

The 5th Gunnison Valley Journal

... the place
they like best



Contributors . . .

Michael Bain is an outdoorsman and skater on thin ice who took our cover photo.

Delaney Baumann is a freelance graphic designer with too many jobs to list among other things.

Bob Benell is a storyteller who has retired to the valley.

Bryony Brack is a Western literature student and poet.

Toni Bullock is a stained-glass artist, art teacher and poet, retired here from a career in government service.

Narcissa Channell is a longtime Gunnison teacher who is recently retired and has time to write now.

Robert Corneer came to the valley in 1957, and taught education at Western for 23 years, with a long tenure as department chairman.

Judy Cox is a poet who is also a Mt. Crested Butte hotelier.

Phoebe Cranor is a poet, essayist, and former ranchwife who has published two volumes of *Ranch Life* about her years in the valley, and a number of religious books.

Jackie DeVore is a former teacher and poet now living in the valley.

Chris Dickey is editor of the Gunnison Country Times, a photographer and new father.

Joe Dixon is a longtime resident and businessman who writes the occasional poem.

Troy Hamilton is a painter, poet and crystal hunter.

Barbara Haas is a fifth-grade teacher at the Gunnison Community School and a spiritual seeker.

Anne Hausler is the poet in residence at the Lost Miner Ranch.

Jonathan Houck teaches at Gunnison Valley School and spends his summers biking, exploring and chasing bluegrass festivals.

Virginia Jones has been a closet poet in Gunnison for many years.

Darrel Jury is an outdoorsman, educator and photographer who, in his spare time, works for the BLM.

Nate Liederbach is both a Gunnison and Western graduate who has won major writing awards from *Playboy* and *Atlantic Monthly* magazines.

Betty Light has been part of the poetry of the valley for sixty years, since 1942.

Ronald A. Long is a recently retired Gunnison surgeon who is now free to fish as much as he wants.

Joe Lothamer is a Gunnison painter and poet who has published one volume of his work.

Sean Ludden is a Western student who lives to be outdoors.

Larry Meredith is a novelist when he isn't doing public relations for the college.

Hugh McGee is a retired high school choral director who writes poetry constantly — and reminds us constantly to pick up the trash.

Mac McGraw is a really longtime resident who has written several books of local reflections and history, as well as some poetry.

Patsy Martin is a longtime resident known for her gardening, acting, and letters to Emily Dickinson.

Luke Mehall is a Western State College Recreation major with an Environmental Studies minor who likes getting out into the valley.

J. M. Mendonca is a cowboy poet who also cowboys in the valley.

John Napier retired to Crested Butte to write, hike and fish after a teaching career in California.

John Nelson is a Gunnison guide, outfitter and well-known cowboy poet, with one book out, *My Participle's Dangling*.

Egan O'Connell works with horses, reads about the real Old West and writes poetry about it.

Miss Ryan Pike is an eleven-year-old Gunnison poet.

Amy Proctor is a poet who can be found tending the Gunnison Library Tuesday evenings.

Kris Scuccimarra is a Western graduate now away from the valley in New York City; he has one book of poetry published.

George Sibley is a writer and Western teacher who should know better by now.

Candy Smith is a freelance graphic artist who also works at the Gunnison Country Times.

Anna Steenlage is a "corn-and-potatoes midwesterner" who found her way to Colorado via Oregon where she fell in love with the climbable rocks, raftable rivers, and opportunities for poetry.

Sherrill Stenson is an artist, poet and yoga teacher who designed the Journal logo on page one.

Mark Todd is a poet and literature professor at Western, who had a book of poetry, *Wire Song*, published last year.

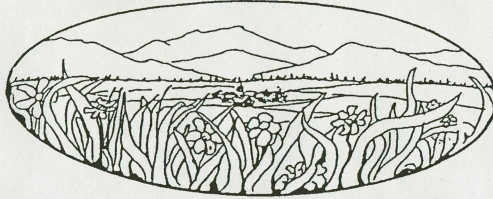
Harley Tripp retired to Gunnison from a career with a major oil company in Houston; he is now a local historian involved in historic preservation.

Robert Valdez is a photographer who works for the Job Service Center.

Joan Wagner is a Kansan who helped the Schumachers at the Three Rivers Resort some years ago, and will retire here soon with her husband.

Marlene Wright Zanetell is a Western graduate, longtime resident, former county commissioner, and guardian of the waters.

Connor Coleman, James Davis, Jazzmine Otsuka, Marcus Piquette and Jordan Zenisek are all budding poets who last year were fifth-graders in Barb Haas class.



The 5th Gunnison Valley Journal - Foreword

This is the fifth volume of *The Gunnison Valley Journal*, a journal exploring the idea that “place” is as important in shaping human decisions and destiny as all of the rational things economists tell us shape our lives.

The Journal is a biennial collection of poetry, stories and photos from people who live in and love the Upper Gunnison valley – basically everything upstream in any direction from Blue Mesa Dam. We received more work than we have room to print, as usual, and in terms of technique and other literary criteria, some of what we didn't print might be judged by many as better than some of what we did print. But our principal criteria, as always, was the level of articulate passion for the valley and the life ways of people who live in the valley. There are certainly many other interesting and important things about which to write, but they have their journals; this one is about here. And as the wave of generic material culture continues to wash over us, as it washes over everywhere, eroding away the genuine lifeways that emerge in unique places in a sea of commoditized “lifestyles,” we think it is an important kind of a journal to have around.

“We” are the Gunnison Valley Poetry Alliance, a loose coalition of poets and writers from the valley that gets together once a month at the Gunnison Arts Center to hear what we have each been working on. This is good because it insures that, for at least a day or two before the meeting we will probably be trying to work on something, and it's not always that easy in this busy buzzing world to fit in the reflective time, without which life is just an unexamined gaggle of reactive experiences. Anyone who has tried to write about an important experience knows that it doesn't come easily; it takes a lot of coal to make a diamond. If anyone is a “closet writer” who would like this kind of gentle discipline, we would encourage you to contact any of the “more active” members of the Alliance: John Cope, Jackie DeVore, Virginian Jones, Betty Light, T. L. Livermore, Joe Lothamer, Hugh McGee, John Nelson, George Sibley, Mark Todd.

We segue from this “Foreword” into the content of the journal with poems by local writers that we hope will encourage you to give it a try – so that, when the call goes out for The Sixth Gunnison Valley Journal in 2004, you will be ready.

- *The Gunnison Valley Poetry Alliance*

I write because it frees my mind of all thoughts good & evil.
I long to tell others of all things beautiful.
When they listen, the world seems the tranquil place it should be.
One who reads this has much time;
which they should use in a more useful manner.
We must teach our children to dance
so they may not forget what it means to see inside themselves.

- *Anna Steenlage*

You have to just write without thinking.
It doesn't matter what you write about,
it's how, and your voice will come out.

Your voice may slide out small and
unnoticeable at first,
but like riding a bike,
your voice will eventually
get the hang of it after falling off.
Eventually your voice will sound great and strong –
even saying something stupid like
“triple-apple-valley-pork-cake”, or “dragonfly-flower-green-dream”.

- *Troy Hamilton*

Thoughts of Rain

It looks like another long hot day.
That sun is bearin' down.
The wind so dry, roadapples blow
away
before they hit the ground.

There's a dust devil in the pasture
where there ought to be some grass.
Not a cloud on the horizon sayin'
when this drought will pass.

I've eaten so much dust this summer
there's dirt clods in my blood.
Hell, if I could only make some spit,
it'd surely turn to mud.

Yet, I know that it's useless frettin',
lettin' my nose get bent.
But, I guess all this comtemplatin'
gives me a way to vent.

And, I reckon things will be okay.
We'll do what we have to do.
Part of "gettin' by" is a state of mind,
and we've always made it through.

There's still cold water from the well,
and it cools off some at night.
Majestic sunsets bring peace of mind
that says we're livin' right.

And you know, we truly love this place
and the roof over our head.
It's never failed providin' ways
to get kids and livestock fed.

Lord, I am pleased with all I've got.
I'm too grateful to complain.
But someday soon,
if you're feelin' graceful,
we could sure use a little rain.

- John Nelson

Heavy Water and Light

Some things have always been
By the river - like buckets,
Buckets everywhere.

I'll bite. Sure, I got "buckets
Comin' out of my ears."
How 'bout you?

I just carry them, heavy
With the clean water I have,
And try to remember
A proper thank-you-god
For the blessing of weight.

But sometimes on the river
I get to see
A sudden yellow streak
'midst the tangled willow -
wild canary darting by.

Heart-stopped, for a moment
I feel just as swift,
Just exquisitely bright.

Dazzling. I tremble to think
Of just how much light one could carry.
Buckets.

- Marlene Wright Zanetell

Body of Water

i am a body
of water.
my life flowing
like a river,
from its source,
towards its source.

i am ever
growing,
changing,
evolving.

someday, part of me
will leave the water,
crawl out on all
fours,
search for something
more.

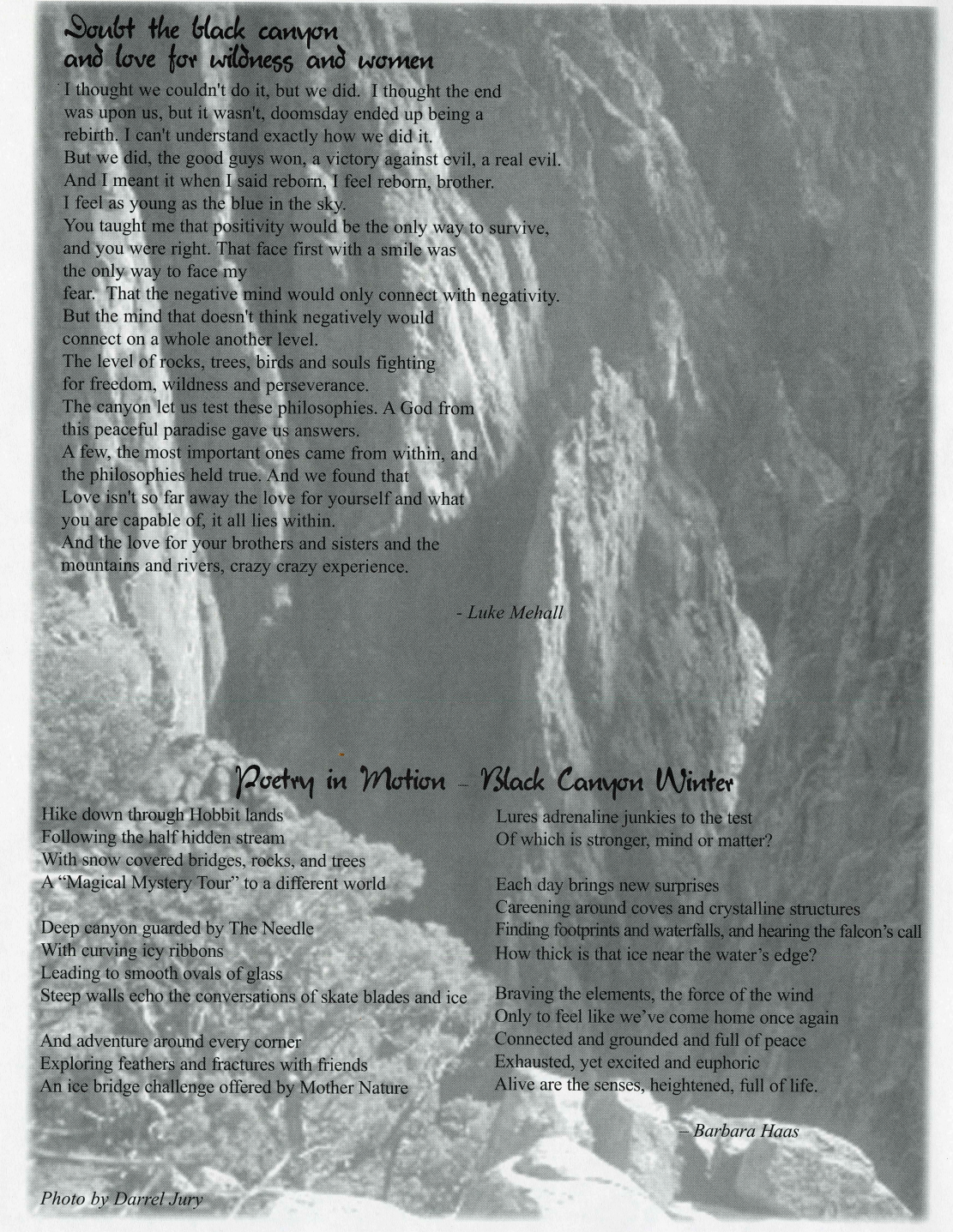
i am a body of water,
filled with primordial ooze,
waiting to evolve.

- Amy Proctor

I guess I am rain

I guess I am rain,
or wind against old low lying stone walls.
I am leaves or candle smoke
left hastily in the high corners of an empty
room.
I am clouds at night,
and favorite things lost in a hurry.
I am afternoon dreams,
and the backsides of famous paintings.

- Kris Scuccimarra



*Doubt the black canyon
and love for wildness and women*

I thought we couldn't do it, but we did. I thought the end was upon us, but it wasn't, doomsday ended up being a rebirth. I can't understand exactly how we did it. But we did, the good guys won, a victory against evil, a real evil. And I meant it when I said reborn, I feel reborn, brother. I feel as young as the blue in the sky. You taught me that positivity would be the only way to survive, and you were right. That face first with a smile was the only way to face my fear. That the negative mind would only connect with negativity. But the mind that doesn't think negatively would connect on a whole another level. The level of rocks, trees, birds and souls fighting for freedom, wildness and perseverance. The canyon let us test these philosophies. A God from this peaceful paradise gave us answers. A few, the most important ones came from within, and the philosophies held true. And we found that Love isn't so far away the love for yourself and what you are capable of, it all lies within. And the love for your brothers and sisters and the mountains and rivers, crazy crazy experience.

- Luke Mehall

Poetry in Motion - Black Canyon Winter

Hike down through Hobbit lands
Following the half hidden stream
With snow covered bridges, rocks, and trees
A "Magical Mystery Tour" to a different world

Deep canyon guarded by The Needle
With curving icy ribbons
Leading to smooth ovals of glass
Steep walls echo the conversations of skate blades and ice

And adventure around every corner
Exploring feathers and fractures with friends
An ice bridge challenge offered by Mother Nature

Lures adrenaline junkies to the test
Of which is stronger, mind or matter?

Each day brings new surprises
Careening around coves and crystalline structures
Finding footprints and waterfalls, and hearing the falcon's call
How thick is that ice near the water's edge?

Braving the elements, the force of the wind
Only to feel like we've come home once again
Connected and grounded and full of peace
Exhausted, yet excited and euphoric
Alive are the senses, heightened, full of life.

- Barbara Haas

Photo by Darrel Jury

They Shall Mount Up With Wings As Eagles

I built my nest on a high high crag.
From the cliff I could see far and wide.
My eaglet grew and feathered.
He ate and learned to preen
He grew too big for the nest.
Preying for him subsided in me day by day.
Finally the time came near.
I began pushing him toward the edge.
He was outraged.
He threw things – telephone, books, pillows, shoes.
He banged doors. Such squawking.
Such fury. He nearly burst.
“Bring me this! and that! I need this and that!” he raged.
I knew he needed to fly.
I watched the sky.
It was time. Push!
Over the edge he went –
And down, down.
My heart grew faint.
Then I saw the updraft catch his wings, and he soared.
At last, an eagle!

- Patsy Martin



After Dark

I sit dimly in a room of the same composure,
And think about what is higher and what is lower,
And do the formulations concerning a star
Also apply to its infinite surrounding noir?
As I step lightly out onto a horizon of the same complex-
ion
I stare feral at a wilder landscape than I,
And wonder impossibly if over it I could fly.
Could I live down around the dunes,
Or in a cave, in a juniper or stone house of ruins?
And could I know what others only dream
As if by some coincidence I peer through a seam,
In the overlying firmament and see those mysteries,
Which tease mankind with its purpose and complexities?
It is this coincidence that keeps my imagination
Wondering - on the edge of savagery and civilization,
Wandering - as though I am still a child,
As I sit dimly in a room of the same composure,
And think about what is higher and what is lower.

Photo by Robert Valdez

- Sean Ludden

a few pages on ranching, cowboying and living west

The Cooks

The cook quit. Tom, the foreman of the Slash 9 Ranch, told the cowboys that the cook just left. No words, no complaints, he just left. Until Tom could find a new cook, the hands were going to have to take turns cooking. Jimmy was going to be first.

The cowboys knew their life was going to take a turn for the worse.

The next morning Jimmy was up early to begin his new job. First he

took an inventory of the cookhouse, seeing it from a new point of view. Of course he knew all about the two long eating tables but he hadn't paid much notice to the large worktable for the cook before. There was a tin-door pantry that Jimmy discovered held the chipped blue enamel coffee cups and plates. The silverware was in the pantry too. He easily found the pots and pans as they were hanging from nails pounded into the walls. Jimmy started a fire in the large wood-burning stove. The stove always had a large coffee pot sitting on top. Jimmy found that regulating the temperature inside the wood-burning oven was an art.

That morning, Jimmy burned the bacon. The biscuits were hard as rocks and the beans were black. The coffee was all right, but it's hard to do anything bad to coffee. Of course,

the boys thanked the cook and went about their business. The food was the same that night and in fact it was the same for the next several days. The ranch crew was even getting used to the Jimmy's cooking. It was bad but predictable.

Tom announced the next morning that Alex was the next cook. He thanked Jimmy and asked Jimmy if he might show Alex the ropes, as everyone knew Alex was new to cooking. The closest thing to cooking that Alex had ever come was filling his canteen. But he had Jimmy's help!

Jimmy and Alex got an early start the next morning. Jimmy showed him how to fry bacon in the big cast iron frying pan and taught him when to take it out so it didn't burn. Coffee was easy. Alex just put it on to boil and left it. Jimmy showed Alex how to cut up a little onion and a couple of slices of bacon to add to the beans for flavor, and told him to remember to stir the beans. Now, biscuits were the hard part. Jimmy showed Alex how to mix flour, baking soda, lard and some milk. Then he put globs of the mixture in a pan and placed them in the wood-burning oven. All that was left to do was stir the beans and watch the top of the biscuits. When they were golden brown, Alex was supposed to take them out and ring the dinner bell out on the porch, calling the hands to eat. Well, the boys had never eaten that good. The biscuits were light,

the bacon was perfect, the beans were tasty and the coffee was good and strong. Tom was impressed. He didn't know Alex was such a good cook!

Now that Alex had the hang of it, breakfast wasn't hard and dinner and supper were successes too. Alex was getting tired of cooking but the

hands knew a good thing when they saw it. They raved! They went on and on about Alex's cooking. They wanted Alex as the permanent cook.

Alex was miserable.

That night, Alex said to Jimmy, "What happened? You know I can't cook. I'm a cowhand and cookin' ain't respectable. You've got to get me out of this mess!"

Jimmy replied, "Why Alex, I think you're doing a fine job but if you don't want to be a cook anymore I'll see what I can do. I'll have to think on it."

"Jimmy, I would be in your debt, truly I would."

As Jimmy lay on his bunk that night he put on his thinking cap. He always thought best on his bunk. Now, bad cooking wasn't going to work. He had already used that one. Maybe poison. Might be a little extreme. Jimmy bolted upright with a new



Photo by Chris Dickey

thought. Yes, that might work. Oh yes!

The next afternoon Jimmy explained his plan to Alex, who thought it was fine. But then, Alex would have thought any plan was fine on account of his desperate situation.

Jimmy helped Alex prepare the special supper. They fixed the dish for the hands and rang the dinner bell and the cowhands eagerly filed into the cookhouse. They were looking forward to another good meal.

Alex sprang his surprise.

The hands couldn't believe their eyes. When Alex handed out the dinner the boys unleashed all kinds of comments. Like, "I ain't eatin' this!" "This is terrible!" "You used to be a good cook!" and so on.

The boys demanded a new cook immediately. Alex was off the hook. When Tom ran into Alex he asked, "What did you feed the boys that made them so mad?"

Alex replied, "Why, it's the latest thing. Jimmy told me it's what they eat in the city and it's supposed to be good for you."

"Well, what is it?"

With a sheepish grin, Alex said, "Why, they call it salad!"

- Bob Benell

runaway

well i'd unhooked the trailer
just like i'd done a hundred
times before i chocked the wheels
and set the block and cranked
it off the hitch so maybe that block
did wobble just a bit but still
I did it just like i'd done
a hundred times before then
drove off down the slope

when i saw my wife kym drop
her pitchfork and go running
right past the truck waving
her hands in the air
at the trailer heading down
the slope aimed straight
at two baby horses watching
the trailer from the other side
of the fence there she was
just a little thing herself
but running to meet
that thousand pounds of stock
trailer speeding up down
the hill like her hundred
pounds and waving hands
would flag down the speed
of the trailer like it would take

one look at her and say huh
and come to a halt before
her mighty hundred pounds

while i looked at her waving
hands and saw the trailer meeting
her more than half way
and saw the baby horses
looking on to see what
was going to happen
and saw that i was backing
all of a sudden our new (mostly)
four-door one-ton pickup up
to block the trailer just
in case kym's waving hands
failed to stop the baby-aimed
trailer's path and trying
to decide if those babies
would move before the trailer
hit the fence and how
much would it cost
to fix the truck when
a thousand pounds of ten miles
per hour smacked hard
into the bed and kym
then jumping out the way

and me in reverse
and easing back and thinking
what to do those baby horses
not moving a step the truck
new (mostly) still easing
back when before
i could make up my mind
the trailer lurched against
a deep rut where the slope
meets the road that runs
along the fence and smacked
the truck's receiver hitch against
the trailer's fender pow
the trailer's tire bounced
quick and popped to a stop
on top the road

those baby horses standing
looking at the thing right there
in front of them kym
and the truck and the babies
all okay with just
a bent fender and a ruined tire
to show for just how fast
my heart was beating

- Mark Todd



Photo by
Robert Valdez

Ranch Life:

There were lots of birds on the ranch. Most of them weren't very people-oriented and hustled off in a hurry when we went irrigating. Some were fun to watch, like the mother killdeer with her string of yellow cotton-ball babies. Each chick followed Mom in her EXACT tracks, mincing along on toothpick legs and pecking at only Mom recommended.

There was one bird, though, who was a real help. He knew something very important to ranchers.

When our four year-apart kids were little, I did laundry every day, rain or shine. While hanging out the clothes once during haying, I met up with a fact: There was a way to discover the weather forecast. Nothing was more important than the weather forecast!

I would go out with my basket first thing in the morning and start hanging. Pretty soon I would hear a bird (whom I never caught sight of) give me the day's predictions.

In case you don't know, the process of haying takes charge of all summer routine while it is going on. You can't put up hay if it is full of moisture, so if the sky is blue, everyone works as hard and fast as possible to the job done.

This means the cook serves dinner when there is a proper break in the proceedings. If the "balin's goin' good," she feeds the men somewhere between 1 and 4 p.m. Or else if "it's a little green for puttin' up," a hay hand runs to the house to inform the cook the boss'd like her to hustle things along and eat about 11:30 a.m. So whether or not it rains is of extreme importance.

Hustling up a roast, for instance, hardly works at all. Rare is okay, but raw is sort of unacceptable. And keeping a nice dinner tasty for three hours is also fraught with culinary problems. Hence, my interest in the above-mentioned bird.

What he did was wait until I was not looking and then holler, "kitty-kitty-kitty" IF there was going to be an

afternoon rainstorm. Otherwise he was quiet. So I KNEW and could plan dinner accordingly.

The only problem was that, in spite of my bird-provided knowledge, the crew didn't pay any attention to me. Even after several seasons of my being correct when I predicted rain, the boss remained skeptical of a source of information nobody but me had ever heard of.

Anyhow, because of the bird, I could always have dinner ready for them when they arrived dripping wet. And I did learn to keep my mouth shut and not say, "I told you so."

One of the worst aspects of the above situation was that my kitty-kitty-kitty bird only predicted when I was at home hanging out the laundry. Thus, when we did custom bailing for the neighbor and a crew member sidled up nervously twisting his hat and casually wondering if I thought it would rain, I didn't know.

Incidentally, I don't have any idea what the

"kitties" had to do with the matter. They didn't come when Mr. Bird called them. We didn't even call them "kitties," anyhow. We called them by their names. Or, when the milker came with the bucket, they arrived without calling. I'm pretty sure the bird was talking about something else besides the family felines.

When I told my mother about my "kitty-kitty-kitty" bird, she smiled knowingly.

"That's a rain crow," she told me. I had never heard of him, either. "Rain crow" wasn't listed in either the bird book or the dictionary – even the big one at the college library. Now I suspect Mother invented him on the spot. Someday, I suppose I should ask one of the college profs about the matter. If I get up the courage to, I'll let you know.

- Phoebe Cranor

There are always gifts

Pain is truly a leveling thing,
Reducing to basics the way the birds sing –
The way the sun rises or stars fill the sky –
The way we see time. Does it creep by or fly?

Pain keeps us humble, dependent of God,
(Although the world loudly proclaims that is odd.)
But I will continue to sing the refrain
That says "Thank you, dear Father, for
the gifts in my pain."

- Phoebe Cranor

Want to be a Cowpoke

The Saturday matinee was only a dime, I could be a cowboy any time
I was tall and thin and sat my stick pony like Errol Flynn
Trigger was my pony in my mind, He came at a whistle and turned on a dime
Wyatt Earp was not my name but I could be him just the same

I wore a red cowboy hat and bib overalls with patches where I sat
A new pair of cap pistols were tied low, they were for business not for show
With my Smiley Burnett squeeze box, I can play like a juke box
Yip pie tai yi ea, Yip pie tai yi o, I can sing and play all day

In the yard with chickens to feed I sat my pony and sang like Gene Autry
Deep in the shadows of the old chicken coop lurked an ornery old owl-hoot
The slippery sidewinder shouted at me, "I'll made you sing from the hanging tree"
I stopped singing and shouted back, "I have new six shooters and that's a fact"

I quickly slid from Trigger and that mean old buckaroo looked even bigger
With my fast guns and Roy Rogers grin this cow poke could only win
My feet apart and hands held true, I can shoot like Lash LaRue
There's no whipper snapper that can slap leather and be any faster

That polecat stepped into sun packing a great big ugly gun
He looked at me with no fear in his eyes all he wanted was for me to die
He wasn't just any hired gun he made me shake and want to run
It was Billy the kid, that's no lie and he had made a lot of men die

I won't let that varmint get the best of me, I made my challenge plain as could be
Be out of town by high noon or meet me in front of the long branch saloon
He said to me, "Your time will be up when the sun is straight up
When my gun goes boom I'll send you to your lonely tomb"

It was time for help it seemed to me so I called on Annie Oakley
Annie Oakley played by sister Sue says "Sure I 'll help you,
but I want to wear your new guns and we'll surely made him run."
I replied, "No way I'll Just have to stand alone and make my play"

Billy the kid played by brother Mike was never one to lose a fight
So I quickly drew both new guns and the battle had just begun
I shouted I got you first. He answered you missed I got you first.
My six shooters hold a hundred rounds so I scattered bullets all around

Once the smoke was clear, I could see his frightening sneer
It was clear to me it wasn't over so like Randolph Scott I dove for cover
Bullets were flying everywhere some through my hat and into my hair
That snake had a fancy new gun it could hold and shoot a hundred and one

Through the yard and from behind a tree in a cloud of dust came Annie Oakley
Mickey, Joe, she exclaimed, I want to play in your game
It's to late for you to play our game, you had your chance we proclaimed
Our shoot out is about to end you'll have to wait until we play again

Mother, Mother, hollered Sue, Mickey and Joe won't let me play too
When it looked like we had won out Sue ran inside and began to pout
Then we heard the score as mother hollered from the screen door,
Mickey, Joe, you better feed the chickens or I'll give you each a hard licking.



Joe & Mike Dixon

- Joe Dixon

For Levi

I'm trying to be a better man.
No, I don't want to be
like the mean and phony heroes
in today's movies and on TV.

An honest and hard working man
is what you should expect.
A friendly man with values
who treats others with due respect.

Because I know a little cowboy
who is looking up at me
watching for a trail to follow,
and how he ought to be.

He lives with his aunt and uncle,
and they're leading the way,
providing a caring family and
the love he needs each day.

And, they told me of this story
that kinda warms my heart,
and gives me cause to examine
the way I play my part.

It seems that Levi likes his cowboys,
duds up the way they did.
He reminds me of someone I knew
when I was just a kid.

He wanted to impress his teacher
on his first preschool day.
He donned the hat, chaps and boots,
strolled in the cowboy way.

And the lady was delighted by
his charm and his attire.
He was cuter than a button, and
it caused her to inquire

"Why you're quite a little cowboy.
I bet you know who John Wayne is?"
Levi paused, slightly taken aback,
considering this quiz.

"No," he mused, "I don't know of him."
He slowly shook his head.
Then looking up with a beaming face,
"but, I know John Nelson," he said.

His teacher chuckled and so did we
when we heard about this story.

Now, they're teasing me about being a leg-
end
in my own mind and glory.

But, it's sorta got me to thinking about
the things we sometimes do
that are crude and careless without a thought
for just who's watching you.

And about, how being a good influence is
an awesome responsibility.
But, I don't think that I influenced him
half as much as he did me.

Yes. I'm trying to be a better man.
Because he is looking up at me,
watching for a trail to follow and
how he ought to be.

- John Nelson



Photo by Chris Dickey

Prose Poem Inspired by Hartmans

Been so long since me and the fire talked so long even without words the fire speaks to me, so different, so friendly, so different to me. So quickly it burns the wood, burns it away, to ash, ashes of gray stay not so long. Flowing but not saying anything, teaching. Am I learning? Coyote howls so important is the coyote to our land. Heard but not seen to me.. Seen to the land for sure and seen by those it is meant to. Sage smells so good to me. I write, I write to you, you dig? Dig down deep sometimes we must to accomplish our success and live close to our dreams. Sometimes we must get closer to wildness to live our dreams. What do you dream of? I dream of my friends on alone nights like these. I dream of only being alone and not lonely. I dream of a long life in Colorado, you dig? Throw another log on the fire make the night last a little longer. Not wanting it to last forever and not wanting it to burn out. But we all will burn out and fade away, someday just like the camp fire. Pop, says the fire and not much longer before it fades away.

- Luke Mehall

Hartman Rocks

I lift up my eyes to these hills
To see beyond gods and such folly;
I come up among these rocks
To take peace in their absence of plan.

Here in this thrust and boil of stone,
Long cooled but still settling out,
And the penetrant thrust and twist of root
Sorting mineral from dust beneath sun
And the dry vagrant prowl of insistent air
And this tree's hope against hope for rain:
Here in this mishmash of eternal fiddling
I am finally free from God, destiny, free.

Philosophers ask what life means, or meant;
These rocks make me think: accident.
In the beginning was no word, just swirl
And press of rampant roiling energy
Rearranging itself in random shots
Ever more solid and slow till its
Latest form is this long drawn death in beauty
And brokenness here in these rocks around.

No: the word, if it comes at all, is dragged here
By such as me: a buzzing busyness at surface
That interrupts this fine waiting silence
Not at all, or not enough to matter.

- George Sibley



Photo by Jonathan Houck

SEASONS

In Cold Morning Air

Before the sun rises
Before the grass greens
Sage Grouse is dancing
On his Mother's breast
He hears Her drumbeat
His tail is spread

the East he honors
the South he honors
the West he honors
the North he honors

His breath is smoke
His Father receives it
His sharp feathers rattle
Kyu yu yu kushsh
In cold morning air

- J.M. Mendonca

Early Spring

An adventurous eye finds delight in the sky
the clouds are great works of art.
The background of blue enhances the view
this beauty brings joy to my heart.

The river keeps flowing, the ice chunks are going
to the lake as they finally melt.
It's nature's pure plan not altered by man
all must play the hand they've been dealt.

More snow may be falling still cranes will be calling
as they fly to their springtime fields.
The moisture so needed for gardens we've seeded
will provide for our future meals.

The branches are still bare but spring's senses in the air,
soon leaves will hide the bird's nest.
The robin and bluebird return with the good word
that this is the place they like best.

- Betty Light

Fall in this Valley

"Nature likes to hide itself." Heraclitus

Midas touched
this whole valley, far as I can see.
Half blinds a man, all that gold
under the sun, gotta
squint through trees.

Say, it's quiet
here today. No moonstruck call of loons.

Sandhills, history. Pulled south
by secret tide routes
mapped geography of
air and egg yolk, film
across the pond, almost ice
fish burrow in bottom mud,

crops turn gold
become dust

- Anne Hausler



Photo by Robert Valdez

Wild

Wild sounds
In the early morning air
Rivet me
To my dark window
Searching for clues.

Eioooo, yip yip yip yip
Comes from the
mountain's base
With answering howls
From the opposite meadow.

Anxious barks
Of domestic dogs
Join the chorus.
I, too, am enlivened
By the boisterous pack
At the end
of the night's hunt.

But like a dog
Behind doors
The cold glass,
So tauntingly clear,
Separates me
From this dark outside.

Sometimes coyotes
Lure dogs away
From the indoor warmth
Of food and owners.
Dogs catch the scent,
The raucous wildness,
of their ancient cousins.

My insides are stirred
How would it be
To have wild blood?
Blood to loose
My uncivilized self

To hone my senses
To survive.
To howl
with blatant joy
At daybreak?

- Judy Cox

The Storm

Brassy veins of jagged lightning
Puncture bruised-blue storm clouds
Gathering in the western mountains.
Faint vibrations of thunder barely heard.

A strange stillness creeps into the trees....
No animal or bird sounds, no whispering aspen,
No sighing pines...only footsteps
Crunching the few grounded aspen leaves.

Trees begin to stir....
The sound of wind announces its arrival
Bringing thunder and darkening sky.
Hurried footsteps run toward sanctuary.

Now a howling, twisting wind...leaves flying...
Screaming trees clashing against each other....
A stately pine splits, spiraling to the ground,
Causing a tremor that shakes the soul.

Wonder, edged with fear, engulfs the spirit
As stab after stab of lightning splits the sky
And blasts of thunder tumble over each other...
Then the deluge....

The earth, with widened cracks like begging mouths
Gulping teardrops from the sky...unsatiated...
Wanting hours of gentle rain...but no...
The storm moves on....

- Virginia Jones

You flow through me like a river
The rocks guide you and carry you
The constant rushing of your blood
pounds through my soul like a river

You mesmerize me like a river
and drown me in your waves
Smooth me and caress my roots
Thunder into me like a river

- Anna Steenlage

a few pages on the past . . .

Remnants

Past the rock-walled garden
Still lying fallow
And cedars
On the canyon rim,
I descend
By switching back
Watching for the river's bend.
I smell spring's imminence
In a cool, moist breeze
Yet what I see
Are hollow forms of life
Left by winter's freeze.

Whorled stalks of reeds
Brittle, delicate,
Bleached pale pearl-grey,
Yet within them
memories of summer green
Caught in a last sun ray.

It makes me think:
Is beauty found
Just in the prime
Or does it still reside
In the form and symmetry
Of what is left behind?

And the river . . .
It flows through it all.
Ancient, all-seeing
Watercress and crackling ice
Its being.

My eye is drawn
To a sunny glade
And veering from the path
I find remains.
Whitened, even mossy bones
Attest to final pain.
The jawbone of a deer
And vertebrae
Spread down the lane.

Did she charge
To keep her young
From being prey?
Did she die of hunger
Or disease
And there she lay?

And then in these forgotten woods
I see a sign, a trace
Left by the human clan
And what I call my race.
I mistook for matted vine
Some wire shaped like a palm
Outstretched and rising
From a twisted base
Asking to be found
Embraced.

It was used perhaps
By settlers
Leaving more behind:
Turquoise jars
And leaded violet glass
With ivy-carved designs.

And what frail woman
Held this cup
Now just a shard
And pastel thin,
Speaking softly of her trials
and taking care of kin?

Could her child have worn
This piece of hardened leather boot
With tiny holes intact
And run in through
The kitchen door
Where now there's just
This oven latch?

I collect these remnants
As I walk

And on returning
Spread them out
To listen to them talk.

They speak
My every clinging fear
Of powerlessness
Or loss of dreams
Or losing those held dear.

Of the seasons
Of my life
And how the world
Goes on despite
The passing by
And passing on of life.

The passing on of life -
The seed!
The casing looked
so dead
Around the reed.
But the fawn was spared,
The child matured.
And so the remnant,
The legacy endured.

I gather up my
Crusted bits of treasure
I've brought to light,
Examined,
In which I've taken pleasure.
I will return them
On another trek
To where they'll
Rest in peace
And not be kept.

I feel new hope
And have a lighter step.

- Judy Cox

The Gunnison Valley - As it Was

You can never go back. People who have returned to areas where they spent childhoods and youth have found that many, perhaps most, things have changed.

It is certainly that way in Gunnison and in the areas that surround the town. Oh, how the ranch land has phased into new and different uses. So many of the family homesteads what dotted the sagebrush and draws and the mountain valleys are basically gone and have been purchased at tax sales. Some are now home sites. How well we remember the luxuriant potato patches that graced the little ranch garden spots. We bought sacks of huge white potatoes from some of those folk for 50 cents a sack before World War II. All gone now.

Cattle and sheep ranches are, to a certain extent, the same way. After the sheep and cow wars of the early 1900s ended and sheep owners were allowed to pasture sheep in the nearby ranges, some owned sheep bands and others brought the animals in from other areas for summer grazing. That is different now.

The construction of Blue Mesa Dam and the filling of the reservoir caused the loss of so many beautiful historic locations and structures. Towns and sites such as Sapinero, Cebolla, Kezar and Iola are only vague memories.

Structures in town, such as the Arts Center, have been changed. That building once served as a Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad office and freight storage place, later as a hardware store, and then a saloon. The railway's companion structure was at the south end of Main Street on the west side. That was the depot. Next to the depot was a lunchroom, owned by Mrs. Johnson.

Across the street to the west of the Art Center, Herman (Dad) Maurer operated a hardware store and lumber office. It was originally a wooden structure. About 1916, the newspaper said, Dad took a lashing by whip from a woman whom he had termed as "a lady of bad manners." But he'd used a naughty word.

In the same general area, Officer Izaac Barrett shot and killed a want-

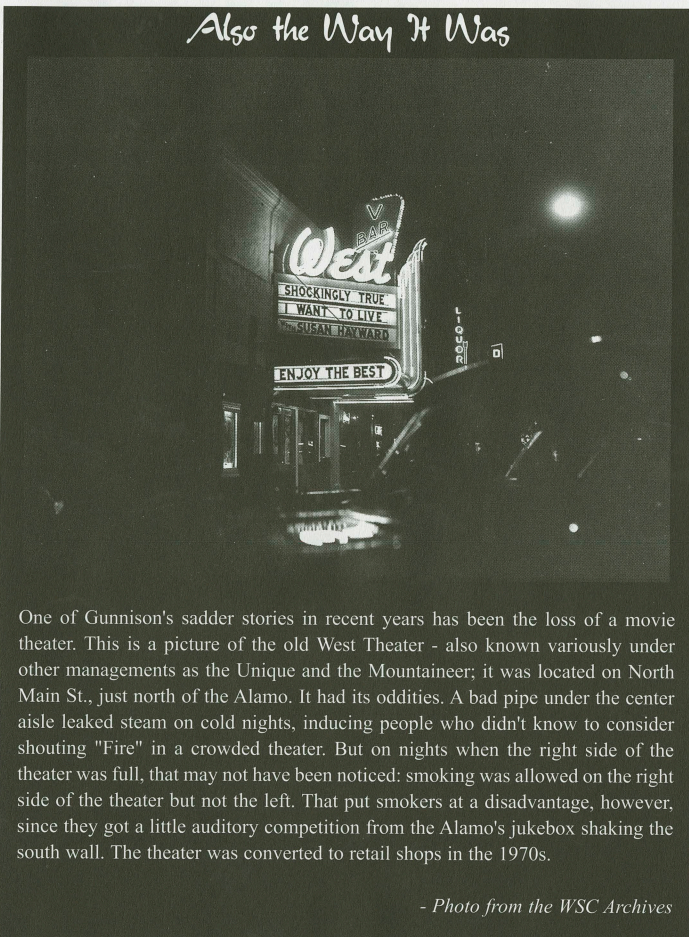
ed murderer from Buena Vista.

On West New York Street, a towing company used a very old stone building. In December of 1881, pranksters stole the body of Thomas Coleman, a black who was the only man ever legally hanged in Gunnison, from the scaffold of the then new courthouse and hid it on top of that same stone building. It stayed there until a foul odor caused some citizens to climb ladders and investigate. They found the decomposing body of Coleman.

On the northwest corner of Main Street and Tomichi Avenue, the Gunnison Bank and Trust operated. On the southwest corner a rock building served as a gasoline and tire repair station. Safeway was one of several businesses that used the northeast corner. Today's little mall on west Tomichi was an auto repair garage.

Gunnison Bank and Trust eventually moved to the building where Western World now operates. The Gunnison County Shop sat where the Bank and Trust is now, further west on Tomichi. The shop burned around 1960 and the county moved to the abandoned railroad roundhouse site where it now operates.

So many places, and so many changes. Unique Theatre was on the east side of the second block of north Main Street. On the west side of that same block, a business called the Academy of Music performed plays and songs in 1881. A man named Yard shot a fellow named Walsh because the latter had bragged about being intimate with Yard's girlfriend, Viola, who was described as being a bone, a rag and a hank



One of Gunnison's sadder stories in recent years has been the loss of a movie theater. This is a picture of the old West Theater - also known variously under other managements as the Unique and the Mountaineer; it was located on North Main St., just north of the Alamo. It had its oddities. A bad pipe under the center aisle leaked steam on cold nights, inducing people who didn't know to consider shouting "Fire" in a crowded theater. But on nights when the right side of the theater was full, that may not have been noticed: smoking was allowed on the right side of the theater but not the left. That put smokers at a disadvantage, however, since they got a little auditory competition from the Alamo's jukebox shaking the south wall. The theater was converted to retail shops in the 1970s.

- Photo from the WSC Archives

of hair.

We could go on about old homes, lodges, businesses, art studios, gunfights, rodeos, cowboys, sheep herders and such for countless pages, but will let it go for now. So long, and happy memories.

- Mac McGraw

The Roosevelt Mine

Several miles south of Pitkin, Gunnison County Road 70 passes the Roosevelt Picnic area, which covers the site of the original headquarters of the Roosevelt mine. A quarter of a mile past the picnic grounds, across Quartz Creek, and a hundred yards up on the west side of Copper Mountain, those that look carefully can see the remains of the old wooden building that contained the Roosevelt mine's stamp mill. Few travelers see the ore chute and stamp mill, and even fewer attempt to cross Quartz Creek and explore the area. Of those who do cross the creek and climb up to the stamp mill, even fewer find the mine entrance another hundred yards up the mountain.

The Roosevelt Mine dates back to the early 1900's. By then Pitkin was beginning to recover from the silver panic of 1893. In the summer of 1903, J. C. Bowerman claimed to have found rich ore several miles southeast of Pitkin on the east side of Copper Mountain. His Independent Mine, which resulted in more hype than ore, did result in the last significant gold rush in the Gunnison Basin and in the boomtown of Bowerman. During 1903 and 1904 however, low grade ore was found, near Bowerman, in several mines including the Camp Bird Mine, named for the fabulously rich mine at Ouray.¹ However, almost immediately the miners realized that the quality of the ore in the area was insufficient to cover the shipping costs to the smelter in Pueblo. By 1905 potential investors were becoming suspicious of Bowerman's claims and the August 1905 Rocky Mountain Magazine declared: "...Even the proof of one important mine having been found is lacking..."

One promoter, George Brandt, took advantage of the situation and formed the Brandt Independent Mining Company and began buying mine claims. In all he bought 1,067 acres containing 92 mine claims and ended up owning most of Copper Mountain between Bowerman on the east and Quartz Creek on the west. Brandt then sold stock to eastern investors caught up in the excitement and romance of gold mining. A f t e r removing \$60,000 of ore from the Camp Bird Mine, Brandt convinced his investors to fund a tunnel through Copper Mountain, joining the railroad line along Quartz Creek with the mines to reduce shipping costs. In 1907, Brandt started the tunnel, variously called the Roosevelt Mine or the Copper Mountain Tunnel. The shaft was to cut through the mountain to intersect all the mines Brandt owned and to terminate at the gold veins of the Independent and Camp Bird mines, a mile away on the east side of the mountain. At the same time a 700-foot long rail spur was built from the mine surface plant to the Denver and South Park railroad tracks that ran along Quartz Creek to Gunnison.

Brandt built an impressive tunnel portal, faced with a cast concrete pediment meant to inspire confidence among the investors. Ore taken from the tunnel was carted to the chute and mill where the remains of the two five-hammer California stamp mill mechanisms, used to pulverize the ore, can still be seen. This stamp mill is probably the only mill in Gunnison County that still has the hammers in it. Since it was customary to move the machinery for one mine to another as the ore ran out, this stamp mill came from the Sandy Hook mine on Gold Creek.²

Other buildings at the surface plant included a compressor house, change-house, blacksmith shop, sawmill, stable, powder magazine, and generator building. Many of these buildings were as impressive and permanent as the mine portal. The stone masonry compressor house, at the tunnel entrance, contained an air compressor that powered the pneumatic rock drills used to bore the tunnel and the tunnel ventilation fan. South of the mine, the remains of several miner cabins and the concrete walls of the generator building are still visible on the east bank of Quartz Creek. The building contained two water turbine driven 150 K. W. generators. Combined, these were a magnitude larger than the generator that had been installed in Gunnison in 1894³ and not only furnished all the electricity needed by the tunnel and surface plant, but also provided 150 kilowatts for sale to other mines. Water for the turbines was delivered



through a 4-foot diameter pipeline constructed of two-inch pine staves, bound by one-half inch iron bands. Remains of this 6,625 feet long pipeline, which started at a dam on Quartz Creek west of the fish hatchery, can still be seen along the side of Copper Mountain. The chimney and foundation at the picnic grounds are the remains of Brant's house.⁴

By the time Mr. A. P. Nelson wrote his Gunnison Country book in 1916, the Brant Independent Mining Company was not only the largest but also the most important mining company around Pitkin. Nelson projected that Pitkin would develop into a productive gold camp similar to Cripple Creek. At that time the Roosevelt Mine tunnel was 1800 feet deep and was within 400 feet of the 19-foot wide Roosevelt vein, which on the surface assayed at \$4 per ton in gold and contained 8% copper. Nelson projected that the gold value would increase to \$377 per ton as the vein depth increased. The company's future success seemed to be assured and that it would "give its stockholders liberal and ample reward."⁵

Unfortunately for the investors the rich projections of the Roosevelt vein and of other veins did not work out as the shaft continued through the mountain. Time proved that Brandt was much more successful in promoting his tunnel than he was at mining. By the time the tunnel was abandoned in the 1930's, it was over a mile long and had still not reached the Camp Bird Mine.

- Harley Tripp

¹ Perry Eberhart, "Guide to the Colorado Ghost Towns and Mining Camp," fourth edition. Swallow Press, Athens, page 282.

² Wolle, Muriel S., Stampede to Timberline, page 188.

³ McCanne, David Jones, Memoirs of A Civil Engineer, unpublished manuscript.

⁴ Haines, Wayne, Pitkin and Beyond - A Pictorial History of Pitkin, Colorado: The Pitkin Adventure Company, Pitkin, CO.

⁵ Nelson, A. P. Gunnison County Colorado - The Majestic Empire of the Western Slope: A. P. Nelson Mining, 1916.

The Hanging

What a state I'm in, blowing
like a dust rag on the end of a rope,
twelve minute hard boiled eyes
cooking wide open to the sun.
And you there, Jim, still twitching
beside me like an axed rattler.
You don't look so good either.
Wyoming dust devils spinning
down your wind pipe, screaming
and flapping like cave bats,
will soon give way to the smell
of sweet sage, wintergreen, wild onion
and honeysuckle, and a soft amber
powder will brush across your cheeks,
finer than a dry creek bed, lighter
than a web in a thistle bloom.
And a clean feeling like the ranch
when you open the door to the warm
milk morning, and sun rushes
into the kitchen with the cats.
And damp grass and matted cattle
moaning for their young-uns
move in slow rivers.

We ain't dangling more than
three inches off the ground.
Such a leafless tree, good
for drying laundry, not a hangin'.
All my bones stretched clean out
of their sockets when they strung me up.
In time, I'll elongate into a dancer
pivoting on my toe with the wind.
Quit your bouncing, Jim. Be still,
let the evening come and cool you.
They hung us to get what they wanted—
our land, cattle, and unbranded calves.

We were burrs in their boots,
pesky flies in their ears.
We were too small to fight them.
You never give up easy, do you?

Now settle down, Jim. The branches
overhead are full of birds fussing
at our intrusion, fighting for our shade.
As for me, I kind of like the way
I'm spreading out over the prairie,
spinning like a tumbleweed.
Maybe by evening when all is still,
a bluebird will light on my lip,
poke his head inside my mouth,
and find a song.

- Egan o'Connell

Some Folks I Know

don't ask me if i know
these folks there's parts
of them i do and parts
of them i just don't want
to know like looking at your hand
and knowing it's a helping hand
that does the things it should
without you asking for the help

just jumps in and makes
the doing done without a word
and if need be the other hand
comes up quick and plays
its part since there's no end
to what you can do
with two hands working
at the same time

but if you idle down
a bit and start to stare
at that hand there's things
you'd just as soon
not see that knobby thumb
for one or that twisted knuckle
that never seemed to straighten
out if only you'd give
it a rest it'd be fine

but no there you are
at the supper table
and you'd like
to ask for the bowl
of those mashed potatoes
but then you'd have
to reach out that hand
and that's not the sort
of conversation piece
that seems to suit the food

all the same you know
you'll ask that hand
or maybe you won't
have to it'll just know
you need the help
next time you've got
something heavy to lift

well that's some folks
i know but don't ask
me just find out yourself

- Mark Todd

Perspectives

It's been about thirty-five years now since I first glimpsed the beauty of Taylor Park. My husband Hap and I were driving over Cottonwood on our way to summer jobs at Timberline Trails Boys Camp in Tin Cup. The owner Bob Balch had convinced us that a summer at a Colorado camp would far exceed our experiences working at a Texas camp deep in the piney woods. These were the days before electricity in Tin Cup and running a summer camp in a remote, rugged environment was not always easy. We knew that our campers benefited from long hikes, seeing their meals being cooked on wood stoves, and going to bed with lights dimming from generators running low, but the competition with more elaborate camps was a challenge.

We recently attended a reunion of Timberline Trails' campers and staff. Seeing these boys as grown men and listening to their reminiscing only reinforced my instinctive feeling that young people don't have to have material luxuries to be happy and thrive. We heard many words those few days, but the ones below capture the feeling.

from Dave Smith in Lawrence, Kansas:

"What was it that made Taylor Park important then, and still, a full thirty plus years later? What did it give me that was so meaningful? Maybe you can imagine a shy thirteen-year-old from Lawrence, Kansas, who was not overflowing with self-confidence, getting on a bus with forty people he doesn't know from Adam, in order to spend two weeks away from home for the first time. It would do my parents a great disservice to say that I climbed on that bus a 'nobody'. But neither was I, by any stretch of the imagination, any kind of a real 'somebody' in Lawrence.

My first summer in 1996, our counselor took us on an overnight to Cow Lake. On the way out, just downstream from the lake, we

traversed a boulder field that offered some tricky footing as we picked our way through it. I was second in line and just after a few minutes, our counselor looked back and discovered the rest of the line struggling over one hundred yards behind us. I'm sure he assumed the group was with him since he heard my feet right behind him. Such a simple thing really, of no lasting consequence. But the pride that my thirteen-year-old self felt right then because I had kept up was the first of many experiences in our private wilderness where self-confidence and self-esteem took root in me. It's magical how all these small victories, slowly but surely, can combine to change an 'anybody' to a 'somebody'."

from Steve Buka in Boston, Massachusetts:

"I can't begin to say just how important my days in Tin Cup were in making me the person I am today. I would gladly trade all my years of high-brow education here in the East for my summers at Timberline Trails. What would I be like if I hadn't wandered west one summer? Thanks for showing me love and God, who is so much more real on a hillside than in some concrete chapel or temple. Thanks for the knowledge, the vision of what we become when the artificial constraints of society are removed. I realize now how tough it must have been to keep things going. Did you ever think that those rough rides on the old yellow school bus or running low on food on those long hikes would scare me away? We never did anything like that here on the Coast. But then again, I don't suppose anyone ever did it like we did.

- Narcissa Channell



Photo by Robert Valdez

Purple Haze

As I walk along the canyon floor, I am focused on footfall and discovery,
joined in collective assembly to gather purple time inside a plastic bag.
In the placing, imagination sits in tiny vases on a windowsill or floats in candlelight
beside the steaming water's edge.

For a moment, my heart plunges into the newborn day.
It matches the flow and ebb of the ancient canyon.
Icy snowmelt runs through me with shivering joy.
In turn, warm heart's blood joins the swirling foam of the river,
feeding fish and mayfly among the budding willows.

Then, eyes lift they rise vertically along this hope this hope which hangs above.
There, my heart leaps effortlessly along the walls of rocky cliffs,
pulling muscle into mind, climbing, ascending, moving upward,
winding its way along the place where sky and land and thought collide.

Here, love holds the line, tracing a high path of moving point along
destiny after destiny. . . lifetime after lifetime. . . dream after dream. . .
Dreams, whose once beating energy now forms the precipice, which I, in turn,
must climb with courage across this edge of time,
this red which blends with blue,
this purple haze,
this beating heart
Piling softly, pulsing drop by drop what time is left, inside a plastic bag.

- Jackie DeVore

Reflections in Taylor Canyon

Water – you have a cutting edge!
Long before you had this steady, smug,
seductively soothing,
silken sound,
Up the river, you were surging and swirling
around bulbous boulders,
rushing over rocky runs.
But eons ago, you were rowdy and raucous,
riotously roaring, as you raced through
ravines,
ravenously ripping up the earth.
Yet...across the canyon...you left behind
the beautiful burnished
building blocks of stone
Thrusting toward a bright blue sky!

Dawn

On a soft gray canvas
one summer morn
I watched an artist at his work.
He splashed the colors here and there
it seemed with a most casual air;
and yet, at last when it was done
each color and each shade
had found a special place.
It was a miracle created by
the Greatest Master of them all,
lighting up a darkened world
bringing it the dawn.

- Robert Corneer

- Virginia Jones

- The 5th Gunnison Valley Journal -

Windsong

Sometimes it's soft, sometimes it's strong,
never can tell what kind of windsong
will blow as you walk, but if you will listen
you might get a message of things you've been
missin'.

Short sleeves felt just fine for the wind wasn't cold
but it blew with such force it seemed to take hold
and I walked very fast, not my usual pace,
but the wind was in charge as it blew in my face.

I heard the music the wind had created,
the message to us was clearly stated.
And though it was robust, the song that it sings
was exciting and special for forecast the spring.

- Betty Light

There is nothing like
lying in the grass
and listening to the wind
Watching the trees blow thoughtfully

Thinking of nothing and...
dreaming of everything

-Anna Steenlage



Photo by Robert Valdez

Wind

the wind howls in my mind,
scattering my thoughts
here and there.
back to a time when love was new
when all i could see was you.

back to now, where i sit
staring at my shoes.

the wind fills me with its
restless anxiety;
something is on the way,
but what?

it's only a storm,
you know,
high and low pressure.
just air,
the wind.
air moving above and around you,
tearing your thoughts to shreds.
it's just air, you know,
without it you would
be dead.

- Amy Proctor

from our younger generation . . .

Golden leaves are fun
Halloween colors are neat
Snowflakes are falling.
- Ryan Pike

These selections are from Barbara Haas' 5th Grade Class . . .

Colors

Pink

When I think of pink, I think of the sunset. I think of the different shades of pink, swirling around the sun. I think of hearts pumping in everybody's body, keeping everyone alive. Sometimes I even think of pink as my kitty's nose. When I think of pink though, I mostly think about love. I think of love because of all the love that goes on around the world. When I think of pink, I think of all these things.

- Jazzmine Otsuka

Blue

When I look outside what do I see? I see a blue sky looking at me. The air is so clear, and as bright as day. So bright in summer it looks like May. Even at night the sky is blue, the stars shine so bright like sparkling dew. As the butterfly touches your nose with its blue wing, you feel so happy you begin to sing. Look into the ocean it is blue too, so slippery yet wet it may feel like glue. When I look outside what do I see? I see a blue sky looking at me.

- Jordan Zenisek

Red

Red is the color of blood flowing through your veins. Red is also the color of romance like roses so beautiful and when they wither, red is still in their petals. Red can also mean death as blood trickles down your bullet-wounded head. Red can mean life, like a newly born baby or it could mean hope like blood donors. They can give their blood to help a dying mother or child so they can fulfill life and make their child a happier one.

- Connor Coleman

Gray

Gray is for steel, paper, and most of all timber wolves. When timber wolves howl, my brother gets chills down his back and I just howl back. Of course, they will echo back like I am one of the pack and my mom calls me in for dinner so I've got to go back. I wonder if they will accept me into the pack once more?

- James Davis

Beauty

Beautiful

I think the most beautiful place in Gunnison is the mountains. I think there is nothing more beautiful. I think they're so beautiful because of the rocks, and all of the trees. When I'm at school, I love staring at all the mountains. Mountains also make me happy when I'm sad.

- Jazzmine Otsuka

beautiful because you can see almost all of Gunnison. And the peak itself is so beautiful because of the trees, plants, animals, and the sunrises. I hope that this peak could stay this way forever.

- Marcuse Piquette

Forever Dew Drops

Dew drops on my open window. I felt the cool brisk air of morning. I looked at those dew drops as if they were gold. But those pieces of gold only last for a couple hours. That is why they are more precious than any valuable ore 'cause gold may last forever, but dew lasts for all eternity in your mind.

- Connor Coleman

The place I'm going to tell you about is so beautiful, that even a picture might make your eyes water. So, I'm only going to tell you about it. It is a peak called Signal Peak. The peak is beautiful in two ways, in history and by its nature. The history is that the natives that lived here used this peak to signal if something was wrong. In nature, it is

My Life Without Eighth Graders

I remember someone saying that life comes in cycles, small and large; a twenty-two-year cycle for me is about to end with my retirement in May. Come next fall my life will no longer include eighth graders. With this amazing prospect my mind begins to reel; how will I know how to act in a world without thirteen- and fourteen-year-olds constantly surrounding me?

Will I be standing in a crowded grocery line, suddenly thinking I'm in mid-morning break and start pushing my way to the front of the line?

Will I expect my friends to come up with wonderfully bizarre and random comments having nothing to do with the subject under discussion?

Will I be able to function in the peace and quiet of home without someone interrupting me every five seconds?

Will I be able to carry on an adult conversation?

Will I suddenly feel older when I'm not immersed in the latest music and styles?

Will I suddenly feel like I have to race somewhere at a precise time like 8:26 instead of making normal arrangements like 8:30?

Will I know what to do with my time when I'm not grading papers most nights?

Will I know what to do when I'm talking with a group of people and they actually listen without passing notes or throwing sidelong glances across the room?

All these questions race around in my mind. At the moment I know no answers except one: without eighth graders, my life will be totally different. Eighth graders grow up; teachers become older. We will probably see each other periodically, passing each other on the streets of our small town or meeting at other gatherings. They will either greet me with enthusiasm or give me a knowing nod. Either way, there will be an inescapable bond between us.

Life goes on, but probably not as vitally without my eighth graders.

*- Narcissa Channell
Written on her retirement from teaching
in Gunnison Schools, May 2001*

The clouds cannot escape the horizon
And the spirit cannot hide from the adventure
So I inhale every piece of this life.

- Anna Steenlage

To a First-time Tourist

Step into a time passed – to a hamlet called Almont.
Distances become unknowns; cares disappear for the moment.
Relics from the past, come into view.
Days turn into unnumbered hours which are
oblivious to the coming and going of the sun's golden rays.

Where you have been before, or where you go after, doesn't matter.
Tarry here, while raucous magpies squawk or swallows warble in harmony,
and gentle breezes whisper softly into the pines.

Hush! Give ear to this pastoral setting – green-blue water swashes over worn
boulders, and surges with milk-white froth.
The river murmurs, and rolls down, down.

A balm descends on your spent spirit, soothes away the roar of traffic, the stress
of your workday week, and eases you into a vale of years gone by.
Breathe freely, pause to reflect, take time to be the master of your time;
become an idle person and let the grace of the mountains lull you to a reprieve.
Let the magnificent height of the pines which soar above you, liberate you from the real
world.

Become a part of the quiet life in Almont. Dwaddle, drowse, walk, breathe in the feather-
light air, nap, or gaze into the black night. Sometimes millions of stars will gaze down.
Before long, cares will vanish. Time will stand still, for a while, in Almont.

- Joan Wagner

Three Rivers Resort

Stars seem somehow closer set against
the black of night.

Moontide sends light streaming behind
the mountains to outline their silhouette.

Sunlight flashes on the brilliant of the Taylor
while the water dabbles over slick boulders.

Pines call to each other softly
on the whispering breeze.

Rain pelts the dust filled roads and
bushes, and shines them perfectly.

Air freshens with moisture,
making piney, wet smells.

Cabins, cozy in their place, welcome you
to a haven of rest and calm.

People call to you, friendly and concerned,
welcoming, you again.

HOME, no matter where else you go,
always seems to be called Almont.

- Joan Wagner

This Cursed Valley

The following is the prologue to Larry K. Meredith's historical novel, published in July of 2002, which is set, to a large extent, in the Gunnison Country. The story spans the years from 1880 to 1930. It is built around a local legend that the Ute Indians, as they were being driven to reservations in southwestern Colorado, placed a curse on the Crystal River Valley. The novel, which follows the boom and bust of such area locales as Schofield, Crystal City and Marble, also details the rags to riches to rags story of Aspen and the development of Glenwood Springs as a tourist mecca.

PROLOGUE Fall, 1879

The thought occurred to him once again that they had killed too many.

This time he agreed with himself and groaned involuntarily, letting his usual Ute stoicism slip and not caring, as he struggled to rise from the cross-legged sitting position he had assumed throughout the long night. Too many winters, he muttered to himself as he brushed at the dust on his store-bought Levi's. He trudged the few steps to a weathered pine tree and scratched his back against the bark, not worrying about snagging the plaid shirt he had worn since he and the others had fled the White River Agency five days ago.

It saddened him to think of what he had decided he must do as a result of what the whites were calling a "massacre." The Utes called it necessary. Nevertheless, it was done, and now he was soon to use his powers as a Holy Man in a manner that had once been unthinkable.

Owl Man shrugged as if to say it didn't matter. In his heart, however, in the deepest secret places of his soul, it did matter.

He discussed it with himself some more.

They had killed only 23, he told himself again, and 13 of those were soldiers. One of the others, though, had been the agent Meeker. That was it, then. It had been the deaths of the agent and the women that had sent the white soldiers into such a rage they had pursued the small band of Utes down Colorado's rugged backbone to this deep, isolated valley.

He laid the thought aside and turned slightly, looking past the brush toward an army of ramrod straight aspen trees, trying to see the woman. He had heard nothing from her for several hours and it was nearly light, the false dawn of early morning beginning to give shape to the bulk of mountain across the valley. He wanted to join the others this morning and cross the pass that would lead them to safety in the southwestern San Juan Mountains. It would not be a good idea to stay here much longer, he thought. The soldiers would be along much sooner than the Nunt'z, the People, expected them. Most of the Utes respected the soldiers for the power of their guns and because there were so many. Few, however, gave them credit for being fast or smart.

There was a moan from the aspen grove to his left. Good. Perhaps the half-Ute, half-white child would come soon and they could leave this sacred mountain.

He walked to the edge of the high outcropping and sat once more on the rock where he had waited throughout the night. His knees creaked as he bent to the boulder and he shook his head sadly at the thought of the rigors of old age. Straight gray hair with hints of the deep black of the past fell to his shoulders and framed a broad face, a flat nose that spread widely beneath still-sharp and deeply set eyes and a narrow line of a mouth. The face was smooth except for the

etched lines at the corners of his eyes and in his forehead, made even darker by the consternation he felt as he pondered the events of the past few months.

Few of the Nunt'z had listened when he told them it was inevitable. The speed at which it happened had been a surprise, though, even to him, a Holy Man with powers that had once made him rich and honored by his people. But when the whites laughed at him the People slowly began to doubt his power. It was Meeker, though, who turned them finally against him and many of the Nunt'z deserted Inu'sakats and turned to Meeker's Jesus.

He waved his hand at a blowfly and then stared at the palm. It was old and scarred. His life was written on that hand, the thick wrist, the short, strong fingers. That scar there between the thumb and forefinger. A Comanche knifeblade might have severed the thumb entirely but he had been too quick. Something like a smile cracked his broad, dark face. That hand had killed a man, had held many babies, had caressed many women. A slightly broader smile. Was it for the killing, the babies or the women? No, he thought. It was for his youth. Only yesterday he had been young and strong. One day young, the next old. He did not remember the transition.

Now he was old and running like a frightened rabbit from vengeful white soldiers who were angry over the deaths of 23 of their number, even though it was clearly their fault. It was good to grieve for those killed but they had died in battle and honorably. It had to be the women. The conclusion comforted him slightly. The whites were people, too, and they could rightly be angry and vengeful because of the women. He hoped it was the women and not simply the 23 deaths.

The old Indian sniffed the air and wished for the scent of a campfire and breakfast. Instead, the sharp bite of spruce, familiar to those who lived in the high country, filled his nostrils. It was a comforting smell, one he quickly associated with this place, this valley. The Nunt'z, the People, his band of Utes, had spent many good summers here. Game had been plentiful in those days and the People were happy. Then the miners had come and said there was value in the rocks of the mountains. "Pha!" He spit on the ground, thinking of the gleaming eyes in faces streaked with greed. He thought about it all, then, and fought the despair that threatened to overwhelm the anger. Keep the anger, he said to himself, and never accept the loss of country, of pride, of identity.

There was a sharp cry of new life behind him and soon the woman called his name. The child was already at her breast when he turned to her. "It is a man child," she said. He saw a scraggle of black hair, a nose that was bent to the side. Potentially blue eyes hinted at part of the child's parentage. Sooner than he had expected, the woman claimed she was ready to leave. He directed her to the ponies at the base of the ledge and lingered behind, waiting until she was out of the range of his voice. Then he stood and stretched his arms to the north and south. The sun cast his shadow far over the broad valley below.

He called on the powa'a and the ini'pote who had served him well for so many years. When he felt their calming presence, in a voice he hoped was angry but which betrayed the sadness that engulfed him, Owl Man placed the curse on the valley that he knew would lead to lives of pain and sorrow for all white men who walked in the shadow of the Mountain of Sanctuary.

- Larry Meredith

The Kill

It was snowing harder now, large soft flakes falling straight down through the tall trees. The forest became stone quiet as the snowflakes grew larger and more dense. Soon the sky and the ground blended into whiteness and the horizon disappeared altogether.

A solitary young man dressed in leather clothing picked his way along a faint trail. His progress was slow because the tracks he followed were becoming lost in the new snow. An hour before daylight he had left the tiny cluster of teepees to track a small herd of elk that had passed near his lodge during the night. He followed their trail for many miles winding down a broad canyon.

At the edge of a frozen creek he killed a large, eight-point bull with a single arrow shot from 60 paces. The accuracy of the shot pleased him and he knew his people in the village would be thankful for a portion of fresh elk meat. His people shared everything.

He butchered the kill quickly, packing only the largest cuts of meat that could be carried in his knapsack.

The snow stopped falling, and it grew very cold as he finished packing up. His hands were numb as he hoisted his heavy prize and trudged off toward home. He paused to look back from a distance at the carcass of his friend the elk. Steam rose from the still warm remains. He took a moment to silently thank the elk for giving himself up. He thought about how much his children would enjoy fresh meat.

As he stood in thought, he saw three gray shapes move silently out of the trees to surround the decimated elk carcass. The wolves attacked the remains ravenously. Soon the whole pack was together and a feeding frenzy ensued. The young man knew better than to linger. He shifted his load and moved quietly through the trees, but his progress was slow due to his cumbersome burden. He knew the elk carcass would not satisfy the wolf pack for long and that soon enough they would follow his trail.

The wolves circled the carcass again and again, then headed his way. It was apparent they had his scent and were after more meat. A large black wolf with a glossy coat leaped ahead of the pack and closed in on the young man. The wolf was powerfully built with large paws that allowed him to make good progress through the snow. Yellow Crow frantically struggled to dash forward in the deep powder. His feet were bound and padded with animal skins for better snow travel, but

the black wolf narrowed the distance between them steadily. Yellow Crow sweated profusely inside his leather clothing. His breath came in gasps as he labored to stay ahead. He could hear the large wolf behind him whining and growling with each bound. He knew the wolf pack would be close behind their leader in deadly pursuit.

Suddenly the black wolf closed the gap, lunging forward at the man's heels and bit into his leggings. Yellow Crow lost his balance and tumbled awkwardly down a steep hill. His precious load was lost as he careened forward blinded by the dry snow.

His body came to an abrupt halt at the base of a tall tower. The young man was dazed by the sudden impact. When he opened his eyes, the day was somehow different, brighter and the light more dazzling. He wasn't sure just how, but he could feel a difference.

He slowly raised his snow-covered head to follow the tower with his eyes to its top. Large cables rumbled through metallic wheels near the peak of the tower that stood taller than the surrounding spruce trees. A large but empty quadruple chair glided by overhead, followed by another and another. On the next chair rumbling overhead sat four silent figures bound in dazzlingly bright clothing that made Yellow Crow think of the colors of the sunrise. On the end of their legs were long, narrow boards fastened to heavy shoes also of bright colors. The riders looked at Yellow Crow through darkly opaque masks. If they were surprised to see him, they didn't show it. They leaned forward slightly in their metallic chairs as they whizzed towards the top of the mountain.

Before long, three large men wearing red jackets with white crosses on their backs glided up and quickly surrounded him. They stood effortlessly on their long slats in the deep snow, each leaning forward as though resting on the long slender poles fastened to their hands. Silently, they closed ranks around the young man and reached for him with their gloved hands. Yellow Crow did not resist the strangers because he believed the poles they held were weapons. Suddenly he was very tired. He shivered violently with the realization that he might not see his own people again for a long, long time.

- John Napier

Broken Treaties

We came to greet you with baskets of fruit
You cut off our arms
We came feathered and perfumed
You gave us venereal disease
Cheap arms and beads
We came begging food
You fed us disdain
We came asking warmth
You wrapped us in small pox
Religion and whiskey
This time we ask for nothing
And
You give it
Thank you
This finally is what we can use!

- Joe Lothamer



Oh-Be-Joyful

The horses are tired
slowly plodding along
We reach the top
and start back down
Into the basin
a sight to behold
It's called Oh-Be-Joyful
and it's red, blue and gold

A blanket of flowers
covers the floor
Columbine, Fairy Slippers
Blue Penstemon and more
Flowers so thick
they reach the horses thighs
It's called Oh-Be-Joyful
under a blue Colorado sky

The trail passes through
pine, spruce and aspen
The horses alert
waiting for something to happen
We take the left fork
through Democrat basin
It's called Oh-Be-Joyful
and it's paradise we're facing

A small mountain lake
deep turquoise blue
Bottomless, clear
a prism to look through
Brookies, cutthroats and browns
jumping for the fresh fly hatch
It's called Oh-Be-Joyful
and there's fresh fish to catch

The aspen are changing
from green to gold
The nights are turning
from cool to cold
It's the last trail ride
for this summer season
It's called Oh-Be-Joyful
and it's beauty beyond reason

- A stained glass work by Toni Bullock

Milton's Knoll

I should've dug the grave, climbed in with him, and shot him there. He weighed so much. Some people claim that there's a loss of weight when the soul departs, but I think it's the other way around. Death creates a vacuum. Like when stars implode, a black hole, something present, physical, and inescapable. Dragging Milton out of the wash, up twenty feet of talus and dirt to the knoll, his corpse absorbing weight by the second, was the most exhausting thing I've ever done. Heaving, jerking, skinning my knees, I gripped his back legs so I wouldn't see his face. Some people insist animals don't have souls and that separates Us from Them.

A forest begins two hundred yards upslope from Milton's grave. There, the warped trees dotting the hillock and peach rock coulee quickly straighten up and cluster into a black copse. The West Prong Mountains peak over the forest's hairline. It was dusk, September, my senior year of high school, and caught in that panorama I could picture Milton's spirit, this heavy, white shadow, step away from his body, glance about, see the mountains, and decide, Hey, I'll head toward those. I figured a soul back in Kansas—where Mom, Milton and I came from; he and I both just kids then, me thirteen and him ten in dog years—buried in a wheat field, would wake disoriented, look around, and have no motivation to leave its body. In the wash I sent a .44 slug through his fur. It shattered the base of his skull and lodged in his brain. Or maybe it exited through his smiling face and nailed a squirrel, a little Egyptian-like minion to hound through the next dimension? Boy, I sure hoped.

The knoll came to mind the moment I knew I'd have to put him down. I drove straight there, Milton's head out the passenger window as we meandered northwest on the Red Tail dirt roads, lawns and pastures giving way to scrub and drooling cliffs. The sky was miraculous. When I think about it now, I hear lyrics, I've seen it rain and fire in the sky ... such a timeless Western Slope dusk, red-rimmed pastel paper clipped out and pasted on a blue screen. Of course, back then the only John Denver song I knew was "Thank God I'm a Country Boy," and I never would've admitted it, never. I was too afraid of people thinking I was.

On the northwest edge of our subdivision, I ground to a halt at the Ohio Canyon BLM gate. Jumping out, truck running, I unlatched the chain, swung it open, drove over the cattle guard, and didn't close it behind me. We continued into the brown hills. By then Milton was drained. Pulling his massive head in the window, he turned around and rested it on my thigh. Sunbeams leveled into the cab, illuminating the dashboard dust. Wisps of fur danced in the light. I felt we were sinking in fiery, dry plankton. Rubbing Milton's neck, I laughed. "F--- it. Time to be men." My voice was deep. Fake deep. That's how I spoke back then. I thought I had to.

Five miles in, where the road grows faint and the wilderness surrounds, I pulled the truck into a turn-around at the mouth of the coulee. It was the place I'd take my girlfriends. Borrowing Mom's Plymouth wagon, I'd undress them in the cramped silent cold of the car, nothing but blackness around us, the coyotes singing like madmen. I'd do things normal high school guys didn't. I'd hoard their souls. I'd try to make them need me forever.

It would've been dangerous had I not decided where to bury Milton beforehand, if I'd driven aimlessly through dry creek beds looking for such a perfect place all the while thinking about divorce and betrayal, about Dad back in Kansas ... a bad spot to be in with a .44 at your disposal.

I stepped from the truck all business. Milton struggled over the gearshift and tumbled out after me. He stretched and yawned. I remember a wind in his fur and thinking it too late in the year to have such a strong breeze. Breathing deeply, I found it still carried that light scent of thaw rather than the smokiness of impending winter.

Milton lowered his nose and weaved away. I let him go. He lifted his leg on a boulder and sneezed into an anthill. I felt a stomachache coming on. I had terrible stomachaches then. They gave me sparks in my eyes and cold sweats. Mom blamed my temper. "You don't control it, you'll wind up in jail or on a gurney."

Watching Milton, I was momentarily convinced he was perfectly healthy. Just had to get away from the house, get in the mountains, piss on something new. I almost loaded him back up, but he spooked a jackrabbit, gave chase,

and went down hard. Standing gingerly, he stumbled back to me.

I sat on a slab, and Milton lay down, pressed against my shins. His tongue lolled. I worked my fingers down his flanks, trying to feel something inside, an explanation. His fur had thinned, replaced with atrophied muscles. The disease was more than him.

He'd been the runt. When I first got him I wanted him to grow big as Clifford. I fed him extra and made him run stairs. When he bulked up to extraordinary proportions, it was as if he had done so at my request. Mom said he responded to me like no one else, like ESP. It wasn't that he obeyed me—he wasn't the submissive sort—but that he seemed to act out of our collective self-interest.

He was the largest Samoyed Dr. Denis ever heard of, AKC, but over 130 lbs. full-grown. And it wasn't fat until the disease. I had him neutered at age six. His cattle chasing was too aggressive. Ranchers were always shooting at him, but he was too fast and smart. I never felt comfortable about neutering. He was my dog, it was my choice, and I was convinced the process scraped anything resembling worth or masculinity clean out. Since Dad left, I knew how that felt. I put off the neutering until Sheriff Roach fined me. Dr. Denis said the postponement probably triggered Milton's diabetes. Even though he ate less each day, his last official weigh-in was 156.

The sun dropped behind the West Prongs. The world turned hard blue. A fingernail moon rose. I shifted forward and straddled him. Milton canted his head and licked me. Patting the ground, I located the gun. He knew. He turned away and stared straight ahead.

Milton's coat was a good four inches thick. He loved the cold. He'd always slept on my bed at night, but once we moved from Kansas to Colorado he got the habit of waking me at four a.m. to let him out. I'd do it, a blast of brilliant cold smacking my half-naked body, and later, when I'd set off to catch the school bus, he'd burst from a snowdrift, having curled up like a Jack London character, making me so proud, escorting me down the road.

He only stayed out all night when coyotes invaded our yard. Hearing them yapping, Milton went ape shit. We could see them out my bedroom window, five or six, and Milton had to get to them like a drowning man. Barking, growling, bucking like a rodeo, I'd release him, the white crest of his back massive in the moonlight, and he'd rocket into the pack, singing, growling, pissing in circles. Like the ranchers, the coyotes never hurt him. With the snow bright as day under those big moons, they'd converge, but he'd shake 'em off like fleas.

The rocky pit took me an hour to dig. Stepping over the grave, I pulled Milton's body in. I didn't know what to do next. I leaned on my shovel like a character in an old Western and watched that strange breeze whirlpool into the hole and twist his fur. I thought about crying, that I should, that I hadn't since I was a kid. I didn't feel like crying but I knew I could if I concentrated. I thought, maybe I should go cry for one of my girlfriends? Or for my mom? Who would appreciate it the most? In the end, I didn't cry. I filled the hole, and, when I had a mound, I patted it proudly with blistered and bleeding hands.

Next I started gathering large stones. I lugged them over and stacked them on the turned earth. At some point, a flurry of ragged clouds swept across the moon, cutting my light. That's when the coyotes wailed. My spine straightened without consent. Dropping a rock, I started sobbing. I sobbed and bolted, zigzagging blindly for my truck.

I stepped on the gas and tore out of there with the windows down. The washboards rattled my chest. My heart felt like it might come loose. I fish-tailed around corners, my head blurred with whipping wind. The passenger seat didn't feel empty, but I couldn't take my eyes off the road. I hit the BLM cattle guard going sixty.

My tires left the ground. Silence. Moonlight froze my truck into a block of ice. One second ... two ... three. Oh, my soul, now I know where you hid. I didn't land, and I won't again.

- Nate Liederbach



Sleeping Beauty

I love the bareness of winter trees.

They have an honest vulnerability as they wait in stillness for the storm's approach. Trees know the grace of prepared acceptance and they tie our lives to their goodness. Fleshy fruits and flowing juice of summer abandoned, what remains? Open branches. . . flexible trunks. . . roots that nourish and strengthen. . .

While green fire burns inside each nascent bud, dreaming of the sweet kiss of spring.

- Jackie DeVore

Photo by Robert Valdez

Hugh McGee on Signal Peak and, of course, on trash . . .

#1

A lone white cloud hangs in the sky,
Accompanied by a wisp or two.
An airplane leaves a vapor trail
Across the incredible blue.

The wind sings the song of the mountains.
The sagebrush trembles with delight.
Snow-covered peaks in every direction.
An inspiring and magnificent sight.

It is difficult to put into words
The emotions that the mountains stimulate.
A heritage of the Gunnison Valley
Few places can emulate.

(Picking up the trash is a habit to emulate,
Not giving it time to congregate.)

#2

Once again I climb the mountain,
The climb I have made so many times before.
The San Juans, as usual, are magnificent,
Opening wide my imagination's door.

How many generations of feet have climbed this mountain?
What was the color of their skin?
What was the content of their imagination?
When did this panorama all begin?

And then the question – who am I?
Why was I permitted to exist?
The question itself indicates an answer.
And yet we continue to intelligently resist!

(Trash will probably continue to exist.
Therefore, the urge to pick it up we must not resist.)

– Hugh McGee

Mountain Morning Sundown

Here in the mountain valleys we see
That the sun doesn't rise but descends,
Comes slowly down from the high barren rock
Down onto and over the thick'ning fur of trees
Lighting the needles and setting the aspen in motion
A binary shimmering code of light no light
Saying patience to us in the still shadow below:
Look west to the descending light long enough
And the sun will slip down and behind us
Touch the nape of our lightward longing soul.

– George Sibley

Places of Home

There was a time, I know
When I was a child
I just can't tell you at what point
I became an adult
A woman of the Valley
A "Hippy"
A "Local"
A "Gunnyite"
But walking down Main
Headed to spend my last 5 bucks
 On a hot chocolate with bagel
 An Extra Breakfast Special
 Biscuits and Gravy
Counting license plates
Watching for friends
Maybe brushed hair, braided.
My favorite jeans
Have been too many places
For letting go with a few holes
Patched up. Holed again. Dirty.
Laundry money Saturday night
Spent at the local joint
On Redhouse or Mama's Cookin'
I know I'm a local.

The latest tourist couple
Watching for the "walking" symbol
Petrified looks over the coming truck
As I just go with a wave
Ignoring the symbols with promises
"They won't hit you, don't worry."
"I guess we're not in the city," answers one.
Walking side by side, they look, look again
Stopping with a weary smile
The other asks, "What's good to eat?"
I name the places I've spent
My college career
My loan money
My transition from child to adult
My discovery of self
"It just depends,
What you're in the mood for," I answer.

Nestled between mountains,
Rivers, cold wind snowflakes
Lights up the Valley with falling white
Crystal blue skies on others
Any time sunburn especially that winter
The coldest, they said, on record
When my father called,

"Do you know how cold..."
And I'd tell him at what point
 I couldn't feel my toes
 My hair turned white, boogers froze
 When someone picked me up
 Offering a warm ride
He'd go on thankful
Talking of warmer, city things
And of people not being so nice

Yep, here in the Valley
We are all aware of the other
 Taking care
 Smiling
 Checking
 Questioning
Adopting the local "Mom"
While she feeds, challenges
Her "kids" the best she can
Some times she just quietly sits
Concerned eyes, head tilted
With tea, homemade cookies
Putting us back together with prayers
 After finals
 Best friends leaving
 Families falling apart
 People dying
Always leaving her house open
Her fridge full
Her heart giving
Her Home to us all

So yes, there was a point
A child walked off campus
The first time fearful of everything
Now, grabbing a few bucks
Walks down Main
Fearful of what?

Discovery.
Self.
Home.
Comfort.
Friends.
The Valley.

- Bryony Brack

"On the Way Home"

Near Buena Vista,
our first sight of Mt. Princeton,
King of the Divide.
A white-haired grandpa
with South Park as his lap.

- Betty Light

Chant to Shatter Illusion

Maya, may I hold you now?
Yet, also know when the lights go down
deep, dark, deep in the ground
A truth is ringing between
the flesh of our ears –
the sound of pure spirit.
The lusty high we feel or
fear to feel is not the
only thing happening here.
Shut your eyes,
earth traveler, and be with me true –
in a cave beneath a desert arch or
deep beneath the sheets in the black wet
here where I am sharing this with only you.
Shatter the false and all ideas
of how you love a man.

I shatter all illusion now
like a delicate glass
who falls to the ground –
caching!!!!
Reborn is a new entity
particles of truth.

- Troy Hamilton

Even When

When snow whites all
and strong hearts slow
so green and even gold be lost
and hummingbirds gone,
leaving behind the robins lame
that find no food,

even in the still
of that darkest time
when creatures burrow
deep in their secret places
and the bones of silent ice
are broken only by the cracking river,

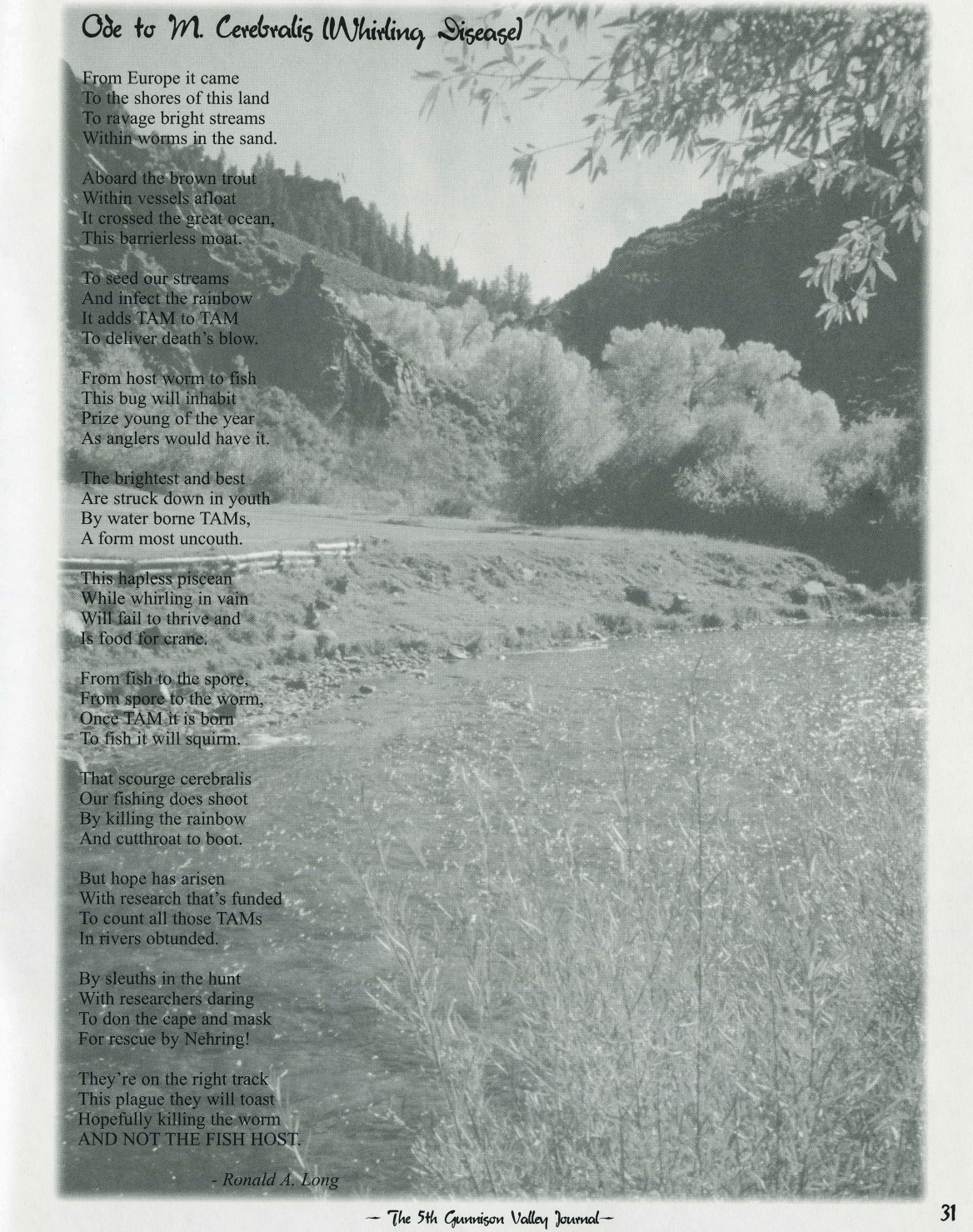
even then in that black night
the stars we crave
but cannot see
are ablaze, fierce and bright –
burning, burning up the sky.

- Marlene Wright Zanatell

(Quiet in true dreams)

Quiet in true dreams
The sleepy immense of heaven
coils about closed eyes.
Its shape invisible, indivisible,
undividable by newspapers, greeting cards
and anchormen.
It flees objectivity, teleprompters,
court reports and bank machines.
It drinks pleasure, rapture,
and the mist across mountains in the morning.
It breaths smoke, joy, musk,
the wet thunder of twilight rains
and the essence of souls,
whenever expelled in public or private.

- Kris Scuccimarra



Ode to *M. Cerebralis* (Whirling Disease)

From Europe it came
To the shores of this land
To ravage bright streams
Within worms in the sand.

Aboard the brown trout
Within vessels afloat
It crossed the great ocean,
This barrierless moat.

To seed our streams
And infect the rainbow
It adds TAM to TAM
To deliver death's blow.

From host worm to fish
This bug will inhabit
Prize young of the year
As anglers would have it.

The brightest and best
Are struck down in youth
By water borne TAMs,
A form most uncouth.

This hapless piscine
While whirling in vain
Will fail to thrive and
Is food for crane.

From fish to the spore,
From spore to the worm,
Once TAM it is born
To fish it will squirm.

That scourge cerebralis
Our fishing does shoot
By killing the rainbow
And cutthroat to boot.

But hope has arisen
With research that's funded
To count all those TAMs
In rivers obtunded.

By sleuths in the hunt
With researchers daring
To don the cape and mask
For rescue by Nehring!

They're on the right track
This plague they will toast
Hopefully killing the worm
AND NOT THE FISH HOST.

- Ronald A. Long

more on writing . . .

Reading and Writing

The writer thinks of songs to write
While walking down the road,
And hears the song the water writes
On the rock in the woods beyond,
And sees on the lake nine ducks write Vs
Across the shimmered Vs of trees reflected,
While above it all from the mountain's ridge
The wind with snow writes something on the
sky,
Something too large to read today;
I'll have to come read it another day.

- George Sibley

Visiting Hours

I brought you my soul cut in little pieces and shook up in a bag
you showed me your nemesis and his regiment
who makes being a poet like working for the government
keeping his thesaurus up his arse
where his forms reside till he decides to free them
the only problem with his poems is he tends to overfeed em
this hefty heaven smelling of poison where he gives you trinkets
for learning his lessons which are a bit like the rules for
living in prison the angel of apathy centered in his attitude
surrounded by names dropped and rhymes schemed and these
fornicating platitudes besides every time he winks you think
he means something you believe i could learn a lot from him
like how to write a sonnet of a fart in the wind or how to treat
the muse like a widow in a nursing home tell you the truth all
this plastic statue can do is annoy me
yet this sculpture doesn't piss me off near as much as the way
your eyes refuse to hold me

- Joe Lothamer

*And for those of you who are thinking about the sixth Gunnison Valley
Journal, but don't have time today to start something, remember this poem
from the third Journal. . .*

Procrastination

Some day I'm goin' to write a poem about procrastination

Procrastination, Revisited

Some day I'm goin' to write a poem about procrastination,
A malady that seems to be so common in this nation.
I'll pen some verse quick and terse about this vice infernal,
And promptly get it published in the Gunnison Valley Journal.
I'll take to task the slacker for bein' so weak and meek.
Damn! What a great idea!... I'll start on it next week.

- John Nelson

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loving and critically at the valley – and share their thoughts with us all.*

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