed postcards and warned that "There is a movement by the Sierra Club and Wilderness Society to eliminate any and all flights over Grand Canyon." In an interview, Seibold said flights were necessary for the "30 percent of the U.S. population who really can't hike the canyon because of heart disease, overweight, emphysema, etc."

Seibold, who runs both tourist and commuter flights from Las Vegas, Nevada, added, "if noise is the issue," then the two airlines that carry more than 30 percent of the sightseeing passengers over Grand Canyon have a solution." The companies, Scenic and Grand Canyon Airlines, operate 19-passenger planes soon to be outfitted with quiet turbofan propellers certified at 72.3 decibels. Seibold said 66 decibels is normal conversation.

Seibold added that limiting noise was preferable to setting limits for aircraft since they would tend to cluster. It would also not give incentives to air companies to spend money on quieter planes or helicopters.

According to the Park Service summary of comments in favor of banning or restricting flights, people noted: "No one has a right to see the park in a way that destroys its stillness for others."

"Grand Canyon is the noisiest park in the West," said another, and "Just because planes have been flying over the canyon since 1926 does not make it right."

"Air traffic is highly regulated in cities. Why should a national park have lesser regulations?" And, "Given the astonishing number of flights within a limited airspace at

constantly changing altitudes with no radar and no restrictions, the recent mid-air collision was tragic but hardly surprising."

Farabee said he thought some criticism of the Park Service was unwarranted because "we don't control air space. The FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) does." He said recommendations urging that air tour operators be put under contract as concessionaires were unreasonable. "How can we put United Airlines on a concession contract?" he asked. Some tour operators also routinely land on Indian reservations in the park, "and we have no jurisdiction there," Farabee added.

The "helpful" comments, he said, were ones that sought not to bar all but emergency flights, which is part of a conservationists' Quiet Canyon proposal, but instead suggested ways to limit flights by time, season or airspace.

Comments in favor of continuing flights that now carry 300,000 passengers a year over the canyon began with the statement that "Air tours are necessary for handicapped, elderly or inform people, or busy businessmen." Another comments reads: "Tour operators wouldn't be there if people didn't want to take flights. Since passengers rarely complain, what's all the fuss about?"

Many remarks noted that noise is ephemeral, that people -- especially foreigners -- don't have time to see the canyon except by air, and that hikers, who litter, should not throw their weight around because air tours cost taxpayers nothing while "hikers are heavily subsidized by all taxpayers."

Superintendent Marks is expected to make his recommendations for decreasing aircraft noise in Grand Canyon to Interior Secretary Donald Hodel by Aug. 28. According to Butch Farabee, it will then be up to Hodel to persuade the Transportation Secretary, who oversees the FAA, to control aircraft over the canyon. An FAA recommendation that planes fly 2,000 above landforms in the canyon is now generally ignored. Farabee says a Congressional move in July to bar all non-emergency flights below canyon rims "doesn't affect our timetable."

--Ed Marston

--Betsy Marston

The Union Pass fight is over, for the moment

JACKSON, Wyo. -- A stalemate over right-of-way in Wyoming's upper Green River Valley has ended, at least temporarily. But although Louisiana-Pacific's lumber trucks finally rolled across Union Pass Aug. 18, the company is not pleased with the agreement the Forest Service made that same day with the couple whose property is at the center of the dispute.

At a press conference in Jackson, Bridger-Teton National Forest Supervisor Brian Stout appeared with the couple, Joe and Stella Retel, both 71. There, Stout announced that the Retels would allow L-P trucks to drive on the 300-foot section of the Union Pass Road that crosses their land.

The memorandum of understanding signed by the Forest Service and the Retels sounds like a June 10 decision by Forest Service Chief Max Peterson, who said L-P could haul timber from a sale near Pinedale over Union Pass to the Dubois Mill. But this latest agreement adds that the chief's decision precludes requests "to haul additional timber sales across the Retel property until resolution of the permanent right-of-way and implementation of the forest plan."

The Retel's attorney, John Zebre, in an earlier letter to Stout, said his clients needed a tightly worded agreement because "Louisiana-Pacific has no intention of abiding by Mr.



Joe and Stella Retel, flanked by attorney John Zebre, left, and Brian

Stout, supervisor of the Bridger-Teton National Forest

Peterson's decision, but rather after the Little Sheep Mountain sale, would seek additional timber harvest in the Upper Green and additional utilization of the road, and continue to make 'foot-in-the-door' arguments."

Joe Retel said, "Let them take the Little Sheep out. It's already sold." But he said L-P has "wrecked that place over there (Dubois)," and he didn't want to see the same thing happen in the upper Green River Valley. "If they want to bid on another sale, they can go another way," he said.

L-P's chief forester in Dubois, Bob Baker, said his concern is much

broader than just the Little Sheep Mountain sale. He said the agreement signed by the Retels and the Forest Service may not protect the community and the company. He said he continues to believe that the Forest Service has an easement and right-of-way across the Retel property, but Baker said he did not know if L-P would fight the agreement.

Baker said that by running six or seven loads of timber a day from Aug. 18 through Oct. 1, his company can haul a little over half of the Little Sheep Mountain sale this year. "That will help us keep in business until the end of the year."

After the press conference, Stuart

Thompson of the Wyoming Outdoor Council said his group had worked behind the scenes to encourage the Forest Service and the Retels to reach a solution that wouldn't involve condemnation of the Retel property or a quiet-title action. In a quiet-title action, the U.S. can make a "declaration of taking" and begin using contested land while litigation is in process.

During the press conference, Stout also announced that the long-delayed Bridger-Teton forest plan will be "on the street" by the end of October. Though Stout declined to comment on the future of the Union Pass road, Zebre said it was his understanding that the preferred alternative in the plan called only for maintenance necessary to prevent damage to the watershed and soil. Earlier reports on the plan have indicated there would be a reduction of timber-harvest levels in the upper Green River Valley.

If that is the case, L-P would have benefited from a delay in the release of the plan so that it could operate under the current timber-management plan. But now that the Retels and Forest Service have come to agreement, Stout said, all user groups, including the timber industry, have an interest in the speedy release of the forest management plan.

--Katharine Collins

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

It was beautiful, but it wasn't the Grand Canyon

by Ray Ring

A few days before the recent mid-air collision that killed 25 people intensified controversy over aircraft in the Grand Canyon, I flew the canyon on a commercial helicopter tour.

I had expected a thrill. I got one, but the flight, billed as "The Ultimate Experience" by the tour companies, was strangely unsettling.

The long storefront for Grand Canyon Helicopters was nestled in the pines just outside the boundary of the national park, among the motels, \$60 a night on up, and souvenir shops. The ticket counter was mobbed by young couples, the middle-aged, kids, and the elderly, who all had that out-of-place look that immediately identified them as tourists. I stood in line, looking over the company brochures that were printed in Japanese, French and German, as well as English, until one of the clerks punched up my reservation on the computer terminal.

Six company helicopters were cycling through the landing area out back, loading and lifting off. A sign on the wall gave the specifications of the sleek machines: Bell 206L11 Long-rangers; \$650,000 each.

The loud whine of their engines and the whip of the rotors only heightened the anticipation.

Then it was time. They checked my name off a clipboard, made a notation of my weight so the load of passengers could be balanced, and escorted me out to a helicopter idling on the concrete pad. I climbed in next to the pilot; in back were two tourists from Europe. The pilot beckoned to a pair of headphones. When I slipped them on,

easy-listening music flooded my ears and drowned out the noise of the helicopter. The inspiring strains of *Chariots of Fire* accompanied the lift-off, which happened so smoothly it was almost a disappointment. One second we were on the ground and the next we were in the air, accelerating across the flat expanse of pine forests, the Kaibab Plateau.

We sat inside the plastic bubble, buffeted by turbulence even on that clear and calm day, looking out at scenery on our left, our right, even down between our feet. Over the intercom the pilot reeled off a few sentences about the history and biology of the forest rushing by several hundred feet below. Pinon nuts like those on the trees below can be purchased in small sacks in the souvenir shops, he said. All the while he was watching the thicket of gauges and toggle switches in front of him, and coaxing his pedals and sticks. Get ready, he said.

The rim, the edge of the abyss, hurtled toward us at 100 miles an hour. Beyond, there was yawning emptiness. A primitive fear rose and suddenly gripped me; I held my breath and we went over the edge. There, a mile straight down, was the Colorado River. Grand Canyon opened around us, horizon to horizon, carved, layered, impossibly rugged, rock and water and shadows and sky. We zoomed down into it as the music eased into waltzing violins.

I found myself remembering my last visit to the canyon, a very different "ultimate experience." That trip I had been strapped to a 50-pound backpack, picking my way down a wilderness trail off the North Rim, averaging maybe three or four miles a

day. I had worked for every foot of it. In places the trail was so steep I had to go on all fours.

It took three days of hiking to reach the river, three more days to hike out, and each day had been better than the one before. Hour by hour, step by step, I became more intimate with the canyon.

At first all I could focus on was a few square inches of trail right in front of my face. When I looked up there was only the vastness and steepness of the slopes. Then I began to see the subtle hue of rocks. I took time to watch fiery sunsets that died to red coals and black stillness, saw trout dancing in a turquoise pool, found a few cups of old rainwater pooled in a shallow depression on a stony plain. I felt each shift of breeze, each change in humidity and temperature as the canyon walls were heated by the sun and cooled by the shadows and the night.

But halfway through the first day, while airing out socks and inspecting blisters, I heard a faint roar. Even that high up, commercial jets bothered me.

For the rest of the day something nagged at the limits of my hearing. A vague droning that I couldn't identify, like a lawn being mowed. By the second day, that much closer to the inner gorge and the river, the noise was louder and I could see what was causing it: airplanes flying through the canyon. And helicopters, coming in low and hovering over the waterfalls, the river, all the best places.

From then on, the noise and the sight of aircraft never left me free of the realities above the rim, outside the canyon. Each time a plane or a helicopter came by it was like a yank

on my chain. I had earned my solitude and now it was being stolen away.

In 55 minutes my flight was done. I flew over 100 miles of marvelous landscape, dropping into precipitous side canyons, cutting between the towering rock temples, criss-crossing the river that wound below. The perspectives were overwhelming, the beauty undeniable. But it was all abstract. It was on the other side of the plastic window.

After 10 minutes I grew restless, belted into the seat, and even a little bored. Others no doubt would have reacted differently. But I wanted more than a ride. I wanted to touch, to feel, to smell and hear what was out there. I wanted the canyon on its own terms.

What I got instead was the sunrise theme to *2001* and relentless *Chariots of Fire* violins. Finally I had to pull off the company's headphones. The racket of the helicopter was a relief.

I was ready to get back to earth when the pilot touched down. "That's it," he said, and I got out. Walking felt good.

The terminal was jammed with the next loads of customers who were ready to pay \$2 a minute for their visit into the canyon. At a register for comments on the flight, my fellow air tourists, signing in from Alabama, Scotland, South Africa and Argentina, had written: "Just great... You don't want to miss this... Super!!"

Vaguely dissatisfied, I drove into the park and walked to the first canyon overlook. It was crowded, but I didn't get that feeling. People were speaking softly and pointing-out. A gentle wind blew from the west. The canyon was right there. A swallow swooped and dived just below the rim, hunting silently.

6-High Country News -- September 1, 1986

HOTLINE**Will Nevada get a park?**

Although there is still disagreement about size, Nevada's 62-year struggle to create its first national park is closer to a successful ending. The heart of the park would be 13,000 foot Mt. Wheeler in the Snake Range of eastern Nevada, which includes deserts, lush alpine valleys and streams, abundant wildlife, ancient glacier remnants and 5,000-year-old Bristlecone pines -- possibly the oldest trees in the world. Two bills to bring the park into law are currently on Capitol Hill, one four times the size of the other. The Senate bill, introduced by Republican Nevada Sens. Paul Laxalt and Chic Hect, provides for a 44,000-acre park with select portions of all the area's natural features included. Interior Department Secretary Donald Hodel says he favors this bill because it creates a less expensive, more manageable park. In the House, Nevada Rep. Hary Reid, D, has proposed a Great Basin Park of 128,000 acres with an additional 45,000-acre preserve to allow hunting. Reid is backed by Park Service Director William Penn Mott and by local entrepreneurs from Ely, Nevada.

BLM urged to start over

The Utah Wilderness Coalition wants the BLM to start over. In a 700-page critique of the Bureau of Land Management's draft environment impact statement on Utah wilderness, the coalition called the BLM's study wildly inaccurate and confusing. The group called for the BLM to rewrite the 2,700-page document. The coalition, which comprises 17 conservation groups totaling over 20,000 members, said an anti-wilderness bias pervades the agency's study. Moreover, the coalition charges that the BLM did not evaluate all reasonable alternatives to its study, including the Utah Coalition's own proposal for 5.1 million acres.

Compromise reached on Priest Lake

There is a dramatic turn in the three-year controversy over development of North Idaho's Priest Lake. Two Spokane developers and Diamond Lands Corporation have formed a joint venture to develop 1,500 acres of Diamond's lakeshore lands at Huckleberry Bay. The joint venture had the apparent cooperation of the Priest Lake Coalition, which vigorously fought Diamond's previous development schemes at the bay.

The venture was announced Aug. 18 at Priest Lake. The specifics of the plan -- densities, number of units, features -- will be developed in consultation with local residents and the coalition. Some coalition members are not happy with the plan, but a majority of its board has decided to work with the developers.

Priest Lake is the most primitive of north Idaho's large lakes and boasts the most diverse wildlife in all of Idaho. In late 1982, the timber giant Diamond International, which owned over 10,000 acres on the lake, was bought by British millionaire Sir James Goldsmith. Within months, Goldsmith announced plans for a Sun Valley-scale resort at Huckleberry Bay, and proposed a land exchange with the state of Idaho to make it possible. Local opposition to the exchange was very strong, but the Idaho Land Board approved it on a 3-2 vote in May 1985.

The approval gave Diamond a contiguous 6,000-acre parcel at the bay. The Priest Lake Coalition, representing local residents and conservation groups, immediately filed two lawsuits seeking to overturn the decision (*HCN*, 4/29/85).

While the suits moved forward, a series of small changes lay the groundwork for the surprising announcement. Goldsmith's agent in charge of Priest Lake died, and his replacement, an Englishman named Vivien Franklin, let it be known he opposed the major resort concept and regretted the villain role Diamond had assumed. Idaho Gov. John Evans, who opposed the exchange, also appointed a citizens' task force to investigate



Looking east across Priest Lake to the Selkirk Mountains

alternatives to a major resort and discussed them with Franklin.

Spokane developer Don Barbieri made Franklin an offer for the 6,000 acres. Rod Hoover, a board member of the Priest Lake Coalition who is also a developer, began separate talks with Franklin, urging a much smaller-scale approach.

In other talks with Franklin, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation reached an agreement this July to purchase a 293-acre piece of shoreline at Squaw Bay from Diamond. Squaw Bay lies just north of Huckleberry Bay and the purchased piece adjoins an existing state park. The price was \$900,000, including a \$400,000 loan to the state from the Nature Conservancy.

On Aug. 15, Franklin flew to Idaho for an Aug. 18 ceremony at Priest Lake to present the Squaw Bay deed to Gov. Evans. Franklin spent the intervening days with Rod Hoover at the lake, and the joint venture emerged from that visit.

Its formation was announced at the Squaw Bay ceremony. Developers said the crucial details of unit numbers and facilities on the 1,500 acres will be determined after a survey of lake residents and users, including the Priest Lake Coalition.

"We're going to be working very closely with people on the lake to find out what they want," Barbieri said. Diamond's original proposal was for 3,500 to 5,000 units; Barbieri's first proposal several months ago was for 1,000 to 1,500 units. The coalition had opposed both levels.

Franklin also said that Diamond would preserve the remaining 4,500 acres of land behind the lake front as timberlands.

Talks between Diamond and the state on a second swap to return the 4,500 acres to state ownership will continue. Diamond has also agreed to establish a non-profit corporation to conduct water quality and related land-use studies, with results incorporated in the final development plan.

The Priest Lake Coalition is not unanimous in its support of the development. A few board members reportedly think the plan and any guarantees of coalition involvement are too vague to endorse. Many of the coalition's grassroots supporters, who are mostly lake users from nearby communities, are upset.

But a majority of the board is willing to cooperate. "It's responsible people trying to put something together," said coalition secretary Jules Gindraux. "In principle this is a splendid development."

Coalition attorney Scott Reed said he had not yet been told whether to continue or withdraw the coalition's two lawsuits against the exchange. The coalition received a setback on one of them Aug. 11 when a district judge in Boise ruled the land board's action approving the exchange was legal. At that time, Reed said the coalition would appeal to the Idaho Supreme Court.

--Pat Ford

Yet another domino falls in Colorado's oil shale country

There is an infinity of shoes in Colorado's oil shale country, and they've been dropping at varying intervals since Exxon closed its Colony oil shale project on May 2, 1982.

The latest hit the ground in Rifle, a few miles from the Colony site, on Thursday, August 21, when a 38-person raiding party from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. closed First National Bank. What was one of the most profitable banks in Colorado had been transformed by the oil shale bust into a basket case.

It was able to survive for four years by living off reserves accumulated in earlier, more prosperous times, and by selling foreclosed real estate for fifty cents or less on the dollar. But in the end, it succumbed to forces it had reluctantly help set in motion in 1980 and 1981.

Those forces were a commercial and residential building boom meant to serve the thousands of workers the oil shale boom was attracting to the area. Al Koeneke, then president of FNB, said in September 1982 that he had been well aware of previous oil shale busts, and was skeptical of

1980's boom. How, then, did over half of his loan portfolio end up in development real estate?

Koeneke said it was mass hysteria. He recalled, in the September 1982 interview, his reaction to Exxon's 1980 Colony announcement, made at a mass meeting in Grand Junction: "This gentleman gets up in a three-piece suit and with a perfectly straight face says: 'There's going to be three 10-foot by 10-foot aqueducts from the Missouri River to the Colorado River.' That was the biggest fallacy I ever heard."

Nevertheless, he continued, "You're on the edge of the whirlpool, and bit by bit you get sucked in. I'd go to Denver and people would say to me 'Al, this time it's different. This is the biggest company in the world. This time oil shale will go all the way.'" Adding to the carrot was the stick. Rifle's cattle economy was disappearing as ranchers sold out to developers, and oil shale was the only game in town.

It wasn't just locals who were caught up. Exxon was sending up \$1 million a day from Houston. "And we

had people from San Francisco, New York, Texas and Oklahoma who were coming in here to serve a need. Need or greed -- you take your pick."

In the wake of the bust, the developers and other investors ran, leaving the lenders to pick up the pieces. Koeneke, his bank inundated with foreclosed real estate, had a strategy in September 1982: "We'll work through the next 18 months by dumping real estate. I'm waiting for the sharks to come in. I'm churning the water like mad trying to attract them."

His prediction was: "In 24 months we'll have absorbed what has to be absorbed. We'll bind up our wounds. We're a viable community. I see Rifle growing 5 to 10 percent." He also said, "Everyone is going to be hurt."

He was wrong about the 24 months. It's been 52 months since Exxon shut down Colony, and loans in FNB's portfolio continue to go bad. But he was right about everyone getting hurt. Koeneke, for example, who had been at the Rifle bank for 16 years, and was the head of the Colorado Bankers Association when

Exxon went bust, was forced out of Rifle a year ago by federal regulators.

Bill Scoggins, who had been president of the Regional Bank of Rifle, which opened in 1981 to partake of the oil shale economy, moved over to FNB to take Koeneke's place. He now gets to be present at the dissolution of FNB, while his old bank picks up the bulk of the 4,000 FNB accounts and their \$17 million in deposits.

While those who invested or loaned money during the oil shale days continue to go under, Rifle as a whole is surviving. Its population is close to the boom-time total of between 5,000 and 6,000 thanks to the 'sharks' Koeneke had put his hopes in. Some newcomers are retirees. Others work in Glenwood Springs and Carbondale, 30 miles east of Rifle, where prices are buoyed by proximity to Aspen and their own recreation economy. By comparison, \$130,000 executive homes in Rifle can be had for \$70,000, and townhouses can be had for the price of a trailer in Glenwood Springs.

--Ed Marston

WESTERN ROUNDUP

An oil shale lands settlement is attacked

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- For 25 years the federal government has waged a court battle over contested mining claims to hundreds of square miles of public oil-shale lands in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming.

This month, the Interior Department abruptly reversed that course, allowing oil companies and more than 100 individuals now holding the claims to take ownership of some 82,000 acres of the disputed lands north of Rifle, Colorado.

Conservation groups and congressional critics quickly branded the out-of-court settlement a "giveaway," while influential chairmen of three House committees vowed to have it overturned. At a well-publicized hearing, new legislation was announced that would make it more difficult for additional lands to be transferred in the same way.

Details of the proposal gave Democrats ample ammunition for a fresh attack on a Republican administration they argue has forsaken public interest to appease industry. Under the agreement, companies such as Tosco, Exxon and Union Oil gained title to the land for a filing fee of just \$2.50 an acre. If court contests over shale claims in the two neighboring states are similarly resolved, energy interests could take control of a total of 360,000 acres of public lands.

Opponents further suggest that the settlement could set a precedent under which millions of acres of mining claims for other minerals could be given up across the West.

The nation's antiquated 1872 mining law provides that claims can be converted into clear ownership if \$100 of improvements are made to the land annually. The shale claims at issue were filed before 1920, when shale was treated as a hard-rock mineral, and could be staked out through the claims process. It is now leased through competitive bidding.

Economic and technical problems have thwarted all of the many attempts to commercially exploit the West's vast shale reserves. Even so, shale lands are actively sought by major oil companies, and the western Colorado land is considered valuable for other purposes. Although Interior officials have steadfastly declined to set a price tag on the transfer, current and past estimates by the department suggest the land may be worth \$50 million to more than \$150 million.

Interior officials deny that any precedent has been set, and they defend their settlement as the best possible resolution of the historic dispute, in part because it allows the government to keep the land's oil, coal and other resources. Those potentially valuable rights had in fact been lost in a sweeping decision in May of last year by Denver U.S. District Court Judge Sherman Finesilver. The Interior Department insisted the settlement was appropriate considering that the government most likely would have lost an appeal of the Finesilver ruling. Western Colorado Rep. Mike Strang, R, cast the one vote necessary in Congress to block a study of the land transfer. In announcing their settlement, however, Interior officials refused to release many of the documents that might have bolstered their decision.

Congressional critics say they aren't surprised at the reluctance to make public the material. Legal briefs and correspondence between Interior Department lawyers and administrators in Denver and Washington, which had been the groundwork for settling the claims out of court, in many cases lent support to opponents of the settlement.

In some cases, the documents, obtained by the *Denver Post*, directly contradicted the assertion that the case would have been lost on appeal. "We believe this ruling is plainly wrong and most certainly would be reversed on appeal," Interior Department lawyers said in an analysis of the decision. A number of the key points Finesilver made were disputed by the Interior lawyers. For instance, the government attorneys closest to the case found "compelling evidence that (required improvement of the land) was not performed on the great bulk of oil shale claims for most of the years from the 1920s to the 1970s."

The Denver-based regional solicitor for the Interior Department and a mid-level Washington counterpart both urged the case be taken on to a higher court. The Justice Department should "vigorously pursue" the appeal, the Washington lawyer recommended. Kannon Richards,

retired state director of the Colorado Bureau of Land Management, which oversees most of the land in question, fought the land transfer and called it a "land grab."

Despite the support for continuing the court fight, top officials of the agency opted for the out-of-court agreement. "What we have gained through the settlement process has been worth far more than the throw of the dice of an appeal," said Steven Griles, assistant Secretary of Interior for land and minerals. There are existing oil and gas leases on the land, he noted, and the agreement additionally attempts to ensure that ranchers will continue to use the land for grazing, and that hunters will also have access.

"This settlement is not a giveaway," Griles said. "You cannot give away something you do not own." Four times in the past the Supreme Court has ruled in favor of shale claim holders, and 350,000 acres of shale lands have been patented, or granted private title, as a result, Interior officials stressed.

--Gary Schmitz

Gary Schmitz is the Washington, D.C. correspondent for the *Denver Post*.

HOTLINE

Montana impasse

A Montana wilderness bill introduced to Congress Aug. 16 by Montana Sen. John Melcher, D, was pronounced dead on arrival by Montana Rep. Pat Williams, D. Montana's four congressional delegates have long been unable to agree on a wilderness bill for Montana, prompting Melcher to attempt his own version in Aug. In that bill, the status of the Hyalite Peaks area of the Gallatin Range was the major bone of contention. Montana Rep. Ron Marlenee, R, said motorized access was necessary there; Sen. Max Baucus, D, argued for wilderness values. Though the disputed area was left to remain in its present study-area status, Marlenee refused to sign the bill. Marlenee told *The Montana Standard* that the Melcher bill represented a victory for a "narrow group of selfish environmentalists over a broad group of recreationists." Melcher said he thought his bill would not see action because of the Montana delegation disagreement, but that it did let people know what acreages were under consideration. Melcher's bill called for wilderness protection for less than 1.5 million acres of the 6 million under study. The Montana Wilderness Association, which seeks wilderness protection for a minimum of 2 million acres, says it views Melcher's bill as a rough rather than dead draft.

Wyoming citizens keep an eye on the MX

Citizens opposed to deployment of the 10-warhead MX missiles in southeast Wyoming stepped up protest activities this August while the Air Force moved closer to readying the first 10 MXs by December 31.

An anti-MX rally at the Capitol Building in Cheyenne and a "funeral procession" to one of the nearby Minuteman III silos being refurbished for the MX was scheduled for Aug. 31. Earlier in the month, volunteers from Texas, Colorado and Wyoming visited Cheyenne to watch a Warren Air Force Base gate for nuclear weapons and missile shipments.

Bill Sulzman, a Denver taxi driver who is coordinating the Cheyenne vigil for a Madison, Wisconsin-based group called Nuke Watch, reported several apparent movements of nuclear weapons. Convoys were accompanied by armored vehicles and law enforcement cars -- sirens on high -- as helicopters hovered overhead.

Nuke Watch volunteers also watched the Department of Energy's sprawling Pantex nuclear weapons plant near Amarillo, Texas, to monitor convoys of unmarked tractor-trailers and security vehicles. They travel with the normal flow of traffic on the nation's highways and deliver nuclear weapons to Defense Department installations. A DOE spokesman said all of the nation's nuclear weapons are assembled at Pantex. Nuke Watch members said they expect that the 100 warheads needed for the first 10 MX missiles are now being shipped to the base. They said final assembly of the missile stages and warheads is being performed in new Warren Air Force Base buildings, which have been erected in the past two years at a cost of \$100 million.

An Air Force spokesman at Cheyenne said the MXs are installed by stages in the silos. Capt. Bill



MX missile deployment came closer in Wyoming this summer

Kalton said the top stage of the MX, containing the warheads and the re-entry vehicles that deliver them to their targets, will not be installed until December.

The Nuke Watch effort is intended to keep the ongoing nuclear arms race in the public mind, Sulzman said.

"When people know that these end-of-the-world weapons are traveling on the highways and through our neighborhoods then they can't put this horrible problem out of their minds as easily," he said. "It indicates that we still haven't solved this horrible problem of the nuclear arms race."

On August 18, state government security officials told Nuke Watchers to leave the Wyoming Highway Department parking lot adjacent to the base gate being used for missile and weapons shipments.

Nuke Watch appealed to Gov. Ed Herschler's office and were allowed to

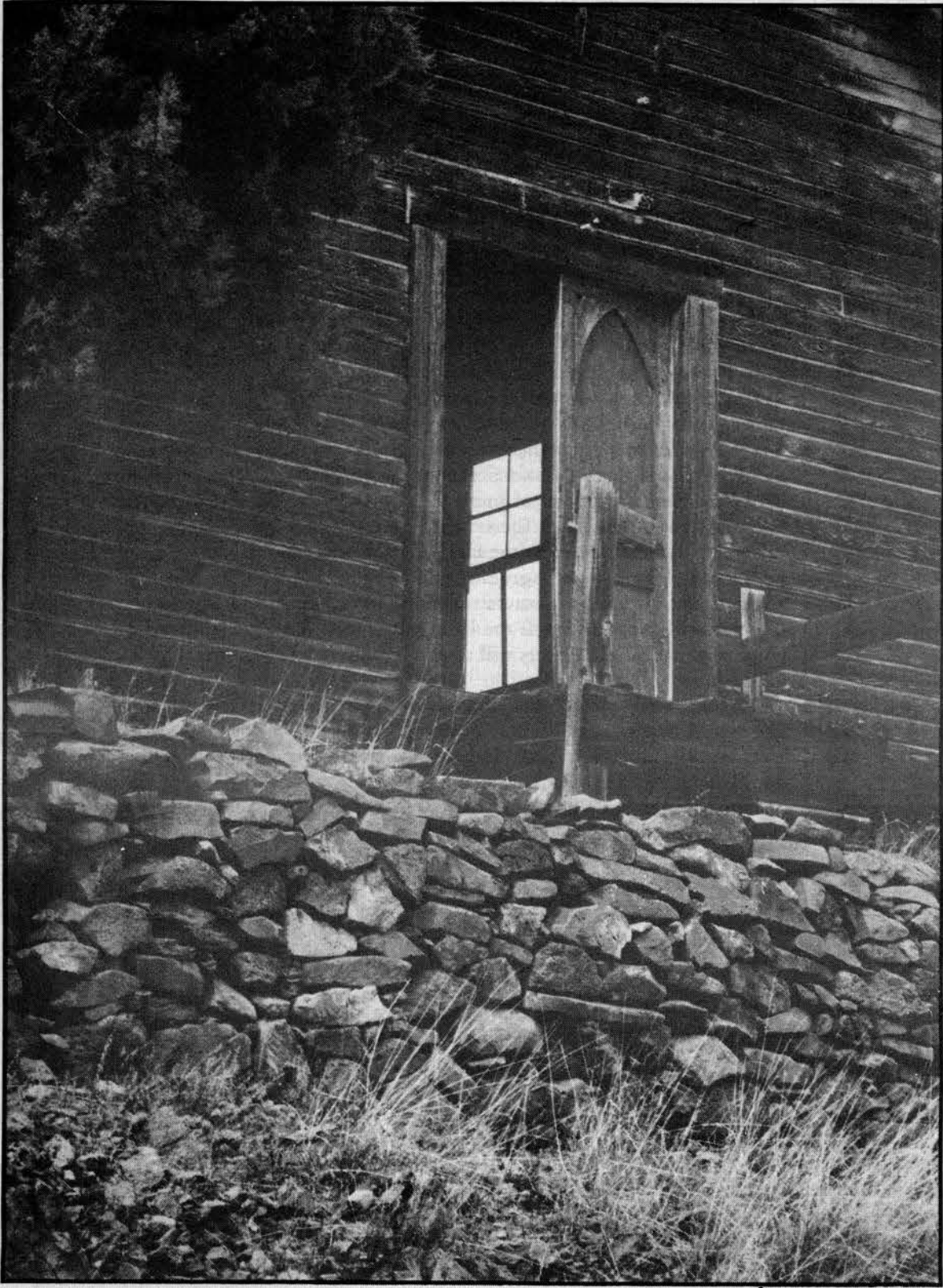
return to the lot two days later after state Attorney General Arch McClintock's office ruled the lot was open to the public. The *Casper Star-Tribune* quoted Herschler's executive assistant Dick Skinner as saying, "Unless they are really screwing things up out there, they can watch all the trucks and sagebrush they want."

--Philip White

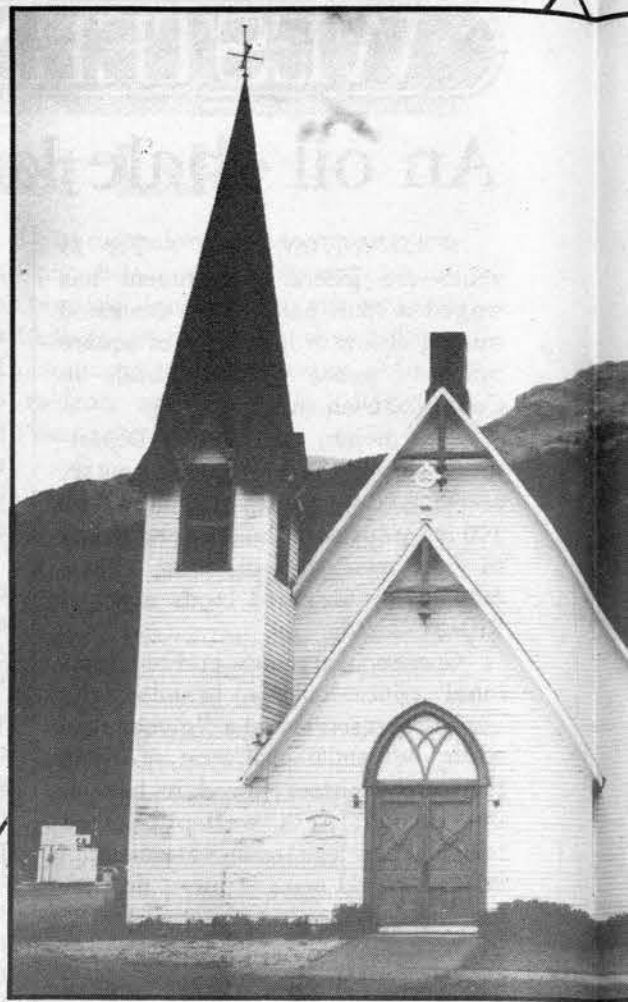
BARBS

Picnic on the rocks.

"A gravel pile can be very attractive," said a Central Utah Project official recently to the Salt Lake County Planning Commission. The official, Gerald Maloney, told the *Deseret News* that a 40-acre reservoir site would be better as a gravel pile than a park with jogging trails and picnic areas.



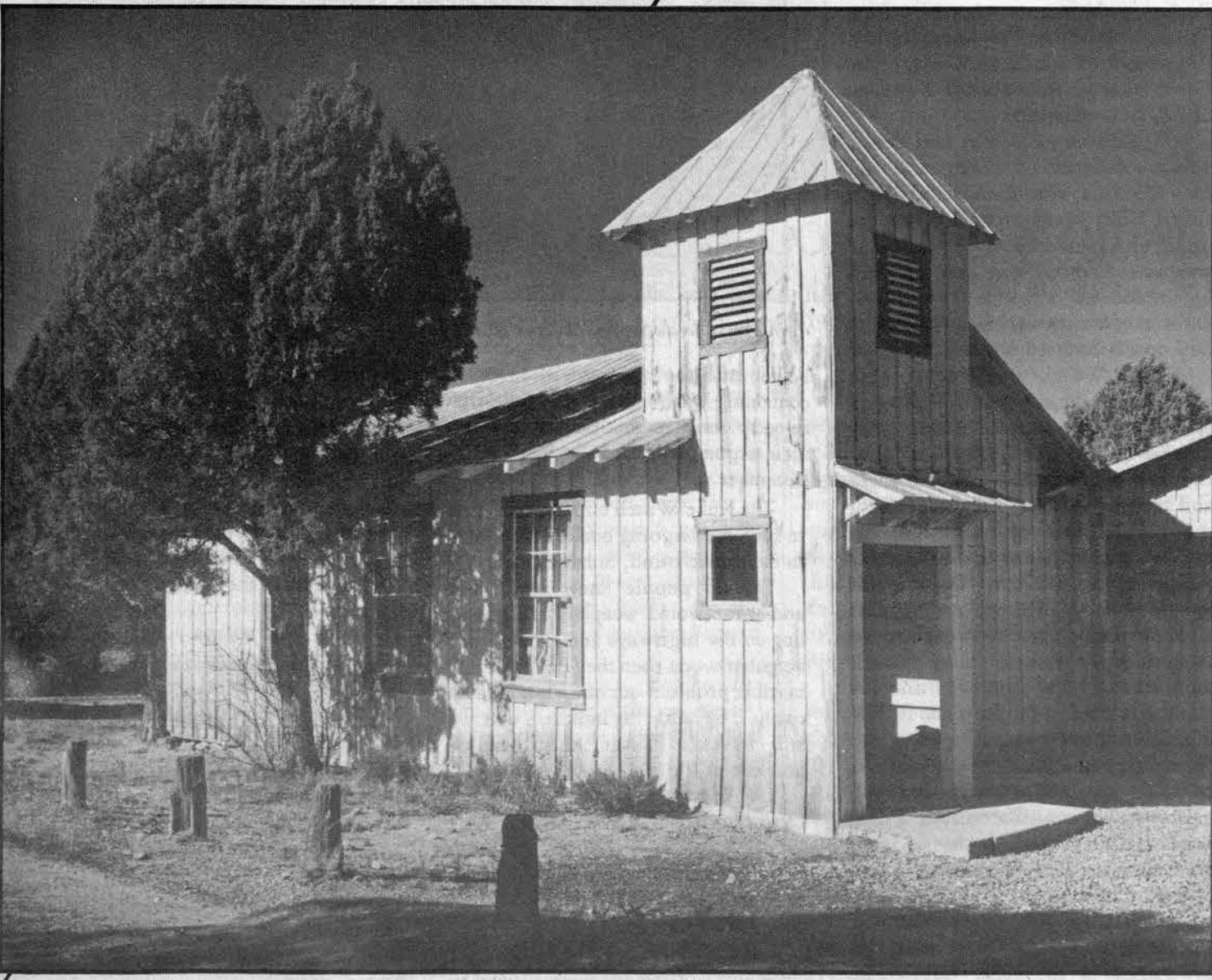
Mogollon, New Mexico



WESTERN C

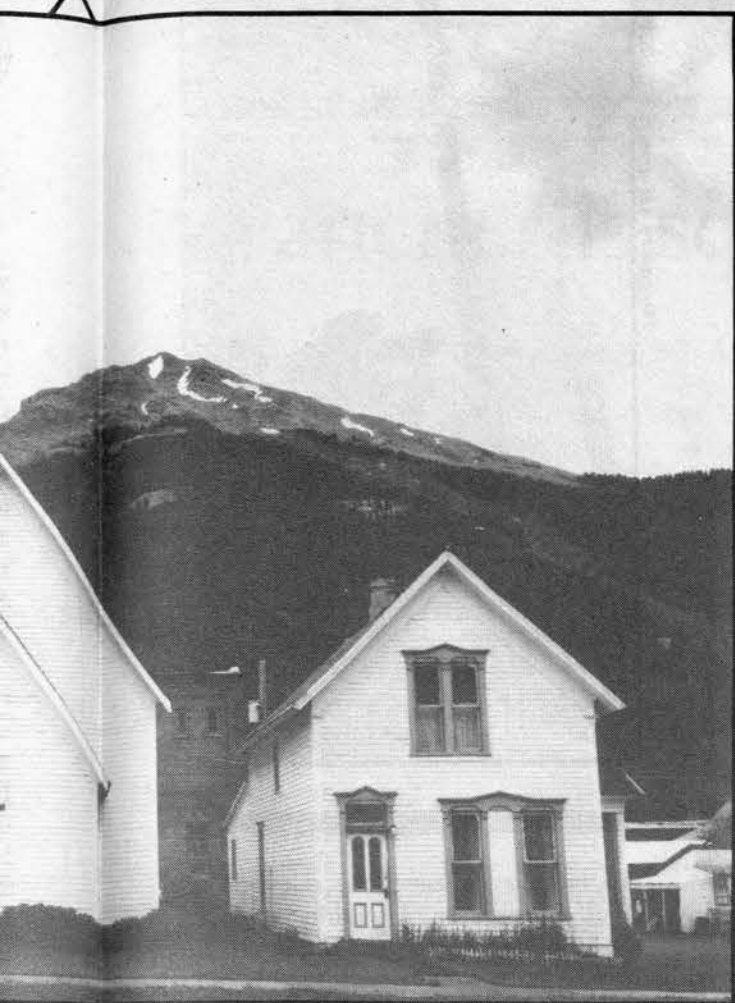
Photo

Dale Schicketanz is a long-time photo contributor to *High Country News*. His work has recently appeared in *Arizona Highways* magazine

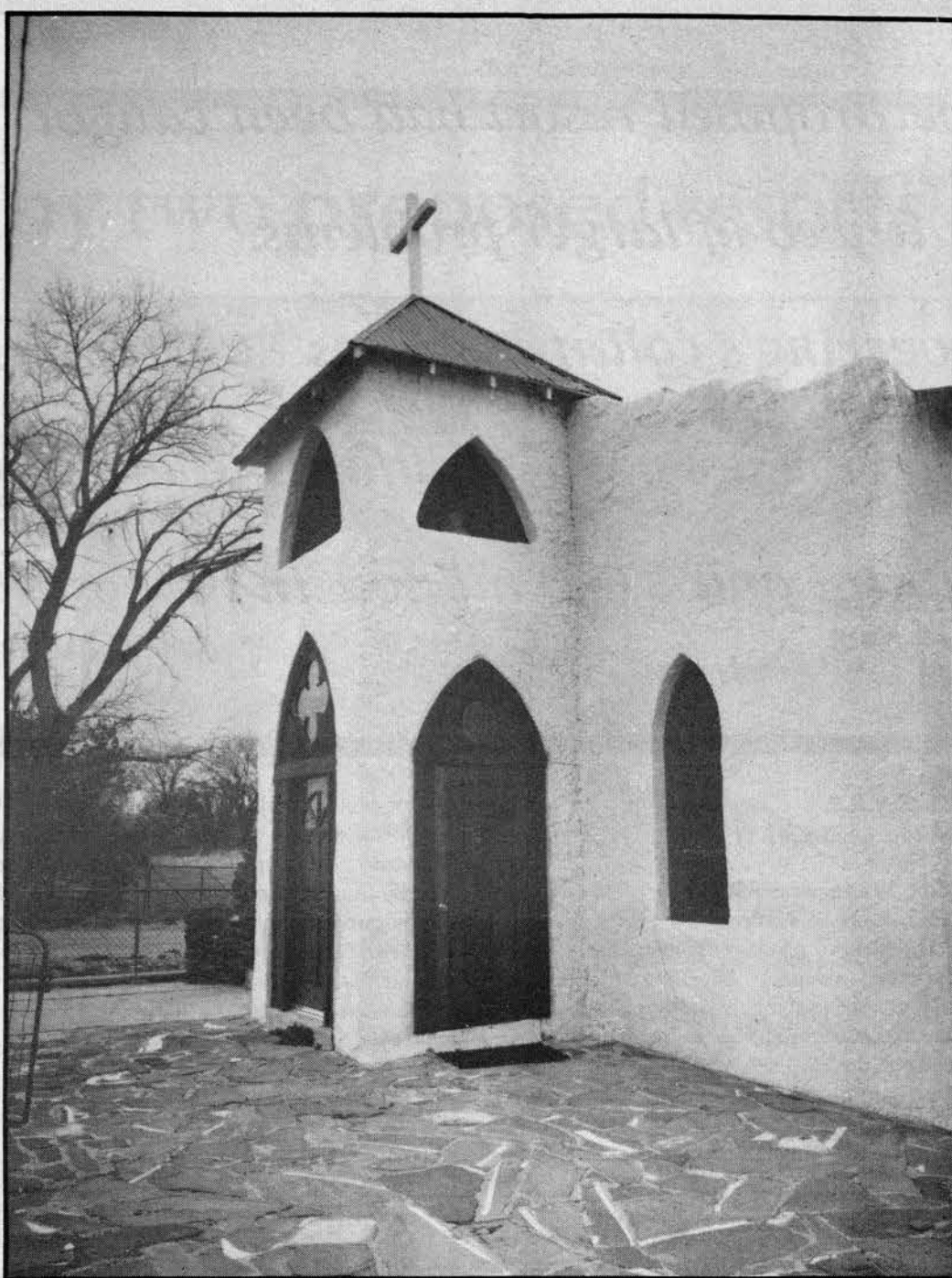


Burton, Arizona





Silverton, Colorado

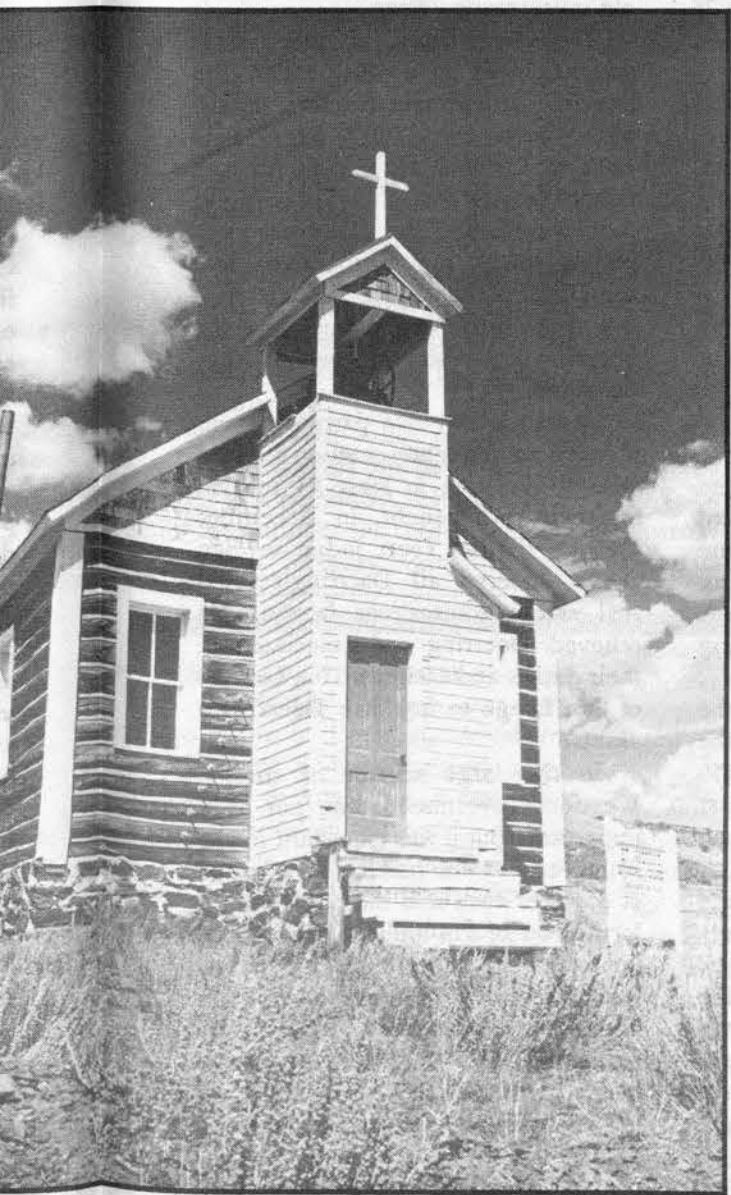


Concho, Arizona

N CHURCHES

Photos by Dale Schicketanz

photo and in the annual report of *The Wilderness*
work has and *Society*. He lives in Show Low, Arizona.
magazine



Atlantic City, Wyoming



Central Texas

The proposed resort had been caught in a web of larger problems.

Doerring's collapse snares 80 partnerships,
800 investors, \$65 million in partnership
capital and \$170 million in real estate.



Purgatory ski area, CSCUSA

Ski...

(Continued from page 1)

Resource Management Plan produced by the San Juan National Forest in 1983. The agency proposed studying a modest-sized ski area. But Doerring convinced it that a much larger tract was needed to serve the Snowmass Ski Area-sized development he planned for the ranch land his group had purchased in the valley below Windy Ridge. So the study area grew from 1,140 acres to 2,365 acres. When added to the proposed base area on 2,564 acres of private land, Doerring's site covered seven square miles on the west side of Wolf Creek Pass.

In January 1984, Westfork Investments, a limited partnership set up by Doerring, applied to the Forest Service for a special-use permit. Four months later, the Forest Service began an environmental impact study funded by the developer.

At that point, the state began holding Joint Review Process meetings to identify concerns and issues. JRP's role is to coordinate agencies involved in permitting a major project and to give the public access to the decision-making. The Joint Review Process began 10 years ago to deal with oil shale development in western Colorado that threatened to overwhelm the region's natural beauty. With oil shale dead, JRP's present major source of work is the permitting of recreation developments such as Westfork.

With the help of JRP, the Forest Service prepared and released a draft environmental impact statement in October 1985. Among the concerns was a mile-long stretch of U.S. 160 that would have to be realigned and the loss of several acres of wetlands. The draft also said that a migration corridor used by 400 to 600 elk would be disrupted, and that development of an area known as the "back bowls" could infringe upon a big game calving and fawning area. This impact was especially controversial since sportsmen spent \$6 million in the area in 1981 on hunting.

Despite all the coordination and public process, the draft was unacceptable to many agencies and individuals. They complained that there wasn't enough information on wildlife mitigation or pollution of the San Juan River. But most comments centered on the study's failure to include the effects of another proposed ski area, known as East Fork (see accompanying story), located on the nearby East Fork of the San Juan

River. Its runs would be just over the ridge from Westfork.

The Colorado Division of Wildlife was especially dissatisfied. Director Jim Ruch's comments included such phrases as "total inadequacy of the document...seriously devoid of information," and "reflects prejudice for development."

The comments spurred the Forest Service to write a second draft, which it released this June 26. It will be followed in late August by the draft EIS for East Fork.

Given this private pressure to build new ski areas on public lands and the Forest Service's acquiescence to this pressure, an outsider might assume that Colorado's ski areas are bursting at the seams. The facts are otherwise.

The downhill ski industry has just gone through another flat season. Both Denver daily newspapers carried articles last spring about the lack of growth. New skiers didn't show up in appreciable numbers despite a huge expansion of facilities, longer seasons made possible by snowmaking, and intense promotion, ranging from the sale of discounted ski tickets in supermarkets to financial guarantees to airlines to schedule ski flights. The stories predicted that the "national ski boom is over" and said "there aren't enough skiers."

Despite the lack of 1970s-type growth in the 1980s, ski areas on national forest land have grown by 50 percent in five years. In 1980, the areas could handle 97,000 skiers per day, in 1985, 145,000. And the Forest Service has handed out enough approvals to raise that daily capacity another one-third, to 200,000. During the last ski season, 1,015 acres of national forest land were added to the state's existing 16,231 acres of ski runs.

Despite the recent rapid expansion, and the permits to allow even more, the use statistics show a plateau. According to John Korb, the agency's ski specialist for the Rocky Mountain Region, Colorado's 28 permitted ski areas had 8,862,000 visitors in 1984-1985. The visits rose a scant 1.38 percent, to 8,985,000 last winter. Back in 1979-1980, there were 7.9 million visitors. Growth over that period has been 2 percent.

Skiing may not be growing at the 7 to 10 percent rate of the 1970s, but it remains a big industry. Resorts are the major employer on Colorado's Western Slope. According to the trade

group Colorado Ski Country USA, skiing accounted for \$1.3 billion in retail sales, provided \$132 million in state and local taxes, and employed 44,300 people last year.

Some of those employees are women whose husbands once earned \$35,000 a year mining molybdenum for Amax at Leadville or Idaho Springs. Laid-off coal miners and their wives work at low-wage resort jobs in the north, at Steamboat Springs. With mining and logging on Colorado's national forests down or out, the Forest Service may see skiing as its next mission, and that may account for the tenacity with which it has clung to growth projections of 7 to 10 percent a year in the face of years of 2 percent growth.

The Forest Service is almost alone in its optimism. William Barry, a regular contributor to *Ski Magazine*, predicted last spring that Colorado's ski areas would not maintain their revenues. Martin Sorenson, who monitors ski area development for the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Sierra Club, also disputes the agency's projections: "They're looking at the past, not at the future... Of those 28 permitted ski areas, 11 lost money last year."

The *Denver Post* reported this spring that overall real estate prices are down 15 percent in ski areas. Condos are sold at auctions at some resorts; for-sale lists have grown into the hundreds. Ski area newspapers have a new regular feature -- foreclosure notices -- as second home buyers abandon condos bought at now-gone 1970s prices.

Expansion has been questioned by Colorado Gov. Richard Lamm: "There is a state interest in keeping an existing industry prosperous. But why all these expansions when the market is going flat?"

Myles Rademan, planner for the ski town of Crested Butte, says the Colorado ski industry has spent \$250 million in capital investment in the last five years for emotional rather than financial reasons.

"They're in a facilities race; it's like the arms race," Rademan says that even with a \$30 lift ticket, "There's a lot of value for the tourist." But he also predicts some hard times. "There are many reasons to invest in a ski area, but not to make a living. If you make money, that's a bonus."

The question of an over-expanded

ski industry is especially relevant at Wolf Creek Pass. A wealthy investor or long-sighted corporation, with an eye 20 years to the future, might want to buy into the ski industry during this period. But developer Harvey Doerring and his unwitting investors don't fit this category. In November 1985, the Securities and Exchange Commission filed a 36-count complaint against Doerring, his several investment affiliates and their respective directors.

The proposed resort has been caught in a web of larger problems. Since Doerring's business was the forming of limited partnerships for the purpose of land development, his collapse snares 80 partnerships, 800 investors, \$65 million in partnership capital and \$170 million in real estate. Some properties are in good shape. Others were caught by declining markets, especially in Austin, Texas, possibly leading Doerring and his partners to attempt to keep them going with other funds. The SEC complaint said Doerring commingled money from different corporate accounts, using new money to keep old investments afloat.

The beneficiary of the commingling was an account called the Doerring Investment Reserve Trust, whose acronym is DIRT. From July 1984 to October 1985, even as the Forest Service was plugging away at the Westfork EIS, Doerring was pulling funds from partnerships into the DIRT account. The SEC charged that these funds were not used for the benefit of investors to whom they belonged.

Doerring and five partners were accused of misrepresentation and of misappropriating at least \$3 million for their own benefit. In December 1985, a district court judge in San Diego ordered all Doerring-related real estate transactions frozen. He relieved Doerring and associates of their duties and assigned Tom Lennon of San Diego to liquidate Doerring's assets.

In the large scheme of things, Westfork Investments was not very important. But it was important to the 250 investors who had put an average of \$56,000 each into the partnership, for a total of \$14 million. And it was important to Pagosa Springs, which had been buoyed by Doerring's numerous above-market-price purchases of land. With the announcement of Doerring's troubles, the town's dreams of a new economy went smash.

The investors, most of them from

A rancher is squeezed by two proposed resorts

Although Harvey Doerring and his Wolf Creek Valley resort have snared most of the publicity, they are not the only ski game in town.

Just over the ridge from Wolf Creek Valley as the crow flies, East Fork Joint Ventures has filed a permit application for 7,070 acres of public land. Headed by developer Dan McCarthy, the partnership includes American Express' 30 percent interest, and is much more secure than Westfork.

If East Fork can get a Forest Service permit -- a draft EIS is due out in late August -- it wants to build a resort for 13,000 skiers, which would make it 30 percent larger than Snowmass, Colorado. Its private base land, the 2,780-acre East Fork Ranch, could by itself host a small ski area with 1,600 feet of vertical drop. The public land would give it a 3,400-foot drop.

East Fork has a different set of problems from Westfork. Environmentalists worry about the several miles of contiguous boundary it shares with the South San Juan Wilderness Area and the Montezuma Study Area. The South San Juans are most famous for harboring the last grizzly bear killed in Colorado, back in 1979.

It also has access problems. The road leading to the ranch is unimproved dirt, and the river will require major channelization to handle the sediment construction will release. A problem less subject to mitigation is Elizabeth T. (Betty) Feazel, owner of the At Last Ranch, sandwiched between the two ski area sites.

For the past two years, Feazel has fought a two-front war, opposing Wolf Creek Valley on one side while denying East Fork a right-of-way for a widened road on the other side. The Forest Service needs to enlarge the present road if it is to serve 13,000 skiers a day, but Feazel won't let the road encroach on her land. So far, the Forest Service has said it won't condemn her land.

Feazel has lived on the At Last Ranch since her father bought it when she was 12. Daffodils planted by her grandmother still pop up every spring in the meadow near her home. A chain-smoker, Feazel boasts that when she had a hip operation last year the doctors told her she had the body of a person 20 years her junior. So this summer she chose to celebrate her 50th birthday, rather than her

70th. A friend laughingly commented: "They obviously didn't look at her lungs."

A dedicated conservationist, Feazel is a founder and current treasurer of the Upper San Juan Land Protection group, a nonprofit organization that works with landowners to protect rural land from development by conservation easements. In its four years, the group has protected 1,800 acres in Archuleta County with easements.

"We tried without success to convince Frank Teal that he needed to put his land or at least some of it into conservation easements, and I think at one point I almost had him convinced. But then Harvey Doerring showed up and Teal sold out," laments Feazel.

"I was physically sick over it. Harvey and I spent long hours discussing the whole development. Of course, we didn't agree, but we did talk. After all, we share the same irrigation ditches. I, in fact, spent thousands of dollars on attorney fees making sure Doerring and his development wouldn't be able to damage my ditches," she says. She also spent money on medical care. "I went to the doctor and he told me, 'Betty, you've got Doerring-itis.'"

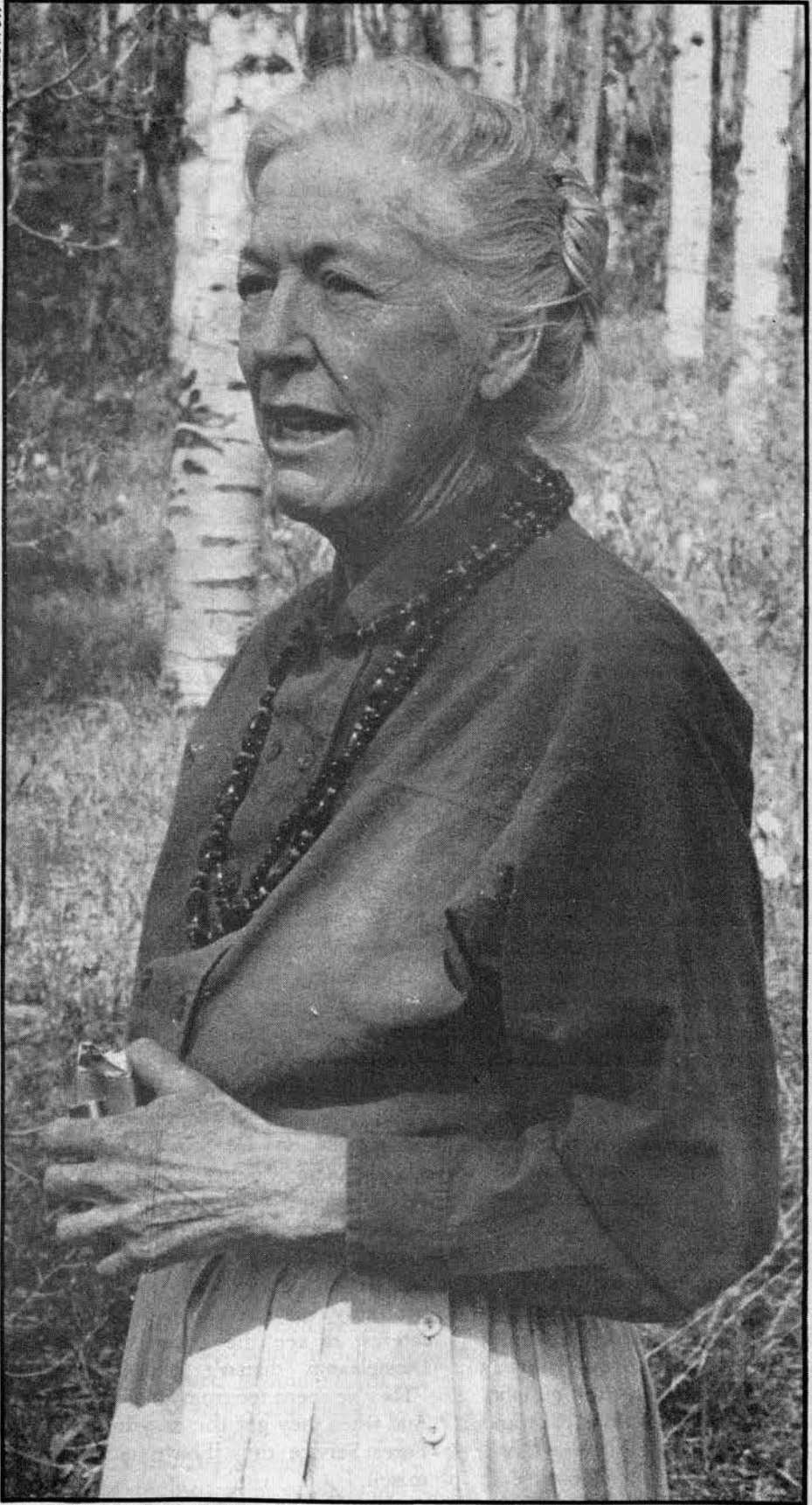
She says she is not alone in her disease. "Adam Poe may say that Westfork Investments was left holding the bag after Doerring left the scene, but it's Frank Teal who's really left holding the bag. He hasn't had a payment on that land since 1984. And with those metro districts, Teal will be in for a mess if he tries to foreclose. Someone will have to pay off those bonds."

She is skeptical of both Poe and the Forest Service. "I think Poe's going to work for Doerring has really damaged Steve Norris' (current head of the Joint Review Process) credibility and the whole Joint Review program."

Poe counters that while he was head of the JRP, he had no authority to make decisions on permits; he was in the business of getting people to talk to one another. "It's not like Craig Rupp," Poe says. Rupp is the former Regional Forester in Denver who went to work for the proposed Quail Mountain ski area near Leadville soon after he retired.

Feazel calls the Forest Service's participation in Wolf Creek Valley a "To whom-it-may-concern" ski area permit. The whole project triggered a speculative spurt of real estate sales, a

Rick Morrell



Betty Feazel, at the At Last Ranch

boom contingent on enormous developments. Now the real estate business is in a real depression. The whole Wolf Creek Valley thing was a bad faith operation, and they'll never find a big enough sucker to satisfy the debts and move forward."

As for East Fork, Feazel says, "American Express will nursemaid

the project through the permitting process and then will probably sell out." She sums up her feelings on both proposals by showing a cartoon. A bedraggled Mother Nature is standing in front of a door with a sign reading: "Rape Counseling."

--Tamara Wiggans

Texas and California, and all of whom had invested through personal contacts with Doerring, wondered where their \$14 million had gone. According to Adam Poe, it was spent on "pre-development costs." Before the debacle, Doerring hired Poe to help guide the project through permitting, and Poe took day-to-day charge after Doerring left. Before Westfork, Poe had run the state Joint Review Process where one of his last tasks had been coordinating the Westfork study.

Poe says of the \$14 million: "There was a lot of mapping, planning analysis and baseline date to develop. But most of the

money went to buying land and paying interest on land."

The land, however, isn't close to being paid for. Millions are still owed on the Teal Ranch at the base of the proposed ski mountain, and on 1,600 acres west of Pagosa Springs known as the Gomez Ranch, which was acquired for donation to Archuleta County for expansion of the local airport. Modern ski areas need an airport capable of landing jets. The court action will keep the land in limbo until Lennon, the court appointed liquidator, acts.

Lennon told the San Diego court that Westfork's salvation lies with a new general partner or buyer for the entire project. To clear the path to a major new investor, the Westfork investors put up more money and hired attorneys to advise them.

Poe says, "Doerring really left us (Westfork Investments) holding the bag. We weren't part of the daily financial decision-making process." If investors had understood the situation, he says, "We would have done things differently."

In particular, they would not have moved a massive amount of dirt on the Teal Ranch. The bulldozers were to help turn meadows into roads, ponds, a golf course and sewage treatment facilities. The boom fell after the land-clearing but before the building. The area is now torn up -- scraped bare in some places and covered with mounds of dirt in other places.

The land is marred by something besides bare, eroding ground. Ski areas are rarely built with upfront money from the developer. Instead,

taxing, or metro, districts are formed to float bonds to finance roads, water, fire protection, sewage and the like. When the ultimate buyer comes along, he or she not only gets a mortgage on a condo, but also an annual tax bill to pay for the improvements.

In the case of Westfork, four metro districts were formed to pay for infrastructure and \$5 million in bonds were sold. But Doerring never had a chance to sell off land to the surgeon from Houston, or the oil man from Dallas. Westfork still owns the land, and is therefore responsible for paying off the bonds.

Poe says, "We were counting on Doerring to perform, to carry through on the project." But Doerring didn't

(Continued on page 12)

Ski...

(Continued from page 11)

perform, and Westfork Investments could have its property taxes raised by the metro districts (which are run by Westfork employees) to pay the bondholders. Where will the estimated \$611,000 come from to make the interest payments this year, to say nothing of the additional money needed to pay the original owners of the Teal and Gomez ranches?

"That's part of the big question," says Poe.

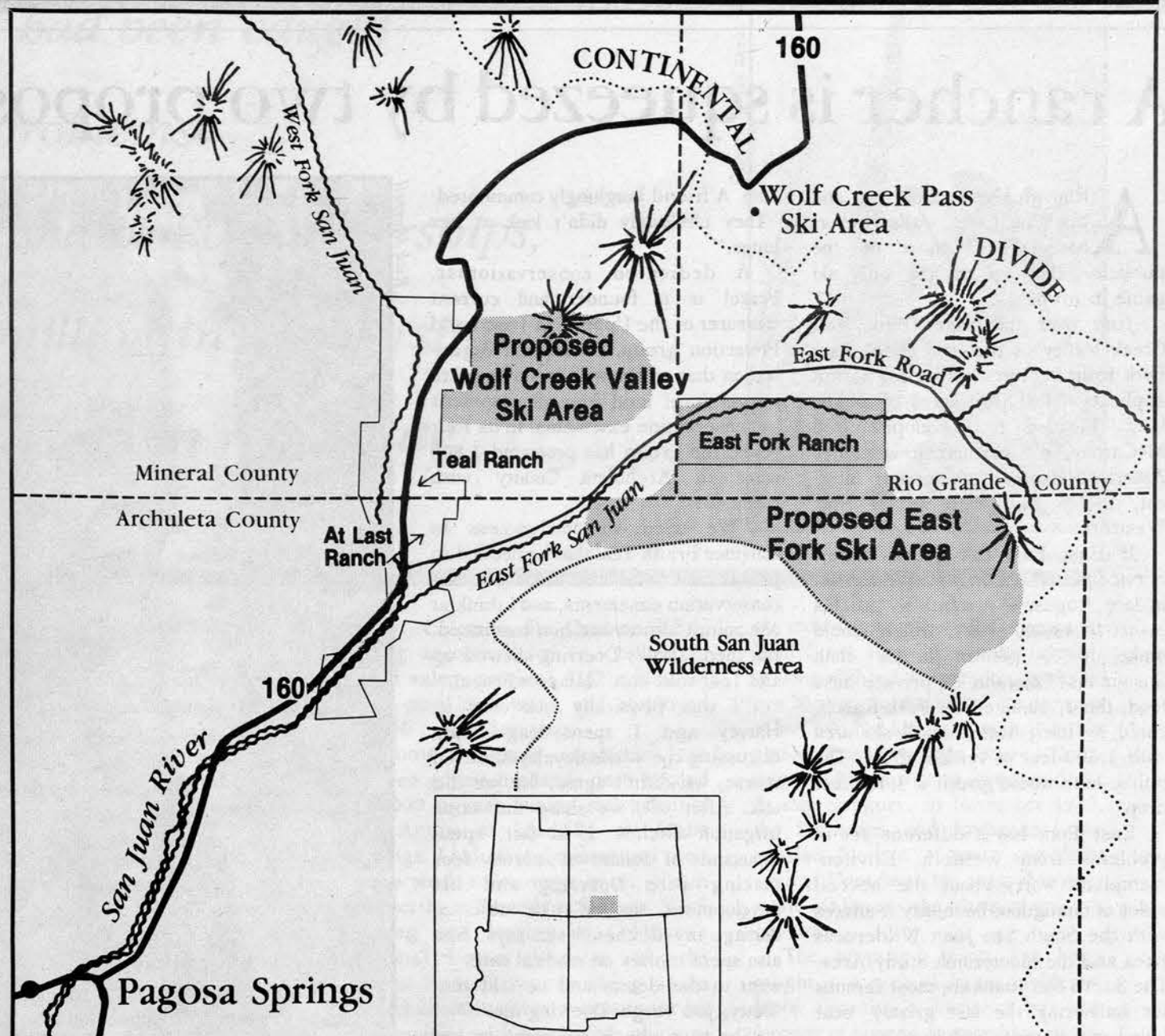
According to Bob Morrison, an attorney for limited partners in Austin, Texas, each investor was asked to invest additional funds to salvage the project. The investors put up \$250,000 in hopes of salvaging some of the \$14 million they had already sunk.

Morrison says the court has allowed the money to go to the Forest Service and consultants to complete the EIS, rather than to serve debt. "Everything now is contingent on the Forest Service issuing their Record of Decision. Our thought is that the value of the project is greatly enhanced if it receives a favorable recommendation from the Forest Service. And we are hopeful of that." He also says, "It appears that the type of entities or persons qualified to do that (buy out the investors) come few and far between."

The mess created by Doerring is especially sticky for Frank Teal, who chose to sell his ranch to Doerring at a price reportedly well above market, and to finance part of the sale. If the current court stay is lifted, Teal could foreclose on the property. He would get back the scraped ground and the piles of dirt, as well as the four metro districts and their \$5 million in obligations.

When asked about the intricacies of the situation, attorney Morrison let out a long chuckle, and then hesitated, saying the situation really wasn't funny. "There are several options. Teal could buy all the bonds back and then try and have the districts dissolved. He'd be out of pocket at least \$2-3 million if he did that. Or, he could continue the development himself."

Interested onlookers are Archuleta and Mineral counties. The land is in Mineral County, which approved the development without batting an eye. Closure of a mine that employed most of the residents has sent unemploy-



ment soaring there. In addition, while Mineral County would get the ski area's property taxes, the demand for schools, hospitals, police and other services would land on Archuleta County, making it something of a no-lose situation for Mineral County.

Archuleta County Commissioner W. H. Diestelkamp says a proposed tax-sharing agreement with Mineral County won't pay for even one patrol car. In the short run, then, it is probably in Archuleta County's interest to see the resort die. But Diestelkamp doesn't expect that. "They've spent too much money now. And when they get the okay from the Forest Service, they'll have something to sell."

Unlike Poe, who said he was unaware of how the real estate market is doing in Pagosa Springs this summer, Diestelkamp said things were slow. "Oh, there's some wheeling and dealing going on, but with the bottom falling out of the oil industry, Texas and Oklahoma have been hard hit. That's where most of

the money has come from in the past few years when things were booming around here."

Through it all, the Forest Service has kept the project on track. The agency's second EIS began after the SEC complaint was filed and Westfork's assets frozen. San Juan National Forest spokesman Dennis Neil said in March that since Westfork was paying its bills, "We have no choice but to treat them as a viable entity until they show us otherwise." He also said, "If a new general partner isn't found soon, we may have to look at things differently."

Forest planner Jim Furnish says, "This isn't an unusual situation. Several approved areas in Colorado are languishing in eddies... Those developers are just waiting around for better times to capitalize on their investment."

The Sierra Club's Martin Sorenson differs. "As far as I'm concerned, the Forest Service is playing the role of

land developer and speculator instead of unbiased catalyst in the process. They might as well be out beating the bushes with Westfork, looking for a sugar daddy." It is clear, he continues, "that there is no meaningful proponent on the horizon. Yet the Forest Service persists in writing a document based on the assumption that there is."

It is hard to predict what decision the Forest Service will make, or whether its actions will be appealed. But it is likely in the short term that no permit will be issued -- just a final EIS and Record of Decision on whether the area is suitable for development.

To obtain the special use permit, the developer must show liquid assets equal to 25 percent of the first phase of the development. In its current state, Westfork is not close to that goal.

□

Tamara Wiggans is a freelance writer in Durango, Colorado. This article was paid for by the High Country News Research Fund.

LETTERS

A SUGGESTION FOR DUBOIS

Dear HCN,

Environmental effects of timber cuts and one family's attempt to prevent damage to their land near Dubois, Wyoming, were subject of an August 4 HCN story. I recently had occasion to briefly examine the situation in Dubois. An interesting idea came up.

Dubois is an attractive and isolated place that many of us know as the last town we drive through before entering Yellowstone. Timber, livestock and tourism are its primary economic base. Ranching is as tenuous there as anywhere. Tourism is important, but short-lived each summer. Timber is critical.

The town once had several small local timber operators. It now has two primary operators, one locally owned and one owned by Louisiana-Pacific. L-P's operation has become vulnerable, apparently due to a decline in the demand for L-P studs and proposed changes in U.S. Forest Service timber leasing, supported by environmentalists.

Dubois is deeply divided over the emotion-charged leasing issue. Residents blame the USFS and environmentalists for their economic problems. They want to keep L-P in town. In their efforts to reduce the impacts of logging, many regional environmentalists have shown little concern for the problems of Dubois. Their position is to reduce board-feet of logging.

There may be a path through this controversy that pleases both Dubois

and environmentalists and could help both to set aside their "positions" and examine what they really want.

The goals may be complementary, given the following: Dubois could continue as a timber-based economy by using smaller, local operators rather than L-P. Local operators spend more of their profits locally, which returns more timber dollars to the local community and creates more jobs. Even if these operators cut fewer board-feet, because they were cut by resident operators, they may create as many jobs as more board-feet cut by an absentee corporation.

Second, some silviculturists say that small timber operators can log with less ecological damage. Therefore, new local operators may be able to create more jobs by cutting fewer board-feet than that being cut by L-P, while damaging less woodland.

No one knows if this approach is feasible. It certainly has problems to be solved: capitalizing new local businesses, overseeing small operators and meeting national timber goals, to name a few. But a study sponsored by the USFS, Dubois and perhaps the Greater Yellowstone Coalition would be instructive.

There is an unfortunate impression amongst some environmentalists that those whose jobs depend on extraction of natural resources do not care for the natural environment. In fact, most care deeply for it. But they also care deeply about having a job. Those of us interested in preserving ecological balance will find more allies if we also help find ways to create jobs and sustain community economies.

Michael Kinsley
Old Snowmass, Colorado

Ski area developers replay *Milagro Beanfield War*

by Tom Wolf

Robert Redford is making a film based on John Nichols' book, *The Milagro Beanfield War*. Real life governors and mayors in New Mexico are auditioning for parts. This seems odd, since Nichols' tale of a traditional community's response to recreational development proposals portrays most government officials and politicians unfavorably.

Had Redford and Nichols attended the annual meeting this spring of the Colorado-Wyoming Society of American Foresters, held in Pagosa Springs in southwest Colorado, they would have heard impassioned arguments in a picturesque setting about the relationship between the ski industry and the San Juan National Forest.

Like so many multiple uses on public lands, ski area development occurs under a special-use permit. Two huge new areas are proposed: Wolf Creek Valley, on the West Fork of the San Juan River, is designed to accommodate 11,750 skiers at one time. East Fork, just five miles away over one ridge, weighs in at 13,500 skiers at a time. Both are planned as world class, four season destination resorts.

Foresters in the Rockies are still smarting from their recent tussle with the state of Colorado over the place of recreation in the more-or-less completed forest plans. Much to the Forest Service's disgust, the state waited until the draft EIS appeared before announcing opposition to plans to access top quality spruce at higher elevations by building a vast new system of backcountry roads.

Already under pressure from environmentalists on the below-cost sales issue, the Forest Service proposed to pay for the roads by harvesting lots of aspen, a species that had never had much commodity value before. Conveniently, mature stands of aspen dominate many of the lower-level ecosystems in western Colorado. Letting Louisiana-Pacific cut aspen to feed its new waferwood mills provided what looked like a modern forester's dream: economically efficient timber harvest on a pay-as-you-go basis.

Arrayed against such plans was an unusual coalition of environmental groups and the state itself, claiming that the Forest Service had failed to follow the Colorado Joint Review Process, which coordinates the input of all the local, state, and federal regulatory agencies into the EIS

process. Most people think it works well.

Among those working for the Department of Natural Resources was Adam Poe, who claimed that Forest Service aspen harvest plans ignored the amenity value of the species for the tourism industry. Poe spoke eloquently and effectively about adverse impacts on fish and wildlife and on their dependent hunting and fishing industries. The department won its case, hands down.

Now Poe is executive vice president for Westfork Investment Associates, the developer of Wolf Creek Valley. Many of the foresters were plainly angry at his smooth passage through the revolving door that leads from government to industry. One asked, "Adam, when you were with DNR, you appealed our timber harvest plans as environmentally damaging. Is your ski area development proposal less damaging than our timber sales?"

While this question rang in the air, Poe hesitated. The group was gathered at an overlook on Wolf Creek Pass' Highway 160. Down the valley along an elk migration corridor, Poe's golf course and homesites were emerging from the muck of a Colorado spring day. Across the valley, one saw the aspen-adorned slopes of the proposed ski area, just at the base of one of Colorado's few known peregrine falcon nesting sites. The peregrine is a federally listed endangered species.

Blinking behind cranberry-colored glasses, clad in a cranberry-colored down vest subtly matching the stripes in a stylish shirt, Poe was at least as cool as Robert Redford would have been. He replied, "Yes, there is a difference. The vegetation management we will do here is not tied to the price of timber. We will control roads and public access in ways that are different from timber harvest. And the percentage of land we are impacting is only a tiny fraction of what the Forest Service was proposing to cut."

Also present was Kingsberry Pitcher, the owner of nearby Wolf Creek Pass ski area and a longtime developer who lists Chet Huntley's Big Sky area near Bozeman in his credits. Pitcher said: "I have been in this business since 1941. I have had chances to develop the site we're looking at. I always said no, because I can tell that those slopes are unstable. Lots of aspen means unstable soils.

You are looking at an area that will slump when the aspen are cut to make ski runs. I am also sceptical about exposure, elevation, and sun problems. Snowmaking is only a partial answer."

San Juan Forest Supervisor John Kirkpatrick will make the final decision on both developments. He said, "We feel these are two separate areas, and so we do not study their impacts together. If we tie them together, we put both proponents at a disadvantage. Their consultants say they can capture the Sun Belt market. It isn't our business to say if this is a real market or one created by real estate and tourism promoters."

It was time for Adam Poe to speak again. "We project a 60 percent growth in the Sun Belt population by the year 2000 or so. All those people sweating down there want to come here to recreate in all four seasons. We are the closest resort area. The numbers tell the tale."

Dan Love is the President of the Colorado Board of Tourism. He comes from the highly competitive airline-travel promotion industry. He said tourists spent \$4.4 billion in Colorado in 1985, generating \$216 million in state and local taxes. When people think "vacation," according to Love, Colorado ranks third behind Florida and Hawaii. "Scenery is our number one draw," Love said, "and you foresters control the scenery. Colorado's economic future lies squarely in the Forest Service's hands."

Jim Ruch, head of the state's Division of Wildlife, sounded a cautionary note. "The Forest Service's proposals to cut a lot of aspen sounds like the plan to save the village of My Lai. Both foresters and developers have to remember that new proposals affect existing interests. Hunting and fishing put \$1 billion into Colorado in 1985, about the same as the ski industry."

The last speaker at the overlook site was Glen Eyre of the Division of Wildlife. He said, "Wildlife always ends up at the bottom of the list of concerns. Some impacts just can't be mitigated...Six hundred elk presently migrate through this proposed ski area and into the calving habitat in the back bowls that link it with the East Fork. There are plans for a nordic hut system linking the two areas. What about the elk? What about the wolverines? Many of us feel that there may be a remnant population of grizzly somewhere in the San Juans. What about them? What about the peregrines? How do we keep them



from getting hit by cars or smashing themselves into powerlines?"

Adam Poe said, "We plan to work with the Forest Service and the DOW to deal with these problems. There is no doubt, however, that the quality of hunting and fishing in this area will decline over time."

The foresters' bus descended Wolf Creek Pass, headed for Pagosa Springs. It passed the At Last Ranch, the Elk Meadows RV Camp, the Old Miners Steakhouse, and a group of Saturday morning drunk-driving convicts cleaning up trash along the Highway 160 corridor.

Right after this meeting, Forest Service Chief Max Peterson came out against the bill to extend permits and ease restrictions for ski area developers. The bill has the support of the entire political-power structure of the state of Colorado.

When Redford is finished with New Mexico, he can shoot his next film, peregrines and all, in the Wolf Creek area. Maybe Redford will play Adam Poe. Maybe Adam Poe will play Adam Poe.

Tom Wolf is a writer in Fort Collins, Colorado.

14-High Country News -- September 1, 1986

It will cost \$30 a day to slide downhill at some resorts

Skiers in four Western states will pay as much as 20 percent more this winter to ride a lift up a mountain. The large resorts that attract week-long skiers have raised prices, with Utah's Deer Valley, Idaho's Sun Valley and Colorado's Vail/Beaver Creek charging \$30 a day; Aspen, Colorado, \$29; Steamboat Springs, Colorado, and Park City, Utah, \$27; and Jackson Hole, Wyoming, \$26.

Prices at smaller resorts, which mostly cater to day skiers, are staying steady, with charges between \$8 and \$20 a day. A sample from around the West includes Utah's Alta, Wyoming's Snow King and Colorado's Berthoud Pass, \$15; Colorado's Monarch, \$18, and Wolf Creek, \$19; Grand Targhee, Wyoming, \$19; and Sundance, Utah, \$20.

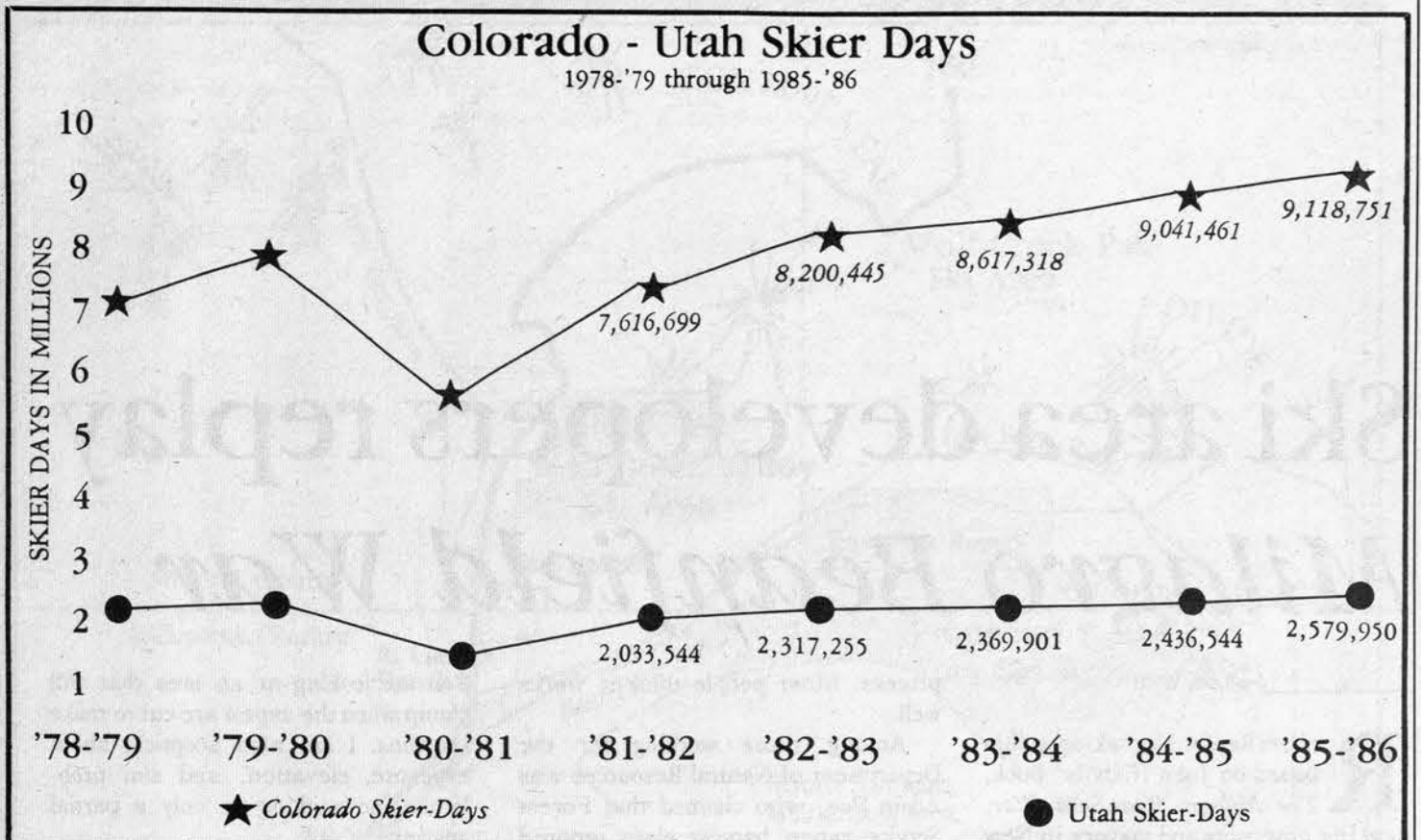
Colorado, with over nine million lift tickets sold in the 1985-1986 season, is the giant in the ski industry, towering above distant runner-up, Utah, which sold 2.5 million lift tickets.

Since 1981, the industry in Colorado has spent more than \$335 million in capital improvements, according to trade group figures. Stephanie Nora, of the Denver-based Colorado Ski Country USA, which represents 30 resorts, says improvements such as high-speed gondolas increase time on the slopes and add value to a lift ticket.

Typical of Colorado resort improvements is Telluride's new, high-speed chairlift that seats four skiers at a time. Said to be the longest of its kind in the world, the lift will take skiers almost two miles to 11,000 feet in 11 minutes. That increases Telluride's uphill capacity to 10,826 skiers per hour.

The nearby Crested Butte ski area in western Colorado, which is seeking capital to stay in the black despite reporting a 7 percent gain in skiers this winter, also has expansion plans. Ski company officials recently announced a \$600 million plan to develop a new mountain and build 1,900 new housing units at its base.

Overall last year, Colorado resorts pumped a record \$130 million into their facilities. But while the ski industry enjoyed its best year, the rate of growth was less than 1 percent from the year before, and 17 resorts posted losses.



This chart can prove almost anything about ski industry growth. Utah ski areas can show that their rate of growth spurted in the last year, and that they now lead Colorado and the nation. Colorado can prove that Utah has only a small share of the ski business. And Eastern ski areas can show that Colorado and Utah together have only 25 percent of the nation's 50 million annual ski visits.

Large ski areas such as Steamboat, Keystone and the Aspen-Buttermilk complex were hit by rising costs for insurance and equipment while, at the same time, attracting fewer skiers. Seven smaller resorts, priced out of business, closed. Ski Country USA says the smaller resorts were less able to attract skiers because they lacked capital to make improvements. Their demise is not healthy for the industry since most resort managers say smaller areas are the ones where skiers start out.

In contrast to Colorado, Utah resorts have not moved toward large and expensive expansion. Utah lift tickets range from \$8 to \$30 a day and some areas boast skiing quality as good or better than Colorado's. Utah ski industry representatives say the

Those wishing to show that skiing in Colorado is an expanding industry can calculate the growth rate from 1980-1981 to 1985-1986. It turns out to be an astronomical 14 percent. But 1980-1981 was depressed by a severe drought. The growth rate from the normal snow year of 1979-1980 to 1985-1986 works out to 2 percent a year.

That is very low compared with the

7 to 10 percent rate racked up in the 1970s. The low growth occurred despite intense promotion and installation of snowmaking equipment at all resorts. The last several years have seen bumper snow crops, but snowmaking is still important; it allows ski areas to open around Thanksgiving each year, thereby lengthening the average ski season.

Source: Utah Ski Association

\$1-3 rises in ticket prices coming up this winter are solely due to insurance costs.

"We are just passing along insurance increases," says Danny Richardson at the Utah Ski Association. But raising ticket prices to cover skyrocketing insurance premiums troubles the industry in Utah. "Until some sort of responsibility comes -- when we stop paying high awards to people who should have been responsible for their own actions -- insurance rates will continue to rise," Richardson says.

Rather than expanding lifts or other slope facilities, the Utah resorts upgraded amenities in the base villages. Last year skier days increased by 3.5 percent, with 2.5 million tickets sold to make it the best season on record. To keep the trend

going, Richardson says resorts are offering package discounts and other inducements to attract more people to the sport. The real competition, he adds, is warm-weather vacation areas, not other ski resorts.

Wyoming's Jackson Hole and Idaho's Sun Valley, two of the West's major "destination" ski resorts, share Colorado's and Utah's insurance problems. Kari Gemmel, who works for the Jackson Hole resort, says fourfold increases in insurance premiums over the last four years forced a \$4 increase in lift ticket prices this season. All resort managers say, however, that when skiers pay \$1,000-\$2,000 a week in the West for a vacation, a lift ticket is the least of their expenses.

--Steve Hinchman

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OFF THE WALL



The next time your radiator boils over, make soup

by Ray Ring

Middle of summer, the sun is blazing down. Your car is like an oven. You need potholders to work the door handles. The seatcovers sear into your thighs, the steering wheel blisters your fingers. Waves of heat are shimmering off the dashboard. You fume inside your four-wheel inferno.

Relax. Look at the bright side of this product of summer sun. If your car is as hot as an oven, use it for one. Give a whirl to the newest summer craze -- car cookery.

Wrap a standing rib roast or turkey in foil and place it gently on the front seat. Large hams should be belted in an upright position.

Roll up the windows, lock the doors to keep away marauding hobos and children, and come back in a couple of hours. Voila.

Precise parking controls the temperature inside the car. For warming leftovers, park under a shade tree. But for roasting and baking, park on a

large expanse of heat-reflecting asphalt, such as a shopping-center lot.

A reminder: On really hot days, keep a window cracked so the meat doesn't dry out or burn before you have a chance to check it.

Once you get the knack, just about anything can be cooked in the average sedan. Sheets of cookies or pans of brownies can be slid under the seats for slow baking, and the perfect place for foil-wrapped potatoes is in the glove compartment.

Working carefully to avoid burning your fingertips, unscrew the knob on the transmission level. Then slide marshmallows over the steel rod and listen to them sizzle.

Most turn-signal levers will accommodate a single hot dog, skewered from end to end.

The convenient ledge below the back window is reserved for delicate cakes and souffles that should not be disturbed while rising.

The dashboard beneath the windshield -- the hottest spot in most cars -- doubles as an energy-free broiler. Slices of garlic toast can be

arranged along the dash and, if watched closely, steaks and hamburgers can be charbroiled on the radio-speaker grill so the hot grease can drain properly.

For those who plan feasts, whole pigs and goats can be laid out in the trunk compartment for all-day roasting, perhaps nestled in a bed of carrots and ears of corn.

Creativity is the secret to car cookery. Don't let conventional thinking restrict your imagination. Strips of bacon can be wrapped around the steering wheel and fastened in place with toothpicks. The most succulent baked apples I ever ate came off the door locks of a 1968 Camaro.

Other people might be going around complaining about how it's hot enough to fry an egg on the sidewalk. You know where the egg belongs.

□

In Tucson, Arizona, Ray Ring fixes grilled cheese sandwiches in a Ford.

LETTERS

BUZZING THE BADLANDS

Dear HCN,

I have not visited the Grand Canyon in over 10 years, so I have not experienced the disruptions caused there by the relatively recent increase in aerial incursions by helicopters and small planes. However, a few days ago, my family and I passed through Badlands National Park in South Dakota. Just outside the main entrance on the northwest side of the park was a small outfit offering helicopter views of the Badlands -- for only \$5.00!

We wondered what sort of ride one would get for so little money, and soon found out. About one-half mile inside the park is the first major turnout for tourists to view the Badland scenery. The roar of the one helicopter in use was incessant. I timed the flights by

stopwatch and found that each flight lasted *two minutes*, followed by one minute on the ground to change passengers. That adds up to 20 helicopters per hour passing low above this turnout. I have worked out of helicopters in Alaska; the safety violations involved in shuttling people in and out so rapidly must be numerous.

This kind of hit-and-run operation ruins the Badlands scenery for people on the ground, and gives only the thrill of going up in a helicopter to the passengers -- which can be done anywhere and surely should not be allowed in a national park.

Marith Reheis
Golden, Colorado

HAPPY TRAILS

Dear HCN,

Thanks for the lead article of Aug. 4 on Gudy Gaskill and the Colorado

Trail. I was a two-week volunteer working on the trail in the South Platte District in 1975. During the Bicentennial year, I had the pleasure of working all summer as a crew leader, supervising groups of volunteers constructing the trail in various stretches between Waterton and Kenosha Pass. Along with the other volunteer crew leaders, Mike Cassell, Sue Nolan, and Sue Rhodes, I also enjoyed surveying additional sections of the 480 miles in the Breckenridge area, in the Collegiate Range west of Leadville, and in the San Juans west of Creede. (We recommended that the trail not go through the Weminuche Wilderness Area.)

It was a rewarding summer, with some of the most beautiful scenery I've ever seen. But the incident I remember most vividly happened on our very last day of construction. In mid-afternoon on a hot September

day, Gudy had hiked six miles uphill to our work site. Out of her pack came two of the biggest and absolutely most delicious watermelons any of us had ever tasted. It was all the thanks we needed.

My appreciation goes out to all the people who have kept the Colorado Trail alive during the last 10 years. And thanks especially to Gudy -- a woman of vision, inspiration, and obviously, unbounded energy.

Mike Bencic
Houghton, Michigan

BARBS

What? So soon?

The U.S.S.R. and Great Britain have settled their dispute over the Soviet Union's refusal to pay off bonds issued by the czarist regime prior to the Russian Revolution.

16-High Country News -- September 1, 1986

ESSAY

On the trail of extravagant health

Environmentalists are like oncologists -- always in search of disease, always with a knife at hand in case cutting is necessary. As a movement, we have failed to take psychologist Abraham Maslow's advice to his profession: there is more to be learned from extravagant health than from pathology.

HCN reflects the environmental movement. Most of our stories are about sickness. But two recent issues -- July 7 and Aug. 4 -- happened to lead with stories about health. The July 7 story described the Zahniser family's fight to preserve his sheep ranch. The Aug. 4 issue described Gudy Gaskill's work on the 480-mile-long Colorado Trail.

Neither dealt explicitly with the question of health. It wasn't until the Zahniser story was in print and Wilbur came by to get 50 copies to distribute to his fellow farmers, that I thought to ask why he had fought. His answer: "What else could I do? I didn't have any choice."

That was no answer. All around him neighbors were handing over their deeds with little or no fight. Wilbur knew this, and was puzzled. So far as he could see, his neighbors were the same kind of people as him. So when he heard that one of them was under pressure from a banker, "I'd call up and say, 'You can fight. You don't have to let them take your place.' " Their response was always the same, "What the heck, they practically own it now. You can't beat them."

Zahniser couldn't imagine giving up his place. The people he spoke to couldn't imagine fighting for theirs. But from the outside, there was no difference between those who fought and those who didn't.

If anything, by my values, the Zahnisers should have been among the first to surrender. They don't appear to be hooked into an outside civic or political network that could have given them support. They don't follow the events of the outside world very closely. In fact, their first reaction to their troubles was that it must be a bankers' plot. So they lacked the context and the human network that I would have thought would be prerequisite to the battle they fought. And yet

they fought, and may turn out to be among the small percentage that win that fight.

Trailbuilder Gaskill is easier to read. The story in the Aug. 4 HCN was based on winter interviews. But the week the issue was published, Betsy and I drove our two children to Bolam Pass north of Durango so the teenagers could spend a week helping extend the trail as part of a 15-person crew. This particular crew was headed by Gudy, and what we saw in action was a woman who doesn't know how to worry and who doesn't give obstacles and setbacks a second thought. She said that if her children were three or four days late returning from a climbing or hiking trip, "I wouldn't worry. I know they're very capable, and I'd just assume they were delayed."

The assumption that things will work out was on display the Saturday afternoon we showed up at the Durango Forest Service parking lot to rendezvous for the trip to the 11,000-foot base camp. We wondered about taking conventional cars to the campsite, but Gudy assured us that "a Chrysler made it." We discovered when we finally reached the camp that a Chrysler had made it. But our Ford Tempo and a Chevette owned by another crew member did not. Each of us abandoned our cars at a different point in the trip, leading Gudy to say, when she drove into camp two hours later with groceries, "It looked like the Twilight Zone, first one car and then another."

But we didn't have to walk to camp. A farmer from Iowa, tired of waiting in vain in the Purgatory Ski Area parking lot for a 4 p.m. rendezvous, set off for the campsite. He was jubilant to find us trudging along the road loaded down with tents and sleeping bags. "Are you from the Colorado Trail?" he asked, even as we were climbing into the back of his pickup.

Gudy wasn't surprised to find us all there despite the abandoned cars and the missed meeting. Nor was she distressed that the farmer had spent a couple of anxious hours waiting. Her assumption is that if you are going to build a 480-mile trail for peanuts, there is going to have to be improvisation.

Blind confidence can lead to disaster, but Gudy's is supplemented by a shrewd grasp of individuals and group dynamics. Saturday night she crowded us all into the cook tent and had us introduce ourselves. We stood around, awful mulled wine in hand, stooped over by the tent roof, and presented those aspects of our personality we wanted others to see.

She began Sunday late, by design. (Except for the Iowa farmer, Craig Schroeder, who got up at dawn to sharpen tools the last crew had blunted.) After a leisurely breakfast, we spent an hour sorting out Pulaskis and McLeods -- the implements used to dig trails, chop roots, and smooth surfaces. Then we went to work, carving a trail out of what had been a steep hillside.

Only then did Gudy suggest it was time for a hike. One of the younger crew members complained that because of the late start "we won't have time for a long hike." But Gudy said later, "If they take a long hike today, they'll be worthless tomorrow."

Another key to her success may be an ingrained generosity. Our car died because the electric fan motor broke. Gudy spontaneously offered to loan her car for the 20-mile trip back down the jeep road to the state highway, and the 150-mile highway drive back to Paonia. She acted as if we were doing her a favor: "Otherwise it will just sit there all week."

Perhaps that quality is the major reason the Colorado Trail is pushing toward completion. She sees people and the things of the world as there to be used. People of all ages should come up to 11,000 feet and swing a Pulaski. The land should be shaped to accommodate those who wish to see the high country. Tools should be dulled by work and then sharpened. Cars should be driven, and then replaced when they're used up.

Some of us have reacted to this era's extravagant polluting expenditure of natural resources with a minimalist approach to consumption. We feel most virtuous when the meters of consumption are barely turning. It may be that our goal should instead be to cause those meters to spin in ways that will build the kind of world we want.

--Ed Marston

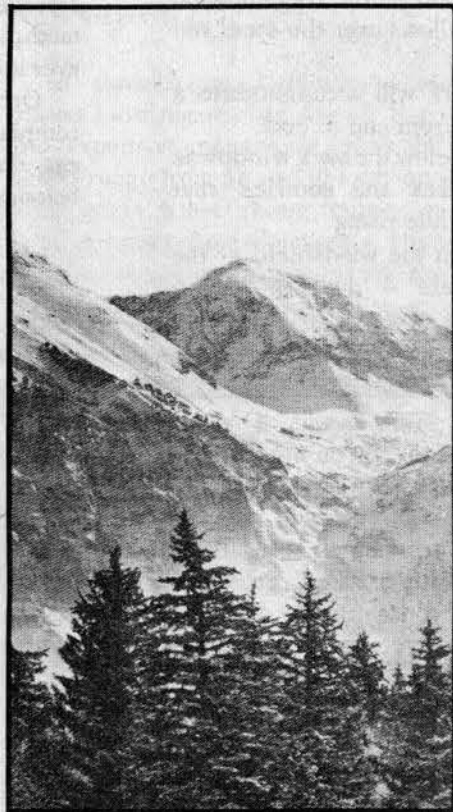
BULLETIN BOARD

FIVE COLORADOS

The Colorado Endowment for the Humanities is sponsoring a discussion program to define, understand and reconcile the differences among the five sections of Colorado. The endowment contends those divisions are: Eastern Plains, Metro Denver, Front Range (north and south of Metro Denver), Western Slope and Southern Colorado, and that they were created by differing geography, water and climate. The result is that each region has its own history, economy, politics and culture, and "the sections rarely talk to each other; to a disturbing extent, they do not understand each other. Because of their competition with each other, they often dislike each other." Fifteen meetings are set for around the state to involve local citizens and scholars in discussions under the heading, "Five Colorados." Meetings coming up soon are: Sept. 23, 7 p.m., McClelland Library, 100 E. Abriendo Ave., Pueblo; Sept. 24, 7 p.m., Otero Junior College, Student Center Recreation Room, La Junta; Sept. 25, 4 p.m., Social Science Consortium, 855 Broadway, Boulder; Sept. 26, 3:30 p.m., North Eastern Junior College, E.S. French Building, Rm. 219, Sterling.

HOLISTIC RANCH MANAGEMENT

The Montana Branch of the Center for Holistic Management, a ranch advisory organization, will hold its first annual meeting on Sept. 5 and 6 at the Ramada Inn in Billings. The meeting will include speakers and display booths, culminating in a tour of a pilot Holistic Resource Management ranch. Pre-registration is \$15 for the meeting and tour and \$12 for the Friday dinner banquet. Make checks payable to Center HRM, Montana Branch at Montana Branch, P.O. Box 1593, Billings, MT 59103.



AUTUMN EYE WORKSHOPS

Now in its 9th year, Autumn Eye photo seminars at a ranch close to Telluride, Colorado, are nearly booked for the two sessions from Sept. 18-21 and Sept. 25-28. Director Bill Ellzey and other professional photographers take students of all levels into the San Juan Mountains as part of the instruction. The cost is \$395 for workshop and lodging or \$250 for tuition alone. For more information write Autumn Eye, Box 1171, Telluride, CO 81335.

WATER IS FOR SELLING

A three-day conference titled "Water Marketing: Opportunities and Challenges of a New Era," will explore the new age of transferable rights, water reallocation, market pressures, public interest constraints and other factors affecting the attempt to move Western water from a government-controlled resource to a market commodity. The conference will explore the opportunities for marketing, the legal and technical challenges, financing, the role of the public interest doctrine, Indian water and environmental implications. Speakers include Gary Weatherford of Berkeley, California; consultant Steven Shupe of Santa Fe; Prof. F. Lee Brown of the University of New Mexico; Colorado water attorney Jack Ross; University of Oregon law professor Charles Wilkinson; and former New York City mayor John Lindsay. The conference will be held at the University of Denver Law Center Sept. 24-26. The fee is \$375. For information, contact: Water Marketing Conference, University of Denver College of Law, 1895 Quebec St., Denver, CO 80220 (303/871-6323).

BOOM TOWN EXPERT DIES

John Gilmore, a researcher who specialized in the effects of rapid development on Western communities, died Aug. 15, 1986. He was co-author of *Boom Town Growth Management* in 1975, and wrote numerous articles on the subject. Gilmore was a senior research fellow at the University of Denver Research Institute as well as a consultant to various government agencies and private firms. He was born May 9, 1922, in Emporia, Kansas, but his career was in the West. In the 1950s, he co-founded with his wife, Patricia Kent, the *Nucla Forum*, a weekly newspaper in the western Colorado uranium boom town of Nucla.

A METEORIC TEST

Professor Thomas Gold's theory of the origin of natural gas is being tested with the help of 3,000 optimistic Swedish investors and the Swedish national electrical utility. Those putting their \$21.5 million where Dr. Gold's ideas are hope to strike a large quantity of gas at the site of an ancient meteorite crash in the Swedish province of Dalacarla. Gold, an astrophysicist, believes natural gas and oil are part of the earth's original heritage, and that it is discovered by man when he is lucky enough to drill in places where it has seeped out of the core and up into reservoirs near the surface. Luck is required because Gold believes that current theories, based on the fossil origin of hydrocarbons, are totally wrong. The current drill site was chosen because the crash penetrated three miles, and fractured the earth's crust even deeper, creating seep paths. The *Atlantic* did a cover story on Gold in its February 1986 issue.

UPPER GREEN RIVER VALLEY

Only the River Runs Easy is a human and natural history portrait of the upper 25 miles of the Green River, in Wyoming's Wind River Mountains. Author Holly Skinner is a native of Pinedale, Wyoming, a small town at the base of the Wind Rivers. Most of her short essays concern people who have inhabited the valley of the Upper Green -- the Sheepeater Indians, trappers, outlaws, pioneers and cattlemen -- interspersed with the author's personal impressions. The last chapter is about Snook and Evalyn Miller, residents of the valley who have run a guide service for over 40 years and who still put up the hay they grow with horses. Pruett Publishing Co., 2928 Pearl St., Boulder, CO 80301. Cloth: \$14.95. 131 pages. Illustrated with map and black and white photos. Reproduction is somewhat dark.