



Noreen Horvitz

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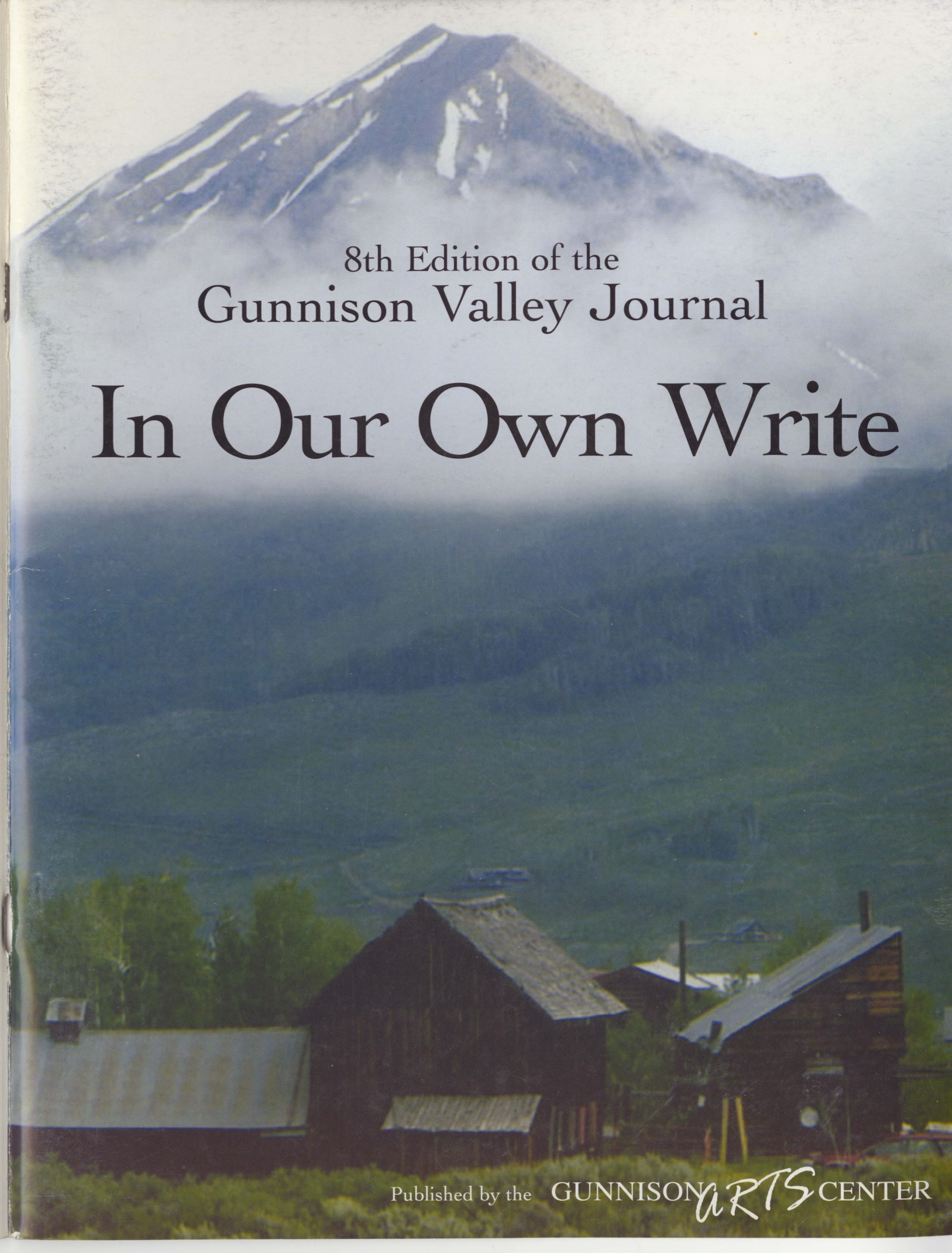
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8th Edition of the
Gunnison Valley Journal

In Our Own Write

Published by the **GUNNISON ARTS CENTER**



In Their Own Write

This Eighth Edition of the *Gunnison Valley Journal* comes at an interesting time in the dance, march and slog of life in the Upper Gunnison Valley. After a mostly droughtish decade, we've just come through an extremely interesting winter – or maybe we should just say an extreme winter: some of it, like the 30-below shoveling, ceased to be interesting by mid-January.

And now we've emerged from the excesses of the natural environment straight into a season of economic uncertainties and other curveballs from the cultural environment, highlighted by \$4.00-a-gallon gas. When the first *Gunnison Valley Journal* came out in 1996, we were worrying that gas that summer might go as high as \$1.50 a gallon; now we are wondering how long it will be before it is \$5.00 a gallon. And what we sort of sense is that this is probably the shape of the future: more extreme weather in a time of uncertainty about what the climate will do, more extreme energy prices in a time of uncertainty about what our future energy resources will be. Eight years into the 21st century, we are beginning to see how it will be different from the 20th century.

So why are we reminding you of all this – stuff – that we would rather not think about, at the beginning of the Eighth *Gunnison Valley Journal*? Because the context of the times makes the *Journal* and its contents all the more useful and meaningful here in the valley. This *Journal*, like all the others, is about the things we know and love here that we have some say in, and that are relatively dependable, constant and worth sustaining – the rolling cycle of seasons, the great “thereness” of the mountains, the green-to-gold glory of the aspens and cottonwoods, the June assault of the lilacs and crabapple trees, the winter mornings when a fog slowly burns off and the trees all light up with a cold fire, the evenings by the stream where the fishing pole was just an excuse to be there, and the ten thousand other things here that are ours so long as we keep them for each other. Our capacity for taking pleasure in what is here – as these *Journal* participants do “in their own write” – will become more important again as the cultural distractions afforded by cheap energy diminish.

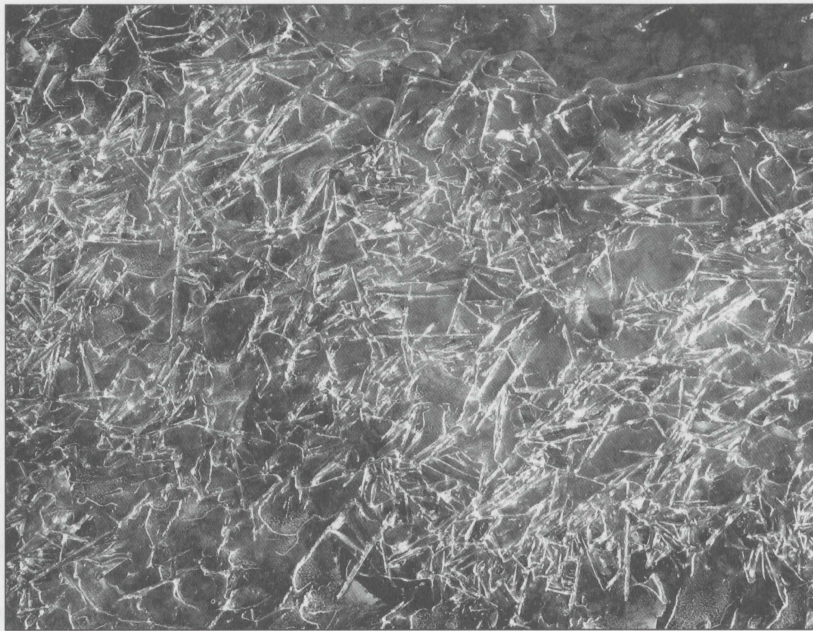
So peruse this new *Journal* as one of the gifts we give each other to remind ourselves what is really important. As always, it has been a great experience assembling this bountiful collection from the real “energy resource” of this valley – its wonderful people and all their creative energies. Thank you, and enjoy. The valley is ours to the extent that we are the valley's.

- *The Journal Staff: Kirsten Dickey, Virginia Jones, Sandra Karas, Betty Light, T L Livermore, George Sibley, Mark Todd*

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Jackie De Vore

In the Time of Snowlace

By Jackie De Vore

There is a place in waking dreams
...where sleep collides with time
...where layers freeze to capture light
...where blood and mud combine

Sleepwalkers dance the rhythmic waves
...as winter's eyelids dart
...and crystalline transitions
...now suspend the dreaming heart

Beneath the light of distant worlds
...ice masquerades as ice
...to falsely alter consciousness
...for a gambler's bargain price

Enchantment holds the dreamers
...while their surface forces age
...hearts and minds and souls are locked
...inside this unlocked cage

Yet in the time of snowlace
...where truth and love reside
...where warmth and light awaken spring
...where earth becomes her bride

Fragile delicate structures
...lie sparkling in the sun
...sculptured shapes of chambered light
...appearing one by one

As wintertime's enchantment
...awakes to fluid form
...trickles down to bedrock
...runs open, free and warm

Bend and break the smallest piece
...and place it in your hand
...the magic of the melting
...will help you understand

That warmth and light like truth and love
... can break the spellbound years
...restore the lifted open eyes
...and melt the frozen tears

Conscious life returns again
... through love's sweet open door
...pools faith along the roadside
...spills belief across the floor

Down the face of mountains
...awareness stretches wide
...holds the cold and porous ground
...unwraps its frozen pride

Along the muddy prayerful paths,
...earth softens, breaks and swells
...wakes up the waiting seeds of life
...where hope eternal dwells

Jackie DeVore has lived in the Gunnison area for twelve years. She taught elementary school classes for many years and is the former director of the Restorative Justice Project of the Gunnison Valley. She has participated in various poetry readings and gatherings in the community.

Ron J. Flemming resides in the "Heart of the Colorado Rockies" with his wife and three daughters; his writings have been published in national magazines as well as in smaller magazines, anthologies and local newspapers. • Rebecca Bishop is sixteen years old and has been homeschooled her whole life. Writing is her passion; she enjoys writing books as well as poems and hopes to be an author one day.



Joe Waggoner

Colors of a Rainbow

By Ron J. Flemming

Sister

By Rebecca Bishop

A fresh snow upon a Christmas morn
A flower in the spring
A little, tiny kitten new born
A bird who just must sing

A splash of sunlight in the cold
A splash of water in the heat
A sparkly diamond you can hold
A triumphant song that can't be beat

A mystery that does not end,
Yet one who understands me most
My dearest, best, and oldest friend
What other sister can so boast?

We spend our lives
Day in and out
Thinking, feeling, wondering
What's it all about...

Climbing sheer mountains of joy
Descending into valleys of sorrow
Getting lost in dark, secret caves
Still looking for tomorrow...

Journeying inside ourselves
Searching for the truth we need
Opening and closing our hearts
We celebrate, share and bleed...

We allude to and seek-out love
Ever elusive; it fades away
Like the fleeing colors of a rainbow
Only to return another day...

Most Americans Have Never Seen the Milky Way

By Shelley Read

"One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds." – Aldo Leopold

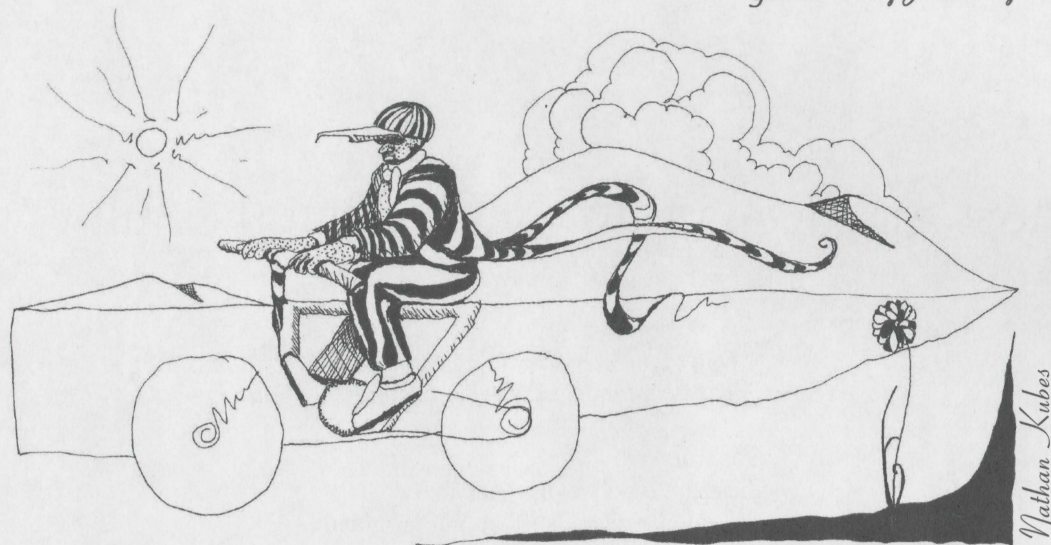
It is true—
these are lonely eyes that can see
the entombed and suffocating farmland
beneath the beige subdivision,
can see the salmon pushing against the dam
like a child who cannot be born,
can see the ugliness of the beautiful new castle
and the calloused hands in the faraway dungeon
that wove the magnificent entryway rug.
These are lonely eyes that can see
irony as the condition of our lives,
perceive consequence, and the subtle motion
of time bearing us to our deserved deathbed.

But the greater loneliness by far
belongs to the eyes who have never seen
the Milky Way.
For our kindred are not those who allow
us to perpetuate our illusions
but rather the beings through whom
we are revealed.
Had I never stood on a mountain
at midnight and peered
into my smallness
beneath that vast and glowing sky,
I should never have perceived
my greatness,
the honor and necessity of my own place
in the vast web of what is and can be.

So when despair edges closer
and I am certain I alone can see,
I take my solitude into the forest
where lonely cannot be.
Received like a misbehaved child into the arms
of a forgiving family,
I sink into the earth,
look to the sky, and I wait:
 tonight I shall see the Milky Way,
 tonight I am one with the world of wounds.

Shelley Read is a writer and educator who fell in love with Crested Butte as a child and has been a permanent resident for almost 20 years. She was one of the faculty members who created Western State's Environmental Studies program, and also teaches a variety of writing workshops for adults and children in the community. Joe Waggoner was a Highway Patrolman and Criminal Investigator for sixteen years in Texas, and a Private Investigator for Twenty Six years. He lived on a ranch in Texas before retiring to Gunnison two years ago.

Luke Mehall is a freelance writer for many publications including the Gunnison Country Times, Mountain Gazette and Rock and Ice magazine. Recently he authored the zine, "Moonlight Dreamchasers, The Buildering Issue."



The Guy on the Bike

By Luke Mehall

I didn't think much of it, a large man along the side of Highway 50, rolling along on what appeared to be skis with wheels on them. I figured it must be a common training tool for Colorado skiers. I'd just moved to Gunnison and I didn't know what was normal here and what wasn't. But there was nothing 'normal' about Benjamin Franklyn Wynn III.

A couple months later driving down Monarch Pass, sixty miles east of Gunny, twisting and turning my car through the curves that are a challenge sometimes to *drive*, there he is again: on a bike powering up the hill. Where did he come from?

His bike was neon yellow with large padded handlebars. He wore large dark sunglasses and looked like he was in a zone, a trance, like this was what he was born to do. 'He must be some sort of extreme athlete,' I thought to myself.

"He's training for the Olympics," someone told me at a house party in Gunny. "He's a boxer," the person added.

"I heard he used to play football for Western State," another person said.

The big black man who I started seeing all the time, riding around Gunnison and the surrounding highways in every direction was the topic of many conversations. Everyone seemed to know something about him. But that *something* usually sounded more like myth than fact. I was fascinated by the 'guy on the bike' they called Ben Franklin; could that be his real name? One thing was for sure: he was a character.

I quickly learned two things about Gunnison,

which I was proud to call home after living there for only a few months. One, people were passionately involved in outdoor pursuits. Two, they liked to dress up in costumes, for holidays and just anytime for the fun of it.

Ben was a perfect example of a citizen in this funky little town. When I would see him riding around town his typical outfit seemed like a costume: an outfit that highlighted his uniqueness. Many times he would wear a sports coat while riding his decked out bicycle. And he wore a ridiculous looking visor that stuck out two feet into the air. It was neon pink. He wore the dark sunglasses and always had that focused expression on his face.

It goes without saying he had passion for the outdoors. I'd see him further outside of Gunnison than any other local road biker. His 'road bike' was the same one he used as his town bike, a heavy looking model that probably weighed four times as much as the average road bike.

Friends told me that Ben figured he would make a million dollars selling the extra long visors. One day while typing away at the college computers I heard a loud voice yapping away to God-knows-who on the other line. He was talking a mile a minute like an infomercial salesman-like manner. I poked my head up from my computer. It was Ben. He was trying to sell someone on the visors. He was talking as loud as he could with no regard for the fifty some college students working in the same room. I looked at the person next to me and gave a smile. He went on for fifteen minutes saying

things like, "Yes, oh yes, this is a great invention, you see these visors...I can have a couple thousand made real soon, oh yes, oh yes...." He went on and on.

Discussing Ben Wynn soon became a popular pastime. He was odd and mysterious and everyone had a 'guy on the bike' story. The Gunnison Valley is rich with hardcore athletes: people who've climbed Everest, ski stars, cutting edge rock climbers, kayakers, and mountain bikers many who are at the top of their sports. But I'd be willing to bet Ben Wynn was better known than any of the famous athletes here. He had a presence that justified his mysterious reputation, he was always somewhere and since he was so unique he was just plain fun to talk about. This wasn't gossip though; everyone suspected he was a bit on the crazy side but still had respect for him.

"He's not crazy; I know that much," Bennett said in a defensive manner.

I was visiting Bennett in his Austin, Texas home. He'd just moved there from the Gunnison Valley. After a beer we started reminiscing about our college days in Gunnison. Ben quickly came up. He was a neighbor of Bennett's. A thousand miles away, with six years of experiences to reflect upon, Bennett found in his mind one of the greatest characters of his former home.

It's hard to explain why we talked of Ben so often. He was a living legend, a character so out there. He was doing his own thing and seemed to have no regard for what people thought. In some way we saw in him what we wanted to be. Someone who had plenty of time to do what he loved, for him riding his bike, and also to live free of caring if you were judged by, say, wearing wild outfits and pitching crazy ideas.

After returning from a winter away from Gunnison I was pleased to see Ben around again. On his bike, and talking his wild ideas to whoever would listen. At a potluck one night the topic of conversation was "Who is the most recognizable character in Gunnison?"

Of course, we brought up Ben and everyone agreed. One girl was just visiting and we told her all about him. But she would never get to see him.

That night after the potluck back at my house, we were sipping beers. My friend Scott asked if we had heard: "Ben Franklyn has passed away."

We all put our heads down and sipped our beers again. The sadness of death sinking in,

Scott said, "He had a brain tumor."

None of us ever knew this. When Scott said this it changed the mood.

"Well I suppose he's in a better place," we agreed.

Everyone agreed and we made a toast to Ben.

In the paper that week there was an obituary along with a headline on the front page that read: "Gunnison enigma passes on." There was a small picture of a beautiful piece of artwork that he crafted. He was an artist too! Many of the items in his art were recycled from things saved from the trash. A dumpster diver! I had no idea. He was from the Bronx in New York and he had been in the military. He had moved away from Gunnison a couple times but returned, like so many others.

There was more on The Bike too: a custom, trademark, yellow, pimped-out, Specialized Rockhopper, adorned with unmistakable brightly colored pipe insulation, Ben always pushing it along in the biggest gear; sporting anything from a one-piece ski suit to cut-off leisure suits.

And another Ben routine that I didn't know about....Ben running up to Crested Butte, a thirty mile run, only to run home backwards, "It balances the muscles," he said.

"Thanks to Ben, Gunnison is a better place," Renee Brown of Gunnison County Human Services added.

I didn't know Ben Wynn, and I never talked to him even once. I don't know if I could have communicated to him how he represented Gunnison, and freedom and individuality to me. I think the fact that I didn't know him made me idealize who he was. Others whom I've talked to said that Ben definitely had a rougher, meaner side. But who says after someone has died it's wrong to only remember the good qualities of the person?

Shortly after he passed he was there in a dream. He wasn't there to speak to me; it was just him on his bike, on the road, in a trance.

It makes me sad that Ben won't be way out there on the highway, on his roller skis, running, or on his bike, making normal travelers in vehicles wonder *why*?

I'll keep thinking about why he was so far out there. For now I hope his spirit is even more out there. In a space with freedom and creativity; somewhere where the highway leads to a place that is a mystery to all of us who are still living.... ■

Impressions from Up Valley

By Kelly Winner's 5th Grade Class of 2007-2008 - Crested Butte Community School

Seasons

By Brooks Haddaway

Snowy winters
 hot burning summers
 leafy falls and flowery springs
 that make the world go 'round
 watery mesas
 smoky dirt
 fluffy snow
 and swirling wind
 box-like houses
 a chair and a couch
 the barking dogs
 and the buzzing bees
 It was a tiring day
 time to rest
 and tomorrow
 there will be a new day.

My Home Town

By Maia Harrison

The wind rushes past my ears. I
 pedal faster and faster. I zoom up the
 street looking at all the houses, looking
 at all the grass and the birds chirping
 to say good morning. The fresh air
 smells like moss and the smell of new
 fallen rain and life surrounds me.
 The stop sign seems like it's been there
 forever, watching people go by day
 by day.

Fall

By Alec Button

Black Powder
 Bow hunters
 Sneaking through the damp mountains
 Elk calling to others
 Red, yellow, green, and orange leaves falling,
 gently swaying to the ground
 Sun rising and you can see your breath like the
 steam of a steam engine
 Frost covers the grass like crystals on a chandelier

Alec Button is 11 years old and lives in both Gunnison and Crested Butte; he likes soccer, horseback riding and dirt biking. • Maia Kai Harrison lives with her mom, dad and sister in Gunnison and Almont; her favorite hobby is hiking. • Brooks Haddaway likes skateboarding, skiing, snowboarding, fishing, dirt biking, and BMX biking; he also loves to play computer games and enjoys writing.

Sunsets

By James Beltz

Dark reds and yellows crisscross the dimming skies. Overhead a jet screams across the setting sky. The different shades of colors make a collage of ever so beautiful paints. The skies change red to yellow, yellow to pink. And they are gone.

Bird of Snow

By Bailey Pierson

Up off the lift and onto the slopes, like a bird soaring in the sky. Feel the soft feathers of the snow, but remember sadly all the birds have to fly away. You see all the white feathers of our bird melt into pools, then later keep flowing to green our home. Soon our bird takes off and flies south, in his wake leaving days full of sunshine and fun. When our bird looks down on us, when he leaves, he makes sure we are happy. Basking in his creation of flowers and trees, mountain biking, water skiing, whatever you want, he gives it to you in full stock. But he has to leave us to make sure his feathers make it all the way, but he will be back soon, with his feathers once again.

Falling Off the Roof

By Mallory Mikeska

Alone at your quiet home. Silence echoes through the empty house. You're staring at all the snow building up out your window. Suddenly, WHOOSH! Wind then Kabam! It sounds like a cannonball launch. All the snow falls off your roof. It feels like the house is going to fall, it shakes so much. Immediately the house is full of sound. The kaboom fills the house. You jump, your heart beats so fast, but when it's all over, you're fine. Now it's time to shovel the covered deck. Great...this will be fun.

James Beltz loves to ski and also likes to cook and eat. • Bailey Pierson enjoys exercising with her dog, and her favorite subject in school is reading. • Mallory Mikeska is 10 years old, and loves to play hockey and volleyball; she has two dogs and four cats, and loves animals, including moose and ostriches.

Karleigh Stewart is a Gunnison native and a freshman at Gunnison High School; when she is not jotting down her thoughts in verse, Karleigh enjoys playing many different sports, including goalie for the Lady Blades hockey team. She also likes to travel, raises Cashmere goats, volunteers with the Animal Welfare League and studies archeology.

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Hockey Goalie

By Karleigh Stewart

Among twenty different players
That moment, the only thing moving
Was the glove of the goalie.

The goalie was of three defenders,
like a forcefield,
In which there were three strong shields.

The goalie caught the puck in the glove
It was a small part of the victory.

A net and a goalie
Are one.
An offense, a defense and a goalie
Are one.

I do not know which to prefer-
The beauty of the white home jersey
Or the beauty of the black away jersey...
The luck of the home ice
or the rush just after the win.

Skaters filled the long ice rink
with taped sticks.
The shadow of the puck-
Passing it to and fro.
The blue line
Reaches for the shadow
As a magnet.

O speeding players of the other team,
Why do you imagine winning?
Do you not see how the goalie
Blocks the puck
And is unbeatable?

I know weak goalies
And losing does not matter to them;
But I know, too
That when a goalie is strong,
A shutout is a badge of honor.

When a goalie becomes afraid
It marks the end
Of many goalies.

At the sight of a fearless goalie
Standing against the shadow
Even the players coming toward her
Would cry out in frustration.

They skate out to the middle ring
From the bench.
Once, a brave player crossed the crease
And mistook
The shadow of the puck
For a score.

The goalie was too fast
The offense must be disappointed.

It was hockey all day
A cold, sunny Gunnison afternoon,
And there was going to be another victory
for the home team,
As the goalie stood
In the net, laughing at the scoreboard.

Union Park

By L.R. "Mac" McGraw

It was near these mighty mountain tops
 Where each person lost a soul
 While digging and searching
 For an elusive strain of gold.
 The North and South were preparing
 For a civil war fight
 To find out if slavery
 And Southern secession were right.
 The north and south factions here
 Fought very much the same
 And caused these isolated graves
 As part of a nation's shame.
 So our hearts and minds will question
 And wonder and meditate
 Whether those rocky graves are real
 And how they met their fate.



Mac McGraw

Three graves reside on a rocky little hill in Union Park a few miles south of Taylor River Resort. An old-timer, Bill Hartman, told us that legend said that three men were killed in a fight between supporters of North and South factions who were searching for gold about 1860. Supposedly Northern supporters named it Union Park so that Southerners could not name it for the South.

A Real Friend of Mine

By Dee Noreen



I have the privilege of knowing a man whose name is Mac McGraw
 He stoops a bit, older now, but man, he sure is tall

Tall as the Rockies, rugged and refined,
 Ol' Mac the Cowboy poet
 reflecting on old times

Gentleman - handsome, a real measure of a man
 With thoughts deep as the Black Canyon
 Mac makes his stand

Oh, where does time go? When you're older and looking back
 And wishing for more...

I'll tell you,
 Time is in the twinkle of Mac's eyes
 In the slow steady gait of an old cowboy's walk
 In the stories he tells, in the books he sells
 In the way he talks

Time is the essence of Mac McGraw
 Makes him what he is, who he is, and All
 A High Country Cowboy, Still Riding the Ridge
 Ol' Mac, A Real Friend Of Mine

Retired from a life of cowboying and outfitting in the Gunnison Valley, Mac McGraw still enjoys sharing stories of the West as it was through his poems and essays. He is the author of several books. • Dee Noreen has been digging holes and managing shovels for twenty-some years as a commercial landscaper, and more recently, trying her hand at pottery and other art mediums. Poetry has been flowing through her veins since she was knee high to a mountain goat....Some of it just finally slipped out.

J. Ryan grew up in the Gunnison Valley with her Mom and two sisters. Writing has always been a passion for her, and nothing else inspires her as much as this beautiful part of the world. • Judy Cox published her collected poems in 2007 in a book entitled "Sending Forth the Seed." The pages of poetry in this journal can be found there. She and her husband, Allen, own and operate the Nordic Inn in Crested Butte.



Judy Cox

Rocky Mountain Lullaby

By J. Ryan

The distant roar of the mighty river rushing down the canyon floor,
Pitter-patter of the cool summer rain on my bedroom window.

The stars twinkle and dance about the blackened nighttime sky,
The moon is full and bright as it emerges around the jagged horizon.

The call of the owl perching in the Ponderosa Pine,
A frog and cricket orchestra serenades the summer moon.

The wind blows through the branches of the aspen,
Tossing the brightly colored leaves playfully into the autumn air.

Grandmother Mountain wraps herself in a brightly colored quilt,
The geese say farewell as they fly across a turquoise sky.

Quiet is the snow as it dances in downward grace,
To rest upon the sleeping Earth.

A doe stops to nibble on the remnants of summer,
She is as silent as my breath as it escapes my cool lips.

The springtime sun emerges to liberate
The river from its frozen winter palace.

A robin perches on a pasture fence and sings the song of spring,
Wildflowers stand and stretch their arms from their winter slumber.



Melva Barton

The Red Shoe

By Kelly Osness

As the owner of a small shoe store in Gunnison, I sometimes get so caught up in my "busyness" that I forget to take the time to greet each customer with sincerity and cheerfulness. This is something that I had wanted to work on more closely, so one hot June day I decided to operate the coffee shop in our shoe store. This would give me time to focus solely on being attentive to our customers' needs, instead of being my usual task-oriented self.

About mid-day a group of five ladies entered our establishment and ordered some refreshments for themselves. I chatted with them for a few minutes, learning that they were from Texas and that they were in our small town for a birthday celebration. As four of the ladies took their drinks over to a nearby table, one of the ladies remained at the coffee bar, gazing up at the garland that was hanging over the coffee bar, seemingly in deep thought. The garland is approximately 25 feet long and is decorated with silk flowers in a rainbow of colors, white twinkle lights, and tiny little shoes.

"I like those little shoes," she finally said. "Do you sell miniature shoes like those?"

"No, but a store right around the corner does," I replied.

"Do you think that they have any red ones? I only collect red ones - all shapes, styles, and sizes, but they have to be red."

"I'm not really sure. But you've piqued my curiosity. Why only red shoes?"

Her gaze shifted from the garland to look me in

the eye. "My daughter turns sixteen today. She's had Multiple Sclerosis since she was six years old. She can't walk anymore, let alone take care of any of her bodily functions. When she was a little girl, she loved to dance. She had the cutest little dancing dress with matching red shoes. Now every night when we say our prayers together, I pray that she'll be able to walk again. I pray that she will have some semblance of a normal life. And almost every night I have the same dream - that she's dancing with God wearing red shoes."

She paused. And deeply moved, I glanced to the other side of the room, and a shelf filled with items that I had collected over the years to decorate the store: fancy party shoes from my grandmother, a golfing hat from my grandfather, a metal truck from my mom's childhood, and many other family pieces. I like to keep them within eyesight so that I can remember to be thankful to all those before me who helped me get to the comfortable place I'm in now.

Alongside these items was a single wooden clog that I had purchased at a yard sale over a year before - a RED wooden clog. I excused myself, walked to the other side of the room, and grabbed that clog from the shelf. I returned to the woman, who in her openness had become so incredibly beautiful to me. I wondered why I had not noticed that before.

"Here," I said. "Give this to your daughter for her birthday." I felt foolish giving such a silly little gift - a yard sale item of all things! She looked at

Kelly and her husband own and operate Treeds 'n' Threads, which they started ten years ago. She is actively involved in Community Church, loves to travel, and is trying her hand at golfing. She will never grow weary of the beauty of God's handiwork and the amazing people in this valley. • Rick and Melva Barton have been Gunnison residents since 1967 when they arrived at Western State College. Rick is a Christian speaker, forest firefighter and ski instructor. Melva serves as a substitute school teacher and helps Rick with ministry around the country. They love to share the Gunnison Country through the eyes of the camera.

Continued on following page

Continued from previous page

the clog, then wrapped her arms around me, thanking me for my generosity. "It's just a little thing," I said sheepishly, "but I thought that she might enjoy it." I found my face turning red.

"Please sign it for her," she insisted. So I wrote on the bottom of the shoe, "God loves you. Colorado 2003." And this simple act of friendship promoted another thirty minutes of conversation. We shared our common qualities of raising teenagers, of being in our 40's, of trying to find a balance in our lives between work, family, and play, and mostly of our love for God.

"I can't believe how close you are to God, especially since you have a child with such a serious ailment," I said in complete wonder. "Many people would be angry at God, or bitter, or even resentful. But you have such a love for God that it astounds me. I'm quite impressed."

"Oh, believe me, I've been through all those emotions and more," she stated. "But ironically it's this disease that has brought me closer to God. It's because of her illness that I've learned to pray every night."

I have always had a difficult time "witnessing" to people about God, for fear of sounding too preachy. I had recently prayed to God to open up my mind for opportunities for witnessing. Here it was, less than one week after that prayer, that this beautiful Texas woman and I were witnessing the good news of our Lord. I smiled at how great God is, giving me this gift of a small window into this woman's life, a thirty minute friendship, an intimacy that you sometimes don't achieve with people that you've known for years.

"I wish you lived here," I said finally. "I think that we would be really good friends."

She left my establishment with the promise that she would visit me every summer when they traveled through our town. As she left, I realized that I hadn't even asked her name.

Now that in itself would be a great memory, but God had more in store for me. Two weeks later I was helping a frail lady with a shoe purchase. She was particularly difficult to fit, but I was determined to do my best to find something that

pleased her. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw another woman looking over at me. When one of our sales associates made an attempt to help her, she pointed at me and said, "I need to talk to her."

I assumed it was a sales rep, or someone looking for a donation, so I looked up from the shoe that I was so diligently tying on my customer's foot.

"May I help you?" I asked.

"I just stopped by to tell you how much my niece enjoyed the red shoe that you gave her," the pleasant woman said. It took me a second to register what she meant, because after all it had been two weeks, and we go through lots of shoes.

"Oh, it was my pleasure," I said as I smiled in her direction. *It was sure nice of her to come back in and say that to me, I thought. After all, weren't they from Texas?*

"My sister talked about you that whole evening. She said that you were like an angel. You have no idea what that shoe meant to her," she said with such conviction that I felt a rush of heat to my face.

"Really, I enjoyed giving it to her. Our conversation was a gift to me." I felt a little embarrassed about this fuss over such a simple gesture.

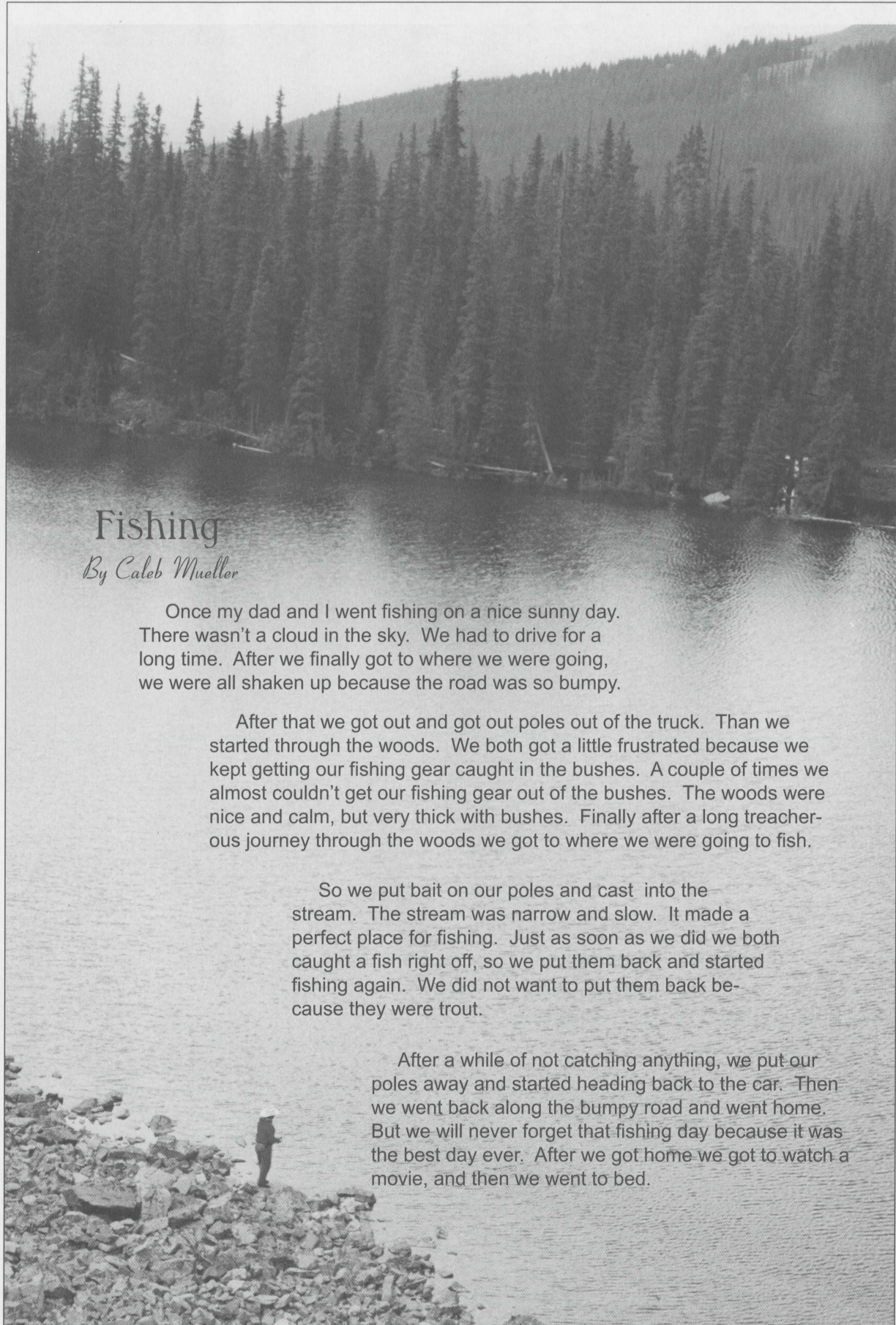
"What you don't know, though, is how these conversations helped us with the funeral."

My mind struggled to understand what she had just told me. I quit tying the customer's shoes and stared this woman full in the face. "You mean," I stammered, "the little girl died?"

"No," she said calmly, "her mom did. She had a heart attack that same night. It was like her heart was broken for her daughter."

I felt huge hot tears running down my face. I pictured this beautiful woman in heaven watching her daughter dance in red shoes.

Never miss the opportunity to do a kind gesture for another - no matter how small it seems. A kind word, a warm smile, or a friendly touch can make someone's day, and be a witness to the greatness of God. Like the concentric circles rippling out from a stone thrown in a pond, you may never know how far reaching your actions are for others. ■



Fishing

By Caleb Mueller

Once my dad and I went fishing on a nice sunny day. There wasn't a cloud in the sky. We had to drive for a long time. After we finally got to where we were going, we were all shaken up because the road was so bumpy.

After that we got out and got our poles out of the truck. Then we started through the woods. We both got a little frustrated because we kept getting our fishing gear caught in the bushes. A couple of times we almost couldn't get our fishing gear out of the bushes. The woods were nice and calm, but very thick with bushes. Finally after a long treacherous journey through the woods we got to where we were going to fish.

So we put bait on our poles and cast into the stream. The stream was narrow and slow. It made a perfect place for fishing. Just as soon as we did we both caught a fish right off, so we put them back and started fishing again. We did not want to put them back because they were trout.

After a while of not catching anything, we put our poles away and started heading back to the car. Then we went back along the bumpy road and went home. But we will never forget that fishing day because it was the best day ever. After we got home we got to watch a movie, and then we went to bed.

Caleb Mueller is a fourth-grade student in Mr. Laine Ludwig's class at the Gunnison Community School, who likes fishing, skiing, math and chocolate.

John Nelson

Avery Pulley is nine years old going on 10; she lives in the Crested Butte area with her family and goes to the Crested Butte Community School. Mark Todd teaches creative writing at Western State College. His second collection of poetry, published by Ghost Road Press, will appear this coming October.



Matt Burt

Missing Shoe

By Avery J. Pulley

One July summer day, a girl named Lisa walked to Gunnison Park. When she got there she ran like her feet were on fire to the jungle gym. The park smelled like blossoms in early May. Her mother called to her in a worried voice: "Be careful over there."

All of a sudden Lisa saw her best friend Margo. "Hi Margo, Gunnison's great, don't you think!" Lisa said excitedly.

"Oh it's okay Lisa." Margo said sadly.

"What's wrong Margo?" Lisa asked.

"My favorite shoes are lost and my mom made me wear my brother's shoes," Margo cried.

"Don't worry we'll find those pink, flowery shoes," Lisa said happily.

That afternoon they looked all around the house, garden, park and the trash, they were nowhere to be found. Margo and Lisa were very tired.

"I'm going home," Lisa said, tired.

"What about my shoes?" Margo asked, panting because they'd looked so hard.

"I'm sorry, Margo, I think you lost your shoes," Lisa said. "Meet me here tomorrow morning."

The next day Lisa woke up at 8:00 am. She ran to the park. Margo was holding up both shoes and laughing. At that moment she knew it was all a joke.

Renovations

By Mark Todd

I know summer has come
when my walls stain with daubed-
on mud, beads that layer
moistened plugs with sturdy
pockets of droplet brick.

The swallows have returned.
Their restless task: to build
new houses over mine.

With their chirp-throated songs
and busy industry,
they fashion an ancient
architecture, using
my planed, sanded aspen
soffits on angled eaves
to fabricate aerie
villages in mere hours.

We draw our battle lines
each dawn, they erecting
nests anew, which I thrash
to crumbling clay by dusk,
shards covering the deck.

Each fresh undaunted day
the ritual repeats,
for four relentless weeks
until, at last, one day
the horde disbands, perhaps
puzzled why instinctual
diligence cannot win.

They leave, their broken rims
like Anasazi ruins,
abruptly abandoned
edificial kivas.

But I know I haven't
won. The first new next year
summer day, a fresh tribe
will wend its winging way
to my walls with daubed-on
moistened plugs, their throaty
chirps determined to build
new houses over mine.

My First Brush with the Law

By Richard D. Besecker

As I studied the sleek, fresh lines of the brand new car, an irresistible urge started to well up within my thoughts. No one was around as my eyes ran across every inch of the exquisite ride. I had no right to entertain the notion, but I felt myself being taken in with such ease. At first, I slowly exited my own aging transportation. Now that I look back, I realize my hesitation was only a token gesture for the further from my dilapidated wheels I stepped, and the closer I ventured towards the inviting sight of the shiny newer model, the more I felt destined to the moment.

I was amazed at the ever increasing feeling of exhilaration as I approached the sleek tangible lure of my desire. I gave a quick glance around the neighborhood and found that no one was apparently being vigilant to my sinister act in progress. Without further tarry, I embraced destiny and climbed into the car. The point of no return had passed and, without further delay, the tangible lure was in my grasp and set in motion. As I steered her onto the street, I remember being surprised at how difficult the vehicle handled. She was sluggish and felt heavy, as well as underpowered. Within a couple of city blocks, my enthusiasm diminished more quickly than it had originally surged and a renewed appreciation for my old ride was mounting.

I couldn't say whether it was a passion for fine machinery or the undeniable enticement of being associated with sophistication. Often when we are young, we are prone to cast all rationale to the wind for an apparent pinnacle moment...a moment which we are certain will never present itself again. As a result we embrace the risk with little thought of consequence and grasp the "brass ring." Invariably, our anticipation of elation is quickly diminished and gratification is all but evaporated as the realization of consequence presents the next sobering moment.

I vaguely recall my short amble back to where I left my own vehicle. I do recall, however, with vivid distinction, the patrol car next to it and Sheriff Cope standing with his arms folded across his chest. I felt my heart race. With juvenile ignorance, I approached my ride as though to go on with life as I had known it before. Without a word I felt the strong hand of the law on my shoulder and with undeniable haste I was being escorted to the back seat of the squad car. Then, with stern resolve, I was placed in abrupt fashion on its cushion.

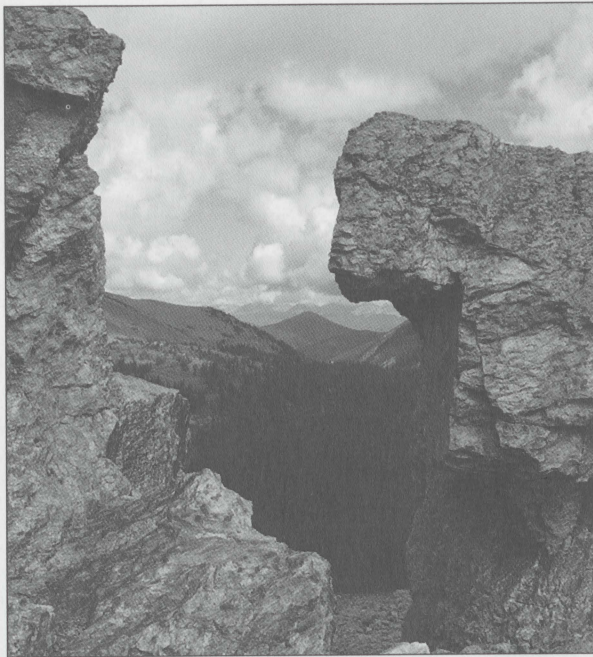
Before long, I was introduced to the hollow confines of the Gunnison County Jail. As the heavy steel door slammed shut and the ancient locking mechanism etched a distinct recollection permanently in my memory, I came to realize that life would never be the same again. Never would I be tempted to run away from the warmth of home, nor would I ever again be tempted with irresistible lure to take a ride that was not mine.

It seemed, after an endless length of time, that I detected the tender sound of my mother's voice as it echoed down the uninviting corridor and it was at that time that I knew my salvation was at hand. I understood that my mother was going to be upset with me, but any wrath that she may have planned was better than the depressed depths of this damp dungeon.

Soon, my release was arranged and, with tears streaming down my face, I ran as fast as I could to the warm familiar arms that had extended comfort to me for my entire life ... all three and a half years of it. As Sheriff Cope helped my mother load my tricycle into the trunk of her car, I promised that I would never again "borrow" another toddler's peddle car, even if it was a Deluxe Red Rider. Although my stint in jail lasted all of fifteen minutes, I had learned my lesson.

Richard D. Besecker was born in Gunnison, and has chosen to live in God's Country for 57 years and counting; he married Gloria (who was someone else's high school sweetheart) after she graduated from Western State College in 1978, and they raised three delightful adult children who have, thus far, decided to maintain residency in God's Country. • Matt Burt moved to Gunnison in 1989 to attend WSC, graduating in 1994 with a BA in Studio Art. Once here, he fell in love with not only the community but the area and all the natural beauty and recreation it has to offer; in his art he is just trying to relay the often-overlooked beauty he sees as he walks, skis, or rides around this natural playground. He sees his role as "more the messenger than the originator."

Ian VonZonneveld has lived here his whole life and is currently a junior in the Gunnison Valley School; he likes to skateboard, play video games and read, and just recently started writing poems because he was put into an advanced poetry class. He wrote a little book of poems for a final project which included this piece – his favorite. George Sibley is a freelance writer who has worked on all the Gunnison Valley Journals; he recently retired from Western State College, and now spends his time helping stir various pots around the valley.



George Sibley

Chalk Rinds

By Ian VanZonneveld

Chalk rinds, a child's expression,
A faded memory that washes away.
Raindrops crash amongst the colors,
Reds, blues, and greens.

A stream of ideas, running across the pavement,
Crashing into the gutter.
The essence of one's soul,
Mixing with the dirt and grime of civilization.

Poison, mixing with the purest of all things.
A child's ideas, their creativity,
Brought into the world, only to be wiped away.

Life resembles these chalk rinds.
We can't stay forever,
All we can do is leave a mark,
In hopes that it stays long enough to inspire another.

So leave your trace,
Make it elaborate and beautiful.
Inspire someone to be their "best self,"
And make your marks heavy and bright.

For if you do,
They will stay with someone forever,
Someone who will carry on your legacy,
And bring about the best of people everywhere.

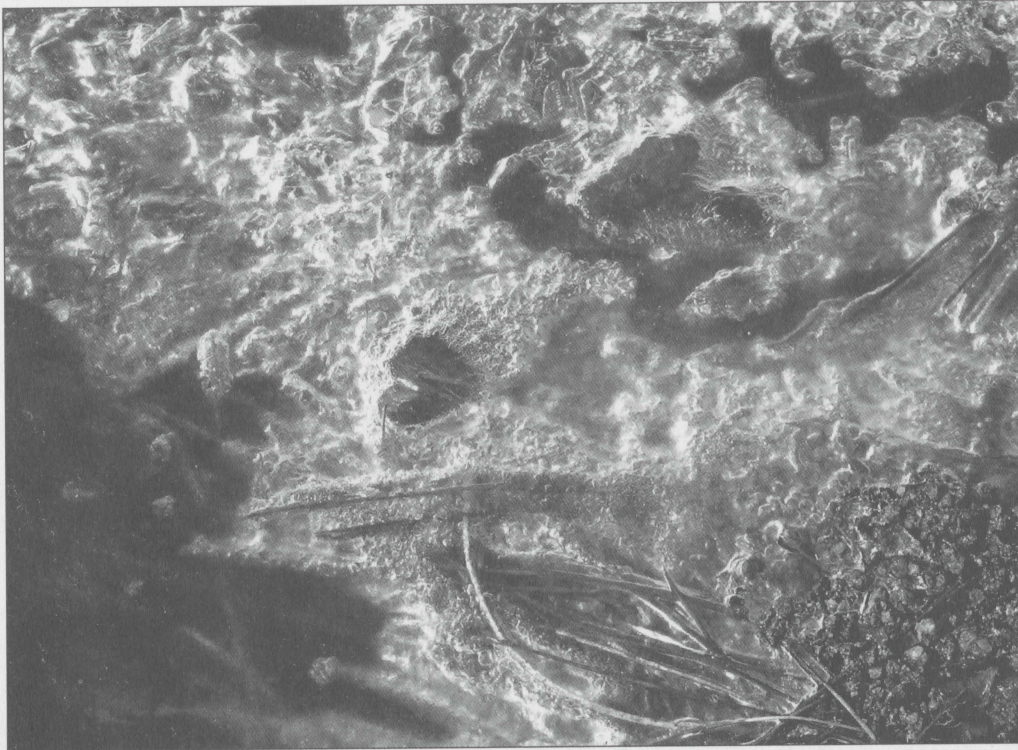
Morals

By Kevin McGruder

Morals
i see baby cows playing
in the fields
and i think maybe
i shouldn't eat them
then I watch the television
and those fat burgers
make me hungry
and i forget about
the baby cows playing –
-damn, now i'm hungry



George Sibley



Jackie De Vore

Upside-Down Whimsy

By Virginia Jones

**Release your imagination!
Think upside-down gardens!**

Just suppose the greenhouse gases become unseen
upside-down gardens when they reach the atmosphere!

What overly-abundant crops they would grow:

Deep snow and blinding blizzards,
Golf ball hail....leaving footprints,
Convulsing hurricanes,
Demolishing, heart-breaking tornados,
“Wind that sings of trees upturn,”*
Driving, gushing rain,
Reverberating thunder and
Fluorescent lightning,
Drought-stifling heat and bone freezing cold,
Gut-wrenching Tsunami and floods.

Maybe those greenhouse gases’
upside-down gardens
dump their “produce”
all over our Earth!

Would this be a message?

*William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

Virginia Jones is a former teacher, an aspiring poet and a volunteer who has lived in the Gunnison Valley for 40 years. She is a big part in making this Journal happen. Kevin McGruder moved to Gunnison Valley in 1998 to pursue a career in ski mountain management; he has also pursued a life course of happy marriage and the insanity of child-rearing, for all of which a previous binge with a number of psychotropic substances prepared him very well.

Kimberly Hamilton lives in Gunnison with her husband and dog. She has loved the Gunnison Valley since childhood, and has been happy to enjoy her college years here, where writing kept her sane through the long winters.

Where He'd Always Never Been

By Kimberly Hamilton

Barnett couldn't stop the dream from coming. He'd exercised, taken pills, and even tried to stop sleeping all together, but in the six weeks after his wife had passed away it had come to him every night. It always began so wonderfully. The roughly hewn sign that he saw so vividly now, even in his waking hours, heralded The Precipice Inn, nestled within a beautiful sequoia forest. Once inside, he was pleasantly surprised to find that the inn was perfectly suited to what his wife had always joked were his "mountain man tastes." At once enveloped with the warmth from a crackling fire, the mouth-watering smell of thick beef stew, and the inviting air of the deep leather arm chairs set about the fire, Barnett felt like he had come home after a long and painful journey.

In his waking hours, he was often bombarded with the reality that this was a feeling he longed for but would never again experience. This he knew, because the dream never ended there. Instead of staying within the comfort of those four embracing walls, Barnett was nightly compelled to venture out into the surrounding grounds. Following a scarcely traveled path, he hiked through the colossal trees, relishing the sounds his feet made as they shuffled and crunched the sequoia needles. Even in his dream, his senses were assaulted—the rich, musky smell of damp earth, the mist that settled heavily under the canopy of trees, he swore he could even taste the richness of this place.

Gradually, the trees thinned and the path turned rockier. Barnett had to catch himself time and again as the slippery rocks threatened to sweep his feet out from under him. His faded tennis shoes had lost their tread years ago. The natural instinct to turn back was pressing him, but the primitive urge to go on overtook him. He pressed on, his careful walk—now oblivious to the danger of slipping—sped up and he finally broke into a run. His breathing grew heavy, his brow soaked with mist and sweat—he ran faster, harder. He sensed the path was coming to an end. It dropped from sight just yards ahead of him. He

sped up. Before he could wake himself, Barnett was crushed with the frightening, yet strangely freeing, sensation of falling.

On this night—six long weeks after his wife gone—Barnett woke from the dream, icy fingers still gripping him. He knew there was more, that something else happened after the fall; but while the rest of the dream was vivid, even upon waking, this ending eluded him. He turned on the TV. "Infomercials," he grunted as he flipped through the channels.

"And for only eight payments of \$19.99, your body can look like..." Click.

"It cuts through this tin can like butter..." Click.

"Just three months ago I was almost completely bald. My wife didn't want to be seen with..." Click. Click. Click.

"Located in the beautiful Sequoia National Park, The Precipice Inn..." Click.

"Wha?" Barnett fumbled with the remote control, searching desperately for the right button.

"...renowned chef makes his meals look effortless and taste gourmet. His menu features items such as buffalo meatloaf, stuffed trout, and his grandmother's beef stew."

As Barnett stared open-mouthed at the television, the view changed and the narrator announced his entrance into the "great room of the Precipice Inn." The fire crackled and men, sitting in deep leather armchairs, sipped brandy and, according to the narrator, "swapped hunting stories."

It was then that Barnett noticed the phone number blinking across the bottom of the screen. He stumbled out of bed, turned the dial on the Coleman lantern—the one his wife had bought him for his birthday last year, "even though I'm sure it's a fire hazard," because she'd seen him admiring it in the Bass Pro Shop—and dug through the clothes on the floor till he found the jeans he'd been wearing that day.

He grabbed his cell phone out of the back pocket and typed the number in. He pulled the jeans on and rooted around till he found a sweat-

shirt. Groping in the dark, he felt his way to the kitchen and flipped on the coffee maker. He sat at the table in the dark, waiting for the coffee to brew, and thought. The Precipice Inn of his dreams was a real place. The arm chairs were real and so was the beef stew. It all existed, and he had been there every night for the last six weeks.

Barnett could smell that the coffee was ready, and he shuffled to the cupboard. He had to reach far back across an empty shelf to find a mug, and he made a mental note to run the dishwasher. He poured the hot, thick liquid and let the warmth and smell comfort him and clear his foggy mind. He moved back toward the table, and a ray of moonlight came through a mussed curtain and hit the mug. He didn't recognize the cup at all, but the picture of the log cabin set cozily in its wooded paradise flipped a switch in his mind. It all seemed so familiar. In all likelihood, his wife had bought it on one of their many excursions—a lifetime of them made it hard to remember each in detail. But, for the life of him, he could swear it was an exact replica of a place he'd visited only in his dreams.

•••

Somewhere between Denver and Salt Lake City, Barnett had worked up the nerve to call the number on his phone. He was both terrified and relieved when a woman with a deep, rough voice answered the phone and secured him a reservation for the following night. He even felt himself gathering courage as the miles between his home and The Precipice Inn grew smaller. But now, as the all-too-familiar sign came into view, Barnett could feel his bravado wavering. He parked his Toyota Four-Runner in one of the few empty slots and slowly tuned off the engine. He laid his head on the steering wheel and closed his eyes, willing himself to recall what came next in the dream. Realizing that it wasn't going to come to him, he sat up and opened his door.

Barnett had had *déjà vu* before, and this, he decided, definitely wasn't it. As he walked into the great room of The Precipice Inn, he was hit by the same sense of homecoming that nightly haunted his dreams. The warmth of the crackling fire, the smell of beef stew, even the deep leather chairs—it was all there, just as he'd seen it over and over again. And after checking in with the deep, rough voiced woman he'd spoken to on the phone, partaking in a bowl of that hearty stew, and sipping his

own glass of brandy in a leather chair, the compulsion to wander the grounds returned to him as well. This, however, he ignored.

Finishing his brandy, Barnett smiled goodnight to the receptionist and quit the great room. After unpacking his overnight bag, he took a long hot shower and fell onto the double bed with its thick down comforter. Sleep overtook him almost instantly, and the dream, which he'd hoped to leave behind, wasted no time in coming. Once again Barnett ate the stew, walked the path, and took the leap—and once again he woke in the grip of those icy fingers, wondering what had happened after the fall.

"Tomorrow," Barnett said to his reflection in the mirror above the dresser, "I am going to find out."

•••

The trail was everything Barnett knew it would be. Coming here, like walking into the great room, gave him the sensation of finally being home. He walked for a time, enjoying the crunch of the needles and leaves beneath his feet and the heady smell of moist earth. Soon, however, the need to reach his destination overtook him and his pace quickened. Before long, he had broken into a run, and the end of the path was in sight. Reason told him to stop, but Barnett's instincts were ruling now. In a great running leap, Barnett threw himself off the precipice, and experienced, in his waking hours, the mixture of terror and freedom as he fell.

The black water of the glacial lake engulfed him, stealing his breath but not his thoughts, which, though muddled, registered that *this* was what came next. He expected his life to flash before his eyes. Instead of his life, however, it was the dream that played out before him now, as it finally grasped the opportunity to run its course.

The icy fingers that had clutched him every night since his wife died caressed his body now. They were softer than he expected, and the touch was familiar in a way he'd never noticed before. And only now, as he sunk deeper and deeper into the black waters of Lake Kalamatie, could he see—in his mind's eye, but also through the iced over orbs of his earthly body—who the icy fingers belonged to. Smiling at his beautiful wife, releasing bubbles from the corners of his blue lips, he couldn't help but revel in the fact that he had finally come home. ■

Phoebe Cranor married John Cranor in 1946, moving from Arizona to his ranch, where they raised four children. She has loved the beauty, weather, people. She has published seven books, two about ranch life and four of which were translated into five different lan-

Gunnison Weather

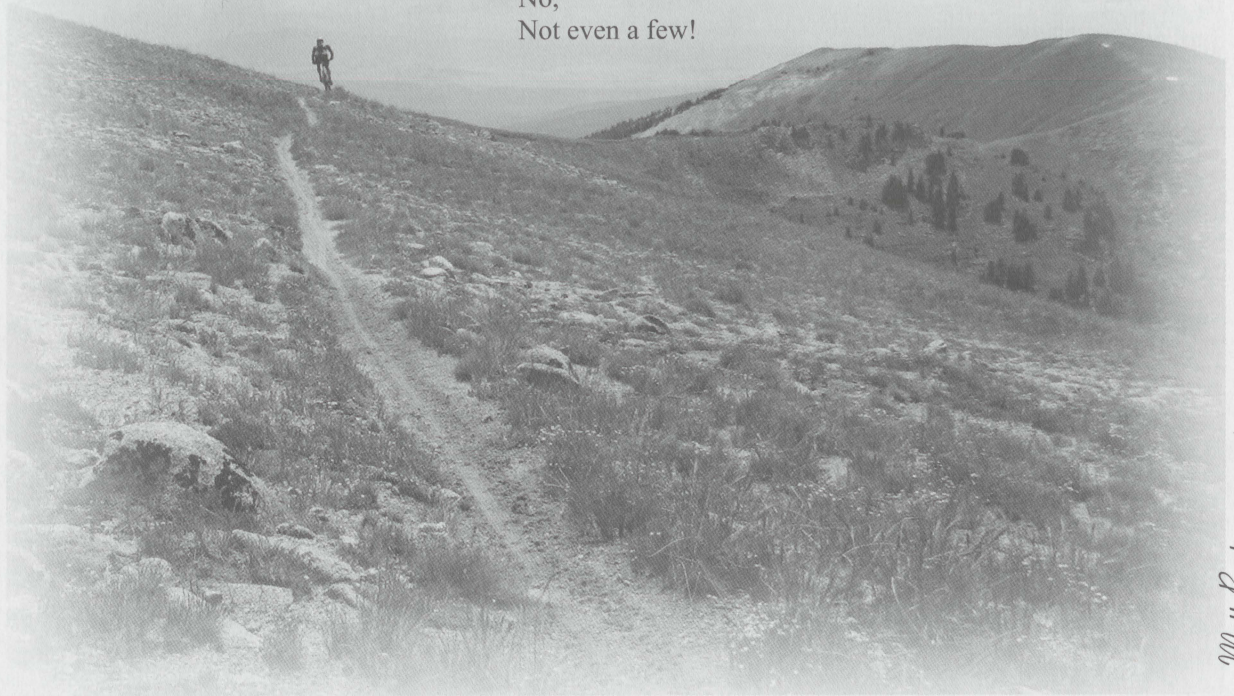
By Phoebe Cranor

The old-timers know
It's not going to snow
When it's 20 below.

So we can then go
To places we go
When it's not going to snow –
Or away from the snow
To a warm fire's glow.

Then finally it's Spring,
A wonderful thing!
But this year who knew
What the weather would do.
Not even a few.

P. S.
I wrote this stuff when
Nobody knew.
What the weather would do.
No,
Not even a few!



Matt Burt



Barbara Norris

Sherrill Stenson has lived in Gunnison for 15 years, teaching yoga and meditation; in her spare time, she loves to write poetry. • Barbara Norris is a writer and photographer who grew up in Crested Butte. She lives in Dallas, Gunnison, and on the road between.

Wind Watch

By Virginia Jones

I have watched the wind
dance with golden leaves down street and gutter;
tumble clouds as they move across the sky;
cause trees to wave as I walk by;
turn horses....tail to wind.

I have watched the wind
blow dust storms of snow from rooftops;
snap red, white and blue to full extension;
lift metal trash cans over a neighbor's fence;
fell trees that earthquake the ground.

Today, I watched a cold zephyr
gently nudge a tan plastic sack
as it slowly crawled its way
across an unmarked field of white
to rest in a snowbank till Spring.

The Garden

By Sherrill Stenson

Winter is coming.
The spring of my life has past,
A hard frost left my cosmos drooping.
Leaving my artistic garden a little tired.
I loved that garden.
Carefree
Left mostly untended to grow
As it chose
Free spreading
Flowers popped up
Yellow and purple and white
Sweet peas grew here and there
Up from last year's seeds
It was a pretty sight
But now it's Fall
And my garden struggles to remain.

The Colors of Gunnison

By Barbara Haas' 5th Grade Class of 2007-2008 - Gunnison Community School

Dreaming at School

By Braeden Gilmore

The yellow sun in the summer
The white puffy snow on Mt. CB
The green water of Blue Mesa
The brown rocks of the Palisades

By Luis Bustos

The baby blue skies with the frosty white clouds under
inky black nights with royal blue stars and our saddle
brown horses on our unbelievably pea green lawns
breathe fresh mountain air while a cool silky breeze
roams through the town.

By Alex Schlegel

The blue lake of summer
The silver ice of winter
The bronze sagebrush in the fall
The sea green leaves of spring
The navy blue skies of the morning
The jet-black skies and gold stars at night
The bronze tree bark
The forest green of the grass
The army green of the fields
The banana and mango flowers
The plum purple of the sunrise
The cherry and ruby sky at sunset
The aquamarine ponds full
The golden-silver fish in the lakes and ponds all year

By Quinn Travis

I love the yellow sunflowers and the brightest blue
streams you have ever seen. The beautiful orange sun-
set that sinks beneath the Palisades. The blistering
white snow falling inch by inch, feet by feet, meters by
meters this year. The green trees and grass makes me
feel excited about the day. I'm thinking about the
brown, wet sand of Blue Mesa Lake. I see a black
raven soaring in the air. I love the Christmas red that
shines in my head.

By Crystal Lynam

The chestnut Palisades in spring as the snow slowly
melts off into the cool, fish-full cerulean waters of the
Gunnison River; the fiery orange and tomato red of the
golden sunrise, and the magenta, marigold and lavender
of the bronze sunsets; the light blue sky with creamy,
fluffy clouds floating above the olive and lime trees
below; the midnight streets and bright, neon yellow
lights shining down at the cobalt, rose, cream, coal, and
butter-colored cars whizzing by; the ashen clouds cover
the beautiful lilac mountains before the first vanilla
snowfall; the pea green grass looking bleached, and
housetops get frosted in the cold chalky snow; the moc-
casin-tan feathers of the sage grouse lurking in walnut
fields of maple sage, pecking away at insects; the sap-
phire of Blue Mesa Reservoir in the summer when blue
and white speedboats skid across in flashes of light; the
cocoa saddles being tightened on the backs of white
spotted mahogany horses with a metallic bit in their big
mouths. These are my favorite colors of Gunnison.

By Lozen Miller

Gunnison is white frosted snow that dances down in
winter. Gunnison is green grass welcoming the warm
gold sun in spring. Gunnison is the bright blue sky
sparkling in the sunlight in the summer. Gunnison is the
red, orange, yellow leaves falling down, down, down in
the fall. Gunnison is a rainbow of colors.

By Zoe Marshall

Gunnison is an awesome place even if it is small. It has
creamy snow peaks on the mountain, and sometimes
the mountains are rose red. We have some roses that are
cherry red. Topaz dirt can be seen here. In the fall the
leaves can turn midnight black. In the summer the
leaves can be banana, pea green, saffron, and plum. At
sunset in winter the icicles glisten like diamonds, and
the summer sunset has a sapphire blue.
In Gunnison I sometimes see a periwinkle house. I also
see a lavender leaf. Will that give me good luck? Do
you think it is possible to see a scarlet dog running
down the street? Gunnison!

Waiting

By Anne Weaver

Laundry mats have always held an element of comfort for me. It's the soft warm air filled with the scent of fabric softener and the hum of machines spinning and drying. Back in high school my best friend and I, in an attempt to be poetic and original, would go to a laundromat in Denver and discuss the quandaries of youth against the lost sock wall.

These memories fill up my chest this morning while I wait for the bus at the High Country Laundromat. Sometimes the nostalgia for times long since gone is heavy enough to make my heart feel dense in my chest, like it's doing more than just pumping blood. Am I still that girl who used to write blues Haiku and eat sugar cubes at Stella's? Is she still somewhere in me? I consider this as I watch someone's shirts spin and fall, spin and fall.

It is too cold to wait outside for the bus even though it's supposed to arrive in just five minutes. This has been a particularly harsh Gunnison winter with unrelenting snow and freezing temperatures. Just the other day Charlie Gibson mentioned on the World News the struggle of the wildlife in Southwestern Colorado to find food after the record snow fall.

"Even the deer can't survive here. What makes us think we can?" I asked my mother on the phone that night while stirring dinner. She said I always sound like this on Mondays.

It has been snowing like I'd wished it would as a kid. I would watch the snow swirl in the halo of the street lamp hoping it would never stop and cover our windows and doors. But in Denver the snow would usually melt quick enough to ensure that no school days would be missed. The winter wonderland would soon return to brown grass and bare sidewalks. In Gunnison, however, once it snows it stays. The city has been making giant snow mountains from the excess snow in the old City Market parking lot. The mountains have reached impressive heights which, makes me worry spring won't be enough to melt it away.

Gunnison became my home nearly nine years ago when I came to Western for college. Sometimes I can still catch shadowy glimpses of myself as that young girl down alleyways or around darkened corners. It was around my junior year that this valley claimed a spot in my heart and really became home. I remember taking my laun-

dry home to fold from the same laundromat I wait in now. As I turned to start up the stairs, a cold wind whipped around me. The wind held a hint of winter and the mountains to the North were surrounded by white clouds promising snow. I felt calm at that moment, like I belonged here among all the wind and sage. After that it didn't take long until my heart began to long for the empty pasture-lined highways of the valley whenever I ventured somewhere else. I was hooked.

One of the first classes I had at Western was "Coming of Age in Music and Literature." We learned that once a person has come of age she can't go home again and expect to be the same anymore. This became true of my childhood home in Denver and eventually even for Gunnison, too. It has been five years now since I graduated from college. When I was 18 and in the "Coming of Age" class re-reading *The Catcher in the Rye*, I thought that coming of age happened in an instant by losing your virginity or smoking cigarettes. Or like for poor Holden when he saw that bad word scrawled for everyone, even the innocent to see and he realized how important childhood is, how it needs to be protected. Sometimes it takes losing innocence to realize how special and fleeting it was. It's like a wedding day that was months in the making and then just a few hours later the curls have fallen and the French manicure is chipped. All at once innocence can be gone. Understanding this means the coming of age process has happened. You've become the catcher in the rye and you can't go home again.

Looking back now I realize that a few innocence-shattering experiences did not equal my spot in adulthood. Coming of age does not happen in an instant but rather over time, if at all. Gunnison has been the background for some cringe-worthy coming of age experiences in my own story but it is also the place where I met and married my husband, bought a dog, a house and started working a business. Gunnison is where I forged an identity separate from my childhood and also where my husband and I decided to lay down some serious grown-up roots.

As it turns out the Gunnison of my college days is different from the Gunnison of now. Like my mother's kitchen, Gunnison has become a place I can't go back to in the same way again.

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For awhile it bothered me that I was no longer one of those sunburned girls with tangled hair laughing down Main Street. I had become so consumed with finances and trying to make it here that I lost some of my whimsy.

It seems that Gunnison is trying to work us out the way skin will eventually work out an unwanted splinter. While I can't go back to the days when I drank Sunshine Wheat in someone's backyard, and enjoyed the contrast of a thunderstorm sky against the dark green grass of summer with such carefree abandon, I still want to feel some of the peace I used to get just by being here. I have some adapting to do for my newfound role in life and in Gunnison because the scenery has stayed the same; I am what has changed.

I tend to feel like an unrecognizable version of my former self yet reside in the same changing places that I always have. Time continues to mark her passage with faint lines around my eyes and fuller hips, yet I am haunted by old memories of a skinny girl walking down New York Street, laying under lilac bushes and living on North Boulevard.

Maybe some people do come of age in an instant, rip off their rose-colored glasses of childhood and continue on. For me it seems to be an on-going evolution of subtle changes. On this particular January morning I am fully aware of yet another change, a change growing softly in my womb that has a heartbeat and someday a life completely separate from mine. For now we co-exist, sharing nutrients and growing together. I came to Gunnison a naïve girl, morphed into a fearless young woman undaunted by consequences, ended up married and stumbling through increased responsibility, and now an expectant mother. Perhaps one day far from now I will catch a shadow of the woman I am at this moment and wonder where that person has gone.

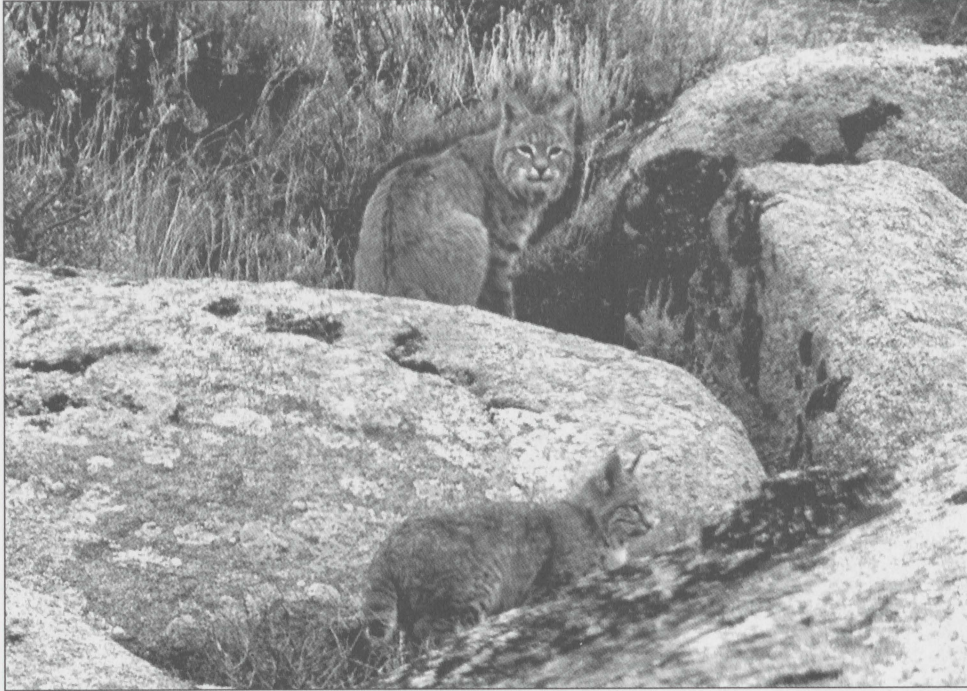
The Gunnison Valley still has the ability to

make me happy even if it is trying to work me out like a splinter. I still like to see hay trucks traveling down Main, the way the sun traces the thin shadows of trees against untouched snow fields and I enjoy watching the mountains green up during summer. Whether or not Gunnison is the place for my future, it has been the place where I attempted to come of age and created a new definition of myself. It has been a place of youthful simplicity. I found an old poem I wrote one summer when I was awash in the possibilities of new love and independence, written at the High Country Laundromat where I still wait now:

Waiting lonely
 In the laundromat
 A Monday afternoon
 Watching my underwear
 Spin and fall
 Spin and fall
 Watching little girls
 Share popcorn shirtless
 While their mother folds
 Tiny shirts into neat little piles
 Smiling then for myself
 For the gleam in my eye
 Who will one day
 Watch me intently
 Small hand wrapped in mine
 For tangled hair
 Dirt tracked through the house
 Popsicle grins and baby teeth
 Elusive still
 My motherhood
 Lingering in the curve of my hips
 The arch of my back
 The slope of my neck
 Waiting
 And waiting



Matt Burt



Noreen Horwitz

Judy Buffington is a Gunnison writer and rancher and the author of "Tall Grass and Good Cattle - A Century of Ranching in the Gunnison Country" and "Riding, Roping, and Roses - Colorado's Women Ranchers." Judy and her family own a 5th generation ranch in the upper Ohio Creek Valley. • Noreen Horwitz has taught drawing at Miami University and Dayton University in Ohio, at the Mesa State Extension in Montrose, the Gunnison Arts Center and privately; she moved permanently to Colorado in 1998 and began exhibiting her art and selling photo cards; her photography has won numerous awards and been published.

The Ranch

By Judy Buffington Sammons

My humble cabin sits in the aspen,
Not suitable for an aristocrat
But warmed by a wood stove
And sheltered by mountains,
It's my natural habitat.

And I love this old place
With its broken down fences,
Though some say I should sell it
And come to my senses.

And I love my good neighbors
Those with feather and fur,
And their most welcomed visits
When they rarely occur,

And if you like good music,
Come join me, if you'd care to,
And listen to my coyotes
Sing their midnight concerto.

And summer's acres of flowers,
I'll have to convince you.
City yards can't compare with
My larkspur, wild rose and Mertensia.

My meadows-so green in springtime,
Sparkling with diamonds in snow.
Aspen quaking gold in the fall time,
It's the fairest land that I know.

Likely I'll grow old and die here,
When it happens, please don't cry,
Just plant me amidst my wild flowers
Under my starry sky.



John Nelson

La Madre Del Agua (aka Headwaters Hill)

By George Sibley

Out along sky's ridge we went
In search of the source of life,
And finally found – almost missed –
An humble roundbacked mother
Whose lap begat three errant offspring.

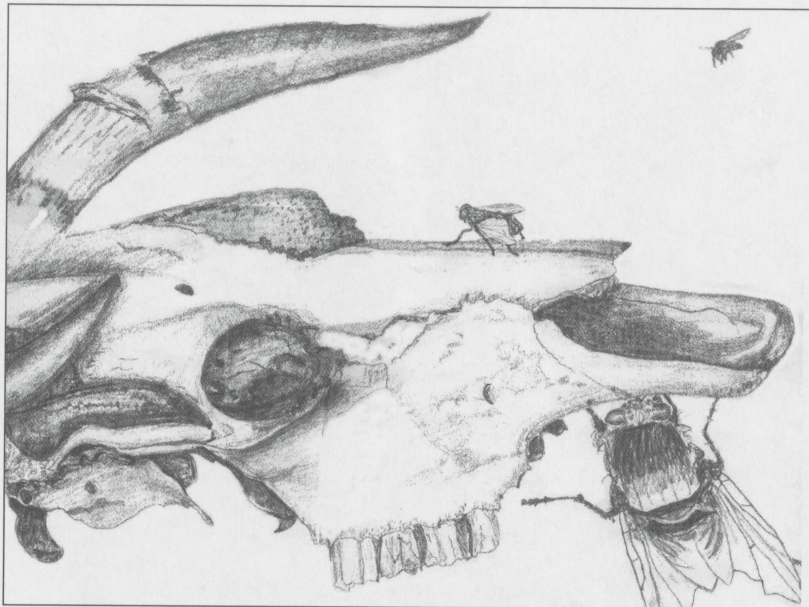
Her first child left for the sunrise
Ran off to the broad blessed bowl
Of a rich vast land now all drained
To feed the growing confusing hordes
Clustering in miraginous floating cities.

Her second child left for the sunset
Ran off to the dry ripped skin
Of a spare red land all bled bare
By the wet dreams of restless people
Trying again in the ancient desert sinks.

Her third child left for *el sol real*,
Ran off to the rippled hot mirage
Of a larger leaner land made waste
By the revolutions of the running blood
Calling from the once and future Cibolas.

But the mother stays where she is
Cumbent in the cool rise and fall
Of our jumbled mountain hope,
And sends only tears down after the lost,
Weeping life for those in the lands so dry below.

“Headwaters Hill” is now the official designation for a modest hill south of Marshall Pass on the Continental Divide where tributaries for three great Southwest rivers originate – the Arkansas, the Rio Grande, and the Gunnison-Colorado. Weather and road conditions permitting, Western’s Environmental Studies program hosts an annual September hike to Headwaters Hill.



Judy Cox

Times Gone By

By Christine Duetsch

Oh Lord a cold wind blows tonight,
The air so froze it blinds my sight,
It closes round and sucks me in,
How can I ever breathe again?
Oh how it comes and bites me deep,
Yet tries to lull my soul to sleep,
My flame is low, the light is gone,
Please hold me till the break of dawn.
Please hold me till the break of dawn.

The sea is raging strong and fierce,
So loud and cruel no sound can pierce,
I try to swim but it's no use,
My strength feels like it's been removed.
They beat me till all hope is gone,
Those waves they just are way too strong,
The water's deep and I'm drowning, Lord,
Please save me from this bitter storm.
Please save me from this bitter storm.

The storm has passed, the water's clear,
The sun it shines, its warmth so near,
And looking back at times gone by,
And all those tears so hopelessly cried.
You took my hand and picked me up,
You looked at me, said, "Don't give up,
It's from those times you're who you are,
Just lean on me and you'll go far.
Just lean on me and I'll take you far."

Christine Duetsch has lived in the Gunnison Valley for eight years and currently attends Gunnison High School as a junior. Songwriting and playing the guitar are two of her favorite pastimes, but she also enjoys boating, snowboarding, hanging out with friends and family, and an occasional game of campus golf.

Cherri is a grandmother of two, who recently achieved her dream of obtaining a degree, when she graduated with a B.A. in English from Western State College in Gunnison, in 2008. She lives with her husband Ernie in the historic mining town of Sargents, Colorado.



Rick Barton

Two-Legged Split-Tail Deer

By Cherri Sergio

The brittle leaves crunched under his feet. He liked the sound, the smell, a combination of musty, moldering leaves and pine balm. He thought they should bottle that scent. Squinting into the sun, he saw Gabriel up ahead, maybe two hundred yards. That's alright; he'd just hang back and enjoy the bracing mountain air, the blue sky, and the colors. He serpentine down the ridge. It was steep: TV Hill, they called it. The incline was so precarious, that he couldn't imagine how the broadcasting company ever erected poles on that hill. But there they were, and they piped in TV signals for the small town of Sargents, about a mile and a half below. *God, it was beautiful.* The aspens had turned from dismal grayish green to gold. It would have been great if Teresa had been there to see it. She loved the woods, but the baby had been sick and she wouldn't consider leaving him. *Teresa was swell.* She didn't mind when Will went hunting or fishing with the guys, which was exactly why he didn't go too often. Teresa didn't smother him, like Mom did Dad. Will wondered if the Trading Post would still have that lavender sweatshirt that Teresa had wanted last year. If it was still there, he would buy it for her before he went home.

A gust of wind shook the leaves of the tree in

front of him. They cascaded down around him, like confetti at the New Year's Eve party at the Legion hall last year. That was the first time they had been out since Danny was born. Teresa was so beautiful that night. He remembered the way they danced and the passionate kiss they shared at midnight. Some guys might not like being married, or at least they say that, but he had never been happier. Great wife and son, nice house, decent job: now if he could just bag a deer, life would be perfect.

Looking up, Will noticed Gabe was not in sight. He quickened his pace; he didn't want to be outdone, as usual. The lodgepoles groaned and creaked like old men. Beneath their shadow, Will's mood darkened abruptly. Goose-bumps erupted on his skin. *A goose stepped over a grave*, Mom would say, to explain that shivery feeling people get. His thoughts morose, Will wondered, *what's the matter with me?* Attempting to clear his head and alter his mood, he laughed at his own unease and resumed his normal stride. He skirted a mound of steaming cow manure, hoping that it was a cow, and not a bull that had just passed by. Local ranchers often grazed their cattle on forest service land; not typically during hunting season, though. He scanned

the area, attempting to spot the cow. He continued down the slope. That's all he'd need, to get fined for shooting some God-damned cow. He chuckled to himself, thinking what a hoot it would be if Gabe shot a cow. The mighty white-hunter indicted on charges of poaching or livestock endangerment, or whatever the charge would be. Will imagined the head of a cow mounted right next to the trophy heads of the moose, elk, and big-horn sheep pretentiously displayed in Gabe's living room; he laughed outright.

Will didn't see a cow, but looking down on a whim, he saw fresh deer droppings. He wanted to whistle. Will knew this was his lucky day. *Oh yeah*, he'd make the others eat their words. For four years, he had endured their mostly good-natured teasing, but not this year. The deer were close, the droppings moist and black, like giant currants. Shouldering his Winchester, he moved through the brilliant, red oak. He'd lost sight of Gabriel, but he wasn't worried. Gabe's a seasoned hunter. Will was definitely the new kid on the block. Teresa had come with Will the last two seasons, and he'd spent more time in the RV making love to his wife than he had hunting with the guys. They had been married for five years, but sometimes Will still felt like a newly-wed. Even when Teresa was nine months pregnant, she still turned him on. Then he saw the buck and he stopped dead.

Holy Shit, it must have six points. Will realized he was holding his breath, and he exhaled slowly, willing himself to move. Methodically, he dropped to one knee and even more slowly raised the rifle to his shoulder. Even through his insulated slacks, the ground under his knee felt cold, and the steel of the rifle against his cheek, was colder still. The buck stood there in the clearing, statuesque, powerful. The luminous eyes were alert, the nostrils flared, as if it were attempting to catch a scent, Will's scent. But Will was too canny for that. He had approached the buck from down-wind. They both remained motionless for a moment, fixed by uncertainty, locked in indecision. Will peered through the scope, cradling the rifle on his shoulder. *Almost like I cradle Danny*, he thought. *Focus, concentrate*. Taking a breath, he released it and gently pulled the trigger. The 30-06 bucked, the report echoed down the valley, his shoulder ached, he stared in disbelief. The buck was gone; it had evaporated like the morning mist. He hadn't even seen it move, but it was gone, and he had missed.

•••

What a beautiful morning. She'd have just enough time for a hike before she drove to work. It wouldn't be long before she'd be donning snowshoes, not hiking boots; she'd better take advantage of the good weather while she could. As Gayle tugged on her favorite blue jeans, she thought about the rifle shots she had heard at dawn this morning. Well, no matter it was almost 10:00 a.m., the hunters wouldn't be out now. Besides, she had seen Roger put both orange vests in his truck after they

hiked the canyon last weekend, so she couldn't wear one anyway. Gayle threw on a sweater, and grabbing a water bottle out of the fridge, headed for the door. She'd have to hurry, if she was going to have time to shower before driving the thirty miles into town. Sometimes living in Sargents was inconvenient, but days like this made up for it. Gayle couldn't pass up that blue sky. Grabbing a ball-cap out of the closet, she shut the porch door behind her.

•••

Damn. To make matters worse, Gabe had seen the shot. Will saw him emerge through a gap in the trees. Gabe sauntered toward him, grinning like a Cheshire. Naturally, it had to be Gabe, the one with the most kills. Will cringed. *Shit*, he'd never live it down. Color rose to his cheeks.

"Now, how in the holy hell did you miss that one?"

Having no excuse, and realizing, that in fact, no reply was expected, Will shrugged his shoulders and fell in step with Gabe. He knew that when they returned to camp, his miss would be the main topic of conversation. He'd hear about it when they went to the Tomichi for drinks after lunch, and then again tonight, when they had dinner in the RV. Gabe was an excellent marksman, a fantastic woodsman, but as a human being, he was a bit of an asshole. Will recalled the last time Gabe witnessed one of his hunting mishaps.

"I think you'd do better in Gunni, Will. You should stick to hunting two-legged split-tail deer." Gabe had sniggered and clapped Will on the back. It didn't really matter that Will was a relatively new hunter, or that he and Teresa were happily married; Gabe's comment was typical of his crude sense of humor. Attempting to delay his inevitable embarrassment, Will checked his watch and decided to try again.

"You know, it's only 10:00. I'm gonna head up Dad's Saddle and backtrack to camp. Maybe I'll spot some deer on the ridge."

"Suit, yourself" Gabe drawled. "The way you shoot, you'll have better luck shooting your wad, than you will a deer." Gabe chuckled as he walked toward the old ranger station where they were camped.

•••

Gayle clamored over the rocks, on the washed-out jeep trail. The incline was abrupt; she felt a delicious burn in her calves and an ache in her thighs. Gayle was breathing hard, but not too hard. After all, she didn't hit the gym four days a week for nothing. Thinking about what she had to do today, she realized that it was Tuesday and on Tuesday afternoons she always met M.J. for coffee. Except for Roger, M.J. was her best friend. Although, being the quintessential pessimist, M.J. did have a tendency to whine a lot. She would go on, and on, about her newest relationship, her kids, her job, or her co-workers and how inadequate they all were. M.J. could make Shakespeare's shrew seem complaisant; however, Gayle was a good lis-

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tener. Gayle thought, when I'm in a bitchy mood, Roger always says, *would you like a little cheese with that whine?* It would make her laugh every time, and she would forget what she was complaining about.

As she walked, she heard the chipmunks twitter a warning. The Indian summer had been prolonged this year; frost had covered the ground only a half dozen times or so. She noticed the moon was still up, even though it was mid morning, a full moon. What was it Roger always called it? *A Hunter's Moon, yes that was it.* There was a moon just like that, that night two years ago, when Roger had asked her to marry him. They had driven up to their favorite place on Baldy Mountain. Roger had everything planned perfectly. The rose, the ring set daintily in the small, pink cowboy-hat-shaped box, he had even been playing a CD by Kenny Gee. Gayle smiled, distracted, she stumbled on a root that erupted through the stony soil. Laughing, she regained her footing and debated how much further she would go. *I'll go as far as the crest of Dad's Saddle,* she thought. *That will still give me time to be at work by noon.*

Will walked steadily up the hill. Discouraged by his first miss, he was determined to bring something down with his next shot. Starting to sweat, he was tempted to pull off his orange hat and douse his head with the water from his canteen. He had dressed for the 4:00 a. m. departure and was finding the layers of clothing cumbersome and uncomfortable. The Cherokee hiking boots he wore became heavier with each step. Will became nervous and agitated; the day had been spoiled for him. Anxiously, he wondered if

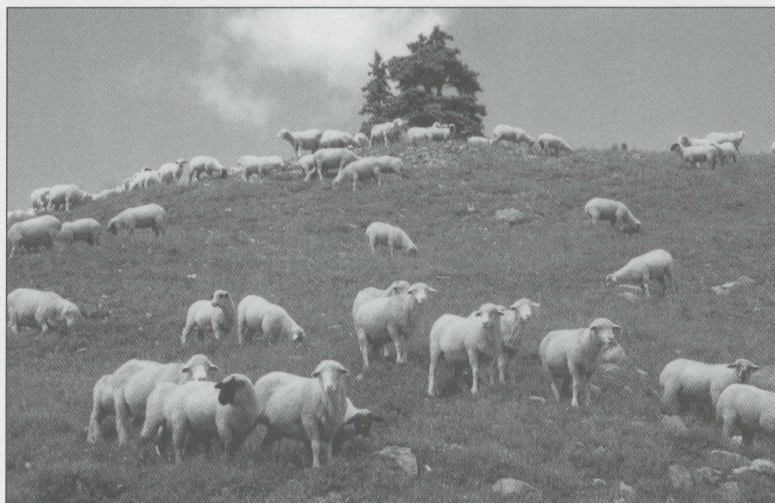
his present state of mind could be attributed to "Buck Fever." He had heard the others joke about it, but he always thought they were pulling his leg. Suddenly, on the rise he saw something move in the trees. Swinging the rifle up to his shoulder, he glanced through the scope, and snapped the trigger. Something fell.

• • •

Gayle lay face up. A small dime-sized, crimson blur marked the bullet's passage through her chest. Will crouched down, touching her lightly, feeling her neck for a pulse. A dark pool bubbled up, as if seeping from the ground beneath her. The scarlet shadow which saturated the grass around her body threatened to envelope Will. He withdrew, rocked back on his heels, lost his balance, and sat down violently. Although a scream convulsed his throat, his vocal chords refused to cooperate. Like some mutant crab, he crawled backwards, mindless of the jagged rocks that pierced his hands. Will stopped several feet away, lowering his head; he wrapped his arms around his knees and swayed to the manic beating of his heart. His rifle lay next to her, where it had fallen.

• • •

Will returned to camp, three hours later, rifle in hand. He looked unkempt and disheveled. His clothing was torn and dirty, his fingernails encrusted with dirt. The palms of his hands were raw and bleeding; his countenance, as dark as his attire. He said little; the group assumed he'd fallen on the hunt. Normally, he would have been ridiculed for returning empty handed but something in his manner discouraged his companions from commenting, all except for Gabe. Looking slyly at William, he said, "I told ya, you ought to stick to hunting two-legged split-tail deer." ■



Judy Cox

Poetry of Peace & Serenity

By Nancy Vogel's 4th Grade Class of 2007-2008 - Crested Butte Community School

The Way We Are

By Erika Bremer

Music is playing
That soft tune in my cold body,
Vivaldi is on,
Flowers are so grand,
Every color and sizes
Flowers are peaceful
Your hand touches mine,
Our friendship sways in the air
Friendship is today,
We pray to heaven,
My hands are touching your heart,
The Gods hear us all,
We are all different,
Loving and tall some are small,
We are grateful now.

Haiku

By Alex Deer

Peace is my best friend
Peace can stop horrible war
Peace can save some kids

By Ansley Potoker

Snow is fluffy and white
Snowflakes landing on my face
Playing in powder

The sun is shining
Happy music roams the air
Friends come together

Nancy Vogel's fourth grade class at Crested Butte Community School has a sister school in Afghanistan. As a gift to their new school, they created a book of haikus and poetry to spread feelings of peace and serenity. These are from their work. • Bob Wojtko retired from IBM, where he was the System Programmer for the DOD Satellite Surveillance Program, to devote full time to his videography business, Third Eye Productions. He is active with volunteer work, XC skiing and fishing, and also teaches Ballroom Dancing and Personal Computers.



Bob Wojtko



George Sibley

Into the Middle Place

By Judy Cox

I am in cave space
Slipping slowly under
Still water which rises
From the hot eye of the earth.

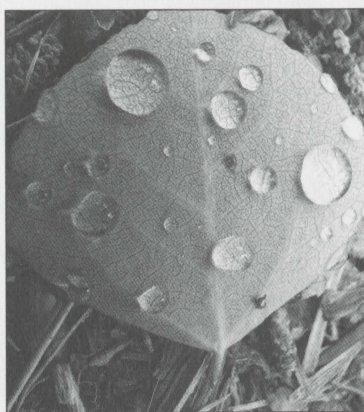
Silence and sage pure aromas
As ancestors' toes slide
Close to mine.
A pavant
Shared by all tribes,
The middle place of the heart.

I see my grandfather's hand
Reaching down to me
In the moist travertine rock,
His fingers and knuckles,
His beautiful bones
Full of remembrances
Of love between us.

The hand that reached for me
In rescue from the clothesline pole.
The hand holding the fan of cards
As we played canasta.
These old fingers embrace
My tender hand leading me
Into my own heart ...

With the same ancient wisdom
Of all my grandfathers
Who walked on
The crust of our Mother
And bathed in her mystical waters.

*In memory of my grandfather,
Gamp Herbert Franklin Slaughter*



Matt Burt

Mariposa Lily, *Calochortus Gunnisonii*

By David Rothman

Emily said they were out above the caves,
Thousands of them in this delicious spring
When the rains returned and so I went to see,
Up Cement Creek, then left on Walrod,
Left again on the singletrack into that high meadow.
I was seeking with my hungry eye
My favorite flower, rare and then abundant
Briefly o so briefly in these mountains:
Three big, bright white petals in a tight cup
Standing on a long, green slender stem,
Like a grass with a bomb on top.
A broad band of neon yellow fuzz fringes
An elliptically shaped glandular structure
Near the base of each petal,
All of it framing the stamens,
Their elegant tripartite purple sex.
But I had waited too long,
Stormy monsoon afternoons, work,
Chores, children, life intervening,
And that great hillside was already drifting,
Despite soaker rains, into its summer fading,
Grasses heavy with seed and tall,
The fields of sunflowers rustling, petals gone,
Dry, already turning back towards sleep.
A few dozen laggard lilies still stood here and there,
The ten thousand others gone as if they never existed,
Perhaps another seven years until they return like that.
And I missed it, my favorite flower, I was late,
So that now like ancient children alone in their cave,
Muttering in their hunger to try to appease it
By making the sounds that they would make if eating,
If only there were food, if only there were food,
Until that inarticulate moaning rose into words
And became prayers and paintings of the hunt,
I can only sit and say again and again,
As I gaze into a fire stoked with clocks:
Mariposa Lily, Mariposa Lily, Mariposa Lily.

David J. Rothman has lived in Crested Butte for most of the last 15 years; he now spends much of the year near Boulder where he teaches writing at the University of Colorado. He was a co-founder of the Crested Butte Music Festival, the Headmaster of Crested Butte Academy for six years, and has taught at Western State College. He has been a finalist for the Colorado Book Award and his writing appears widely.

Marcie Telander is a long-time Valley resident, psychotherapist and celebration artist. She lives on a secret island between the East River, a trout stream and Cement Creek. She has taught and performed her poetry throughout the U.S., Canada, Ireland and Italy. She writes to protect, and continue living under the protection of, the Red Lady.

December Sauna

By Marcie Telander

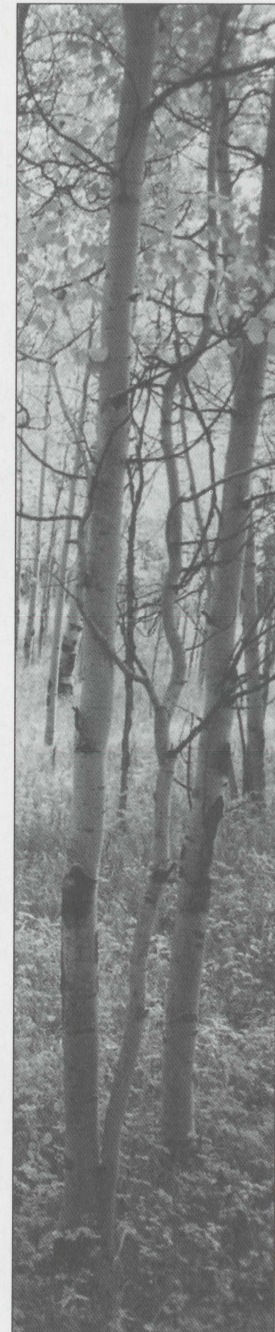
You—
arising from the snowbound stream
like a willow, encased
in taut winter skin.
This other skin frozen into an arctic gown
or a shroud
floating
over pink naked flesh.

Opening your mouth
ice-slicked, crystallized curls thrown back
through wreathes of breath,
screaming: "HOOOOOYAH!"
Your steaming newborn self—
sauna-birtherd
out of December's gestation.

You—
plunging into
water so cold
could not, at first, separate
bones and blood from
its zeroed embrace.
Heart pausing, poised
tremulous, uncertain—hot human
magma coagulating in its cage
of stunned ribs, flash-frozen,
turning into frigid fire.

You—
slim, white sword unsheathed
being tempered through
glacial baptism,
leaden thudding,
chill, creeping mercury that
heart and blood
could so easily become.

You—
vaulting up through frigid scrim
of ice,
screaming your silver breath,
the last heat
human furnace and bellows release.



John Nelson

Frozen Delight

By Betty Light

A snowflake,
a frozen design,
fragile as life
melts as it touches
my hand.

Millions float down,
no two like,
and deposit themselves
in a snowbank.

After a while
the beauty is not noticed.
I shovel the driveway.

COWS

By Sanda Karas

The road to town winds
down through green fields.
White and brown cows
swing heavy heads
in slow disinterest.
In the passenger seat,
your feet in pink sandals
don't reach the floor. At
four, you find the world
full of wonders. "Why,"
you ask, "does one cow climb
on the back of the other one?"

The time is now, I vow,
though it seems too soon.
Sweat beads on my forehead—
my heart drums: "The boy cow
puts a seed in the girl cow
and a baby grows." I pause.
You look out the window.
We're nearly to town.
In the pink shoes, you
kick your feet up and down.
You speak: "Can we get
an ice cream?"



Rick Barton

Sanda Karas has returned to Gunnison after eight years in exile. Each day spent in this paradise fills her with awe and gratitude. • Betty Light has been a Gunnison Valley poet since 1942 and is the author of a poetry collection, "Light Reflections." When not golfing, traveling or hosting relatives, she can be found volunteering for any number of area non-profits.

The Curse of the Utes

By Greg Pettys

The high school I attended had a special program for graduating seniors. There was an office near the deans' office that was reserved for researching colleges and we were allowed to use this office at any time. I took full advantage of the fact that this program meant we could basically skip class whenever we wanted and found myself becoming quite fond of the deans I had never known till this program came about.

There was another wonderful aspect of this program that allowed seniors to take a total of four days off from school in order to visit a potential future alma mater. One day, while I was goofing off, missing a chemistry exam, a friend of mine who was actually utilizing the materials provided for research came across a college in Western Colorado that gave free ski passes for the nearby ski mountain to prospective students who toured their campus. Upon hearing this, I was on the road out of central Illinois headed towards Gunnison, Colorado less than a week later. The rest, as they say, is history.

There was never a struggle for me to be in the Gunnison Valley. In fact, it has often been more of a struggle to NOT be here, as if the ancient curse some say was placed on the white man by the Ute people has made it impossible for me to leave. From time to time I depart this massive snow globe, for good I usually claim, only to return again, often in the dead of winter, to the same job, same home, same faces, same conversation.

Over the years I have lived in Hawaii, Tibet, Costa Rica, and many other places in segue. For various reasons I have tried to convince myself that I have some place other than the Gunnison Valley to be, a place with more diversity, more sun, more girls. Yet some inner magnet, or ancient Ute curse, continually brings me back to the High Country for more freezing winters, never-ending conversations about skiing and climbing, and lengthy periods of time without the comforts of a female other.

I used to resent this. I have, as previously stated, left "for good" more times now than I can remember. Yet over the years I have come to grips with the reality of who I am and what community I belong within. I am a mountain person. Unlike the increasing population here of people who purchase homes simply because they can, or vacation here because it is the chic thing to do, I am here because I have to be, because something deep inside my soul demands I reside here, that I learn, grow, share, and occasionally love here. I am a member of the increasingly hard-to-find tribe of mountain freaks that are pulled towards inhospitable climates by some auspicious force they do not understand yet eventually surrender to, with joy.

My need to explore will continue. The Gunnison Valley has served as, and will continue to serve as, a training ground for further adventure. But as the days, months, and years go by, and I find myself increasingly connected to this valley, I have no intentions any longer of permanently leaving. I may take a sabbatical for a few months here and there, even years at a time occasionally in order to pursue my soul's longings, but I have come to grips with the fact that these sacred peaks are my spirit's temples, these thick-skinned Carhart-wearing snow fiends are my closest family. As long as I live this valley will be my home, and my P.O. Box, no matter where my physical body may reside, will forever remain inside a humble post office in the heart and center of Elk Avenue.



Rick Barton

Trey Percival likes to play baseball and other sports; in the summer he also shows pigs and rides horses, and he likes to write and draw.

The Incredible Sight

By Trey Percival

I've had two really great experiences with two giant bull elk. It was very cool. One day mom and dad said, "We are going to the cabin." So my sister and I started packing and loading the 4-wheelers. Then we drove to Powderhorn and stopped at Tim Lamen's house to unload the 4-wheelers. We drove for another hour and when we got there we decided we'd take a walk. When we popped up over a hill I saw a big six point bull elk eating in the meadow! It was such a cool feeling to be so close to a bull elk that big. Watching him eat and the way he walked and bugled was amazing. Every 30 seconds he would take a few more steps then he would grab the grass with his front teeth. Then he would chew it really slowly. Then he would bugle. It started out really low and got higher at the end. But after a little bit he smelled us and made a mad dash to the trees. And that was one of the coolest experiences of my life. And I think he got shot by a hunter because at hunting camp we saw a bull just like him go by in a truck.

We went back to the cabin this year. We were hunting in Monument Rock Creek. It was Dad, Uncle Lany, Tyler, my cousin and me. We stopped and sat under a tree, and after a while a cow walked out. Then a four-point bull and a giant six-point bull elk walked out of the trees! It was by far the biggest bull elk I had ever seen. He was standing 350 yards away! I wish time would've stopped right there. My heart was beating faster than the rain drop falling on the roof or your car. We watched him for 30 minutes, but it felt like 3 seconds. When Uncle Lany finally shot he was half-way in the trees. And he got away. When we got up and walked over there, I asked Dad what he would score. He said 330, but I think he was 340. And that was by far the coolest, most exciting moment of my life.

Every time we go up there, I ask dad if we can look for elk at Monument Rock Creek. I always think I'm going to see him, but I never have seen him again. I'm going to find him again someday, and when I do, I am going to take a lot of pictures. I get to go to hunting camp again this year, and I hope I see him.

Kim Eastman is a Gunnison native who has left the area at times, but always returns and is now here until she gets to "sissy" to handle the snow and cold. • Marta J. Coleman (Jody) grew up in Gunnison. She has taught secondary language arts for 28 years in the U.S. and Europe, and returned to Gunnison in 1992 to teach at her alma mater, Gunnison High School. She is also self-employed as an independent researcher.

In Memory of Trees

By Kim Eastman

There was a massacre in a heavily wooded forest
Though no one heard the screams
Or saw the aged bodies as they fell
No stories were told of this tragic deed
No tears shed for the lives lost
No monument built in memory
Now, only the rain washes over the bones
Grey with age, decay, and neglect
No one stood trial, no amends were made, no
Sentence handed down to punish this wrong
They simply killed and left the bodies to rot
They simply killed and left

St. Peter's Parking Alp

(A Parody of Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening")

By Dr. Jody Coleman

Whose alp this is, I think I know.
His heavenly home many would bode.
He surely *will* see me here,
Waxing my board, my feet in snow.

City 'dozers must think it queer,
To see a young boarder standing here,
Begging, pleading, for a ride,
Atop St. Peter's snow-piled pier.

"A nickel? A dime? I'll pay to ride!
I'll take a lift atop your hide."
The loudly coughing stench of smoke
Is puffing diesel from a dozer-wide.

Oh, St. Peter! I'm a wily bloke;
I need to ski your man-made slope.
But only if the angels cope
With all my silliness at your slope.



Virginia Jones

The Old Hands

By John Nelson

We were raw and we were limber,
exuberant in our youth.
Never a thought for the day that'd come
when we'd be long in the tooth.

How we savored that wild country,
take in all that we could swallow.
We'd dive and roll into the heart of it
like young mules in a wallow.

We were living in the moment, but
a moment long time prior,
only twenty miles but a hundred years
from the telephones and wire.

And, we looked up to the "old hands"
who knew it better than we.
They who rode it in a wilder time,
hardened, skilled and free.

But we'd tease them about slowing down.
How their old bones held us back.
But they'd somehow always last the day.
Then pick up all our slack.

They'd smile and overlook our swagger
and our cocky way of going.
We were reined in with deft handle.
They had a way of knowing.

In time we absorbed their demeanor
and wisdom came with age.
And the "old hands" in their own way,
were each a learned sage.

But, another "old hand" died today,
Another good man down.
It almost seems there's a funeral
every time I go to town.

My peers and friends each gathered there,
hat in hand with pallid brow.
I'm overcome with the realization
that we are the "old hands" now.

I peer into a friend's eyes, musing,
"Damn, you're an old s.o.b."
His laugh betrays what we both know.
He's two years younger than me.

I think back on our "good ol' days".
How time slipped by somehow.
The awareness of this burden shocks,
Yes, we are the "old hands" now!

Hell, we never thought we'd live this long.
They should shoot us if we did.
Those memories barely lantern lit
from the days when we's a kid.

Of the challenge of those long hard rides
and high-spirits born of youth.
The hidden passion of the "old hands"
of which now we know the truth.

Of those good men of strength and honor
and the gifts they gave to me.
Of their trail blazed with just, kind acts
that they rode so readily.

No, they weren't right each and every time,
but they mostly tried to be.
And they taught to be true to ourselves
with a dose of humility.

And, we were taught to handle hardships
with eyes fixed t'ward the sky.
The "old hands" would shun our sympathy.
Part of living is to die.

Now it's time to get my head back up
and to wipe away this frown.
There are young ones looking up to me.
I don't want to let them down.

"Whatever goes around, comes around,"
so the pundits sometimes say.
I pray now that we have what it takes
for what comes around today.

God, grant us the strength and dignity
to accept what you endow.
Make us worthy of our legacy.
For we are the "old hands" now.

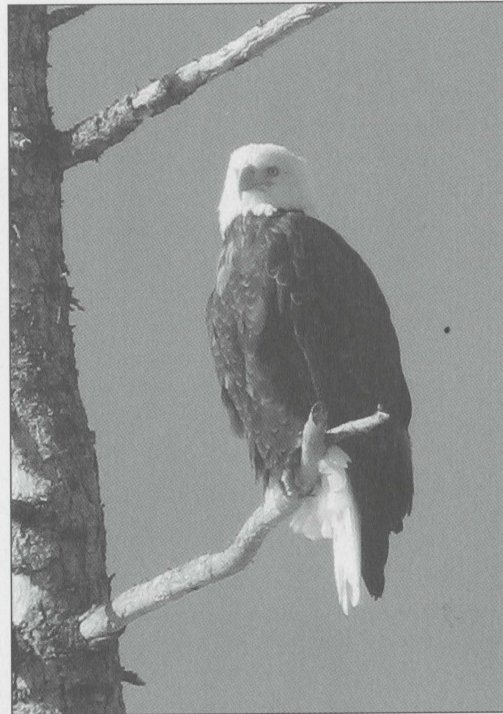
John Nelson is a legend in his own mind. He has been a wilderness horse packer, guide and outfitter since Fossil Ridge was a seashore.

K.K. Roeder grew up in Hawaii and attended Williams College and the Iowa Writers Workshop; she has taught English literature to college and high school students, but somehow retained her sanity. She now lives in Crested Butte where she reads books for a living and tells other people what to think about them; she is also writing a novel about the ski troopers of World War II. She hosts a Hawaiian music show for KBUT Community Radio, and in the summertime, waters the flowers on Elk Avenue. She is not tubercular.

Ravens

By K.K. Roeder

They spool up from the canopy, swoon
 unglued, flex up again, suck in,
 spin free. The trees fade.
 Committed to the vast glare
 between them, black acrobats loosed
 from the swing,
 belly-kissing, gaining gravity;
 they could pull each other apart, up there;
 could tear wings off trying.



Rick Barton

What We Should Have Known

By K.K. Roeder



George Sibley

It is not the slow white egret picking in the reeds
 but the light fanning her blank white mantle
 that is cruel. Neither her scissor-like beak
 nor arrow-like feet
 so help me God.
 On an afternoon like this
 so much is mistaken: the depth of water
 for the length of her leg,
 the jay who can mimic the hawk's keening,
 the egret's pale eye like the sheen of a soul
 untried, white moss on a body long dead.
 She jabs the careless silver minnows.
 Lone cumuli darken the marsh
 in patches, palm prints.
 A tree frog wracks,
 and somewhere in this cast gathered to the water
 like a family to a wake,
 like grief inside the family,
 is something we can't see yet,
 dusk under her throat,
 the jay stealing the hawk's preying.

Flight of Fancy

By Jeanne Wisniewski

Aerial dancing with
Sandhill Cranes
waltzing in the sky.

Swoop and swirl
touching wing tips
flirting as I fly by.

Break away
catch a thermal.
Rise, rise, rise.
Dive toward the treetops, then
slow down,
gently as maple seeds
settling on the ground.

Two Jays

By K.K. Roeder

Steller's Jays walk the wooden beams above.
Black crested, jags of sudden flight.
In morning haze, triangle silhouettes muted,
paired in leaps across separate trees,
their cries are the only sharpness,
throaty, bigger than the light.
This sadness can only go so far,
light straining against shape,
calling making present
more than the half seen.



Rick Barton



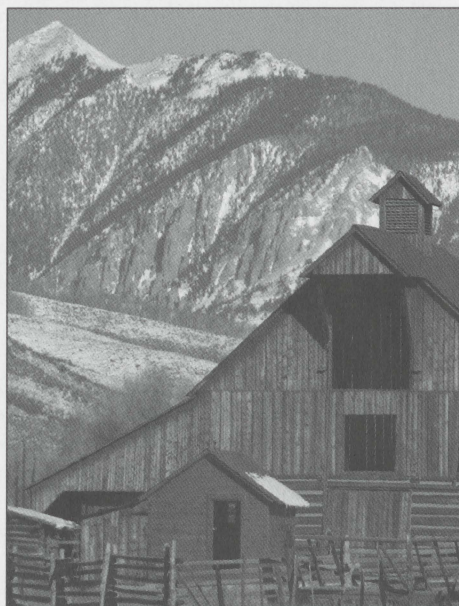
Noreen Horvitz

Jeanne Wisniewski came to Gunnison Country with the US Forest Service; she has been writing poetry on bits of scrap paper for years and finally took Mark Todd's Creative Writing Class to hone her skills.

Sunset over Mt. Beckwith

By Avery Forsythe

We are there.
 To the absolutely amazing place
 I have been waiting for.
 We pull the car over,
 I hop out first.
 The perfume of
 pine trees,
 mud,
 a distant river,
 reaches my soul.
 The grass children
 tickle my legs.
 I dance up the wave of the hill
 just in time
 to see the mountain
 swallow the day light.
 The sky turns
 to faint pastel colors,
 peach,
 violet,
 pale yellow,
 and baby blue.
 The flowers dance for joy
 at the remarkable sight,
 open up
 to get the last drop of light.
 As my family jokes and laughs,
 I know I have an extraordinary
 family,
 and I live in an extraordinary
 place.



Rick Barton

Ridge Line

By Shelley Read

Have you ever read the distant ridge line
 By crawling over each rock and tree
 with the spider of your eyes?
 The creep cannot out-pace the courage of attention
 or suddenly you are tumbling down the other side
 without having lingered on the very particular way
 the angles meet to form the peak,
 without having accepted the invitation
 to participate in the miraculous ache of time.

Somehow I had forgotten that love could be like this.
 That the landscape of the interior is steep,
 prone to rock slides that change everything,
 crash down to shout out there is no deliverance,
 not in this world anyway, not here where
 someone else can inhabit the body you once touched,
 not here in the heart's ragged crags where
 the timid dare not crouch exposed for too long.

When you start up the ridge, each bump and twist
 seems so sharp and meaningful against the sky,
 mesmerizing, mysterious, worth all pursuit.
 The trick, of course, is to stay with it,
 over boulder and crevasse and monotony of scree,
 to love what's before you enough
 to see clearly to the last.

Avery Forsythe is a writer and artist who also loves to dance, travel, read, and romp through the woods with her little brother. She is Shelley Read's daughter.

All these poems were written by fourth graders in Sarah Block's class at the Crested Butte Community School, part of a "River of Words" workshop with Shelley Read.

Storm Hold

By Sol Chase

A storm
Is building
In the distance.
Whiterock Mountain
Rises vertically
Like a huge tidal wave.
The air smells sweet
And fresh.
A green hillside
Slopes down
To my left.
It is velvet.
A large boulder
Looks like a giant's foot.
I see a pathway
That leads down
The velvet hillside.
To my right,
a rock field slopes steeply.
I hear thunder gathering
Far away.
Below the rock field,
A clear blue lake
Twinkles like pixie dust.
A winding river
Leads to a hot springs
Down
In the valley.
A small forest
Blankets the earth below me.

I am king
Of the world.
It feels like
I could stand here
Forever.
But I must go,
So I turn away from Triangle Pass
And descend.

The Funnel

By Justin Smith

The moguls in front of me
Are as exciting as the pirates fighting in my mind.
The wind is as chilly as the ice
Hanging from the roof of my life.
I can feel my poles punching the snow,
smack,
smack,
smack.
I can hear the wind going back and forth
Like crab claws snapping.

Ducky Pond

By Ella Donovan

I lay still and silent,
My face presses on the lush green grass.
The sun floats through golden leaves
Of tall peaceful aspens
Like a soft sheet of velvet
Floating down from above to warm me.
I see a pond shaped like a duck
With a small island in the middle.
The island is a foot stool,
And the water is the long folded gown
Of a princess stepping up to be seen.
I wade barefoot
Through the shallow water.
The pebbles tickle my feet.
I sit on the island,
I am Mother Nature herself.
She pulls me toward her.
My face flops against a wet bed of moss.
It has made a soft, comforting place
For anything tired
To rest her head upon.
I am glued,
Glued to the sound
Of gently rippling water and
The lush green grass against my skin.
I am glued
To the duck-shaped pond
With the sun that floats through golden leaves
Of tall peaceful aspens
Like a soft sheet of velvet
Floating down from above to warm me.
I lay still and silent,
My face presses on the lush green grass.

Ella Donovan rarely stops dancing, but when she does, she also loves horses, gymnastics, reading, and playing the piano. Sol Chase is a rockin' musician who also loves to ski, travel, read, and laugh a lot. Justin Smith's bio: Justin Smith is 10 years old, in Mrs. Block's fourth grade class at Crested Butte Community School. He likes reading, if it is a good book, and also likes soccer, baseball, skiing, hockey and eating pasta!

Hugh McGee is best known for his environmental "trash" poetry, but he is also a serious poet. A former Gunnison resident, he now lives in Sequim, Washington, but keeps valley people up on his poetic works. • Marlene Wright Zanetell is a former GHS teacher and two-term Gunnison County Commissioner who continues to work with others to protect the Gunnison River Basin from Front Range water raiders.



Joe Waggoner

Gunnison Lek To and Fro

(For Sue Navy)

By Marlene Wright Zanetell

If Grouse know
then so must I
where to come and from.

A call from the lek
at the crack of dawn
will tell me when
to dance through dampened sage
toward the Gunnison;
when to prance and part
my feathered legs,
to scratch and peck
and grunt and give
my speckled eggs.

Time will tell me
when to go,
astride a sliver slice
of the new moon,
guiding me away.

Gunnison Country

By Hugh McGee

Where does the air breathe sweet as wine?
Gunnison Country—that's where!
Where are the days almost always fine?
Gunnison Country—that's where!

Where do the people smile a hello?
Gunnison Country—that's where!
Where is a place you need to go?
Gunnison Country—that's where!

Where does the sun shine almost every day?
Gunnison Country—that's where!
Where is the best place to work and to play?
Gunnison Country—that's where!

Commentary

By Maryo Ewell

Sometimes Easter and Earth Day come in the same weekend, which seems as it should be, and it inspires reflection.

I use Easter weekend as the time when I really try to reflect on what I do – for my work (community arts development) and my life. Snowing or not, I try to spend the weekend in the garden, repairing winter's ravages, turning the compost pile, fretting about water, marveling that the tulips made it through another winter. In taking care of my little yard, it's a good time to act out my belief in this planet's goodness and my responsibility to it. And a time to reaffirm promises to people I care about. I always read T.S. Eliot's *The Four Quartets* on Easter, too: "...for us, there is only the trying/ The rest is not our business."

A few thoughts from the garden: you think about grass roots a lot as you try to dig up turf, trying to limit the almost appalling amount of grass you are supposed to take care of. Reminded of the interconnectedness of these tiny little roots which make an almost immovable mass. You remember that the community arts movement is aptly named "grassroots arts." A person's arts. People's arts. Peoples' arts. The interconnectedness of neighbors whose community cannot, must not, be dominated by outside forces, economic or artistic. You remember how important it is to talk about your community, creatively, uniquely.

You think about how your garden nurtures your stomach, delights your eyes, returns a little oxygen to the atmosphere – for everyone. You think about community arts, which you have dedicated your life to, and you think how community arts is like that, spiritually, for community arts nurture the spirit, delight the mind, return a little identity to the community.

And then you think about Earth Day and you realize that the work of community arts people and environmental workers is very similar – both

about ensuring life, which may be why so many community arts organizations aggressively celebrate Earth Day.

And at the same time you remember a friend who likened your profession to that of the ministry, caring for the soul.

And that makes you reflect on the Easter service, at which one prayer is for the well-being of the community where you live; and also "for the good earth...and the wisdom and will to conserve it."

And you liken that service to a piece of community art, one which celebrates that community, in which everyone participates, in which a shared ritual is passed on from generation to generation, in which the language is poetry and the music is stirring, in which everyone sings whether they are on key or not, just because that service says something about who they are.

And you think about the Sonofagunn at the Arts Center, and how it dares to try and ask the Big Questions about your community, and you thank the Gunnison Arts Center for having the courage to let the community ask itself these questions, and you realize that this courage is one of the things that makes the Gunnison Arts Center stand out from so many arts groups nationwide. And you think about your own agency, the Colorado Council on the Arts, and what it has tried to stand for, and you realize that whatever happens, the commitment of community arts people is bigger than that of any agency – it is about the interconnectedness of those grass-roots, that just won't let anyone cut through them. Organizations come and go. The grass-roots are always there.

Easter. Earth Day. Recommitting yourself to your place and your people.

Saying, "This is who we are. This is creatively saying who we are. No one else can say it like this. This is why we matter." ■

Melissa Lundebly is a student at Gunnison High School, active in the choir program and basketball; she also takes part in Gunnison Art Center productions, and really enjoys being a active part of the art around Gunnison.



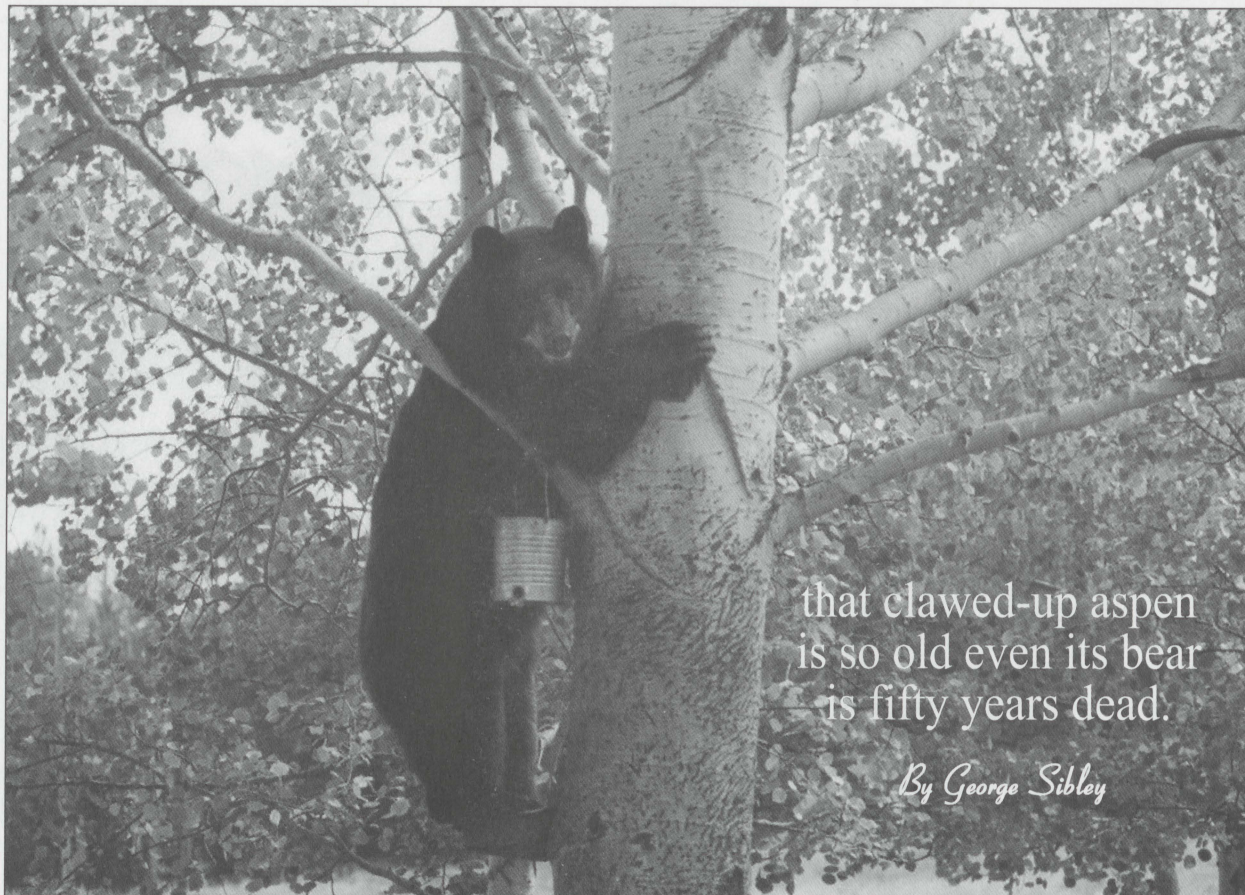
Jackie De Vore

Songs of the Heart

By Melissa Lundebly

my heart sings a song of
love
hate
and despair
I don't show it
so why should you care
listen to the beats of my
heart
it pounds faster
every time your hand touches
my cheek
and you pull me in close
press our bodies together
and lean in for the perfect kiss
your love keeps me warm
from sitting in front of the fire
last night
that's why I don't think I could live
without you
and that's how much you make my heart sing
and if you think it's wrong

then I'll learn to sing a different song



that clawed-up aspen
is so old even its bear
is fifty years dead.

By George Sibley

Noreen Horwitz photo

Meditation Retreat

By Sherrill Stenson

What am I doing here?
Sitting like a rock, on my ass for hours?
Trying to remember what I already know.

Listening to other experts
Sitting on their asses for hours
Trying to remember what they already know.

Suddenly, I feel stupid
Trying to remember what I already know.

The River In Winter

By Betty Light

Jewels edge the river,
icy sparkles on the snow.
This cold and brittle beauty
highlights water's flow.

Shore trees cloaked in ermine
show a dismal scene,
Till stooping boughs are cheered up
by the river in-between.

We mustn't miss a second
of winter's brilliant dream.
We have to freeze the image
or it will flow downstream.

Activities in Gunnison and the Surrounding Terrain

By Katherine C. Ketcham

My family, friends, and I love to recreate in the Gunnison area. My friend Susanna and I enjoy going horseback riding. We take turns riding her horse, Baby. We normally ride at Lost Miner Ranch, which is east of Gunnison. I once went horseback riding at Fantasy Ranch which is in Crested Butte. I rode up in the hills above Gothic.

My mom, dad, and brother, Derek, and my cousins, Olivia, Lea, and Clem, all went cliff jumping at Blue Mesa, which is west of Gunnison. Olivia and I stayed in the water the whole time, except when we got out to jump in. My dad and I liked to ride the waves the boats make. The waves would swallow me whole! I would have to swim to the surface.

Another fun activity is rafting on the Gunnison River which of course is in Gunnison. I love it when the rushing water is bringing me down the river. The faster the better, I always say!

Dad, Derek, and I go prairie dog hunting! "Prairie dogs are cute when they are dead!" Derek says and I have to agree.

My whole family – mostly dad, Derek and I – go target shooting. If I shoot well that weekend on a target, I bring the target home and put it on the wall. If the target is bad, I put it in my scrapbook. I go shooting at the Sportsman's Association, which is outside Gunnison. It is fun to shoot a gun!

Only my brother goes rock climbing. Derek always says, "Let's go! I want to do the Wormhole! It is very challenging! Let's go! Come on!" Derek climbs all over Gunnison.

We all love to hike. Derek and I have survival kits that have three ways to make a fire, a knife, extra food and so on. We bring so much water! I never get lost! Every one goes slow for Derek, but I don't! But I will from now on, I once saw a mountain lion while I was waiting for every one! I wasn't afraid because I had my dog Jade. We hike everywhere! I don't know where most of the time! My dad makes me find the way back and I always do!

Hunting for antler sheds is lots of fun too. Last year I only found a really small shed. It had three points and was the size of my palm. I once found this huge one when I was not looking. So that is my best strategy.

Mom, Derek, and I go bike riding at Hartman Rocks, which is in Gunnison. Our favorite run is the Luge. Derek hates it when we go up hill and I hate it when I go down hill!

By now you probably think I only do summer stuff. But you're wrong! Dad, mom, Derek and I love to ski. Derek is eight and braver than me! We have skied Rambo, which is the steepest cut trail in North America! Our favorite runs are the extremes! The snow in Crested Butte was sweet! If you have not skied there, you have to next year!

Why you may ask, why do we do this? We do these activities because it's fun and recreational. And those are the activities I do! ■



Barbara Norris

Katherine Ketcham is 11 years old, was born and raised in Gunnison, and is now in 5th grade at Gunnison Community School; she enjoys almost any outdoor activity including horseback riding, skiing, hunting, and shooting sports, as well as dance, swimming and basketball.

Limericks

By Barb Haas' 5th Grade Class of 2007-2008 - Gunnison Community School

By Quinn Travis

We survived the winter of '08
We thought it was just our fate
There was too much snow
And I saw my breath blow
Then spring came but it was too late

By Zoe Marshall

One time there was a wee little lad leprechaun
He said he was from Great Gunnison
He said it's been fun
But I really gotta run
So we never really knew about where he's from

By Mrs. Haas

'08's snow reached legendary height
We dreamed of skiing at night
Then shoveled all day
To get out the driveway
Maybe tomorrow the mountain we'll sight

By Jake Wallin

Gunnison folks love to mountain bike
They also love to go on a hike
The snow will not melt
So you'll need your seat belt
And it continues to snow every night

By Rebecca Quint

There was a girl named Jill
She went skiing on Cranor Hill
She had some skis
And fell to her knees
The thought of not skiing made her ill

By Crystal Lynam

We live in Gunnison today
And if we had to move, I'd say, "No way!"
We have things to do
Waiting for me and you
But, if you're gonna move here, come next May!

Ray Van Tuyl – In the Movies

By Tracey Coleman

Raymond Porter Van Tuyl, Gunnison Country Public Library benefactor and long time Gunnison Valley rancher, died in February 2008 at 98. The following is an excerpt from an oral history given by Van Tuyl who was born at Rainbow Ranch on Tomichi Creek in 1909 to Reed Porter Vantuyl and Annie Rouviere Van Tuyl, the second of five children. The Rouvieres were one of the area's earliest ranching families and Ray spent his life doing just that at five different ranches in the valley. The story also refers to Louie, Ray's younger brother, born on Ohio Creek in 1911 with whom Ray would work and ranch throughout his lifetime until Louie's death in 1982. This story was collected from January 10-February 8, 2008, then compiled, researched and written by Tracey Coleman.

An experience of great interest to Ray was his and Louie's involvement in film making. In the late Forties, the brothers were hired to provide, wrangle and care for stock to be used in *The Cariboo Trail* which was to be filmed in the Gunnison County. The film, a typical Hollywood western, starred Randolph Scott, a big time movie cowboy, who was nearing the end of his film career. Scott was born in 1898 in Virginia, a fact that amused Ray no end. (www.imdb.com)

Additionally, the great character actor, Gabby Hayes, played a large role. Ironically, Scott never made an appearance in the film in the Gunnison area; all the local footage was shot using his stunt men. The plot told a tale of a hard working and honest cattle drive boss who had been employed to transport a herd up the Cariboo Road in British Columbia, Canada to feed the hungry gold miners. Written by Frank Gruber and John Sturdy, the tale was classic and melodramatic. Scott, the hero, eventually butts heads with a sinister tycoon, played by Victor Jory. The scoundrel builds a toll bridge at the single ford across a creek, the only access to Cariboo Country, then charges exorbitant fees to all who desire to pass. Scott, of course, in the name of right and honor, refuses to pay and sets on a course to conquer the villain for the good of all.

Ray defined the plot as "kinda hokey," but he had different impressions altogether about the film crew and stunt men. He deemed them "crazy and dangerous." Directed by Edwin L. Mann, the action footage was filmed in several locations all around the Gunnison Country. "Some longhorns, 20 or so, were brought in by semi-truck from Salida to the first location where they filmed near Old Monarch Pass. "You know, longhorns have a

reputation for bein' kinda wild. There weren't fences up there and some men just dropped them cows off and I figured that they would just wander off and we would never be able to round them up again. But, after the filming was finished at that location, they called for a semi to come and move the cows. The film crew pulled all their vehicles, cars, trucks, and the backside of the semi into a circle and us cowboys drove the longhorns into the circle. Then, we spooked the longhorn into that semi and the semi then drove them over to the next location at Mill Creek." Ray and Louie walked their own stock to the location over the hills. Ray and Louie provided about thirty head of horses and some cows for the production.

"I don't think anybody had four wheel drive vehicles in this country in those days, so it was a real task to get the crew in and out of the Mill Creek location." Ray remembers often having to use their horses to pull the trucks and equipment up the hills in spots. "They also had a Cat (dozer) up there to help make the sets. I remember that Cat coming over the hill. I had never seen a thing like that before."

As Ray tells it, "The crew was only interested in getting as much footage as possible and would film all day as long as the light held." Ray remembers shooting some of the footage around a rickety bridge spanning Castle Creek. This was the infamous toll bridge the whole story was about. "Castle Creek was runnin' pretty good that year. The funny thing was that this bridge they built wasn't even a solid bridge. It scared me to death. Not only did they run my horses and cows across that bridge, but they filmed a covered wagon, horses pulling it at a dead run, passing

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Tracey Coleman is a local writer, singer and mother who had the privilege to visit with Mr. Ray Van Tuyl just before his passing and found him to be one of the most interesting people to whom she has ever spoken. To her, he is the Gunnison Valley.

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over that bridge. I just kept thinking, all that needed to happen was to catch a corner of the wagon on the jack pine poles and there would be a terrible wreck. They also had the bridge rigged to blow up with dynamite caps. The stunt guys did that piece alone. The rest of us cowboys all thought it was too dangerous. I don't think the film guys cared who got hurt as long as they got their pictures."

"One of the filmmaker's ideas for a shot was to run the cattle through the deep timber. The camera man would stand up behind a big tree at the bottom of a hill and we would spook the cows down the hill so they would be running by him real fast. He would lean out to get the shot. He was crazy. Then later on that same day, I noticed that my big yellow horse was gone from the corral. He was a good old horse. Pretty soon he comes back, all muddy up to his belly, so I asks them why. They tell me that they run him downhill into the water by the beaver dam. I was pretty mad about that and told them, "I don't treat my horses like that." They laughed and said, "We

won't do that again; besides, we already have the pictures."

"We was camping out. When we wasn't filming, they would set up big tables down under the trees with food on them, all kinds of food, and everybody could go down there and eat their fill. It was nice."

"Then we moved the stock again, to Gothic and then up by the Lake Fork. It took a long time to get all the film they wanted." *The Cariboo Trail* was released in theaters on April 1, 1950.

Ray also worked finding locations and providing stock for the Marlboro Man commercials, many of which were filmed locally. Considered one of the most effective advertising campaigns of all time, the ads which ran from 1954 to 1999 were sponsored by Phillip Morris. They always featured a rugged cowboy lighting up herding his stock amid nature's beauty. Several of the commercial's stars wound up prematurely dead suffering from lung cancer. But Ray, who never smoked, continued living, surrounded by the magnificence of the land he knew and loved so well for nearly a century. ■



Gunnison Library Photo

Ray Van Tuyl being thanked by Marsha Rose of the Gunnison Library Board, following his donation of five acres of his land for a new County Library building.

Jeanne Hull came to teach at Western State College 32 years ago; she also worked at the sheriff's office after retiring from the college. She has enjoyed writing for many years. Kara Girk, a senior English major at Western State College, is also president of Wordhorde, a student organization that presents open-mic "variety shows" for local artists during the school year.

Funny Faced Cows

By Kara Girk

See the funny Fairplay cows?
Furred faces stop their graze
to gaze at metal passing
close to dumpy legs.

Furred faces stop their graze;
Pathetic and squashed—
so short—close to dumpy legs.
Their long fur begs for the brush.

Pathetic and squashed they wait
for hay, for night, for change?
Long fur blows un-brushed
in wind that crouched ground.

Hay comes close to night. A change
to the gaze at passing cars.
And the wind crouches, sweeping
away the funny, furry, Fairplay cows.

Coming to Gunnison

By Jeanne Hull

In 1976, after a whirlwind visit to Gunnison and Western State College, I was hired to teach at WSC. At the time I was teaching two graduate classes at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, KY. My students there, on hearing I was flying to Colorado for the interview, put a sign on my desk with the message "Pike's Peak, or bust!" Needless to say, I was hyped about the whole thing!

At summer's end, a friend flew down from Chicago to Kentucky, and we proceeded to drive to Colorado, pulling a U-Haul trailer. In the station wagon, we had two adult humans, one German Shepherd, and two cats. It was cozy!

All along the way, we had to find motels that accepted pets. The Holiday Inn was our usual choice. Our Waterloo came in Jefferson City, Missouri. I was driving at the time, and, as we pulled into the city and turned the corner in front of the motel, the fender of the U-Haul caught in the guywires of a telephone pole. We had been told not to back the trailer up, which we interpreted as NOT AT ALL! Evidently, at some point the brakes would lock. Gingerly, I inched forward and back, trying to dislodge the fender. No luck! In the meantime, my friend Petie was standing outside the car, saying, "Oh, my God! Oh, my God!," which didn't help a bit.

Across the street were three men, taking this all in. They were enjoying the spectacle. Finally,

one Galahad came over. "Would you like some help, ma'am?" he offered. "Oh, yes, I sure would!" I cried in relief. As I flung open the car door, gratefully turning the vehicle over to him, my Siamese cat Tiki bolted from the car and shot across the street in the traffic. Also across the street was a girl walking her St. Bernard "puppy", which looked like a small horse. The dog took off after the cat, the girl sprinted after the dog, and I raced behind both.

Tiki ran up a tree, and we caught the dog. The girl kept yelling "Oh, my puppy!" and I, thinking my cat was in mortal danger, thought "Will you shut up? It's my cat that's at risk!"

We finally got settled in our motel to rest after a long day of travel. Next morning, Petie and I left for church, and, not wanting to disturb our motel neighbors with a whining or barking dog, we tied her to a tree across the street. Returning from church, we found no dog!

Inside the motel, we were told the police had taken her. After we called, they brought her back. When I saw her, I said in relief, "Oh, Gina!" The officer scolded, "She hasn't done a thing wrong, ma'am. It's against the law to tie an animal outside without food or water." I explained that we were gone for just an hour, but he still gave us a disapproving look. Needless to say, we couldn't wait to leave the capital city of Missouri!

Rubbing on Fence Posts

By K. David Pinkerton

Dave Pinkerton taught high school for many years before he and his wife finally could move to Gunnison where he writes, hikes, skis and fishes to his heart's content.

That same bull was back, rubbing the same fence post as yesterday, in what seemed an odd battle between contentment and a chance to get out. Satisfying an itch between his horn nubs appeared to be the likely most explanation. But why the same post day after day? Does a fifteen hundred pound Black Angus bull have things going on in his grapefruit-sized brain that I can't conceive?

I noticed the bull's antics while I was painting the deck. Cranky and hurried, I had loaded too much paint on the brush and was wiping up an errant paint glob instead of getting the house trim finished before winter set in. As I bent down with my wet rag, I noticed a teetering fence post out of the corner of my eye. I thought we had moved here to escape the fence, lawn, and gutter work of Front Range sameness.

But my wife was right. It would be more work to prep and paint in spring, after a winter of frozen light and blazing snow storms. That is, if we could stay in the house that long. Bills were coming in faster than there was money to pay them, especially since Beth Ann's appraisal job went south, what with the downturn and all.

Eleven other bulls huddled at the pasture's far end, butting and bullying each other. Dell, the long-time rancher and bull owner explained to us, "It's hard to keep them penned in this time of year." Grinning, he nodded his crusty straw hat in the general direction of 300 heifers, one pasture to the south. So why was this lone bull at our property line, opting out of the social reinforcement offered by his buddies? Besides, he was as far from the ladies as he could get.

With my damp cloth in my back pocket, I loaded the brush again, stood on the railing, and craned to reach the last unpainted surface under the eave. The chores were worth it, I reflected. Getting away from the clog of humanity had taken twenty years and occasional head butting between Beth and me. Now, this valley was not only our escape—it was our home.

I heard the swoosh of our patio door opening. "Did he knock it down, yet?" Beth Ann asked.

"Not yet, but if he doesn't, it won't be for lack of trying," I answered, extending my arm to make the last brush stroke.

"Doesn't he know the trouble he can get into on the other side?" Beth Ann queried. I turned

just in time to see her auburn hair tossed by a puff of wind. When she cleared a thick strand from her face, I saw a lingering smirk.

"Maybe he's just relieving an itch that's been bothering him for a long time," I offered.

"Sandwiches are ready," she said and extended her hand to help me off the railing.

We ate tuna fish on homemade sourdough and looked up Ohio Creek Valley through our Great-room window. Carbon Peak and Flattop Mountain held our gaze in the distance. I nudged the unpaid propane bill on the coffee table. My stomach knotted.

"Maybe I could get hired when the mine gets going," she said, a droop in her voice.

"And maybe if we're lucky, I can be the lumber buyer at the new Home Depot. They're going to need a lot of imitation barn wood for all the tract homes along highway 135," I whined. Immediately, I knew my sarcasm had added pain to an already difficult situation.

"Maybe we should move back," she said. Beth Ann's jaw tightened. She put her sandwich down and stood with her nose almost against the window.

In the reflection, I could see a tear slide down her cheek. I rose, placed my hand on her shoulder, and wrung the accusation from my voice. "You didn't deserve that," I said. "I'm sorry." I used my sleeve to dry her tear. Unfortunately, I also spread a blush of trim paint across her cheek. We managed to laugh.

"We're not going back," I said firmly. "We'll make it work here—somehow." She took my hand and nuzzled against it. The buttery softness of her skin soothed my chaffed spirit.

"I'll start painting the west side now," I announced. I brushed my crumbs off the coffee table and returned to the back deck to gather my paint supplies. Immediately, I knew something was different. I leaned on the railing, squinted, and surveyed our lower pasture.

No bull!

The fence post was down and I could see a black circle of fresh manure two hundred yards beyond the bull pasture. Just then, Beth Ann called out, "There's a bull in our front yard!"

Sure enough, as I ran back into the house, I could see that hunk of beef, real close, casually

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grazing on the only patch of domestic grass we had.

"Dell's number is in our address book," she said, a touch of adrenaline in her voice.

Dell was there in twenty minutes along with two of his comancheros. He creaked out of his flatbed truck and pointed to the left and right of his bull. His helpers cautiously flanked the big breeder. "Just bop the son-of-a-buck on the nose," Dell commanded, "And chase him out the gate."

The immigrant cowboys sauntered down to our dry ditch line, cut willow branches, and beat the ground, being careful to stay a respectful distance from the son-of-a-buck's nose. Meanwhile, I slipped out the front door and sidestepped over to the loafing shed, assuming the back end of the bull was the safest in this circumstance. Dell lifted his boot onto the truck bumper and continued to shout orders.

Those orders seemed to have little effect on his associates or the bull, whose head was lifted now in defiance. So I took the opportunity to approach the bull from the rear, thinking a blindside assault would herd him toward our open gate.

But this bull didn't herd.

Instead, when I got close enough to be the easiest target, he spun around, stomped the ground, and snorted out a challenge, "You're not making me go back," I could imagine him saying. Which I was very willing to agree with, since his nostrils sprayed defiance from six feet above a left-over mound of hay stubble. But how do you convince an angry bull that going back is really going forward?

I didn't really have an answer to my question because the bull charged forward, head lowered, hooves pounding. Standing my ground didn't seem prudent, so I dove to the right just as Dell's escapee thundered by. I could hear willow branches swatting the ground and cowboys shouting directions in Spanish, which the bull seemed to understand. That's because he ended his charge, circled around the far side of the swinging willow branches, and trotted toward our open

gate.

I stood, feeling exhilarated by my nifty escape move, and ran over to Dell's truck. By then, the comancheros had moved to either side of the bull and were driving it patiently toward our gate, which opened out to the county road.

"He's getting away!" Beth Ann exclaimed as she ran out to join me.

"My guys and I will get ahead of him in the truck," Dell explained. "They'll open the gate to the bull pasture."

At first, Dell's response didn't make sense. Then I saw it. "He's going back to what he knows," I offered.

"But he'll be fenced in again," Beth Ann said.

"He can rub on fence posts just as well from both sides," Dell replied dryly.

Dell's statement froze me a moment. Is life really the same anywhere you live? Or does *place* make a difference? Maybe my lack of an answer was why I said those things to Beth Ann. I knew I didn't want to go back. But what was I willing to do to stay? After all, the bills don't pay themselves. We've worked hard to be here. We deserve to enjoy it.

By that time, the ranch hands jumped in the truck and started the engine. Dell wrenched himself in the passenger door and off they went without so much as a nod. Beth Ann and I walked around the house, following the truck's progress as it lumbered along behind the bull. Close to the pasture gate, Dell and company pulled ahead and parked to block the road. The bull reached the flatbed, snorted one last time, and walked back to his side of the fence. He lowered his head and began to feed.

Beth Ann just shook her head and went back inside. I walked to the porch, picked up the paint can, brush, and step ladder, then took them to the side of the house. By the time I was up the ladder, I could see our lower pasture again. Two ranch hands stood there, lifting the broken fence post.

A bull headed in their direction. ■

Here is what you need to do

By Marcie Telander

You need to turn
all your sorry finances over to
your dog.
Your companion animal
understands the perfect
exchange-rate:
Only the currency of love
has value.

You need to stop
everything
the moment Grandmother Spider
drops into
your world.
Here is the ultimate note of
life
and death,
your private preview
of destiny.

You need to recognize that
your neighbor's cat, your local raven,
rabbit, pigeon, raccoon,
hamster, vole, junebug
are all better advisors than
lawyer, counselor,
doctrinaire priest.

In one square yard of
the earthed place
you think you own,
there are more shamans,
gurus, and
teachers
than you could ever outlive.

In an inch of dirt,
a cubic foot of air,
a teacup of dust,
a mouthful of water,
the divine devices and voices
of Nature
roar.

What you need to do
is have ears to hear them
whispering like thunder in
the intimate dew,
guiding, instructing:

“Turn over any stone
and a master will appear.”



George Sibley

Pete Dunda of Spring Creek and Ray Guzack of Grand Junction keeping the music alive at Pete's annual Fourth of July Dance in the Almont Pavilion.

Fresh Powder

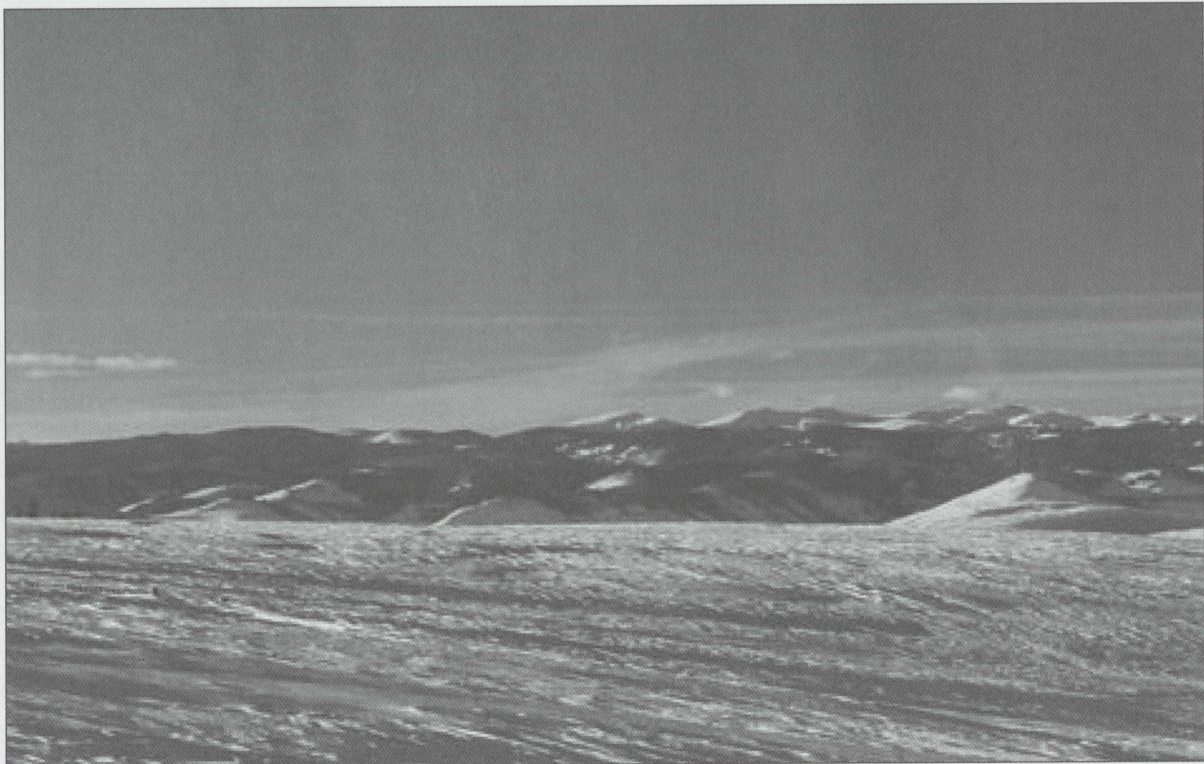
By Mark Todd

Her face, luminous
with first-snow albedo,
flexes to smile at work
she's penned, laser-etched,

eager on sheets that paper
my desk, but her lines
still smooth the socket
and cornice of expression.

Words settle, blanket
pages until only flat
December ground remains. Soon,
she'll gather her thoughts

to walk under the blue
eye of day, careless to its rhythms
or how glare sculpts
powder from fresh words.



Joe Waggoner



John Nelson

Kirsten Dickey, designer of the Journal, has made the Gunnison Valley her home since 1994. She loves this area when it's above 0°, but still enjoys visiting her native area of Cincinnati, when it is below 85°. She lives here with her husband Chris, and children Madeline & Spencer and runs a graphic design business.

Discovery on a Summer Afternoon

By Phoebe Cranor

I was on my knees among the tulips
Clad in the most disreputable clothes.
My hair and face were wet with perspiration,
I could feel a smudge of mud across my nose.

The children, turning somersaults behind me,
Were shouting in their wildest sort of way.
The dog was barking loudly as he watched them.
The cats had run and hidden from their play.

My husband came up quietly from somewhere
And knelt beside me on his well-patched knees.
We heard a different bird song in the distance
And, stopping, turned our eyes up to the trees.

I looked at our four grubby hands together
And listened to the children laugh and shout.
I thought back to our wedding unbelieving.
We hadn't guessed what love was all about.