

INSIDE: Letters, pages 14, 15

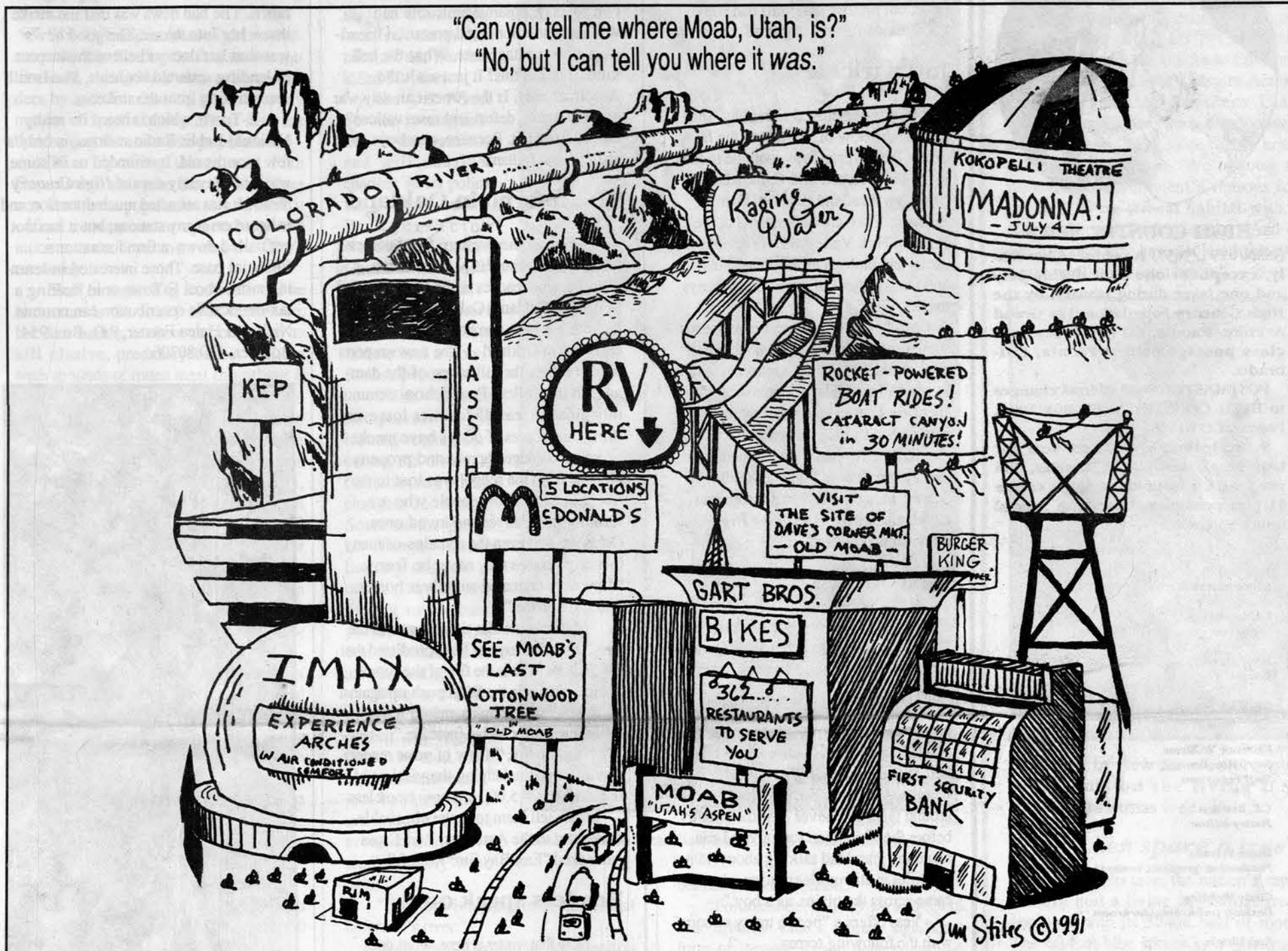
High Country News

November 18, 1991

Vol. 23 No. 21

A Paper for People who Care about the West

One dollar



A passive town in Utah awaits its fate

by Florence Williams

On a breezy October Saturday in Moab, Utah, a sea of mountain bikers clad in brightly colored Lycra flows down Main Street to commemorate this year's Fat Tire Festival. Over 2,000 bikers from across the country have



Jim Stiles

converged on this town of 4,000 to ride spectacular canyon trails rated "gonzo/abusive" and to play games like bicycle polo and bicycle rodeo. Some are even wearing Nike's bright new \$115 cross-training desert sneaker, the Air Mowabb.

In 1989, this busted uranium town was dubbed by *Outside* magazine its "favorite mountain-bike spot." The town has not been the same since.

Just over a century ago, Mormon leader Brigham Young sent disciples to colonize the ruddy, barren valley along the Colorado River in eastern Utah. Today, Moab is a different sort of mecca: tourists come from all over the world to visit nearby national parks, and recreationists hike, bike and four-wheel the canyon country with a near-religious zeal. In the last three years, the area's popularity has exploded.

The peddling Fat Tire flotilla looks strangely out of place in downtown Moab, until recently dominated by 18-wheelers and drilling rigs. For all its surrounding scenic beauty, Moab may be one of the ugliest towns in the West.

Writer Edward Abbey called it "the metal building capital of the world." When uranium hit eastern Utah in the 1960s, the town's population exploded from 2,000 farmers to 10,000 miners. Uranium left a sprawling legacy of trailer parks, industrial service shops and giant utility poles.

The town's reluctant embrace of tourism has also followed an industrial approach. Visitors are greeted by a main street festooned with giant neon signs advertising rooms with cable TV and fast food specials. But as more and more upscale, urban refugees seek sport and solace in the surrounding canyons, Moab's days of atomic cafes and uranium drive-ins are numbered.

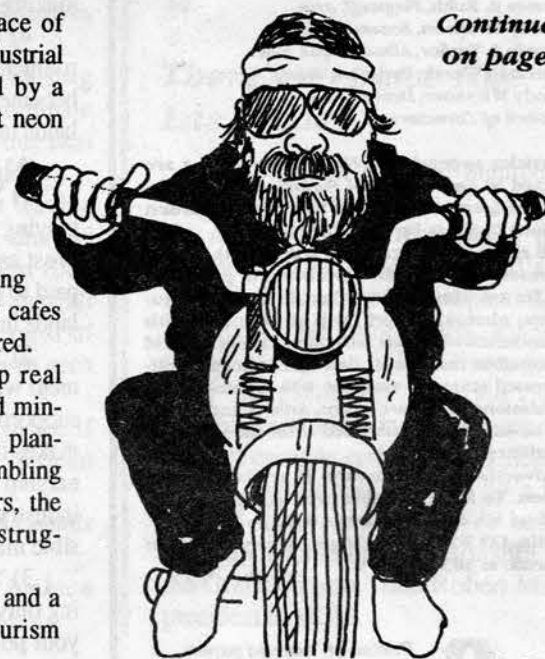
Taking advantage of cheap real estate — a result of the collapsed mining industry — and Moab's own planning vacuum, developers are tumbling into town. Moab's earlier settlers, the Mormons and the miners, are struggling to hold on.

From both an environmental and a demographic perspective, the tourism

boom is not without its ill effects. As one planning consultant put it, "Everything is up for grabs."

Although tourists have been coming to the area since the mid-1960s, when nearby Arches and Canyonlands national parks were born, the recent

Continued on page 8



Jim Stiles

Dear friends,



HIGH COUNTRY NEWS

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Whoops

The green stuffer in the last issue of *High Country News* offering gift subscriptions left off a vital piece of information: the price of a gift subscription. It is \$20, as the ad on page 14 of this issue now shows. Some of the interns, who stuffed the stuffers, noticed the lack of a price, but figured that staff had some good reason for leaving it off.

Just a trickle

Winter has closed in rapidly, shutting off the flow of visitors to the HCN office. However, a few continue to trickle by. From Aspen and Carbondale came Jim Kent and Eva and Dan Baharov. They are consultants in the Roaring Fork Valley who specialize in social and biological mapping, planning and management of "bio-social ecosystems."

Molly Clark, a painter who spends some time in Paonia but who travels a great deal, came by to contribute to the Research Fund. She doesn't subscribe "because I move so much" but buys a paper when she is in town.

Kraig Berg and Tim Cannell, who teach journalism at Paonia Middle School, brought a dozen seventh and eighth graders by to see how *High Country News* is produced.

Deal offered

In lieu of visitors, we get letters. Fourth generation rancher Vess Quinlan wrote to subscribe and to offer a deal of sorts:

"According to most of the information in your paper, my great granddaddy J.P. Quinlan and his peers raised billy hell with the grassland by overgrazing it. I can't say for sure because I was not around then, and never saw the country before the white man came, but I can recall my granddad talking about riding for miles in stirrup-deep grass when he came across the plains as a boy."

Vess offers a "peace treaty of sorts" with the following terms.

- "We in the livestock industry:
- 1) Will stop leaping to the defense of anyone who is abusing country or animals on the grounds that he is one of us because he owns a cow;
 - 2) Will stop jumping into bed with anyone who claims to be in favor of multiple use without finding out just what they intend to do with their multiple use rights;
 - 3) Will insist the government agencies develop clear, consistent rules for the management of public land and stop taking the path of least resistance in making decisions; and
 - 4) Will stop seeing "damned environmentalists" under our beds and will become full partners in managing public lands in a sensible, responsible manner.

As for the other side:

- 1) You in government will stop playing politics with resources in the West and get down to the work you are paid to do, and that is to manage public lands in an impartial, honest manner;
- 2) You in the environmental movement will stop funding enviro-terrorists, supporting any half-baked scheme that makes the papers, and enter into a partnership with those of us in the livestock industry and the government toward sensible management of public lands;
- 3) You in the media will stop printing only those articles slanted toward your point of view and will work toward even-handed reportage of both sides in a

controversy; and

4) Everyone will stop yelling and start listening to the other side long enough to hear and understand what is being said."

Vess ends his letter with questions.

"How's that for a pipe dream? Consideration for another's point of view, polite exchange of opinions, government employees seeking out extra work and controversy, possible amicable and workable solutions, and potential friendship among antagonists. What the hell kind of talk is this? It just ain't the American way. Is the American way war and bitterness, defeat and reservations? God, I hope not. Because, cowboys, we are the new Indians."

The inferno in Oakland

From another western front comes a letter from former HCN intern Matt Klinge, who teaches at the College Prep School in Oakland, Calif.

"It has been one hot, hellish weekend here in Oakland ... The news reports do not reflect the full scope of the damage. In the College Prep School community alone, at least 15 families lost everything, and scores of others have smoke- or water-damaged homes and property. No one from the school was lost to the fire, but many know people who are looking for relatives and loved ones. Odds are that even the remains of many missing persons may never be found: They were cremated with their homes and the hillside."

Matt sees a wider significance to the fire. "Most fire experts have predicted that the East Bay fire is the fire of the future. As more cities in the West push up against their wilderness margins, mixed forest-urban fires are bound to increase."

And finally, "If any of your readers are interested in helping the victims of the disaster — 5,000 are now homeless — please tell them to make charitable donations to the American Red Cross earmarked "East Bay Fire Relief."

Readers speak out

Now that winter is here, what does staff do of an evening? Last week we gathered around a large table to reread at one swoop all the written comments sent in with last February's survey. The statistical data have long since been logged into the computer, but the miscellaneous comments don't lend themselves to computerization.

But patterns did emerge. Most correspondents said the quality of paper we print on doesn't matter: only the words. But one reader said, "Don't ask me; you're the professionals." Over and over again, HCN was urged to expand its coverage to California — "as a Californian, I'm disappointed in the pointed snubbing of my state," wrote one — and a few readers think the 500,000 square-mile-plus state of Alaska is a natural for HCN. And one lone reader, pointing out that Arkansas is west of the Rockies, suggested expansion into the Ozarks. On the other hand, staff and board were also taken to task for expanding into Oregon and Washington, and one reader didn't like the survey because it mixed questions with a Research Fund appeal: "If you want honest response, don't include begging for money. Don't mix it with reader values, and publish your budget, including salaries. You want honest? Be honest. Rare these days."

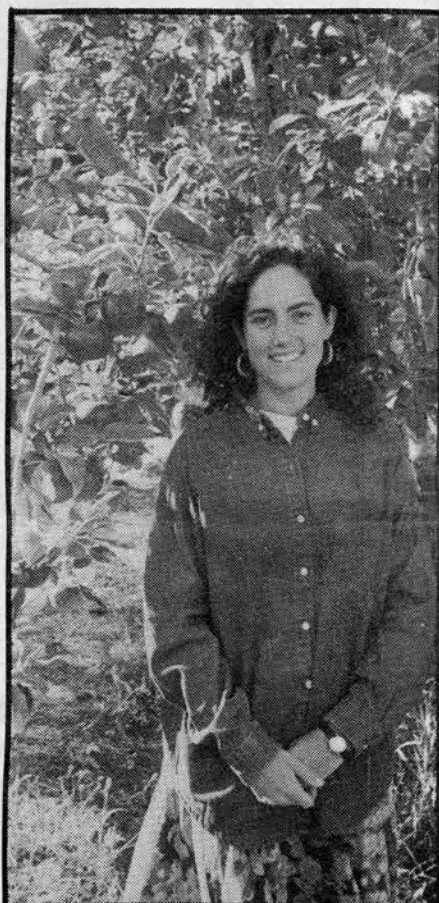
A visit to E-Town

HCN's editor and publisher, Betsy and Ed Marston, journeyed to Boulder, Colo., Oct. 31, to participate in E-Town

— a very entertaining music and talk show hosted by blues musician Nick Forster. The music was provided by John Hammond and Ken Bush, with the Marstons and writer Gretel Ehrlich providing the talk. Ms. Ehrlich read from her new book, *Islands, the Universe, Home* published by Viking Penguin.

Backstage, she told us about being struck by lightning a few months ago while on a walk near her Wyoming ranch. The bad news was that the strike threw her into the air. The good news was that her doctors believe the impact of landing restarted her heart. She is still recuperating from the strike.

E-Town, which is heard on many National Public Radio stations, is only a few months old. It reminded us in some ways of the early days of *High Country News*. It has attracted much attention and is heard on many stations, but it has not yet nailed down a firm format or a financial base. Those interested in learning more about E-Town or in making a tax-deductible contribution can contact Nick and Helen Forster, P.O. Box 954, Boulder, CO 80306.



Cindy Wehling

Fall intern Amy Onderdonk

New intern

Our third fall intern, Amy Onderdonk, arrived in Paonia bleary-eyed and groggy after driving 40 hours from Boston, Mass. Despite the grueling trip, she was rewarded by the exhilarating sight of changing aspens, making a patchwork of yellow and green on the mountainsides.

Since graduating in 1990 from Wellesley College with a major in English and a minor in biology, Amy has had a variety of adventures. After graduation she flew to Seattle, Wash., to begin a 2,000-mile bicycle tour down the West Coast. Highlights of the trip included riding through towns in the heart of the old-growth vs. logging debate and experiencing both the beauty and commercialization of Yosemite Valley.

Once back in her home town of Chestnut Ridge, N.Y., she spent six months writing a user's manual for a computer software program. That job finished, and finding herself no longer a fan of technical writing, Amy decided to become an intern at *High Country News*. She will explore a meeting point of two interests — writing and the environment — and hopes to find another opportunity in environmental journalism in the West.

—Ed Marston for the staff

WESTERN ROUNDUP

Bear hunters' bait attracts activists

Wyoming is preparing for a fight over baiting and killing black bears, an ethics and wildlife-management battle that has spread through surrounding states.

Wildlife and animal-rights advocates say that littering the forest with rotten food, sitting back until a bear wanders by and then shooting it, violates any notion of sportsmanship. They also say that baiting threatens bear populations.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department maintains that baiting does not hurt bear populations, and that it offers recreation to sportsmen and income to the department and the state's economy.

Staff biologist Reg Rothwell said he understands the outcry over fair chase, but that baiting is about the only way to kill elusive, predatory bears. Baiting with mounds of rotten meat or garbage is also not as easy as it sounds, he adds. "It's not like you can stick a barrel up there, sit around for an hour and you've got a bear," Rothwell said. "There are people who have spent a lot of time, sometimes weeks, and haven't gotten bears."

But the New York-based Fund for Animals fails to see any sport in enticing bears. It plans to join other groups in a campaign against the practice in Wyoming and other states that allow baiting.

"There's absolutely no element of sport to it," said Heidi Prescott, national outreach director for the fund. "Not that we think there's much sport to hunting anyway when people are out there with weapons."

"It will probably be challenged in the next year or so. It's a rather barbaric practice. It will be an easy target for us because it doesn't have widespread support," Prescott said.

In fact, a recent survey in Colorado shows that 75 percent of the registered voters oppose that state's policy allowing baiting. Any change in state rules, however, is usually defeated by outfitters and hunters. The issue will be debated again Nov. 20-22 when the state's wildlife commission meets in Denver.

The Idaho Fish and Game Department, which also allows baiting, has proposed a five-year ban on the practice in response to a perceived overharvest of bears.

Montana does not allow baiting. In Wyoming, opposition is just surfacing. A group called Friends of the Bow recently asked the Medicine Bow National Forest to ban baiting, and hikers are beginning to complain of stinking bait carcasses and rotting milk along trails.

The Wyoming Department of Game and Fish is trying to head off the dispute before it gains ground. The fall issue of *Wyoming Wildlife News*, the department's official newsletter, tells hunters they must start cleaning up after themselves and avoiding conflicts with other forest users.

"If we are to continue the practice of using baits for black bear hunting, we need to take a serious look at how we conduct ourselves," the article says. "We need to clean up our act before someone does it for us — bear baiting is something we can no longer take for granted."

In 1989 — the latest figures available — hunters killed 200 black bears in Wyoming. Of those, about 85 percent

were taken through baiting, and mostly in northwestern Wyoming, Rothwell said. In the department's Jackson district alone, hunters killed 80 bears.

The U.S. Forest Service is responding to complaints and will consider changes in its policy for baiting on the Bridger-Teton National Forest, said Chuck Jones, Jackson district ranger.

Bear baiters need both a state license and a Forest Service permit.

With hikers complaining of bloated rotting carcasses, the district is considering some changes, Jones said. Some of the possible changes include limiting the size of meat allowed and putting more manpower into seeing that permitted sites are cleaned up.

"We are definitely going to revisit our regulations," he said. "It's a very sensitive subject because there are a lot of hunters around that have traditionally used baits."

"I'm sure it's going to be emotional before it's over."

Boone and Crockett, an organization that catalogues trophy records, accepts bears killed through baiting so long as the technique is legal in the state or province where the bear is killed.

"The hunter has to swear that he took the animal in fair chase," said Phil Wright, Boone and Crockett vice president and emeritus chairman of records.

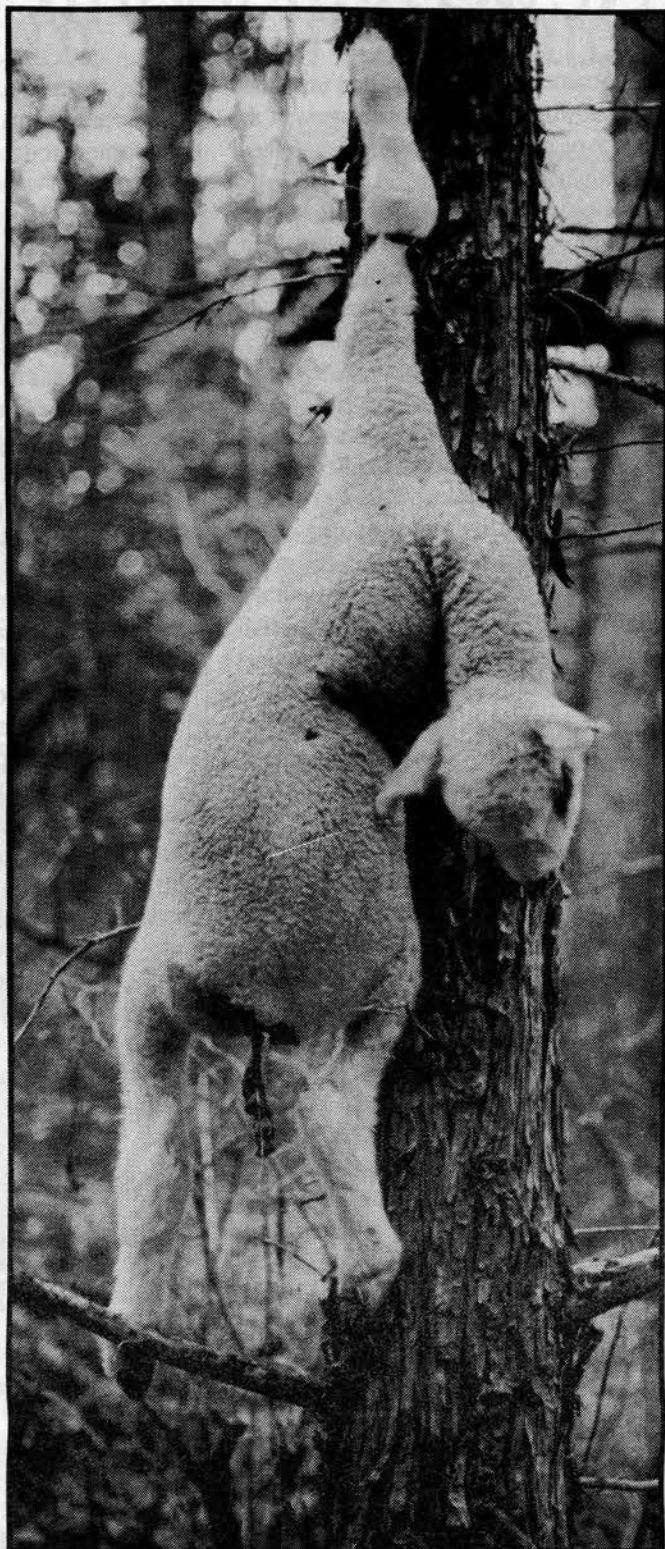
"If the animal is taken legally within any state or province, then the hunter feels — and perhaps he should feel — that what is regarded as legal is fair chase in that state." But Wright, who has hunted in Montana for 50 years, said he would not kill a bear with bait.

Wyoming biologist Reg Rothwell said if baiting is banned in Wyoming, hunters will have virtually no chance to shoot a bear. "If you don't have baiting, you're going to have 15 percent of your previous harvest."

With other game animals such as deer and elk, a dramatic decrease in harvest would mean populations could grow unchecked, Rothwell said. But the same does not hold true for bears because hunters take only a tiny fraction of the population, he said.

Although the state does not have an accurate count of bears, it knows that the population is stable because the age structure of harvested animals is remaining the same, he added.

In terms of economics, hunters spend money on items and services



Jackson Hole Guide
Lamb used as bear bait outside the Targhee forest

besides the permit itself.

"For instance, in 1989 we sold 3,935 bear licenses. That's a pretty significant form of income to the department and the state," Rothwell said.

Under the 1989 fee structure, a resident license was \$11 and a non-resident paid \$70. Rothwell had no breakdown of the licenses by resident and non-resident.

The sport hunt also provides an effective way of dealing with bears that get too close to human developments and cause problems, he said.

"Here is a way, given the right circumstances, that we can take care of a damage or nuisance problem. With any damage problem, we would rather not have department personnel take care of that. If the circumstances permit, we would much rather let the sportsman take care of it for us."

Some people challenge baiting because they say it kills an inordinate number of sows with cubs, but that assertion is not true, Rothwell said.

Critics claim that mothers leaving the den each spring are more drained than others, and find the easiest food source. The fact, however, is that all bears go for bait and the sex ratio of bears taken with bait is about even each year, Rothwell said.

"I don't care what sex you've got. If they smell a 50-gallon drum of dead carp, that would draw anybody in."

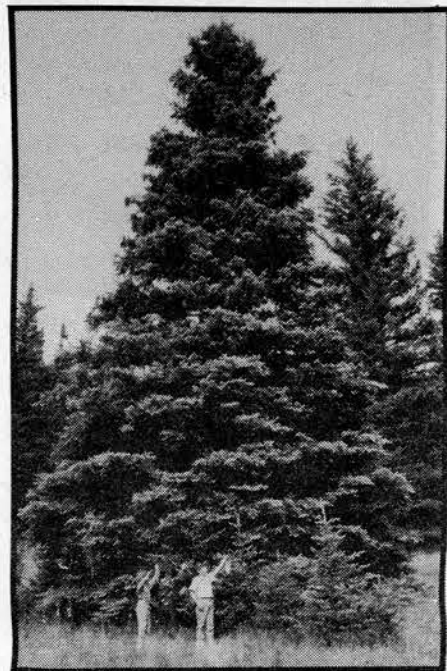
— Brandon Loomis

The writer works for the *Jackson Hole Guide* in Wyoming.

HOTLINE

Agency lists fish

Just two weeks after three environmental groups sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for failing to protect a rare fish, the agency acted Oct. 9 to list the razorback sucker as endangered. "It's a shame that it takes a lawsuit to force the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to obey the law," said Andrew Caputo, an attorney with the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund (*HCN*, 11/4/91). But the groups that sued, the Colorado Environmental Coalition, Four Corners Action Coalition, and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, were disappointed that the agency failed to designate critical habitat for the fish. "We're going to go over the government's reasons for not specifying critical habitat with a fine-tooth comb," said Caputo. "And if we find that they have violated the law again, we'll go to court again."



Don Laine

Children in New Mexico try out ornaments on the living U.S. Capitol Christmas tree

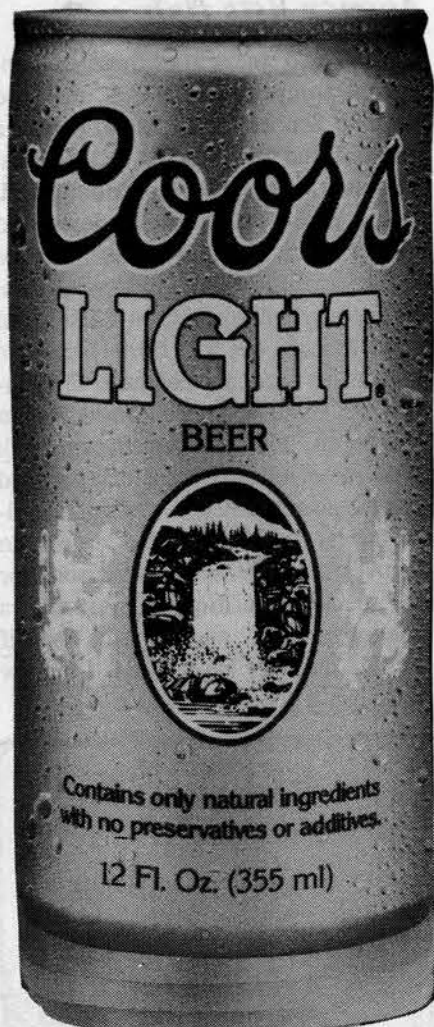
Woodsmen spare a tree

For the first time, the nation's capitol will host a living Christmas tree, complete with its 30-ton ball of roots. The 60-foot blue spruce is a gift from New Mexico's Carson National Forest and will be planted in the Washington area after the holiday to celebrate the centennial of the Forest Service. The Taos, N.M., community donated \$30,000 to dig up the 100-year-old tree, a job that took a week, and a contractor from Houston, Texas, volunteered to transport it 2,000 miles. Joe Hudson, a forester on the Carson National Forest, said his agency liked the idea of delivering a live tree, calling it "one of the few projects" undertaken jointly by the timber industry and environmental community. A lighting ceremony is set for Dec. 10.

There's no place like Las Vegas

Dorothy and Toto led members of the press and some Las Vegas VIPs down a yellow brick road Oct. 7 to the ground-breaking of MGM Grand's new \$1 billion Wizard of Oz complex. Boasting over 5,000 guest rooms, a 33-acre theme park and a \$10-million, seven-story "techno-marvel" Emerald City, it will be the world's largest casino-hotel when it opens in early 1994. Officials at MGM say this new Oz will be a boon for the American West. "We hope to develop a symbiotic relationship with the Grand Canyon," said Robert Maxey, president of MGM.

HOTLINE



Coors pays up

Coors Brewing Co. recently agreed to pay close to \$1 million in fines for violating state and national pollution laws. Without admitting liability, Coors agreed to pay a record \$700,000 to the Environmental Protection Agency for illegally disposing of hazardous wastes from 1981 to 1984. The EPA said that solvents, which Coors used to clean floors and degrease machinery, leaked from drainage pipes into the groundwater underneath the Golden, Colo., plant. But after discovering the leaks, Coors pumped much of the polluted well water directly into nearby Clear Creek and failed to notify the EPA of its violation for nine years. On the state level, the Colorado Department of Health fined Coors \$211,000 for violating pollution standards 44 times during the past two years. For four months, from January to April 1990, Coors was accused of repeatedly depositing hazardous levels of silver, mercury and copper waste into Clear Creek. They were also charged with killing 13,000 fish along a five-mile stretch of the creek when 150,000 gallons of diluted beer and untreated sewage spilled last May. The corporate settlement was the second largest fine ever levied by the Colorado Health Department's water quality control division. Coors also paid the state's biggest fine, \$450,000, in October 1990, after pleading guilty to criminal violations of Colorado environmental law from 1976 to 1989.

BARBS

And now, green couch potatoes.

People in the Washington, D.C., area enjoy watching the blue jays beat the orioles — to the backyard bird feeder. It's the latest rage among urbanites looking for something wild. "People want to get back to nature, but they don't want to leave their homes," reports *The Washington Post*.

The latest scientific definition from the "environmental president."

"A pothole in the backyard is not a wetland," George Bush told reporters recently.

New fight looms over Kaiparowits

Southern Utah's vast and unspoiled Kaiparowits Plateau is once again at the center of a battle over large-scale coal development.

Delaware-based Andalex Resources has applied to the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining for a permit to extract 2.5 million tons of coal per year from the Smoky Hollow region of the plateau.

The debate recalls an earlier plan to mine the Kaiparowits in the 1970s. That plan was dropped for economic reasons.

Utah environmentalists are fiercely opposed to the Smoky Hollow proposal. They say the mine threatens one of the largest and most isolated wild areas remaining in the United States. Both the Utah Wilderness Coalition and Utah Rep. Wayne Owens, D, have recommended the addition of 650,000 acres of the Kaiparowits Plateau to the federal wilderness system. The proposed mine would overlap or lie adjacent to five wilderness areas listed in Owens' pending Utah wilderness bill.

Also at issue are the mine's potential effects on the plateau's numerous backcountry resources, including its many raptor populations and rich stores of paleontological research sites.

Andalex must obtain both state and federal approval before mining can begin. The state will likely complete its review of the permit request this fall.

In addition, the Federal Bureau of Land Management and the Office of Surface Mining will jointly develop an environmental impact statement for the project. The study will analyze the anticipated impacts of the mine site and the associated transportation proposals. The study is expected to be under way by January 1992.

Andalex Project Manager David Shaver noted that residents of nearby Kane County, Utah, and Coconino County, Ariz., support coal development on the Kaiparowits. Shaver has promised, in public information meetings in both states, that about 150 workers will be employed at the mine. An additional 200 workers will be hired by contractors to oversee related operations.

Shaver says the Smoky Hollow mine won't threaten the area's wilderness qualities. "We believe that the mine will not jeopardize the environment," he says. "We can do it in a way that complies with the environmental laws."

Conservationists are not so certain. Many had hoped that the collapse of an earlier proposal to mine the Kaiparowits signaled the end of commercial ventures on the plateau. The plan in the early 1970s was to build a 3,000-megawatt generating station and four underground coal mines. It fell apart in 1976, when Southern California Edison, citing errors in power projections and other economic factors, dropped out of the consortium of utilities sponsoring the proposal.

According to the environmental community, the purported economic benefits of coal development on the Kaiparowits are as illusory today as they were 15 years ago.

Ken Rait of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance notes that "Kane County has only a minimal dependence on extractive industries. Its total income and per capita income continue to grow, largely due to its spectacular scenic qualities. The county's economic structure has been strong precisely because it does not rely on extractive industry."

Rait points to figures from the Utah office of planning that show that Kane County's income has varied little in response to fluctuating energy prices. In

fact, the area has demonstrated a steady increase in total personal and per capita income throughout the 1970s and 1980s, despite the energy bust. Service industry employment also increased during that period, an outcome that Rait attributed in part to the area's unspoiled environment.

"Kane County is at a crossroads," says Rait. "The prudence of subjecting its sustainable economy to the boom-and-bust pressures of an extractive economy is questionable at best."

Other conservationists cite long-term environmental impacts. Martha Hahn of Arizona's Grand Canyon Trust says that "Once a remote area is opened to development, it brings other impacts into that area: continued road improvements, off-road vehicle traffic, wildlife poaching, and so on. We must focus our attention on the cumulative impacts of continued development on the plateau."

Many details about Andalex's mining proposal remain unclear. Conservationists note that Andalex has yet to make available a plan for transporting coal. A proposal favored by Andalex is to use 12 tandem coal trucks per hour that travel about 10 miles through the popular Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. But Glen Canyon's existing management plan requires that its road remain unpaved and restricted to slow-

moving tourist traffic.

"We do have concerns, but we will wait until the EIS process begins before we take a stand," says Larry May, assistant superintendent at Glen Canyon.

Conservationists scored a recent victory when Andalex withdrew its request to construct a loadout facility near Flagstaff, Ariz. As is the case with the missing transportation data, the lack of a definite loadout plan makes environmental impact assessment difficult, both for the agencies and for environmental groups.

These are just some of the many fights that will shape this second battle for the Kaiparowits Plateau. At this early stage, the variety of unknowns makes an accurate guess about impacts all but impossible. Uncertainties about Andalex's intentions, about the reaction of the responsible agencies, and about the mysteries of the Kaiparowits Plateau itself will have to be resolved first.

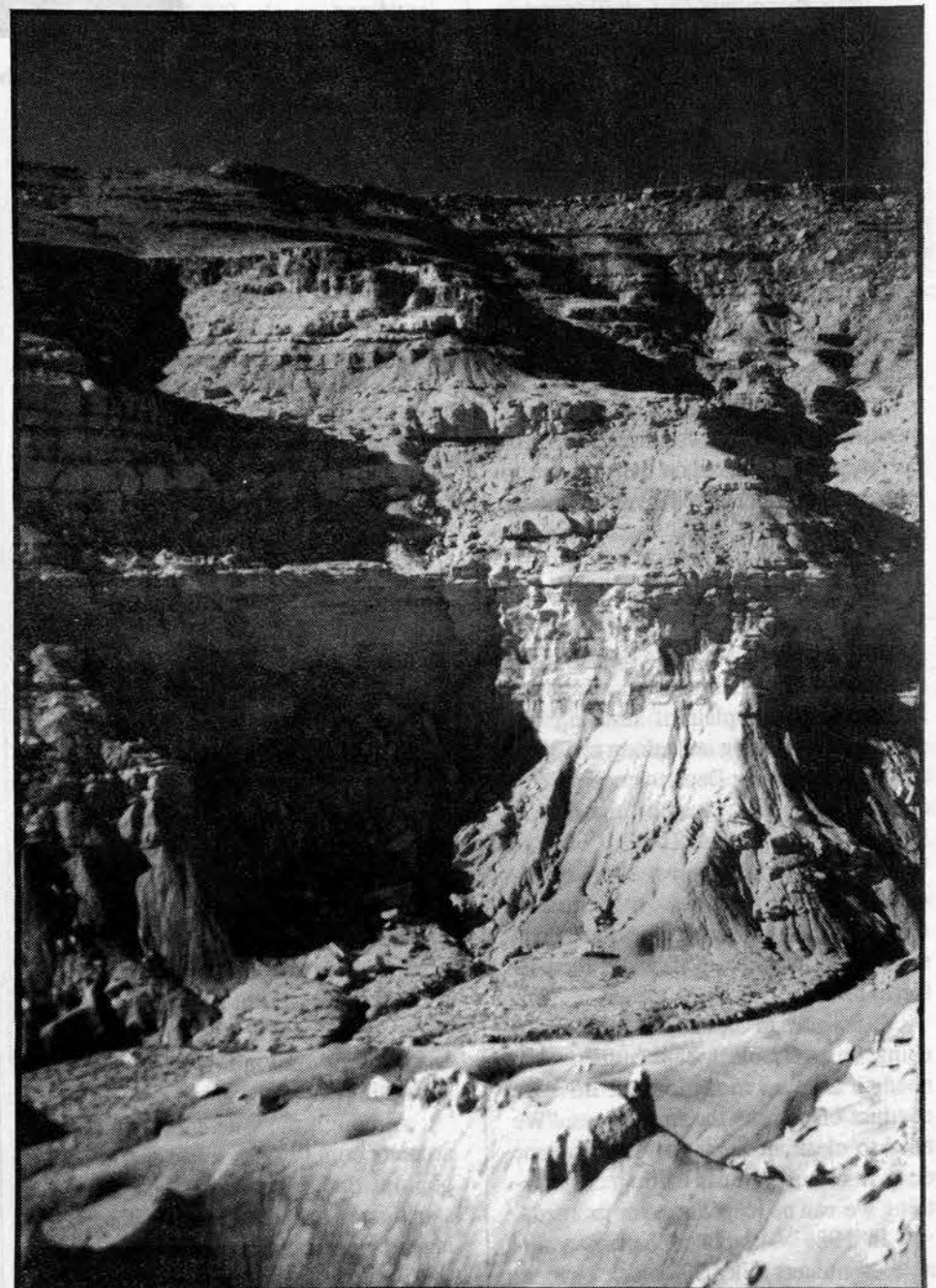
For more information contact Verlin Smith, BLM Kanab Resource Area, P.O. Box 458, Kanab, UT 84741.

— Mark MacAllister

Mark MacAllister was an intern for the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance last year.

'The county's economic structure has been strong precisely because it does not rely on extractive industry.'

— Ken Rait



Smoky Hollow unit, Kaiparowits proposed wilderness area

Jim Catlin

Energy bill runs out of gas in Senate

The National Energy Security Act of 1991 died on the Senate floor Nov. 1.

The Senate debate and the media coverage focused on the struggle between those wanting to drill for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and those wishing to meet energy needs by increasing automobile efficiency.

Lost in that emotional, easily described fight was the immense impact the bill's supply-side approach would have had, especially on the West and its vast energy reserves.

The proposal was sponsored by Sens. Bennett Johnston, D-La., chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and Malcolm Wallop, R-Wyo.

Besides opening the Arctic and offshore areas to oil drilling, the bill would have eased regulations governing construction of nuclear power plants and natural gas pipelines, streamlined the licensing of hydropower plants, revived the federal synthetic fuels program and overhauled electric industry regulation.

The 500-page proposal drew fire from almost every environmental group and set off a wave of grassroots opposition. As the vote neared, thousands of phone calls poured into Senate offices and 500,000 letters opposed to drilling in ANWR were hauled to Capitol Hill.

In the Senate, eight congressmen — including Westerners Max Baucus, D-Mont., Tim Wirth, D-Colo., and Richard Bryan, D-Nev. — threatened to filibuster (or talk) until Thanksgiving if necessary to defeat the bill. That threat ultimately forced Johnston to withdraw the bill from the Senate floor after losing by 10 votes a vote to invoke cloture, a procedure that limits debate and thus overrides a filibuster.

To its critics, the bill represented a complete failure of energy strategy. Energy consultant Amory Lovins, director of the Rocky Mountain Institute in Colorado, said the bill represented fundamental mistakes already made twice in response to previous oil shocks.

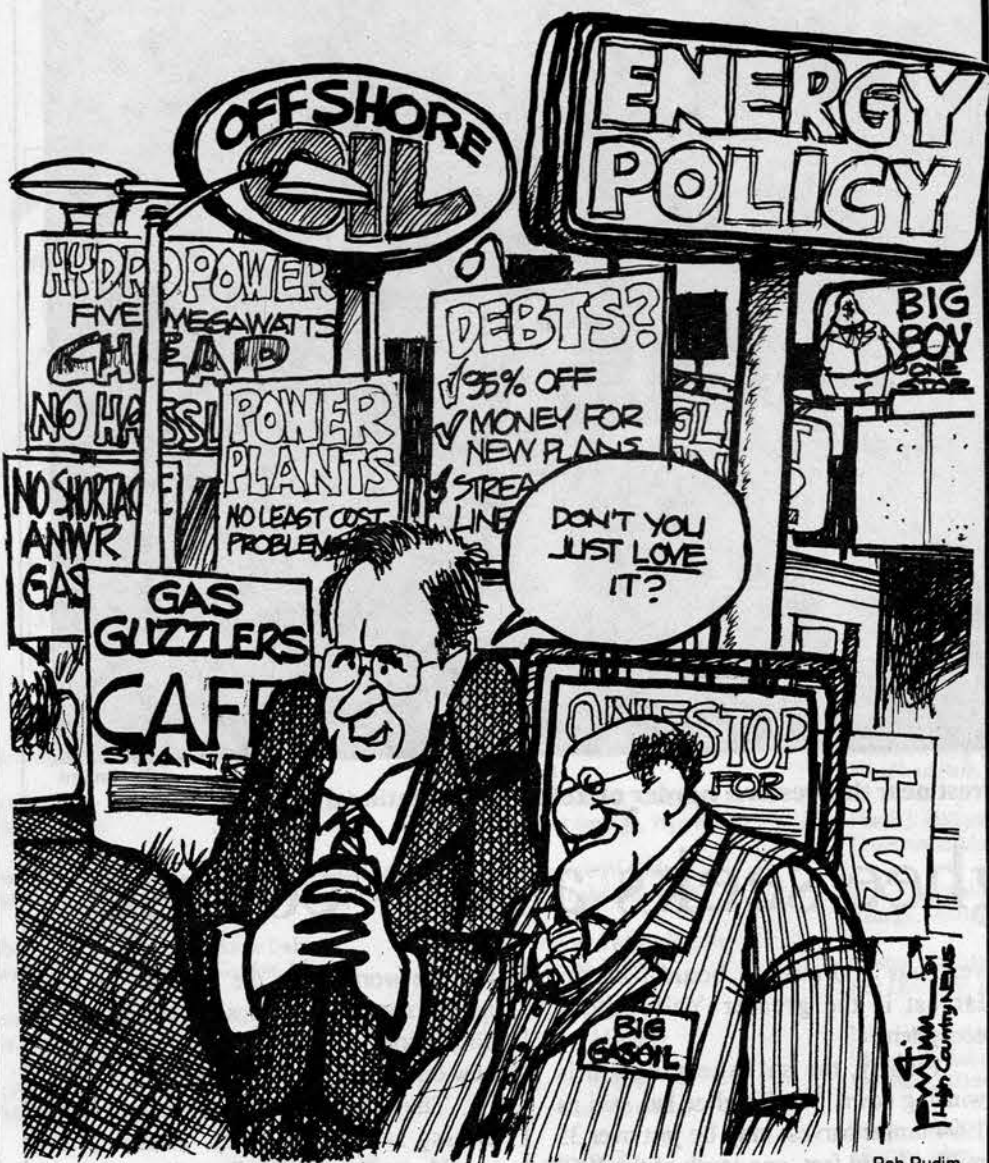
"The landscape is littered with the wreckage of grandiose supply schemes: Project Independence, the Synfuels Corporation, the nuclear program, frontier oil and gas projects," says Lovins. "Where have these people been for the last 20 years?"

Critics were most concerned about the following points of the Johnston-Wallop energy bill:

- **Hydropower licensing:** The bill would have given states authority over licensing and relicensing of all hydropower facilities under five megawatts capacity, which is two-thirds of all existing hydro plants and most new proposals. State control would mean that federal environmental laws, such as the Endangered Species Act, as well as Indian Treaty Rights, would no longer apply.

- **For hydro facilities over five megawatts,** the bill would have given the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission exclusive authority over the process of complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), making the commission the lead agency in all cases and giving it authority to ignore recommendations of other federal agencies.

- **Natural Gas:** The bill would have given FERC the same NEPA powers over natural gas pipelines, streamlined the pipeline licensing process and awarded many projects automatic certificates of "public necessity and convenience," which conveys the right of eminent domain. It would also have repealed



Sunshine Act requirements governing FERC policy making decisions.

- **Nuclear Power:** The bill would have provided streamlined, one-step licensing for a new generation of nuclear power plants. It would also have prevented states or citizens from forcing a safety hearing after a plant is built.

- **A second provision** would have authorized the Department of Energy to spend as much money as necessary to build a demonstration plant for new nuclear reactor designs. And it would have forgiven 95 percent of the nuclear power industry's \$11 billion debt to the federal fuel enrichment program.

- **The bill also would have eliminated** the state of Nevada's oversight authority over the proposed Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Dump and overruled any state laws or regulations that could be used to stop construction of the dump.

- **Coal and Synfuels:** The bill would have funded a coal-based synthetic fuels demonstration program and authorized construction of two "commercial scale" synfuels plants by the year 2000. Another provision would have created a loophole for regulation of coal-fired power plants under the new Clean Air Act.

- **Utility Regulations:** The bill would have reformed the Public Utilities Holding Act of 1935 to allow formation of independent wholesale power companies. Although aimed at increasing competition among utilities, many experts feared that the failure to include equal access to transmission lines would have resulted in unfair competition, raised rates, encouraged construction of new plants and undercut conservation and efficiency projects.

Environmentalists dubbed the measure "The Environmental Destruction Act of 1991."

"This bill was the energy equivalent of savings and loan deregulation," says David Conrad, a water and power specialist with the National Wildlife Federation in Washington, D.C.

However, its defeat may mark a turning point in energy policy. A spokesman for Sen. Tim Wirth says any new energy bill should emphasize conservation and efficiency, development of natural gas and alternative fuels, and incentives for better production from existing oil fields.

Most likely he will be supported by a number of senators who participated in the filibuster. They were Baucus, Paul Wellstone, D-Minn., Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., Albert Gore, D-Tenn., Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., Howard Metzenbaum, D-Ohio, William Roth, R-Del., and Dave Durenberger, R-Minn.

Attention has now turned to an alternative bill, sponsored by Sen. Bryan, to increase the average efficiency of new cars by 40 percent, to 40 mpg. The current standard is 27.5 miles per gallon.

That bill is on the floor of the Senate, but it probably won't survive either. One reason may be energy political action committees. According to a recent survey by the U.S. Public Interest Research Group, energy PACs have contributed over \$3 million to the election campaigns of members of the Senate Energy Committee since 1985. That includes almost \$450,000 to Sen. Johnston and over \$300,000 to Sen. Wallop.

The report, *Abuse of Power*, found that on four key votes affecting the energy industry, committee members who voted with the PACs averaged over \$188,000 in PAC contributions. All four measures — auto gas mileage, nuclear licensing, drilling in ANWR, and global warming reduction goals — passed.

"The oil and nuclear industries have filled the campaign coffers of Johnston and Wallop, and those senators, who lead the Energy Committee, have championed oil and nuclear interests in the Senate," charged U.S. PIRG attorney Bill Magavern in the report.

— Steve Hinchman,
HCN staff reporter

HOTLINE

Spy dupes top brass

When officials at the Interior Department received a letter this fall from a group called the Committee to Restore Decency to Our National Parks, they knew they were in big trouble. Grand Teton, the committee charged, is a vulgar French expression meaning "Big Tit," and it was high time the Park Service renamed both the mountain and park. Agency officials did not argue with the translation but agonized for three weeks over how to respond to the committee's A.S. Rider. But Rider, it turned out, was really a writer for *Spy*, the New York-based humor magazine. In a letter drafted but never sent, AP reports, officials tried to justify the name of Wyoming's stunning 13,770-foot mountain by explaining that it "appears to some to bear a striking resemblance to a female breast."

Environmentalists snubbed in Arizona

Arizona business, political and environmental leaders met at Grand Canyon National Park Oct. 28 to discuss the possibility of an environmental agenda for the sunbelt state. It was Arizona's 59th "Town Hall" meeting, a biannual invitation-only conference called to discuss critical issues facing the state. But it seems only a few representatives from environmental groups were invited. Joni Bosh, a board member of the Sierra Club, told the *Arizona Republic* that the four-day session was controlled by business interests. "I was told countless times to keep quiet while developers were given free rein to talk," she said. Members of the largest town hall gathering in 30 years did agree to call for tougher enforcement of existing environmental laws and a reconsideration of federal subsidies for logging, ranching and farming, but environmentalists felt short-changed. Sen. Karan English, chairman of the state senate's environment committee, said, "I'm a little concerned about the over-emphasis on the economic viewpoint being brought up on every single issue."

BARBS



"A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, reverent" ... and, occasionally, a forest menace.

The "greatest single cause" of visitor damage to Utah's Wasatch-Cache National Forest is Boy Scouts on expedition, says supervisor Susan Giannettino. They litter, trample and in one case destroyed over 60 sapling-sized aspens, reports the *Salt Lake Tribune*.



Jay Drowns

Clearcutting on the Targhee National Forest near the western border of Yellowstone National Park

Battered Targhee seeks a new course

by Kevin Richert

ISLAND PARK, Idaho — By flying over the hills just west of Yellowstone National Park, you can see the U.S. Forest Service's timber legacy laid out in graphic relief.

The stark boundary between National Park Service and Forest Service land is etched into the terrain. On one side are Yellowstone's lodgepole pine forests. On the other is logged Forest Service land containing slash piles and clearcuts, paved and unpaved roads and the stubble of new growth.

Any discussion of new timber sales on the Targhee National Forest always goes back to old sales. Targhee officials say it's time for a change, and the forest has begun the painful process of cutting back.

But change hasn't come quickly enough for critics. Environmental groups and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game protested two Targhee sales just west of Yellowstone, called the Pole Bridge and Big Grassy. A decision is expected soon.

The state's official appeal was a first. Idaho officials said elk and deer hunting has deteriorated so drastically in the Island Park area that it may be the worst big-game hunting in the state.

"(We've) been put in the position of using drastic means to get the Targhee National Forest to adopt a balanced approach," said Herb Pollard, Fish and Game's regional supervisor.

With just one sale, the Targhee's timber program began in earnest three decades ago.

The 1960 Moose Creek Plateau timber sale opened up 33,000 acres of lodgepole pine forest for harvest. At a whopping 318 million board-feet, it was reportedly the largest-ever timber sale in the region. To handle the sale, a \$750,000 mill was built in St. Anthony, Idaho. It broke down the Moose Creek timber into two-by-four inch studs.

By the 1980s, the stud mill and other smaller mills turned their attention to the abundant insect-killed timber on the Targhee.

The mountain pine beetle came to the Targhee in the 1960s; two decades later, the forest was still aggressively salvaging diseased trees. Through the 1980s, the Targhee average timber har-

vest was 77.5 million board-feet, the largest in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem.

Finally, the salvage program is winding down. The Targhee has said its 1994 timber harvest may be just over 35 million board-feet, one-tenth of the 1960 Moose Creek harvest.

At the stud mill, layoffs have already begun. The mill is running 60 hours a week, down from 80 hours 18 months ago. Idaho Forest Industries, the firm that now runs the mill, doesn't expect it to be open more than three years.

The company says it was betrayed by the citizens group, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, because it had promised to negotiate before appealing more sales

ists are worried that the Targhee, in its quest to meet what critics see as an unrealistic goal for timber harvest, will allow new cuts near recent clearcuts.

They cite the Pole Bridge and Big Grassy sales as examples. These sales would cut "leave strips," small corridors of cover left between previous timber sales. Without cover, elk populations will remain low, and the threatened grizzly bear will continue to be scarce in Idaho's share of the Yellowstone ecosystem.

By Forest Service standards, old sale areas may be growing back. But environmentalists say they offer little protection for wildlife. In one area next to the Big Grassy sale, for example, a thick but short cover of one- to four-foot trees is growing

For years environmentalists wrote off the Targhee as a 'sacrifice forest'

on the Targhee. By the time the current appeals are resolved, the company says, its mill may not be around to harvest any timber.

So when Idaho Forest Industries forester Tom Worden flies over the Targhee, it should be no surprise that he sees the terrain differently. He sees sale areas near Yellowstone which would have been burned if loggers had not gotten there first.

"It's a shame to see it all go up in smoke, in my opinion, when it could be used to put some people to work, at least for some period of time," he says.

But the clearcuts aren't pretty. Worden admits that. Among environmentalists, this has been the source of some gallows humor.

"You can see the clearcuts from the moon," says Louisa Willcox, the Greater Yellowstone Coalition's program director.

"We've just decided to cry halt to this scorched-earth policy," says Mike Medberry of the Idaho Conservation League, explaining his group's participation in the Pole Bridge and Big Grassy appeals.

Behind the sarcasm, there is a recurring biological concern. Environmental-

in a recovered 1985 sale area.

"Obviously, in most people's minds this is pretty much a meadow," said John Goodwin of American Wildlands, the Bozeman, Mont., group heading the Big Grassy and Pole Bridge appeals.

There were times when environmentalists gave the Targhee's timber program their tacit approval. The last time the Targhee wrote a forest plan, there wasn't much interest.

Environmentalists wrote off the Targhee as a "sacrifice forest" and turned their attention to other forests next to Yellowstone, says Willcox. They didn't fight in areas like the Centennial Mountains, a crucial Douglas-fir range on the Continental Divide that straddles the Idaho-Montana border. The Centennials are now considered a critical corridor linking Yellowstone with ecosystems in central Idaho and northern Montana.

"It wasn't so much that the Targhee was getting away with it. There was nobody watching," Willcox says. "We were asleep at the switch."

As the Targhee rewrites its forest plan, the forest is under close scrutiny.

Environmentalists say they like

some of the things they're seeing. They see new managers coming in with a new attitude, and they hope this will translate into new policy.

John Councilman is part of the new team. He joined the Targhee last summer to work on timber management in the sensitive Island Park district.

He took a tough job. Confronted by the unattainable goals of the 1985 forest plan, which assumed 80 million board-feet a year, he says he is trying to anticipate what the new plan will look like. That means juggling conflicting demands of environmentalists and the timber industry. And things won't get any easier.

The Island Park district is planning four big sales in 1992, which would produce a 14 million board-foot lodgepole harvest. The largest sale borders critical grizzly habitat.

One 1993 sale has already been called off. It proved impractical, Councilman says. Another 1993 sale was curtailed after a bald eagle nest was found in the area. Still another large sale, which could generate 10 million board-feet of timber in 1994, may also be called off: It is in plain view of two popular fishing destinations, Island Park Reservoir and Harriman State Park.

Councilman admits the Targhee National Forest made mistakes in Island Park. A recent tour there with members of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition was less a field trip than a confession.

In places, Councilman said, the Targhee allowed loggers to cut too extensively in the Centennials. Few old trees were left in place, and there may not be enough cover for seedlings. It's an example of what happens when a forest applies clearcutting policies that seem to work in lodgepole forests but don't work for more sensitive Douglas-fir stands.

"(It was) kind of a bogus thing to do," Councilman says.

In planning for 1993, the Targhee is replacing clearcuts with more selective cuts, which will leave young trees and snags for wildlife. No clearings of over 200 acres will be allowed, even though the existing forest plan allows for much larger openings. And the Targhee is embarking on a forest-wide inventory of its timber country to see what's available.

These changes add up to smaller harvests. On Councilman's district, 20 million board-feet were cut in 1990. The 1991 target is 14.5 million board-feet, although Councilman says that figure won't be met.

When a forest fails to meet its targets, it opens itself up to criticism of another kind. A scathing letter from Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, to Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson last May is a case in point.

"I am convinced that there must be major actions taken if there is to be any balanced resource management in Idaho and the region as a whole," Craig wrote. "You have serious management problems that must be addressed."

But environmentalists like Medberry say they're doing the Forest Service a favor. By appealing sales on the Targhee, they say they're allowing the agency to ignore political pressure and make good land decisions.

Targhee Supervisor Jim Caswell puts the best face he can on the controversy. With the potential for more appeals down the road, he may also have little choice.

"I'm a strong advocate of the appeals process," he says. "That has resulted in better decisions." ■

Kevin Richert is a reporter for the *Idaho Falls Post Register*.

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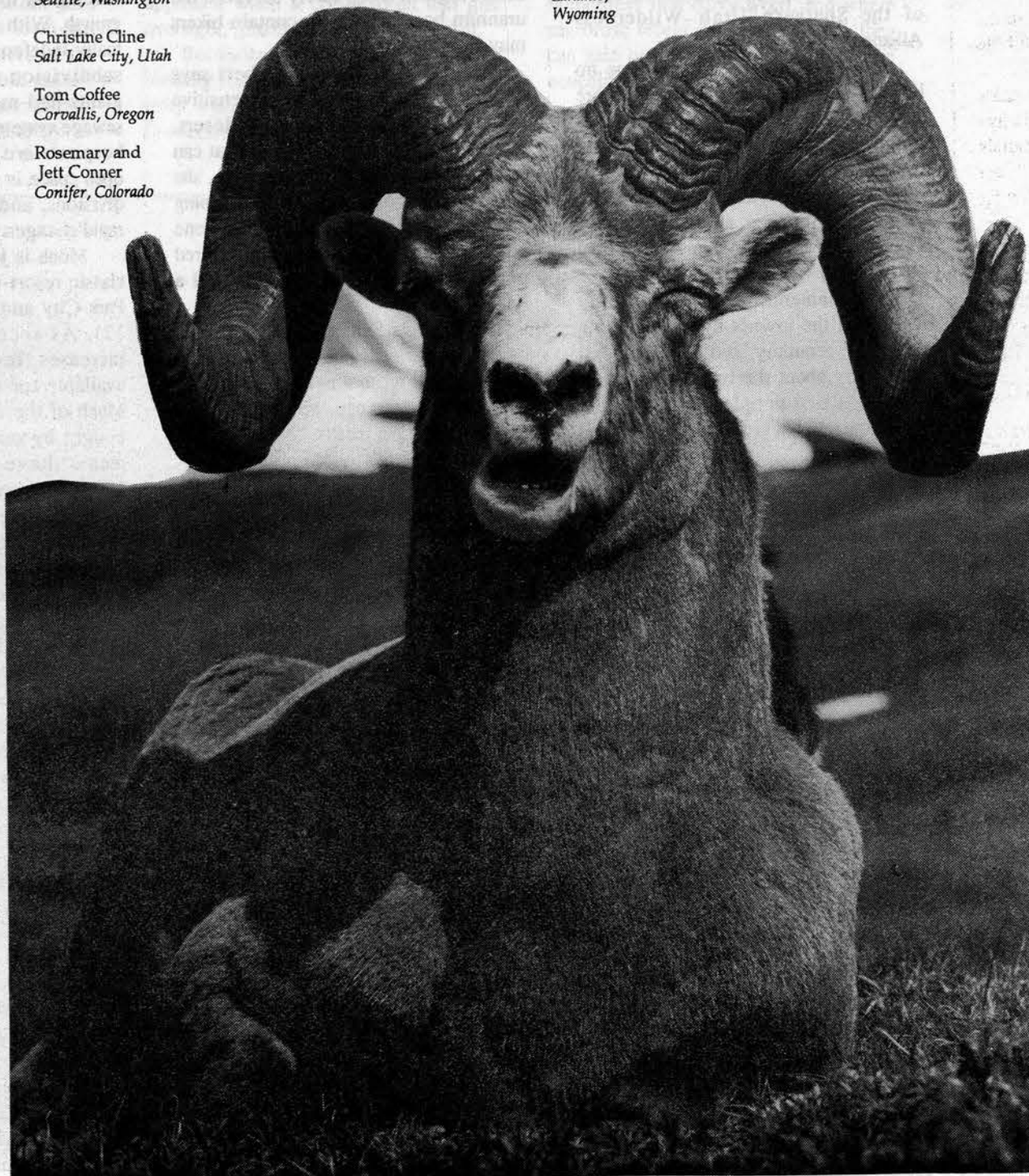
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**Rocky Mountain
bighorn sheep/
Jerg Kroener photo**



Gonzo-bikers, banzai Jeepers flock to Moab.

(Continued from page 1)

'I'm not worried about controlling growth. The concentration of people in this town is lower than in Europe.'

— Moab Mayor
Tom Stocks

spate of recreation-seekers is unprecedented. Since 1986, the number of visitors to Arches National Park has risen 75 percent to nearly 700,000. Canyonlands National Park, an hour away, has seen a similar increase.

But more and more visitors are bypassing the national parks in favor of the equally spectacular federal lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management. On the millions of acres of canyon country surrounding town, public use is free and virtually unregulated; anyone can pitch a tent or ride a bike anywhere, and only a few areas are closed to vehicles.

Overwhelmed by the current wave of tourism, federal administrators of the surrounding public land say they are unprepared to handle the environmental impacts of off-trail biking, four-wheeling and unregulated camping.

What the Fat Tire Festival is to Halloween, the Jeep Safari is to Easter. Last year, some 10,000 people took part. The town, however, has only 400 hotel rooms. Most of the Jeepers and other spring-time revelers drive into the slick-rock around town to camp out.

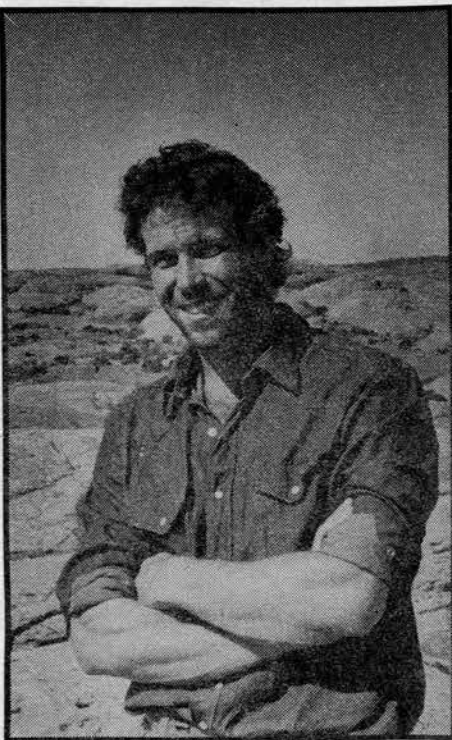
Such use takes its toll: Most of the damage occurs along the Colorado River, where the dense tamarisk along the water yields the stench of human waste and the sight of garbage accumulated over seasons of weekends.

"It's disgusting," observes Scott Groene, an attorney in the Moab office of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance.

Until last spring, there were no latrines near the river; now, there are several, but the county can't find funds to maintain them. Says Grand County Commissioner David Knutson: "We've run out of money (to maintain) Port-potties along the river, and we have three more months left in the year. That's how out of money we are."

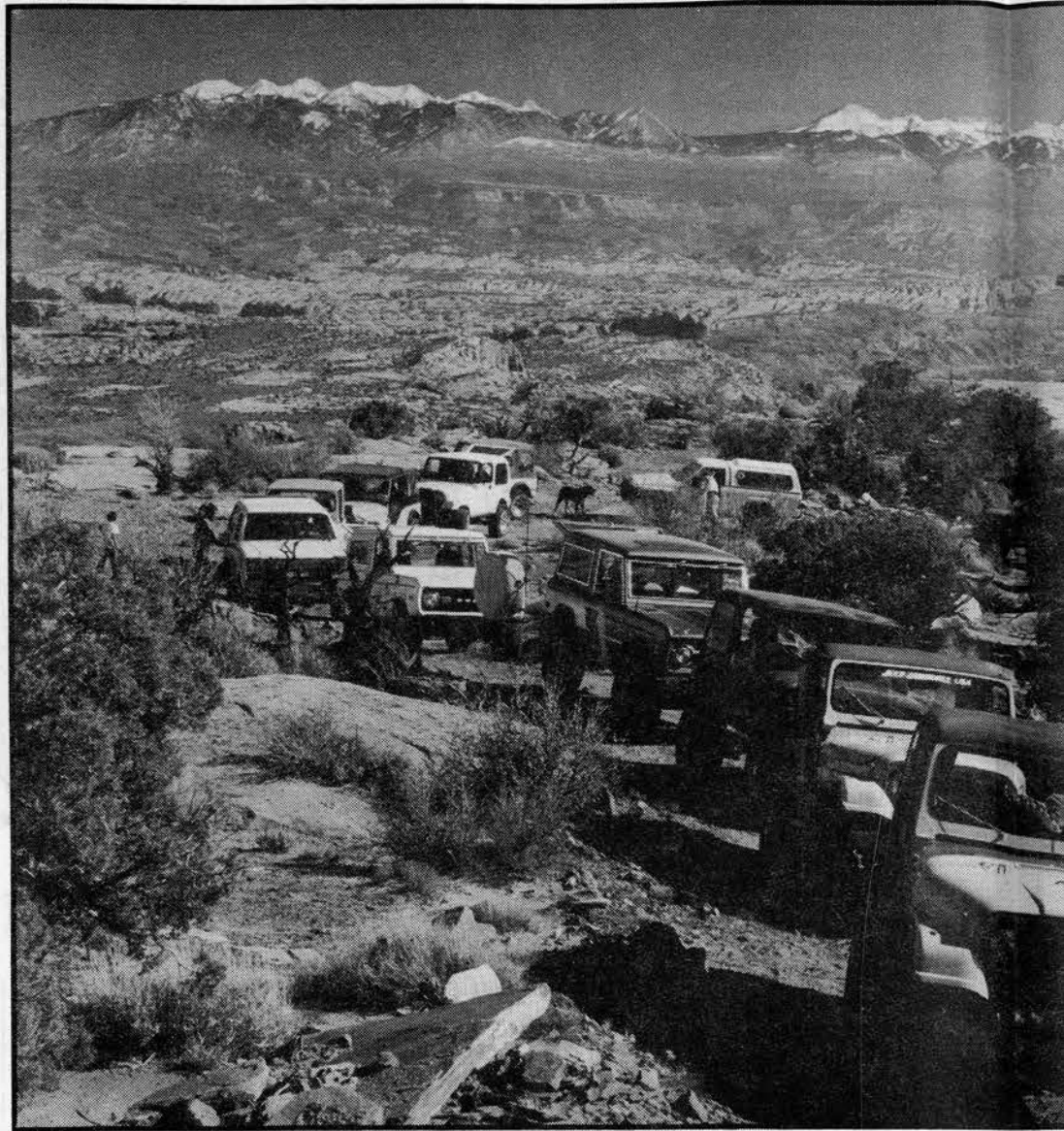
Environmentalists, who initially welcomed the town's switch from an extractive economy to a service-based one, worry about the impacts of recreation. "At first people thought, yeah, great, tourism, it's great, it's clean," says Groene.

"But now people are running around



Florence Williams

Moab attorney Scott Groene



Jeeps converge on Metal Masher Trail near Moab

out of control, looking for a place to camp, pushing into sensitive areas. The desert bighorn sheep barely survived the uranium boom; now the mountain bikers may finish them off."

BLM biologist Linda Seibert says the bikers and Jeepers destroy sensitive microbiotic soils. In the arid desert, mountain-bike tracks make ruts that can turn into gullies and cause erosion, she says. (See story on page 10.) Disturbing wildlife is also a concern; along one popular biking trail, a pair of endangered peregrine falcons recently deserted a long-used nest.

Now, says Seibert, the BLM will have to reassess its policy toward recreationists and write a new management plan. "A few years ago, we were promoting the area," she recalls. "Now we have to say, 'oops, there's too much.'"

Gene Nodine, the BLM's recently retired district manager in Moab, says the agency lacks funds and personnel to handle the impacts of recreation.

"We have a staff of seven people for all of southeastern Utah," explains Nodine. "That's 885,000 acres per person." He says the last management plan for the area was written in the early 1980s, before the mountain-biking craze. "It was not a forward-looking document," adds Russ Von Koch, the BLM's recreation planner.

Nodine says the BLM is writing a new management plan, and in addition to asking the national office for more money and staff, Nodine says the Moab office may implement a fee system for bikers and campers. More latrines are also in the works, as well as an educational campaign to teach visitors how to tread lightly on BLM land.

While the BLM is attempting to regulate the influx of people to the area,

the same cannot be said for Moab or surrounding Grand County. Town officials have failed to keep up with the pace of growth. With weak zoning, Moab is virtually indefensible against the assault of subdivision developers, chain-store giants and mega-hotels. The county's sewage system, jails, fire department and hospitals are already at full capacity, open space is dissolving into pricey subdivisions, and few are happy about the rapid changes to their town.

Moab is just beginning to suffer the classic resort-town symptoms of nearby Park City and Telluride (see story page 12). As second-home development increases, few affordable rentals are available for seasonal service workers. Much of the existing housing has been bought by out-of-towners, and apartments have been converted into overnight accommodations.

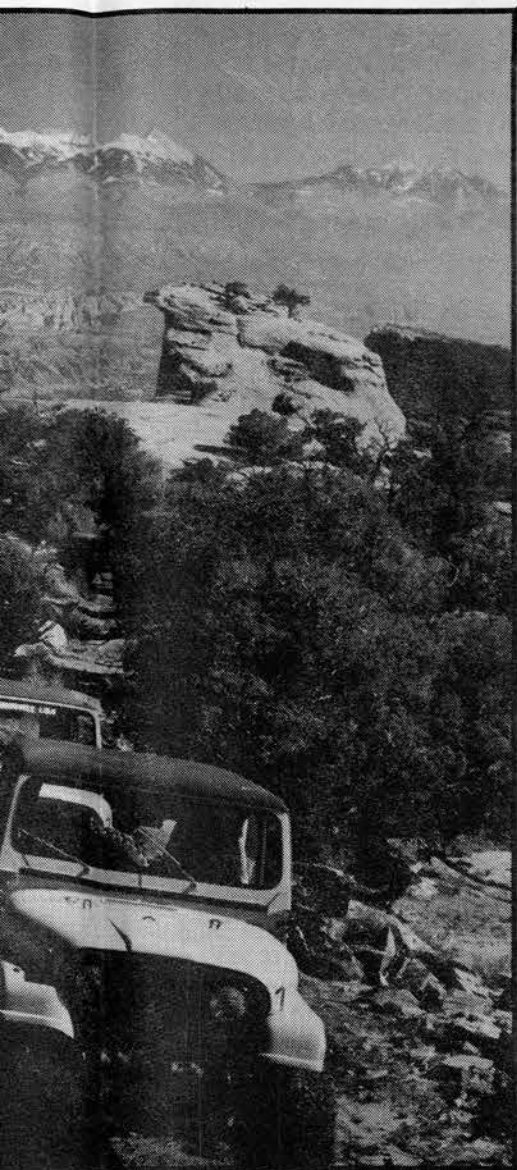
To handle the influx of tourists, the town's lodging has more than doubled in just three years. Bed and breakfast establishments have quadrupled in that time. Local real estate prices have also more than doubled. Recently, an orchard owned by the Mormon church was sold to a Las Vegas developer who plans to build a 300-room deluxe resort. Land speculators from Aspen and Telluride have bought up numerous properties. From a demographic point of view, Moab is changing fast.

"We're a playground now for the rest of the world," says local Realtor Ray Tibbetts, who grew up in Moab. "You can't buy a pair of Levi's here anymore, only T-shirts. It's not a real world for working people."

Tibbetts doesn't hide his anger at mountain bikers. "A lot of them have no respect for the traffic. They ride three or four abreast. Why one hasn't been killed I don't know. You get the seed planted in your head you'd like to be the one to do it."

Says Commissioner Knutson: "It's like having company at your house all the

Moab, Utah ...



Ber Knight

"Tourism promotes self-indulgence," explains Commissioner Knutson, a fifth-generation Moab resident. In his early 30s, wearing a T-shirt and a neat, clipped beard, Knutson hardly seems a reactionary. He leans across his desk in the Grand County Courthouse to tell me his wife is also a fifth-generation settler, and that they may even be related.

"The Mormon work ethic is definitely at odds with tourism," continues Knutson, who runs a Jeep-rental company for tourists. "These people bathe in City Market. They pick food out of the salad bar. We are going to have difficulties when we base our economy on play. There's no productivity."

Knutson's idea of productivity is mining. With a nostalgia typical of Moab's old guard, he says he made more money supplying oil rigs in four months than he's made in four years of renting Jeeps. He also says that tourism does not provide the solid tax base that mining did.

It's no surprise that many from Moab's working class resent tourists, who more often than not represent values antithetical to the town's history of Mormon settlement and mining. This is, after all, the place where local county commissioners drove a bulldozer into Negro Bill Canyon to protest its designation as a wilderness study area. The town also drove out one BLM district manager in the early 1980s for attempting to assert federal control over the area's public lands. Since then, the Moab BLM office has applied a relatively hands-off approach when it comes to oil and gas oversight, grazing, and now, recreation.

But federal presence has also been a blessing for Moab in that it provides visitors with a playground free of local investment. Other recreation-based

economies such as skiing demand large amounts of capital. In Moab, the federal government provides the jungle gym and the tourists swing.

Ever since Arches and Canyonlands national parks were designated, Moab's destiny has been to serve visitors to the spectacular lands surrounding town. But it is a destiny filled only with the greatest reluctance.

"Every day I see a backlash of sorts against tourism," says Robin Groff, co-owner of Rim Cyclery, Moab's original bike shop. Groff, a mining engineer who turned to biking when the energy bust hit, says he is alternately praised and vilified for bringing biking to Moab.

"There's a lot of local resentment against the bikers, who are for the most part really good people," continues Groff.

"Tourism is a different kind of culture than they are comfortable with," explains Myles Rademan, a planning consultant to numerous former mining towns in the West, including Moab. "At least Moab is lucky enough to have a culture clash. It's stressful, but it's better than blowing away."

Despite the concerns of both the newcomers, who are mostly environmentalists, and the old-timers, who would prefer a mine to a mountain bike any day, Moab appears disinclined to help plan its own future. Even the mayor, Tom Stocks, seems uninterested. "It's not my place to do anything about it. I'm not worried about controlling growth. The concentration of people in this town is lower than in Europe."

Stocks' laissez-faire approach to development echoes through the old-guard community. In rural Utah, where wilderness is a dirty word, and where sagebrush rebels still await the day they can gain ownership of federal land, the concept of any governance meets with

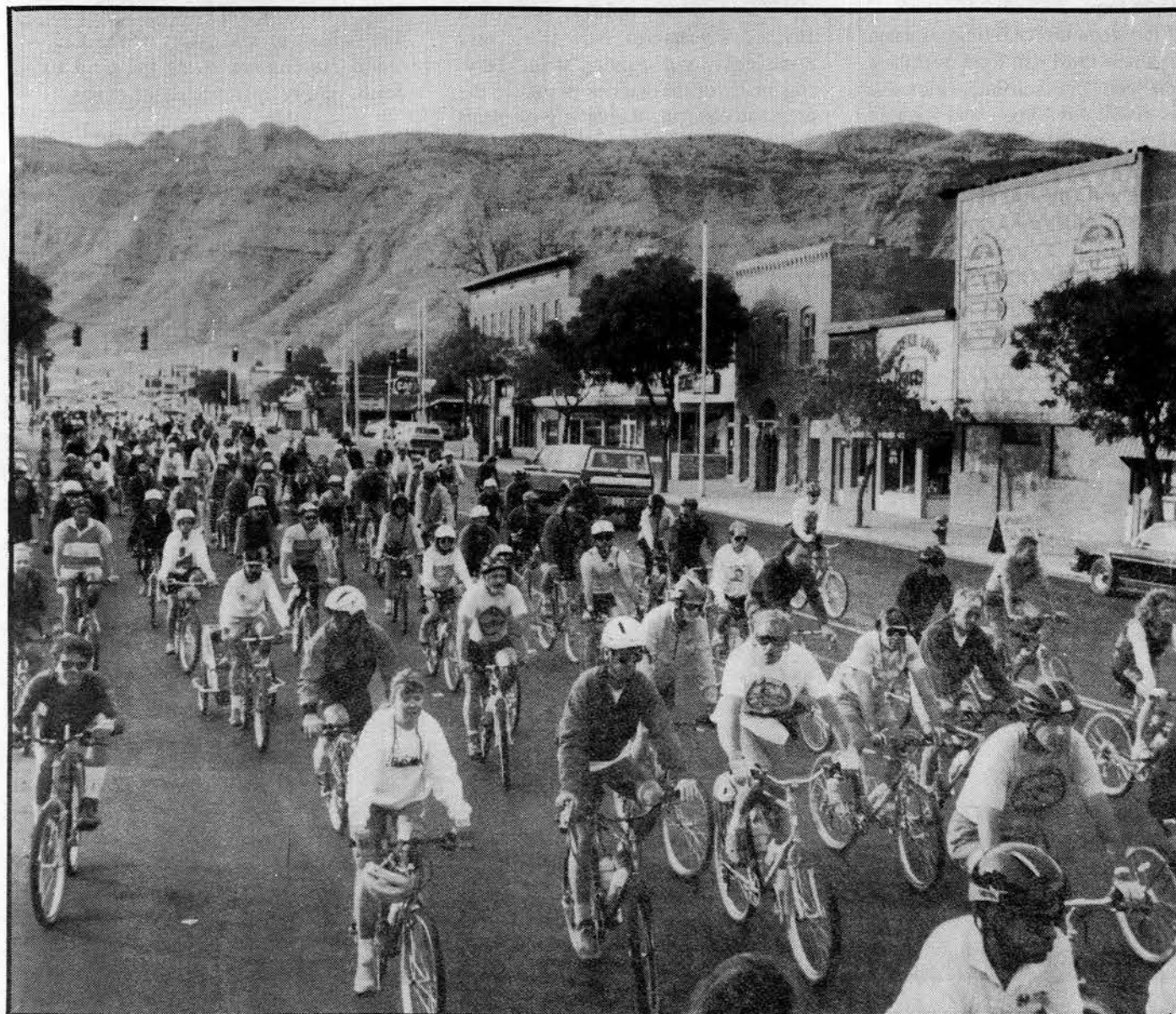
Continued on page 11

'We'll either become a rich people's paradise, or we'll become a tacky tourist trap with big billboards and windshield tourism.'

— Moab resident
Craig Bigler

time. You begin to feel like it's not your home anymore. You wish they'd leave."

The town's beef with bikers goes beyond traffic or crowds. In a town still predominantly run by members of the Mormon church, the inevitable culture clash between visitors and natives runs even deeper than in most resort spots.



Bicyclists ride through Moab during the Fat Tire Festival

Canyon Country Cyclists

Are desert visitors turning fragile soils into dust?

by Dale S. Turner

With the explosion of recreation in the Moab area has come a growing concern for the environmental damage it causes, especially to the humble soil crusts once called cryptogams.

Bicycle tracks are "deadly" to microbiotic crusts, says National Park Service biologist Jayne Belnap. Because the crusts help "hold the place in place," she is taking pains to protect them.

Based at Canyonlands National Park in Utah, Belnap has spent the last decade studying the living crust atop desert soils. Although a native of Moab, her attention was only caught when a professor asked if she had any interest in the stuff crunching under her feet while they walked through a high desert field. She'd never given it any thought before, she recalls, but got down on her knees and discovered a new world.

Belnap saw what can be found most anywhere on the Colorado Plateau, a pattern of little towers rising from the sand, held together by a fine cobweb of tiny filaments. What she and others have found in closer studies is a community of organisms working together to survive in a harsh environment and benefiting the whole ecosystem.

This sort of microbiotic community is found in arid and semiarid climates throughout the world. It is usually dominated by cyanobacteria (blue-green algae), but can include various combinations of soil lichens, mosses, green algae, microfungi and bacteria. In the cold desert of the Colorado Plateau such crusts can compose up to 80 percent of the ground cover.

Belnap has found cyanobacteria to be extremely active organisms, occurring as long filaments bundled inside sticky mucilaginous sheaths. They sit dormant through dry spells and then explode into life when it rains. As the filaments grow they form new sheath material, leaving the older portions as long hollow strands binding soil particles together. The sheaths can last for many decades if undisturbed, forming crusts up to 15 centimeters thick.

The web they create makes a soil surface that resists erosion by wind or water, a quality that's especially important in sandy soils.



Jayne Belnap

Microcoleus vaginatus, the dominant cyanobacterium in the crusts

That web also serves as a sponge, swelling with rainwater up to 10 times its dry size. This holds the moisture far longer than bare soil could, an important quality for both the crust organisms and surrounding plants.

Once the soil particles are well stabilized by cyanobacteria, a process requiring more than a decade of undisturbed growth, lichens and mosses can move in. These bring even greater stability to the soil, and the lichens are major nitrogen fixers in cold desert soils. The availability of nitrogen is an important limiting factor for larger plant life in such areas, so a healthy crust can play an important supporting role.

Unfortunately, microbiotic crusts do not perform that wealth of services when disturbed by human activity. As Belnap describes them, the crusts are "like fiberglass: high tensile strength but no compression strength."

Wind won't bother it but the step of a single hiking boot or cow hoof can crush a fluffy structure that took decades to form.

If the steps are one-time, isolated events, a new crust can form over them in a few years, but their impression will remain visible far longer and form an invitation for other hikers to follow.

More damaging, though, is a pattern of repeated and ongoing disturbance, as occurs along trails or in grazed range-

land. Repeated trampling prevents the development of a crust and eliminates the nitrogen-fixing lichens. Crusts suffer most from trampling during dry times, when they are most brittle.

But some of the worst impacts come from the vehicle tracks of motorcycles, Jeeps and mountain bikes. "A continuous trail will make an erodible gully through a previously stable surface," Belnap says. "Vehicles also flip stuff up and over, covering the crusts beside the actual track. Since these guys (microbiotic crusts) need to photosynthesize, that covering spells doom."

Under the best circumstances, a thin layer of crust may form over vehicle tracks in five to seven years. Tracks up a steep slope may do damage that will never heal.

Belnap says sand blowing from vehicle tracks can cover and kill crusts up to a mile away. She points to the example of Sand Flat, a popular mountain bike area on Bureau of Land Management land just outside of Moab.

"That was a completely stable area just a few years ago. Now it's almost completely loose, moving sand," burying many of the smaller plants in the area and changing the variety of plants that can grow there.

Sand Flat represents a combination of destructive influences that may be increasingly common. As a grazed area,

it had only a thin crust holding the sand in place. Then bikes started slicing through that crust.

The Park Service views visitor damage to microbiotic crusts as a serious issue and has taken steps to minimize it in Canyonlands and other parks, restricting bikes to established roads and educating hikers about the need to stay on trails.

The BLM, however, has yet to recognize microbiotic crusts as a significant resource. According to Daryl Trotter, a planner in the BLM Moab district office, "We don't know that it's significant."

Trotter said "the Park Service has a different mandate — to keep people on trails. Ours is multiple use." That difference can be seen in BLM's Grand Resource Area, the portion of the Moab District surrounding the city of Moab, where 1.5 of the area's 1.8 million acres are designated "open" to off-road vehicle use.

Belnap's views have other critics.

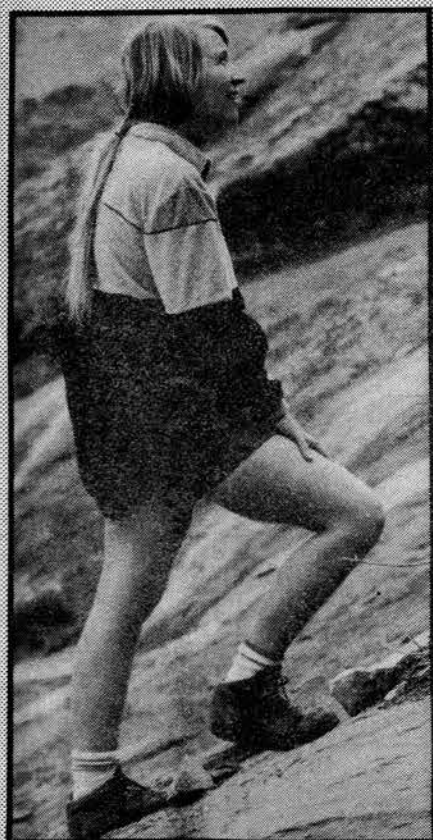
The crusts may simply be "a bit of ecological frosting" with no significance to the surrounding ecosystem, according to Utah State University range scientist Neil West. In a recent article, West speculated that "some may even thrive on being torn up and kicked around. They may not even do much to anchor the soil."

In an interview, West said that in the scientific literature on soil crusts "people speculate a lot and just repeat each other without questioning the assumptions." He also said that Belnap's studies "have not appeared in a peer-reviewed journal, and until they do I won't give them a lot of value."

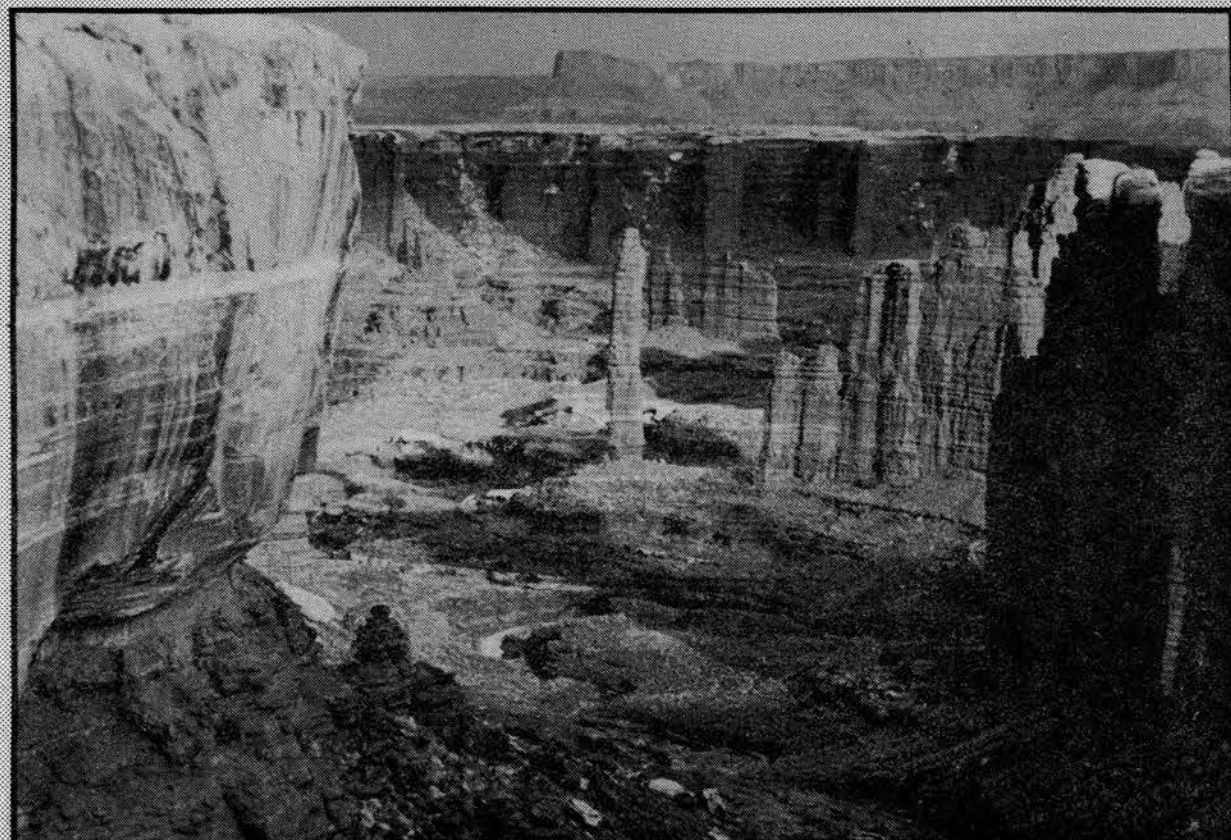
Grazing guru Allan Savory has been even more critical of microbiotic crusts, suggesting that they prevent the growth of grass seedlings. He has called for increased "hoof action" to break up such crusts where they occur on grazing land.

Despite those negative voices, there is a strong and growing sentiment that visitors to wild places on the Colorado Plateau are loving the land to death, simply by crunching the crusts.

Dale S. Turner is a free-lance writer in Tucson, Arizona.



Biologist Jayne Belnap



A jagged pillar of rock known as the Totem Pole stands in Monument Basin in Canyonlands

Norm Shrewsbury

Gonzo bikers, banzai Jeepers ...

Continued from page 9

wary suspicion.

"If I had my druthers, I'd stop it all right now," comments Realtor Tibbetts. "I don't want it overcrowded. But you either go ahead or you go back. You don't control it and you shouldn't control it; that's wrong. Our constitution says everyone has a right to a good life and making a living."

In short, in Moab, anything goes: giant plastic signs on Main Street, big hotels, little hotels, ugly hotels. One developer wants to build a giant water-slide, and others have plans for chain stores and restaurants.

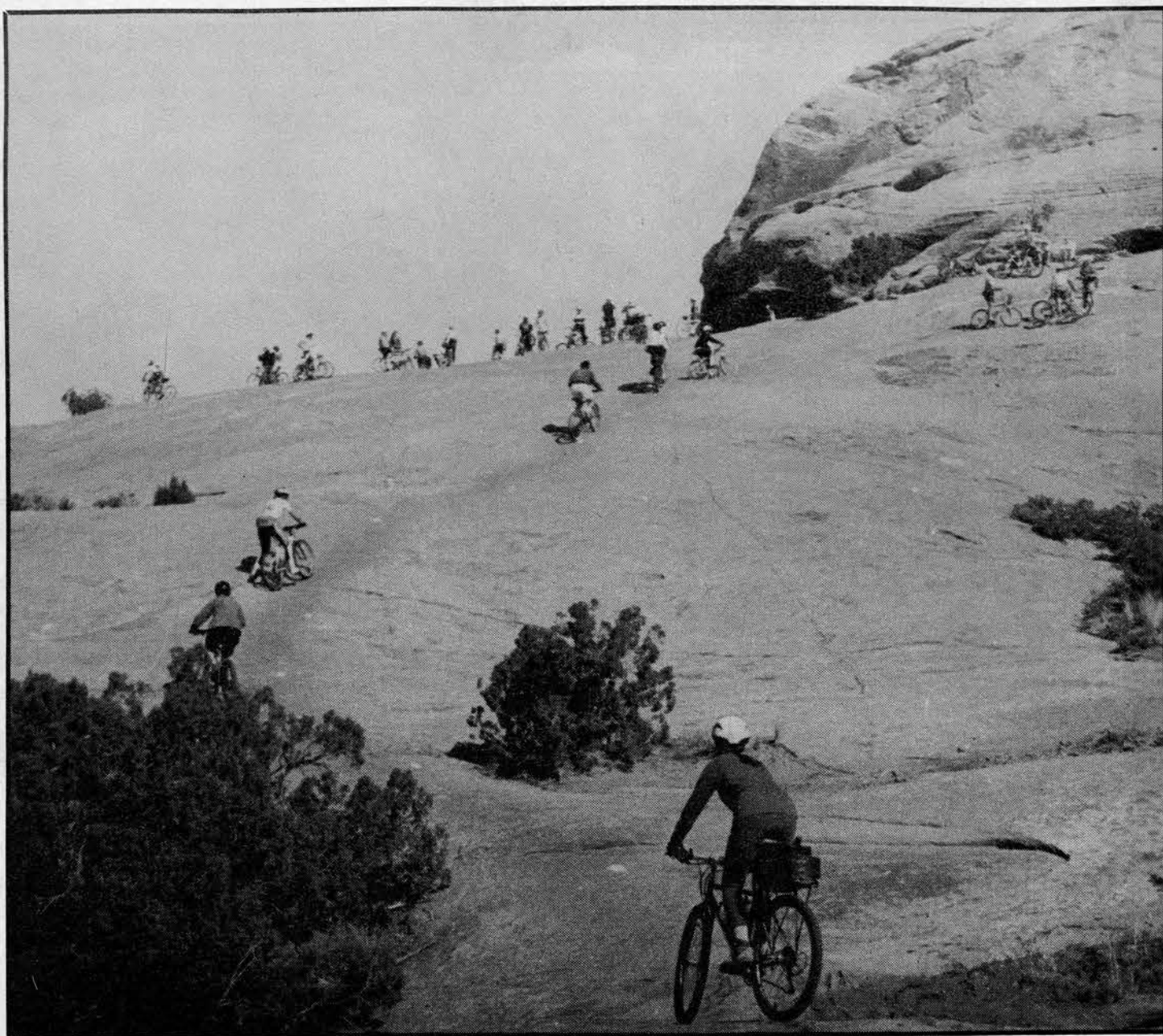
As one land speculator from Telluride puts it, "It's like Jay Leno on the Doritos commercial: eat all you want, we'll make more. Moab is saying, build all you want."

Recently, local business owners signed a petition protesting a proposed ordinance to limit the size and height of signs on Main Street. Bowing to the opposition, the town council voted the proposal down. According to the town's draft master plan, new buildings of any kind are not subject to design reviews. Residential and commercial neighborhoods are mixed; open spaces and hill-sides are unprotected.

Grand County's rules for developers are even more diluted. The most prohibitive zoning for agricultural land allows for one-acre subdivisions; in Colorado counties, by comparison, land can't be broken up into tracts smaller than 35 acres without a county review.

Grand County does not even employ a planner; in fact, its total planning budget is \$300, says David Olsen, the planner employed by the Town of Moab. "The county's philosophy is free agency, free market, Adam Smith."

Although Olsen is Moab's planner, the title is an oxymoron. "It's frustrating," says Olsen, a recent college gradu-



A few of the hundreds of mountain bikers ride the Slickrock Trail during Fat Tire Festival

Florence Williams

ate. "People don't want rules."

Despite the power of the old guard, a growing segment of town is lobbying for better planning, controlled growth and a preserved environment. Not surprisingly, the two factions routinely clash. Debates polarize the community on everything from wilderness designation to the proposed construction of the several-thousand-seat Kokopelli Theater in what is now scenic open space outside of town.

Craig Bigler, who moved to Moab from Washington, D.C., says, without a collective vision, the future looks bleak. "We have two worst case scenarios.

We'll either become a rich people's paradise, or we'll become a tacky tourist trap with big billboards and windshield tourism."

Bigler, who ran for county commissioner last year and lost, says no consensus exists on anything. "No community ever had a better opportunity to control its destiny and turn it to its benefit, but we're so damn contrary we'll blow it."

There are small signs of reconciliation. Robbie Swasey, president of the town's chamber of commerce, says she supports modest regulations on development. "We need to direct growth in a positive manner. Telluride, Aspen, Vail,

they're dirty words around here. We don't want to become one of them, but Moab is 25 years behind in planning."

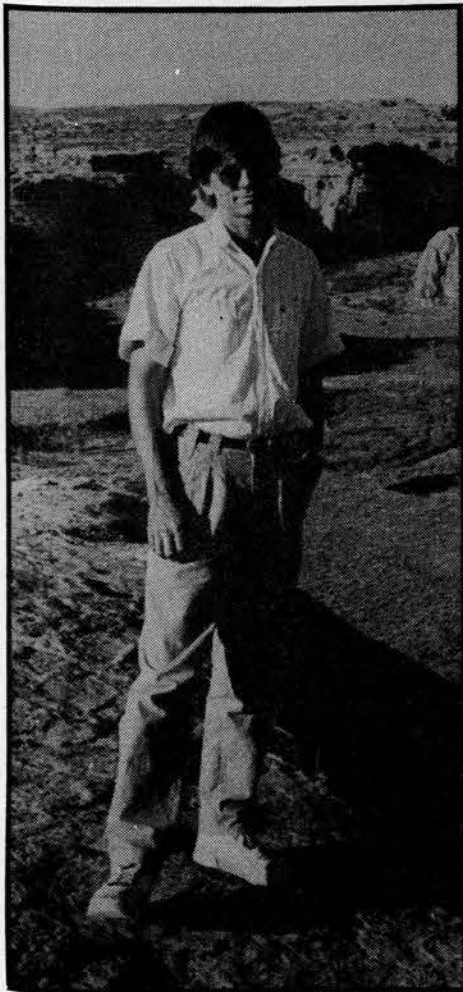
One of Moab's newest restaurants is Eddie McStiff's brewery. Under a striped umbrella on the patio, the owner, Steve Patterson, recommends Cajun French fries. He recently moved his business from the upscale resort of Telluride, which got "prohibitively expensive." Patterson promptly bought several houses and vacant lots in town.

"Is Moab going to be like Telluride?" he says. "It's done. It's finished. By allowing bikes on the slickrock, by allowing second homes and not closing the door ... Moab now reminds me of Telluride in the early days."

That transition is just fine for Patterson, who is active on the town's economic development council. "In Telluride, the bartenders have B.A.s. Here, they have tattoos." He sips a glass of water. "They don't want what Moab's becoming, so they should leave. It'll happen ... The town image has to change. That's why I'm trying to get new street lights."

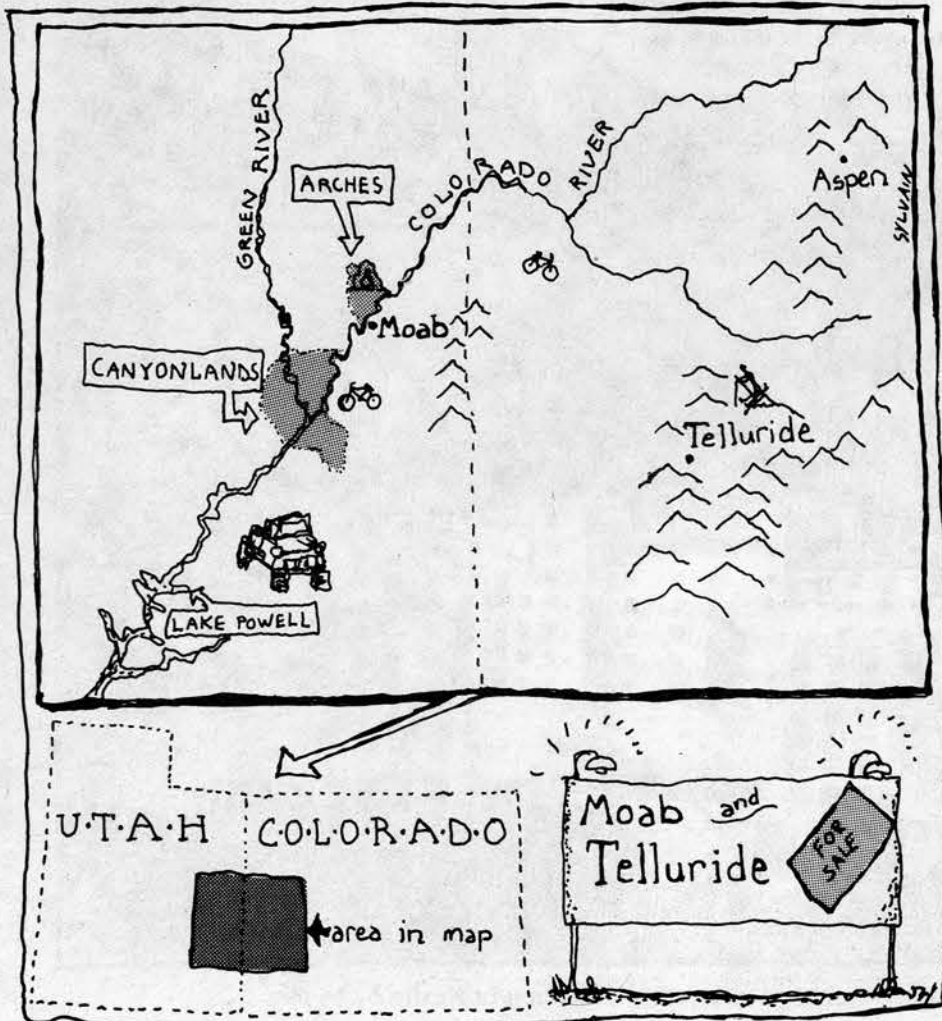
If Patterson is right, Moab's fifth-generation families are opening the door to a future that excludes them. "By boosting this kind of economic development, the old guard will destroy the very way of life they love," observes Jim Stiles, editor of the *Canyon Country Zephyr*, a local monthly.

With its seven-lane-wide downtown street, its utility parking lots and giant store signs, Moab still seems a far cry from Telluride. Says planning consultant Rademan: "There's a certain charm to Moab being tacky. I wouldn't want it to be cute." Agrees Stiles, "Keeping Moab ugly may be the only thing that saves us."

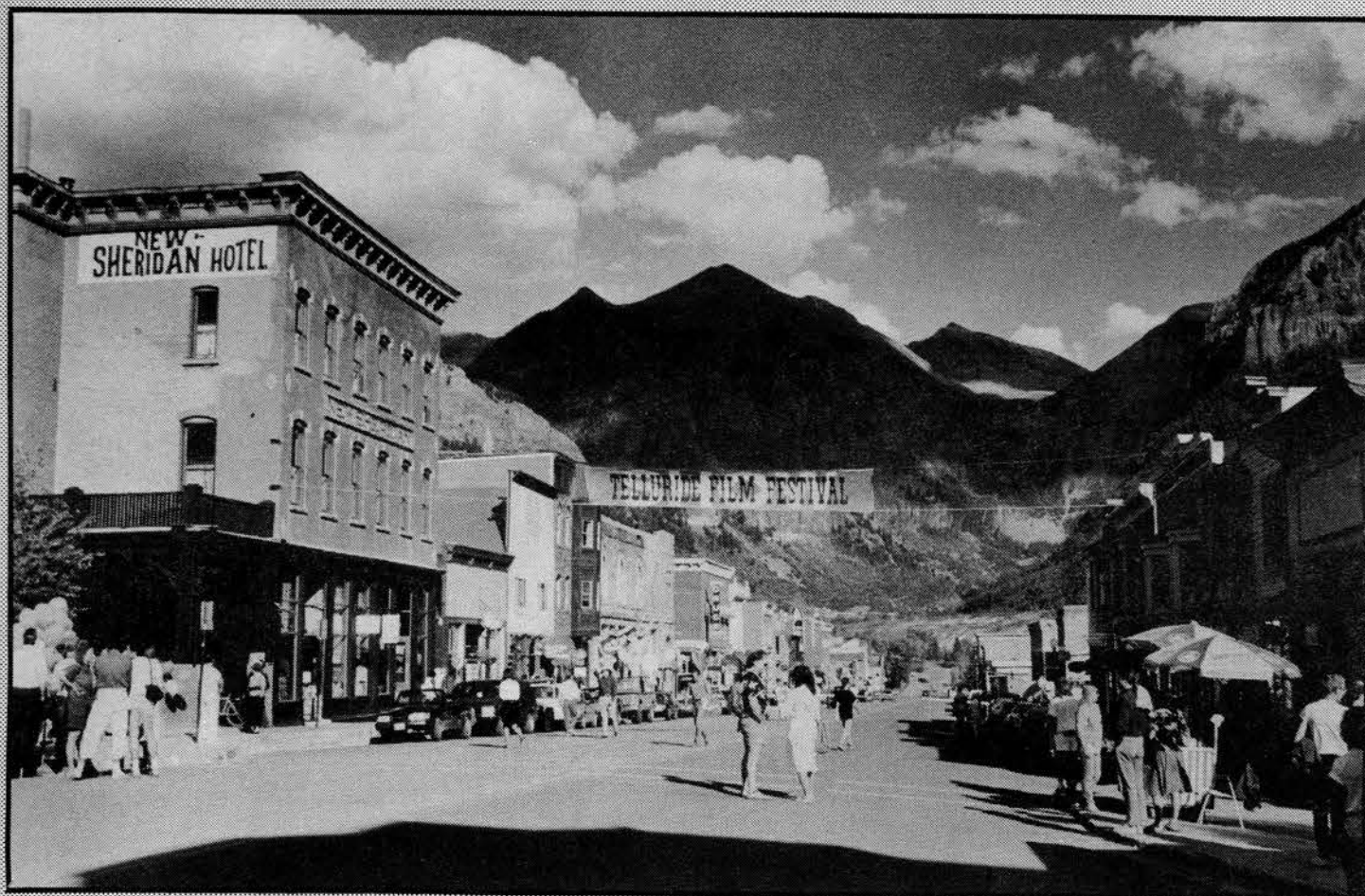


Florence Williams

Jim Stiles, editor and illustrator of the *Canyon Country Zephyr*



Florence Williams is a staff reporter for *High Country News*.



Downtown Telluride during one of its many festivals

Bill Elzby

Second-home boom is making Telluride a ghost community

The worst thing about Telluride is that it's a class society," notes local columnist Art Goodtimes. "There are two kinds of people: those with property and those without."

Goodtimes used to live in Telluride. Then it got too expensive; he had to move down the valley to Norwood, about an hour's drive away. His plight is common among those who moved to the beautiful and remote box-canyon town in the 1970s and early 1980s.

It's a pattern that has recurred in Telluride's history. The Ute Indians were driven out by miners in the

1870s. When the ore ran out in the early 1970s, in moved the hippies, or those "seeking an alternative, spiritual lifestyle," as one searcher put it. These newcomers effectively took over the town and its government, defeating the miners in the 1975 election. Now the next wave has hit — the super-rich, and with them, the real estate agents, developers and the workers to serve them.

A few years ago writer Edward Abbey said of Telluride: "On the one hand, the natives want the newcomers' money; on the other hand, they hate their guts. Excruciating inner conflict."

The Telluride of today is a feudal town. "Everything is divided between the waiters and the waited-upon," says

Jon Kovash, a former Aspen resident who directs news at the local public radio station.

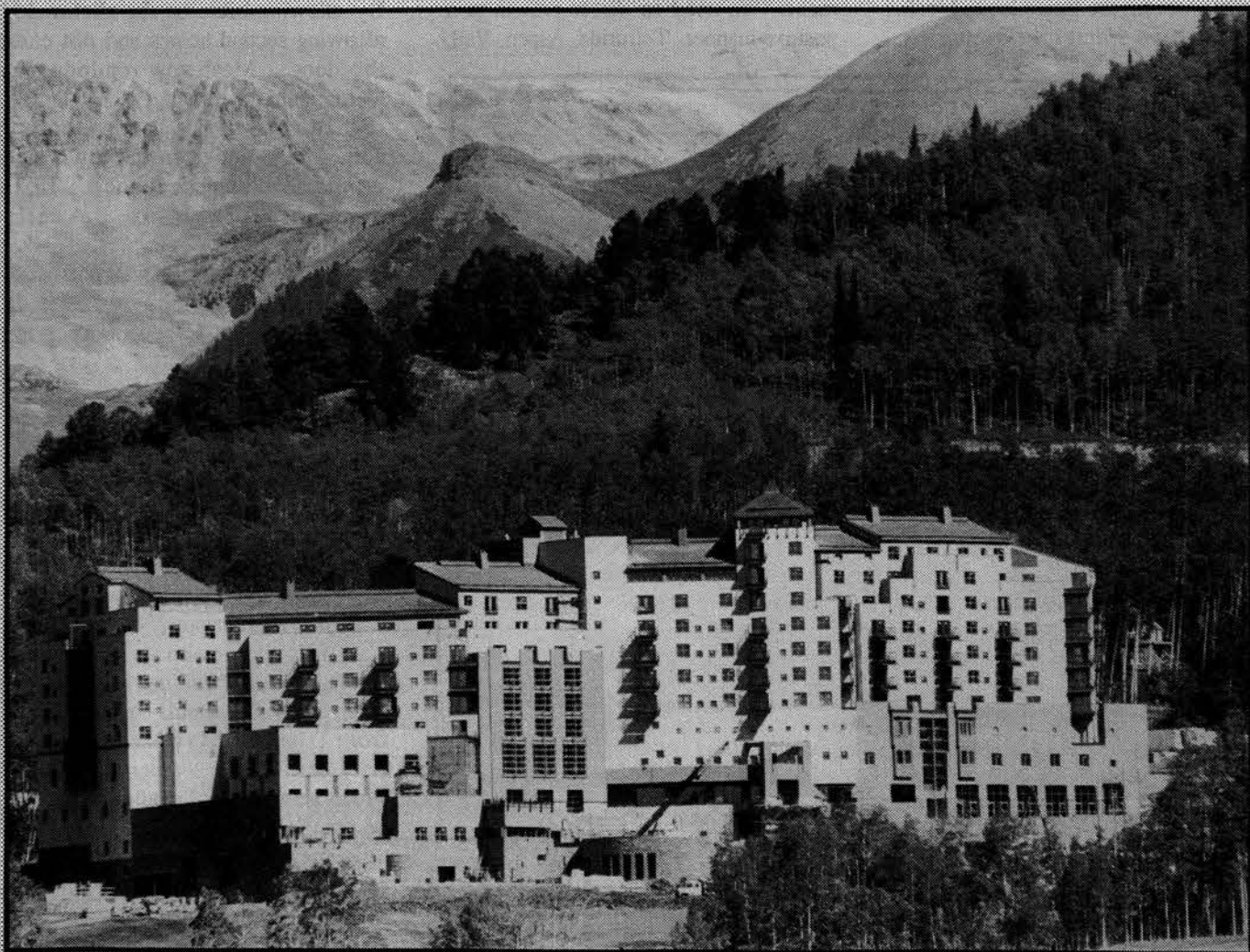
But that's behind the scenes; on the surface Telluride is still a funky town with unpaved streets, bluegrass and film festivals and world-class skiing. People who live there say it's just harder to get by.

Between 1988 and 1990, home prices more than doubled, according to Donna Fernald, president of the local Realtors association. In 1988, she said, agents sold a total of \$55 million in property. Two years later, annual sales exceeded \$126 million. The average price of a home in town today is \$300,000, a figure topped in Colorado only by Aspen.

The real estate explosion effectively shut locals out of the market. It also closed off affordable rental units. Today, close to 70 percent of Telluride's 500 homes are owned by out-of-towners, says city planner Amy Levick. Most stand empty except for one or two weeks a year.

"Super-rich house collectors are buying homes that used to be a part of the neighborhood," says Mayor Peter Spencer. "Now they're empty mausoleums. Whole streets are deserted."

Not surprisingly, some locals resent the real estate agents, who make up a whopping 10 percent of Telluride's population of 1,300. Some townsfolk fear the pro-development boosters will take over the town gov-



The new \$100 million Doral Telluride Resort and Spa exceeds county height limits by 55 feet

'There's a sense of dread that this is the year the Realtors take over.'

— Jon Kovash

ernment in the same way the counter-culture did in 1975.

"There's a sense of dread that this is the year the realtors take over," says Kovash.

Mayor Spencer, who's lived in town since the 70s, says he tried to ban all Realtors from having first-floor offices on Main Street, but nearly got impeached.

To keep development in check, the town has implemented an impressive cadre of regulations on new construction. Every building must pass a rigorous test of "appropriateness" for design and scale, says Spencer. To control air pollution, a builder must buy and then retire two wood stove permits before installing one wood stove. The town has also preserved hill-sides and meadows for open space. To address the worker-housing crunch, the town has built 85 "affordable" rental units in the last two years.

San Miguel County, which administers the vast portion of new development immediately surrounding Telluride, also has some innovative regulations. Every new development must set aside 15 percent of its units for low-cost housing. In addition, for every 5,000 square-feet of private-home construction, the owner must provide a "caretaker's unit" available to locals at low-cost.

While the housing measures add to the feudal aspect of Telluride, at least they provide locals an opportunity they otherwise wouldn't have, says county planner Charlie Knox.

Some residents, however, say the county's innovations are too little, too late. Most of the damage was done, they say, when the county approved zoning a decade ago for 14,000 people in the empty meadows at the base of the ski mountain, eight miles from town. The area's largest development, "Telluride Mountain Village," is now under construction, complete with condominiums, golf course and the 177-room Doral Telluride

Resort and Spa.

The \$100 million hotel, slated to open in March, has drawn the ire of the community for exceeding the county's height limit by 55 feet. The mostly completed ten-story building dominates the base of the ski mountain.

"Big guys get away with things all the time," says Goodtimes of the failure of developers to abide by county code.

Goodtimes says when the developers presented their plan for the village in the midst of the town's depression, no one really thought it would fly.

"The reality is, sure, we could have stopped it if we knew. We weren't savvy. Developers have a vision that's 10 or 15 years down the line."

Those who feel Telluride is overcrowded and over-moneyed blame two major forces: the construction of a jet-service airport and the aggressive marketing campaign conducted by the Telluride Ski Company in the last few years.

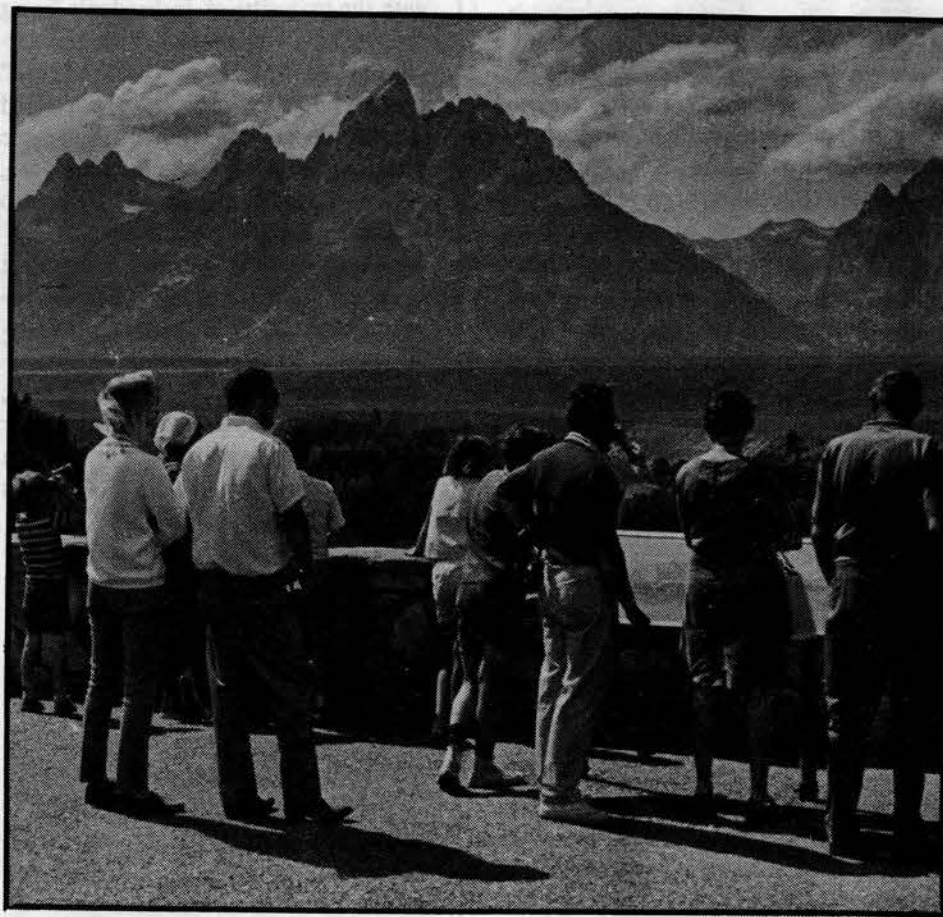
Says one upper-level town official: "We lost the battle when we lost the airport. I saw it as a way for me to get in and out of town, and I didn't oppose it. But it's allowed a new class of people with Lear jets to fly in and check out real estate. If they had to drive, they wouldn't come."

Meanwhile, Telluride is struggling to hold on to its beloved funkiness. "Rasta" Stevie Smith, a dreadlock-bedecked musician and a town councilman since 1983, says he tries to keep the needs of the town balanced.

"My big things are tolerance and integration. If big money is going to come in with ideas of a world-class resort, they need to tolerate those of us who are here for the alternative community, and likewise. I'm here to guide development in a positive direction."

— Florence Williams

OTHER VOICES



Tourists take in the Grand Tetons

We should see 'tourists' as pilgrims visiting holy places, says Jackson resident

— by Ben Read

Some critics are now saying tourism resembles an extractive industry, that it is heedless of local communities, that it rolls over towns like Jackson Hole, Wyo., with a voracious appetite for food, fuel, lodging and recreational shopping.

But I am extremely reluctant to blame tourists for the woes of Jackson Hole.

The national parks are now, in the culture of the late 20th century, the objects of a mass pilgrimage. It takes a lot of effort to get here, and I am convinced that in the heart of every passer-through there is a curiosity, a desire to bear witness to the landscape and wilderness that reside here.

In this way, tourism is positive because people who travel seek to open their minds and feelings.

It's easy to be annoyed when too many people descend on us with credit cards and gas-guzzling vehicles. The problem is not that tourists are poorly trained at locking in on the mysteries of this landscape. Nor is it that they inevitably gravitate to activities like shopping and paid amusements.

The dilemma — and I certainly believe there is one — is that we, Jackson Hole residents, have not done much to bring a fresh or distinctive vision of human possibilities to the public settings that visitors see. Thus we end up with tourists who mill around and shop and are ultimately indifferent to being here — because we appear to be indifferent to everything, except their spending activities.

Should these visitors have the right to expect special effort from us? Or are they just suckers who support us, and yet irritate us, to whom we have no responsibility?

In the decision of each of us to live in Jackson Hole, we have taken on the mantle of interpreter. We are the denizens of a monastery, who, regardless of what we do for a living, somehow reveal what the landscape has given to us.

No one has been here long enough to represent a genuinely local point of

view. The remarkable fact of Jackson Hole is that it has one of the briefest settlement histories of any community in the United States. We produce virtually nothing, and were it not for the stampede of pilgrims to our gates, most of us wouldn't be here.

Let the pilgrims pile their alms on our doorsteps, many of us seem to say. After all, we work our butts off to fill their stomachs and provide them with beds. And if there's anything for them up in Yellowstone, well, then, let them move up the highway and look for it there. We're just trying to get by, so why should we forego the chance to get rich — the same chance that you, the tourists, have at home? So leave us your alms, we say, but otherwise, leave us alone.

When that attitude prevails, we turn our backs on this natural sanctuary that nourishes and supports us. And when historians talk about the park experience of the late 20th century, we will be seen as the entrepreneurs who fleeced the pilgrims as they passed through our communities.

We may not be worse than other people who live in towns that straddle the access roads to our national parks, but we can be better. We are encouraged by this landscape to be better.

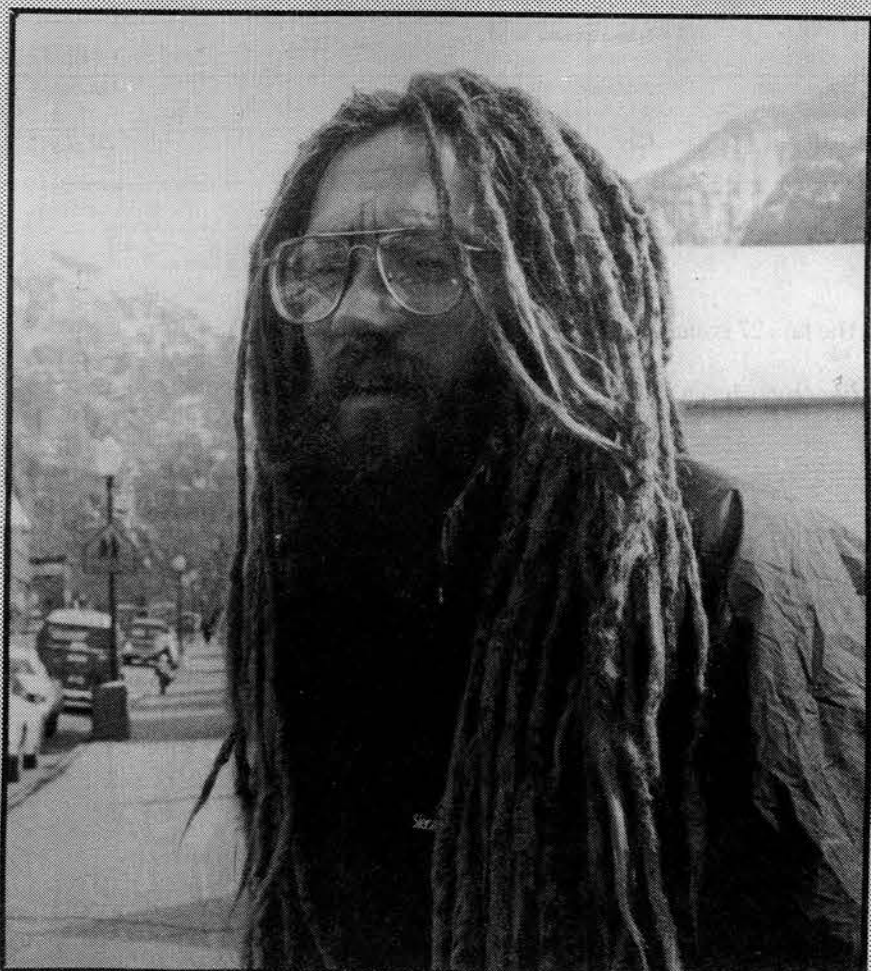
Can we reverse our behavior? We certainly can. In planning, we can build a community that is commercially modest and in scale with the natural setting.

We can pass regulations that say no: Just because you have a great deal of wealth does not mean that you have an unqualified right to "privatize" the experience of Jackson Hole. Otherwise, our problems will become lodged in the mainstream, as other communities like ours grow overwhelmed by commercial and residential growth.

As to our personal affairs, we can strive to live modestly.

So let's get to work. In this place, in our lives, in 1991.

Ben Read lives in Jackson, Wyo., and works for the Jackson Hole Alliance. A version of this first appeared in the *Jackson Hole News*.



Rasta Stevie: "I'm here to guide development"

Florence Williams

LETTERS

IMPOSSIBLE BURPS

Dear HCN,

In the Sept. 9 HCN, Vernon Ketz in "Other Voices" accuses ranchers opposed to a grazing fee increase of being wimps. He lists five purported "facts." Number 3 asserts that "200 head of cattle burp out 10 billion metric tons of methane every year." It would be dangerous to get too close to those cattle because at that rate each cow would be burping out a little over one-and-one-half metric tons *per second*. Some of the other numbers represented as "facts" also appear suspect. There are legitimate environmental concerns associated with cattle grazing, but irresponsible allegations do no good for the environment or ranching.

James C. Barron
Pullman, Washington

WHAT YOU SEE DEPENDS ON WHERE YOU STAND

Dear HCN,

Please find enclosed a clipping from the Sept. 16 issue of *Cascade Cattleman*, a publication serving ranchers in the northern part of Oregon's high country. I'm sending this along to help illustrate the diversity of viewpoints coming not just from the participants in the current range war, but from professional journalists as well. I'm sure you won't be able to print the entire article, but perhaps the headlines will do:

High Country News: "High noon in Nevada; Forest Service goes head to head with angry rancher."

Cascade Cattleman: "Forest Service attacks permit holder" (Wayne Hage).

Both of the above refer to the same people, places and events but with an opposing journalistic slant.

The environmental and economic questions facing the residents of the West are divisive, and when opposing camps can't come to agreement on basic science and statistics, it seems that cooperative spirit and philosophical harmony are distant goals indeed. I hope that the environmental community can keep an

open mind when considering the cattle industry as a whole.

Like the environmental movement, the cattle industry is a diverse group, with the majority of individuals being good, honest, law-abiding, even progressive people. Most of the "modern" ranchers I know are very concerned about proper grazing techniques, humane treatment of animals, water quality, etc., not only because it's the right thing to do, but because it's good business.

On the issue of public lands grazing in particular, opinions within the industry vary widely. In the part of the country where I live — western Oregon — there is very little public grazing land, and somewhat less than total support for a grazing fee system that appears to give economic advantage to some individuals within the industry.

John H. Marble
Crawfordsville, Oregon

The writer is a rancher and an environmentalist.

The publisher replies:

I accept your larger point, but while the HCN headline is dramatic, it doesn't express bias.

Ed Marston

THIRD SHOE NEEDED

Dear HCN,

Thanks for excellent coverage of the Central Utah Project in HCN July 15. To add to the record, although the changes in the CUP may be the second shoe to drop indicating a change in the attitude of the federal government as builder of big dams (the first, your article points out, was Two Forks), a third shoe would be more convincing evidence of reform.

The Animas-La Plata Project is the biggest of the bureau's new starts and demonstrates that there is still big dam, top-down mentality in the federal government. Whereas your article points out

that the bureau's numbers say irrigated land in the CUP would cost \$3,948 an acre, the bureau's figures for the Animas-La Plata are \$6,497 an acre "... to irrigated land whose crops generally don't justify that level of investment."

Reform comes slowly to the Bureau of Reclamation.

James C. Decker
Durango, Colorado

RANCHERS DON'T OWN GRAZING PERMITS

Dear HCN,

Nevada rancher Wayne Hage's battle with the Toiyabe National Forest over grazing allotments (HCN, 9/9/91) comes at a time when similar confrontations are simmering toward a boil throughout the West. With the public pushing the Forest Service to take a greater interest in range protection, Toiyabe Forest Supervisor Jim Nelson has confronted overgrazing more courageously than most of his colleagues. Rancher Hage apparently believes that Nelson is on weak ground by enforcing conservation law, but the Forest Service has been on weak ground until now by not enforcing strict grazing restrictions in the past.

Rancher Hage supposes himself to be breaking new ground with his theory that long-exercised grazing permits are grazing "rights." By asserting that his grazing permits give him title to his grazing allotments, he charges that the Forest Service is "taking" his property by regulating his commercial activities there. But his supposedly pioneering legal theories about "takings" have been tested in American courts many times since the birth of our country.

Rancher Hage either has not done his homework or he is hoping that new conservative judges will overturn precedent on the issue of "takings" and federal regulation such as grazing permits. The Supreme Court addressed the issue as recently as 1973. In 1911, in the case

Light vs. the United States, the Supreme Court ruled that grazing permits on federal land "do not confer any vested right ... nor deprive the United States of the power of recalling any implied license under which the land had been used for private purposes."

In 1918, the Supreme Court ruled in *Omaechevarria vs. Idaho* that "Congress has not conferred upon citizens the right to graze stock upon the public lands. It is because the citizen possesses no such right that the secretary of Agriculture might, in the exercise of his general power to regulate forest reserves, exclude sheep and cattle therefrom." Lower courts also addressed the specific issue Hage raises in the 1940s and in 1983. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals (Nevada's circuit) ruled in the case of *Swim vs. Bergland* that grazing permits are "a privilege which is withdrawable at any time ... without the payment of compensation."

Congress stated explicitly in the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 that "the creation of a grazing district or the issuance of a permit ... shall not create any right, title, interest, or estate in or to the lands." Likewise the more recent Federal Land Policy Management Act of 1976 says that grazers have "rights" only against other grazers and not against the government.

So Hage's claim that the Forest Service must compensate him for "taking" his property when it alters his grazing permit has no basis in legal precedent or statutory law going back to the forest reserves Organic Act of 1897. If Hage wishes to challenge the right of the federal government to possess and regulate land, he will be treading on turf bearing the footsteps of many prior Supreme Courts.

Tom Ribe
Eugene, Oregon

The writer recently completed his master's degree in environmental studies from the University of Oregon.



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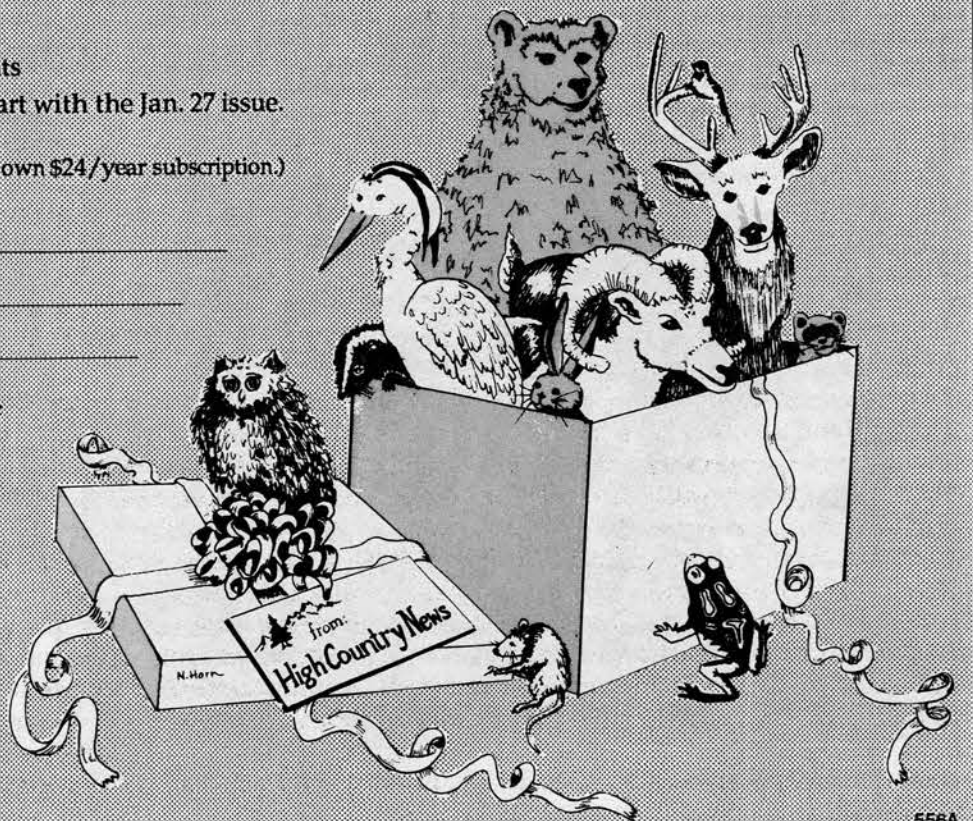
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556A

LETTERS

'HUMAN FACE' IS A RUSE

Dear HCN,

Joe Snyder's emotionally charged letter concerning the "People for the West" articles in the June 3 and July 1 issues of HCN deserves comment. Mr. Snyder would have us believe that life is so simplistic that merely owning a vehicle is tantamount to supporting a mine in the most delicate region of the greater Yellowstone ecosystem.

In his argument blaming consumers for mining pressures on public lands, he fails to address the real issues driving reform of the 1872 Mining Law. As currently written, this law allows the mining industry priority use of public land, except national parks and wildlife refuges. This priority use forces land managers to modify management objectives to favor mining regardless of other resource values.

To Mr. Snyder there exists no middle ground between utilization and protection of public land. He ignores the fact that development does occur in an environmentally sound manner in some instances. Should we not strive for that goal on all occasions? Despite his rhetoric, other resources exist on public lands besides paper, oil, and gold. We have watersheds that need to be safeguarded, threatened and endangered species and other wildlife that deserve protection, and a responsibility to future generations to uphold.

People for the West! is attempting

to define the public lands agenda for the 1990s and beyond to mean big business guiding development of our natural resources. The relieving of Region 1 Forester John Mumma for not "getting out the cut" on our national forests is evidence of how powerful business interests already are behind the scenes. People for the West! is attempting to bring industry's behind-the-scenes agenda to the public spotlight, and to temper it with a human face. Don't be fooled, our natural heritage is at stake.

Will Snider
Bozeman, Montana

POLITICAL
MANIPULATION IS ALIVE
AND WELL

Dear HCN,

Your recent coverage of political interference in federal public lands management was timely and accurate (HCN, 10/7/91). Until recently, everyone knew it was a problem, but few land managers were willing to talk about it openly. The Washington politicians rarely leave any trace of their influence on paper, thereby making proof of their interference difficult. Most land managers are afraid to publicly reveal political interference, because they usually end up with a lateral promotion to a dead-end job.

Ms. Mintzmyer's and Mr. Mumma's cases are excellent examples of the problem. It was evident from the transcripts of their testimony that even under the power of congressional subpoena, they

remained reluctant to tell all for fear of political reprisals.

I was one of many individuals in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem who worked for adoption of the draft Yellowstone Vision Statement, only to see it gutted by a campaign of lies created by industry and agricultural interests with strong political ties to Washington, D.C. While the draft Vision Statement was not perfect, it was a good step in the direction of sound, coordinated management for the seven national forests and two national parks comprising the ecosystem. The final document is complete garbage, and we owe its demise to the congressional delegations of Wyoming, Idaho and Montana.

This is not the only instance of political interference in federal land management in Wyoming. Another example is the Wyoming congressional delegation's role in ensuring the continued life and expansion of the Jackson Hole, Wyo., airport, the only commercial carrier airport located in a national park (Grand Teton National Park).

In 1977, Secretary of Interior Cecil Andrus decided not to renew the airport's special use permit when it expired in 1995, because he believed airports have no place in a national park. About the same time, the National Park Service developed a noise abatement plan for the airport to mitigate noise impacts to the park for the remainder of its existence.

In 1979, at the behest of local development interests, the Wyoming delegation amended the Interior Appropriations bill to exclude funding for the Park Service to implement its noise abatement

plan. When James Watt became secretary of Interior in 1981, the Wyoming delegation asked him to review Secretary Andrus' decision, with an eye towards retaining the airport in the park.

Watt did their bidding, and gave the airport a 50-year life, while taking most of the control of airport development away from the National Park Service and giving it to the local airport authority.

Regional and local National Park Service officials refused to sign the 50-year lease, because it did not represent Park Service philosophy about national park management. However, the signatures of all three Wyoming delegation members appear boldly scrawled across the last page of the lease.

Aside from the obvious noise impacts to park visitors resulting from this political interference in park management, a larger specter looms on the horizon. Since 1981, passenger use of the airport has increased over 270 percent and is conservatively expected to increase another 45 percent by the year 2000. If current use trends continue, the airport will be attempting to serve over 400,000 people per year!

It is not enough to do that. The Department of Interior will surely be asked in the future to give up more park land for airport purposes. Guess who will be waiting in the wings to make sure that happens?

This is only one of many examples of political interference in federal land management in northwestern Wyoming.

R. Scott Garland
Jackson, Wyoming

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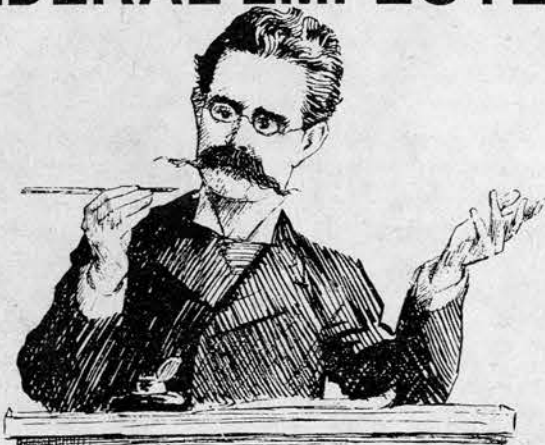
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BOOK NOTES

by John McCarthy

I pray to the birds because I believe they will carry the messages of my heart upward. I pray to them because I believe in their existence, the way their songs begin and end each day — the invocations and benedictions of Earth. I pray to the birds because they remind me of what I love rather than what I fear. And at the end of my prayers, they teach me how to listen.

— from *Refuge*,
Terry Tempest Williams

NEW MEADOWS, Idaho — At the end of her talk to Idaho Conservation League members here in late September, Terry Tempest Williams made a plea to the gathering. "We must be compassionate and fierce at once," she said.

Williams had just finished telling a story of watching a grizzly sow in Yellowstone thrash and devour an elk calf. A cow elk emerged from the brush to stand but a foot away from the snarling bear.

The mother elk pawed the ground for an hour, letting out whimpering keens, and only left after twin grizzly cubs finished feeding on her calf's still-warm carcass. Williams urged the assembled conservationists to also make their intentions known, telling the world: "We will stand our ground in the places we love."

Williams stepped into national attention this fall, with the mid-October publication of her book, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*. A naturalist by occupation and inclination and a fifth-generation Mormon born in Salt Lake City, Williams said she felt compelled to write *Refuge*.

This "is a book about love and it's a book about loss and how we find refuge in change. It's a book about family and how our family learned to inhabit that landscape of grief, with my mother's cancer," she said in a conversation after her talk in Idaho.

Refuge follows the process of her mother's death, starting with the diagnosis of ovarian cancer in 1983, when she was 51. Along with Diane Dixon Tempest's four-year confrontation with cancer, her daughter followed the rise of the Great Salt Lake and the subsequent devastation of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, which Williams began visiting as a child.

Neither the cancerous growth in her mother's abdomen nor the water's rise over the lake's shores were natural occurrences, as Williams sees it. The fallout from nuclear bomb testing in Nevada, which she saw as a child, and the human manipulations of the lake, put the natural systems askew.

Williams didn't read from *Refuge* that cool fall night to an audience of conservationists. She read a piece from her 1989 story collection, *Coyote's Canyon*, which she has read aloud before. It's called "Buried Poems" and begins: "There is a man in Boulder, Utah, who buries poems in the desert." The story is a shadow play about an archaeologist who captures the attention of townspeople by scattering poems in the desert. It ends, "The next thing we'll hear is that the locals want to preserve the wilderness for its poetry."

Williams says she is too vulnerable to read from *Refuge* in public, for in recounting her family story, "there's no place to hide."

Sitting up late, unwinding, she reads a few passages, including the beginning of the chapter called "Snow Buntings." It ends:

I want to see the lake as

rent beliefs, she added, "You have to have a sense of humor in order to survive living in Utah. It's so bizarre."

That attitude at times puts her at odds with church attitudes. "In Mormon culture authority is respected, obedience is revered and independent thinking is not," she writes in the epilogue to *Refuge*, called "The Clan of One-Breasted Women." Williams' mother, both

grandmothers and six aunts underwent mastectomies, with only two of the women still surviving cancers. She continues, "One by one I have watched the women in my family die common heroic deaths ... The price of obedience has become too high."

Williams, 35, has been married for 17 years to Brooke Williams. Her three younger brothers continue the family's pipeline business into the fourth generation. She is the granddaughter of a woman who took her 10-year-old grandchild to the Bear River Bird Refuge. She is rooted in place, family and tradition. Yet she sees threads breaking around her.

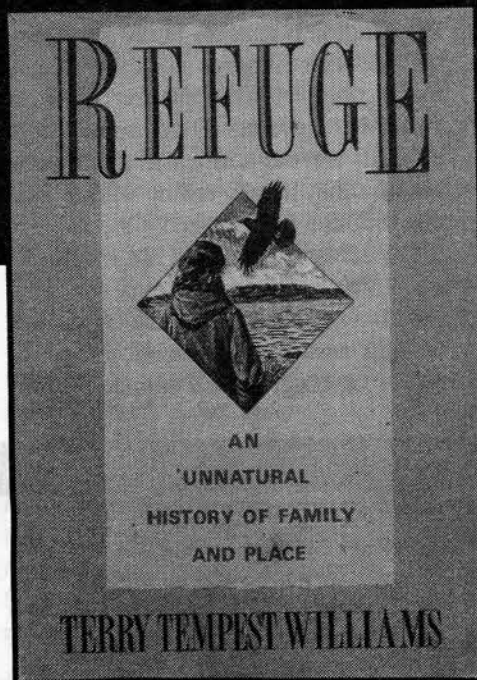
"I think we have to turn ourselves inside out — in order to find out how deep our convictions are to the sacredness of life. I think it begins with telling our personal stories, no matter how painful they may be. The power of story is the power to transform the world."

Williams says she learned "it's a privilege to be with the dying, and it's a privilege to love. We are so afraid to open our hearts. I know all this sounds like a cliché, but I think our capacity to love is in direct proportion to our capacity to take risks. If the West is to survive intact it will turn on that kind of risk."

Refuge, by Terry Tempest Williams, is published by Pantheon, 201 E. 50th St., New York, NY 10022.

John McCarthy is a writer in Moscow, Idaho.

Impassioned Rooted Poetic



Woman, as myself, in her refusal to be tamed. The State of Utah may try to dike her, divert her waters, build roads across her shores, but ultimately, it won't matter. She will survive us. I recognize her as a wilderness, raw and self-defined. Great Salt Lake strips me of contrivances and conditioning, saying, "I am not what you see. Question me. Stand by your own impressions."

We are taught not to trust our own experiences. Great Salt Lake teaches me experience is all we have.

Terry Tempest Williams is on the boards of environmental groups and meets with the Idaho Conservation League as a comrade. We talk about wilderness as church, conservation as religion.

"The American West is a spiritual reservoir ... I think these are holy lands," she said. "In the stillness of moments in these lands we remember who we are and where the source of our power lies. It is in these wild places we find deliverance from inauthentic lives."

Each of the chapters of *Refuge* is named after birds indigenous to Great Salt Lake: burrowing owls, whimbrels, snowy egrets, barn swallows, peregrine falcons ... *Refuge* seeks to redefine family and community and spirituality, linking the natural world and the human world, she said. To Idaho conservationists she talked about how a poetics of place naturally gives rise to a politics of place.

Williams lobbies elected officials, she writes letters, she belongs to organizations, she marches in protest of nuclear bomb testing. Yet, as a Mormon, she finds herself, in her words, "a radical soul in a conservative religion."

Asked how that is possible, she laughed and replied, "I don't know; that's where I am; that's who I am." Given her Mormon heritage and her cur-



Terry Tempest Williams, author of *Refuge*

Rosalind Newmark