

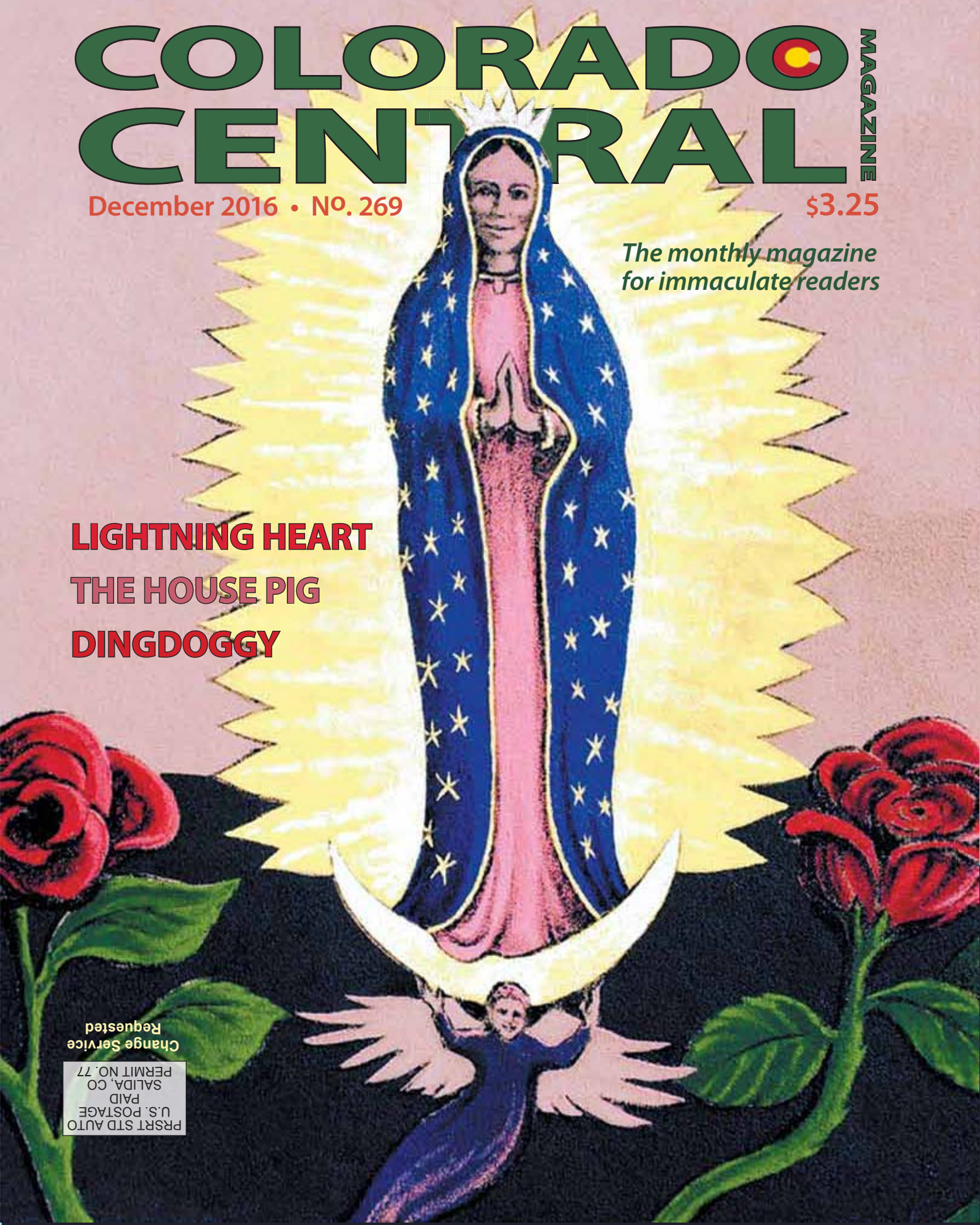
COLORADO MAGAZINE CENTRAL

December 2016 • No. 269

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Colorado Central Magazine

December 2016, No. 269

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“Even if you are a minority of one, the truth is the truth.” – Mahatma Gandhi

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Our goal is to publish an interesting, informative magazine which builds a sense of place, a regional community and a local culture in Central Colorado: Lake, Chaffee, Custer and Saguache counties, as well as the San Luis Valley and nearby portions of Park, Fremont and Gunnison counties.

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Mount Simmons sits at 12,050 feet in the northern Sangre De Cristo mountain range, just outside Salida. It is the 1198th highest mountain in Colorado and the 1830th highest mountain in the United States. Learn about a hike up this mountain beginning on page 33. Photo by Mike Rosso.



About the Cover Art

COLORADO MURALIST Fred “Lightning Heart” Haberlein completed this depiction of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the side of the Atencio Tire Shop in Antonito, Colorado, on October 20, 2016. Our Lady of Guadalupe, *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, also known as the Virgin of Guadalupe, is a Roman Catholic title of the Blessed Virgin Mary associated with a venerated image enshrined within the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. She stands atop a darkened crescent moon, carried by a cherubic angel.

Haberlein says she is the embodiment of the Holy Mother in the New World. “Her image has spread since Her first appearance in Mexico long ago, all the way up the Rio Grande to the San Luis Valley. To those of faith, Her image is the manifestation of the nurturing, unconditional love and healing of the Holy Mother.”

The mural is 14 by 28 feet and replaces a previous mural on the main street that was painted over after 30 years when the building changed hands. See a photo of the previous mural and an article about Lightning Heart beginning on page 12.



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From the Editor

Off the Cliff

So, that went well ...

I've voted in every presidential election since Jimmy Carter's election in 1976 and have never witnessed anything like this year's.

First you have a candidate who, under normal circumstances, would have been disqualified for any number of things he said or tweeted while on the campaign trail. We then discovered that agents of the Russian government attempted to influence the outcome by selectively leaking hacked documents to harm the Democratic candidate.

The candidate who was clearly leading in the polls throughout the election, and who easily defeated her opponent in all three televised debates, still ended up losing the Electoral College and thus the presidency.

A week before the election, the head of the FBI leaked a story to the press with potentially devastating consequences for the Democrat, then timidly walked it back just days before the election.

Many notable right-wing columnists such as George Will and Charles Krauthammer refused to endorse the Republican candidate, and the conservative *National Review* magazine published a special issue in January featuring essays by 22 prominent conservatives opposed to the candidacy of the now president-elect.

Newspapers across the country either rejected his candidacy or supported his opponent. Conservative papers such as the *Cincinnati Enquirer* and *The Arizona Republic* broke with long-standing tradition to endorse the Democrat. Locally, even the right-leaning editor of the *Salida* newspaper refused to endorse him.

Does this mean that, going forward, polls, pundits, endorsements and debates are worthless? Has the presidential election now become a reality TV show, with the losers being voted off the island or worse, indicted?

I confess to having never watched *The Apprentice*, the TV show featuring our president-elect scrutinizing potential employees and then gleefully firing them. Maybe if I had, I would better understand the American electorate and how they came to choose this apparent Mussolini wannabe as the commander-in-chief of the most powerful military on the planet.

There are many theories as to the election results: white working-class angst, a rebuttal to the status quo, James Comey, to name a few. But I'm going to go out on a limb here and suggest that sexism played a large part as well. Hillary or not, a large percentage of the electorate, men and women, were just not ready for a female president, choosing instead a misogynistic, unfiltered trust-fund baby, who never held a public office in his life.

I'm reminded of the 1991 film, *Thelma & Louise*, particularly the ending, where, cornered by the authorities on the edge of the Grand Canyon, Louise decides to gun it, driving them both over the abyss and into the canyon. Only in this version, Thelma represents the 50 percent of the electorate who did not vote for the Republican, and who truly do not want to be driven off a cliff.

Locally, Chaffee County had an unusual race. A Democrat and an Independent will become the new commissioners, joining one who changed his affiliation from Republican to Unaffiliated earlier this year. This actually reflects voting patterns statewide as "unaffiliated" voters now make up the largest number of registered voters. Overall, Chaffee County went for the Republican presidential candidate, but not by much, and Colorado itself went blue.

But soon we will have an executive authority who has little regard for the press and the freedom of speech, and it is more important than ever to support independent media. Please see page 23 to see how you can help us to keep it alive in the uncertain days ahead.

■ – Mike Rosso



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Living in a Bubble, Even in a Small Town

By Maddy Butcher/Writers on the Range

IN MY SMALL TOWN in southwestern Colorado, those who did not vote for Donald Trump seemed numbed and stunned by the result. Mostly college-educated and originally from away, they grouped in their usual places to commiserate.

Maybe it was a shocking result. But if these folks had visited outside their circles, if they'd tried to get a fix on what makes the longtime locals tick, they might have had a better sense of what was to come.

Mancos, Colorado, population about 1,300, is mostly white, with folks here mostly ranching and farming and some doing outdoor recreational and nonprofit work. It is also a Colorado Creative District, and because of its growing diversity, Mancos was

The driver, in his ignorance and impatience, had made matters worse. Maybe it's a scene that plays out across other small Western towns.

Another example: Colorado is a fence-out state, so gates and fences are nothing new. But more and more transplants to our area lock their gates. Inevitably, cattle get through their fencing. So how do the new people drive them off their lawns?

(Ranchers) "either have to cut the fence or cut the lock. Things could go smoothly but don't because of that," said Wyatt Cox, a local rancher.

Perry Lewis served on the town board from 2004 to 2012. Born and raised here, Lewis lived in California, Illinois, Massachusetts and elsewhere before

"Get out of your little bubble. Roll down your window. Smell the cattle."

named one of the "Top 20 Small Towns" by *Smithsonian Magazine*.

But in my experience, pockets of people here act more like species in the wilderness. They clump together and interact with other groups only when they must. That's too bad, since reaching beyond comfortable circles has mostly positive consequences. Researchers at Stanford and Harvard Universities say so. Yet I see plenty of miscommunication and even disdain between community groups here.

An example: Mancos' motto is "Where the West Still Lives" and sure enough, cattle drives are regular deals. Recently, I helped friends move 50 pairs along a few miles of back road. Most cars stopped to let us pass, but one local driver in a new Subaru tried to pass a stopped car and push through the herd. Now, side-by-side vehicles blocked the cattle, and the frustration was palpable.

returning home. "I wanted my three sons to be able to grab their horse and their dog and go up into the mountains," he said.

I asked Lewis about diversity, newcomers and old-timers. "I love the diversity. But the thing that drives me batty? They want paved roads or don't want their neighbor to have chickens. ... But that's why they moved to Mancos."

You might think differences could be worked out over a cup of coffee. But even coffee reveals divisiveness. Most ranchers grab their morning cup at the Conoco station or at the P&D, which for decades has served as the town's grocery store. A quarter-mile away, Fahrenheit Coffee Roasters charges the same price but hosts a different clientele, who tote laptops and smartphones. Some sit for hours at the metal tables, working online.

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Matt Lauer, who owns Fahrenheit with his wife, Linda James, smiles at how old-timers label his customers. "It's 'yuppie,' 'new age,' 'expensive,'" he said. "There are folks who grew up on Folgers and who think this coffee sucks." One rancher told me that cowboy hats don't fit through Fahrenheit's doorway and that Lauer's customers "need to get a job."

You might assume that transplants are better at embracing a town's diversity. But sandal wearers with messenger bags are just as rutted in their routines as the cowhands dipping Copenhagen. Lewis and others said they do not see the new, young farmers reaching beyond their circle to get know farmers who have lived in Mancos for generations.

It makes me think that diversity takes work. Books help. My favorite is *The Good Neighbor Guidebook* for Colorado, edited by Nancy S. Greif and Erin J. Johnson. The driver stuck in cows would do well to read it: "New neighbors must be prepared to assume responsibility for the impact that their presence can have on working farms and ranches. ... Living next door to a farm or ranch involves ... a commitment to open communication, hard work, and constant learning."

Great Work, a business practices book by David Sturt, points to the need to reach outside usual circles. When people do that, "it makes communities interesting, welcoming, vibrant," Sturt writes. "It's actually a disadvantage to talk only with people "who like us, care about us and believe in us."


I mentioned the cattle drive snafu to Sturt. He laughed and offered the driver some advice: "Get out of your little bubble. Roll down your window. Smell the cattle. Listen to them. Get off autopilot. It takes more effort. And it's a delight." ■


Maddy Butcher is a contributor to Writers on the Range, the opinion service of High Country News (hcn.org). She writes in Mancos, Colorado.



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Photo by Virginia McConnell Simmons.

The Way We Really Were

By Virginia McConnell Simmons

SKIING AT COOPER HILL was a favorite family outing 60 years ago. Compared to the rope tow over on Fremont Pass, the T-bar at Cooper Hill was swell, once you learned not to sit on the bar and just let it push you from behind. No fashionable garb required. We wore ordinary winter jackets, caps, and mittens, with leather boots topped by gaiters to keep the snow out, and used wooden skis about six feet long until newfangled laminated Heads came along. Back then, the Hill had one wide downhill slope, but over to the side, a trail came down through the trees for thrills. We packed our own lunches but slept in Leadville in the tattered Tabor Suite on the top floor for luxury. Remember? ■

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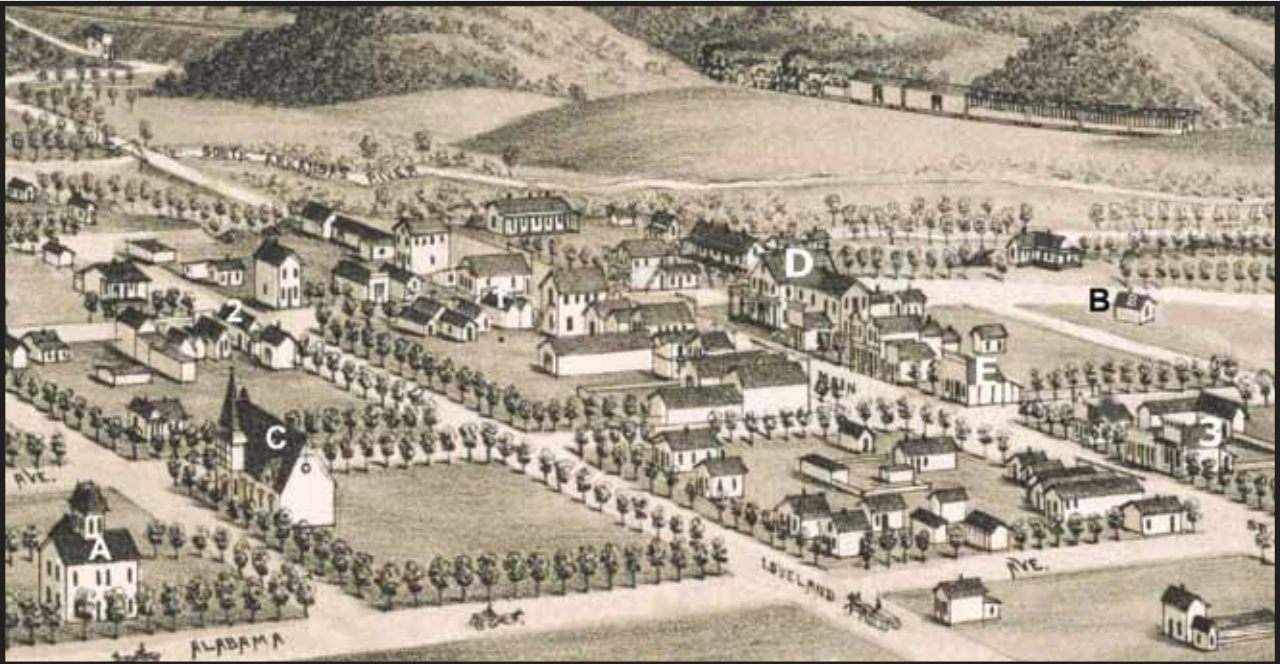


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Lithograph of Poncha Springs, Colorado in 1892: A - Schoolhouse, B - Library, C - Presbyterian Church, D - Poncha Hot Springs Hotel, E - Restaurant, 2 - Herald News, 3 - Meat Market . (Courtesy of the Salida Library)

The PONCHA SPRINGS



ITALIAN Connection

Early Settlers from Lago, Italy to Poncha Springs, U.S.A.

By Dr. Francesco Gallo

ON APRIL 5, 2016, Ralph Benjamin “Ben” Scanga was elected mayor of Poncha Springs, a statutory town in Chaffee County where, one-hundred thirty years ago, his great grandfather Giuseppe Scanga had emigrated from Lago (Cosenza), Italy. It’s a dream that has come true; it’s a good seed planted in fertile soil that gave origin to a solid plant.

While growing up, Ben worked with his grandfather Ralph Lewis Scanga who in 1952 had started the Scanga Meat Company. He learned from him how to run the family business but was also taught the importance of hard work, honesty, education and altruism. Ben always heard positive stories about Lago from his grandfather, who in 1923 went to Lago with his father Giuseppe and studied in Milan for two years.

After high school, Ben studied at Western State College in Gunnison and Veterinary Technician School in Denver. Since 2010, he has been the chairman of the Chaffee County Republican Party and was a long time town trustee of Poncha Springs.

Poncha Springs, founded in 1880, had a population of only 400 in 1885 when the first Laghitans arrived, but a total of 59 pioneer immigrants came

from Lago up to the year 1914, forming a significant portion of its population (about 15 percent) and thus played an important role in developing this new town.

Known for its fertile, inexpensive ranching land and close proximity to mining districts, Poncha was the earliest settlement in southern Chaffee County. Among the first Laghitans to arrive were Giuseppe Scanga, Domenico Posteraro, Giuseppe De Luca, Pietro Spena and Giovanni Groe, aka “John Groy.” They occupied themselves with farming, mining, raising stock or railroad track maintenance, or were busy working as craftsmen (carpenters, masons, lumber jacks, plumbers and butchers). Miners found jobs at the local Neely Mining and Smelting Company and at Elgin Smelter. After a few years, some immigrants had some money and borrowed additional funds to buy ranches. In fact, by the year 1910, six Laghitans owned ranches which together covered 1,374 acres of land with an appraised value of \$12,230.

The 1880 Poncha Springs Census gives us a clear picture of the social and financial situation that Laghitans found when they first arrived in 1885. Poncha had just 180 inhabitants with only five foreigners, but there were no Italians. As to their occupations,

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fourteen were miners, eleven were farmers, eleven businessmen, eight carpenters and five mine owners. Others were assayers, sawmill assistants, blacksmiths, store clerks, hotel clerks, saloon keepers or cooks. There was only one medical doctor, a pharmacist, a lawyer, a mining engineer, a baker, a plumber, a mason, a butcher and a single postmaster (Mr. J. McPherson) and

a hotel owner (Mrs. Minerva Burnett).

Regarding possible employment and services, there were five mines, a railway, a schoolhouse, a hotel (Poncha Hot Springs Hotel), a post office, three banks, a drugstore, a medical office, a newspaper (*Herald News*), a few restaurants, a sawmill, a laundry, a general store, a meat market, a livery stable, a few grocery stores and a few miners' supplies outlets. It was prohibited to sell intoxicating liquor, and as a result, there were very few saloons. There was a Western Union and Telegraph Office where Laghitans sent messages and remittances to their relatives in Lago. The public library had about 1,600 books in its collection.

In Poncha, the South Arkansas River runs between the town and Mount Ouray, which stands in the background. As to the urban plan, its streets came at right angles with each other and Main Street was more important than others, since along it, one found the Poncha Hot Springs Hotel, a restaurant and the meat market. The schoolhouse was located on Alabama Avenue, which led to the D&RG Railway Depot.

In 1883 the D&RG Railway depot was inaugurated in Poncha, causing Poncha's population to jump from 350 to 2,000 inhabitants by 1890. The railroad service facilitated the arrival of immigrants but also attracted to Poncha people affected with rheumatism and muscle pains, ailments that could be treated in its twenty different hot springs sites, one of which was at the Poncha Hot Springs Hotel.

Unfortunately, in 1882 a major fire destroyed most of the business district, and in the late 1800s, two other fires further devastated the town. The fire had spared only the Jackson Hotel and the schoolhouse, which today is still utilized as the City Hall Building. Thus, when Laghitans began settling there, having found a semi-destroyed town, masons, carpenters and plumbers worked hard to rebuild it.



This 1916 photo taken in Salida shows, from left to right, Domenico Posteraro, Giuseppe Scanga, Bernardino "Ben" Posteraro, Giuseppe De Luca and Henry De Luca. Courtesy of Ralph "Terry" Scanga. Upper left: 1912 advertisement in the *Salida Mail*.

Now, since many Laghitans had intermarried amongst each other, many lived together, helping each other to make ends meet, find jobs and get adjusted to the new environment. This was important because immigrants could not easily enter the U.S. unless they had sponsors who could guarantee to economically support them for at least the first month. An article published in Leadville on March 27, 1896, clearly shows this, as 400 Italians were sent back home from Ellis Island (New York) because they were penniless.

Their children attended, at least for a few years of grammar school, the local Poncha Springs Schoolhouse, whose construction began in 1881 and was completed by 1883.

Mayor Scanga represents a clear example of how hard work mixed with sufficient intelligence, courage, honesty and good fortune can enable descendants of early immigrants to reach incredible goals. One hundred thirty years ago, his great grandfather Giuseppe, who was illiterate and poor, had no idea that his sacrifice in America would have paved the way for his great-grandson to become mayor of the place where he himself had first settled in 1886.

We can appreciate how all this occurred when we consider that in 1923, Giuseppe and his wife decided

to return to Lago to spend the rest of their lives there. However, they took along their 15-year-old son (Ralph Lewis, Ben's grandfather), who was sent to a private school in Milan (Italy) to become a clothing designer. This means that although they were illiterate, their intelligence allowed them to understand and convey the importance of education, private enterprise and social commitment and responsibilities.

In fact, after his graduation, Ralph was encouraged to return to America and worked as a professional tailor-designer in Pittsburgh. He then moved back to Salida in 1948 where he was a supporter of many local institutions, especially the Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center, and was a member of the Rotary Club and the Salida Elks Lodge No. 808 for 25 years. In 1952 he started the Scanga Meat Company which still exists today. His son Terry (Ben's father) is a college graduate and general manager of the Board of the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District.

These examples greatly influenced Ben who, before being elected mayor and following the footsteps of his great grandfather, grandfather and father, has been active in the community as Town Trustee of Poncha Springs.

In 1935 the City of Salida had the Works Progress Administration pipe Poncha's spring water five miles east to the Salida Hot Springs swimming pool (today called Salida Hot Springs Aquatic Center). Thus, Poncha lost the tourists who, until then, had come for

thermal bath treatments. Also, as Poncha's residents became financially secure, including Laghitans, they preferred moving to Salida where more services were available, for instance, St. Joseph Catholic Church, the D&RG Hospital and Salida High School. Consequently, Poncha Springs' population dropped drastically.

Since Poncha's population has been rapidly growing from 466 to 778 inhabitants from the year 2000 (a 64 percent rise in 16 years), causing a construction boom of apartments and homes, Ben's job becomes even more important and difficult. This situation reminds us of what occurred in the year 1886 when his great grandfather settled in Poncha and its population jumped from 350 to 2000 inhabitants in only seven years. We can certainly appreciate the similarities and the fact that Laghitans, and especially the Scanga family, have had a leading role for the past 130 years. ■

Francesco Gallo, a Medical Doctor and a Psychiatrist of Padua (Italy), tries to understand how social events strengthen the minds of individuals as they attempt to face difficult, sometimes impossible, situations. Similarly to Ulysses in Homer's Odyssey, most immigrants were determined to continue their struggle to live their lives to the fullest without ever giving up!



GIUSEPPE SCANGA GREAT GRANDFATHER OF BEN SCANGA

Giuseppe Scanga arrived in Poncha Springs at the end of November 1886 (sailed from Naples to New York on November 11, 1886), worked temporarily as a farmer for Dominic Posteraro a few miles west of Poncha Springs, where in 1890 he purchased the so-called Post Office Ranch because it had been the first post office of southern Chaffee County which John Burnett opened in 1868.

He was the son of Raffaele Scanga and of Nicolina "Nettie" De Luca. When Nettie became a widow in 1898 at age 70, she decided to emigrate to Poncha where her son Giuseppe lived. Her nephew, Pietro Spena, accompanied her to Naples. There they boarded the ship California, reaching New York on August 23, 1899. She lived happily in Poncha Springs and passed away on April 10, 1912, at age 85.

Giuseppe was a cattle raiser who in 1898 had been authorized to mark the hide of his cattle with the letters "SBP" meaning Southern Beef Producers and in 1908 obtained a permit to graze his 157 heads of cattle in public lands within the Cochetopa National Forest, near Poncha Springs.

An article, "Italian Wedding," in the *Salida Mail* published on January 14, 1910, points out the good reputation and wealth shared by both the Scanga and Posteraro families:

"A wedding of much interest occurred Sunday when at St. Joseph Catholic Church, Rev. Dean T. Wolohan united in marriage Emil Scanga and Carolina Posteraro, daughter of Dominick Posteraro, a wealthy ranchman near Poncha Springs. A large number of people were present at the wedding and fully 100 guests repaired to the home Scanga ranch, in wagons to engage in the festivities and banquet after the ceremony ... The groom is also a ranchman owning considerable stock and property in the vicinity of Salida and is the son of Giuseppe Scanga, a resident of the Italian Rancher's Association which carries a good reputation. Dominick Posteraro's son Ben is to be married to Nicolina Scanga, sister of the bridegroom on next Sunday and over 100 guests will assemble to enjoy the festivities. These young brides are in their teens." ■



LIGHTNING HEART

By Anthony Guerrero



This mural by Lightning Heart in Antonito featuring the Lady of Guadalupe was painted over this past year. A new version was created in 2016 at the nearby Atencio Tire Shop. Next page: Silos in Antonito depict native Americans and early settlers. All photos courtesy of the artist.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO EXPLORE the San Luis Valley without seeing many beautiful murals and amazing pieces of art. Some of the most prominent works are the vision of Colorado artist Fred “Lightning Heart” Haberlein.

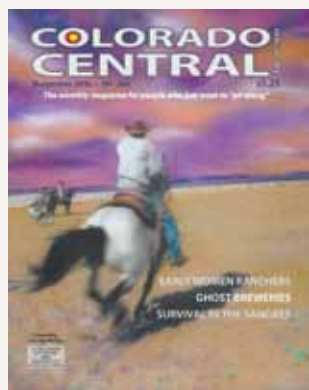
The artist painted his first mural in 1977 and since then has created 138 murals that can be seen throughout Colorado and the United States.

Lightning Heart has never lived in a town. In 1971 he lived in Arizona where a Yaqui tribe took him in. This experience is what led to his unique professional name. His murals bear a heart with a bolt of

lightning. Tribal members gave him his signature title. He has attended spring ceremonies with the tribe in the Sonoran desert every year for the last 46 years.

In 1977 he was part of a hippie artist commune in Oracle, Arizona. This is where he painted his first mural on the outside of a café. From there he painted even more in Tucson and the rest is living history.

Today, the artist who has singlehandedly painted the most murals in the United States lives in an area outside of Glenwood Springs known as No Name Canyon. “I’ve been lucky to never live inside of a town. I’ve grown up in and around Hispanic and Native



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American culture,” he said. Haberlein also had the good fortune to get taken into a Native American church and attend its ceremonies for a while.

Lightning Heart’s artistic influence is seen everywhere in the San Luis Valley. Much of his work connects to nature and is inspired by the Hispanic and Native American culture of the area.

As one example, Haberlein shared this connection to the *Conejos County Citizen*. “A long time ago, more than 30 years ago, I drew the logo for the paper. It’s a *conejo* (Spanish for rabbit) inside a *mimbres* circle. After all these years it’s still there,” he said.

His works in Conejos County include the beginning of his life. Haberlein grew up on the Conejos Ranch. “I graduated from Antonito High School in 1963. When I lived on the ranch, Highway 17 was a dirt road. It was closed in the winter. So we were always the last ones up there in the winter. The closest neighbors were five miles down and it was 15 miles to town,” he said.



“In all of my murals, I try to celebrate the best about the area. That’s what I love about murals, is they maintain a sense of community and local and regional identity. That’s really important.”

In the days when young Haberlein went to school he said he was the only “*güero*” in the district. The classes were also taught by nuns because of the convent in the area at the time. “As a result I got this

really, really good education. It was like a miracle in the middle of nowhere. They were a teaching order so if they had a sabbatical they would go get another degree. We were taught by nuns with nine master’s



At left: The artist at work on a restoration of a mural near Romeo depicting a whooping crane. Next page: This rabbit symbol is found in Antonito.

degrees in the middle of nowhere. It was so cool. They turned me on to the great Catholic thinkers,” said the muralist.

Catholic roots are definitely seen and felt in Lightning Heart’s passionate art. When he returned to the Valley in 1984 he wanted to do something for Antonito, so he began painting murals. These murals

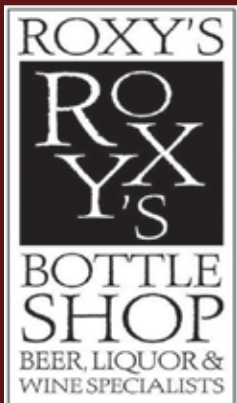
include works at the Cristo El Rey Church and a painting of the Miracle at Tepeyac, which portrays a vision of the Lady of Guadalupe.

His work can also be found in other towns and sites throughout the San Luis Valley. These include Alamosa, Del Norte, La Jara, Manassa, Saguache, San Luis, Creede, Capulín, Mogote and Center. They are featured in post offices, churches, schools, parks, community centers, museums, saloons, businesses and downtown. It is not uncommon to soon realize you are staring at one of his masterpieces.

THE 71-YEAR-OLD ARTIST has recently been sponsored and commissioned to retouch some of the paintings that he did over twenty years ago that have been fading. “Out of my 138 paintings I have lost about 19, mostly to buildings being painted over or torn down,” he said.

One mural that was lost in Antonito has a story. Haberlein said in the Antonito Post Office he once had an 18-foot painting of an eagle, until a fateful day when a girl ran her truck into the wall. “It was snowing and her foot slipped off the clutch and she took out the wall and my mural,” said Haberlein with some amusement. He hopes to be able to replace it someday.

La Paloma Foundation, the state art council, Cumbres and Toltec Railroad, the Conejos Tourism Board and the town of Antonito are sponsoring Haberlein to fix up his murals in the area. The organizations have been so happy with the results of his work that the grant has been extended for him to continue until August 2017.



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He is excited for the prospects of updating and retouching his murals and is impressed with the modern paint available. "A lot of these were done with old paint a long time ago and had faded substantially. My murals in the San Luis Valley are very important to me. It's been great to get to redo my Antonito paintings, my La Jara ones, my whooping crane silo in Romeo and so on."

Haberlein said that today's paint is impressive because it offers UV protection. "The new paint is so superior. It makes a world of difference. I've really been having a lot of fun with it," he said. Lightning Heart expressed he has been having a wonderful time repainting his murals in Conejos County with the two-year grant project that has been expanded.

Lightning Heart is connected to nature from his life experiences and hopes to convey that in his work.

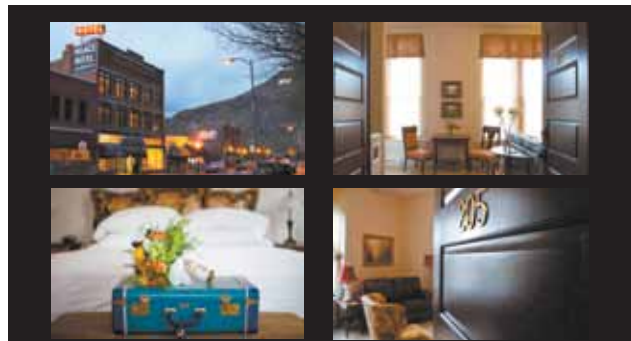
He also sees his work as an opportunity to show people they should go for whatever ideas they may have for their lives and to make a difference in their communities.

"The cycle of the seasons, nature and all of that is really important to me. I try to put that into my work where it reminds people of our connection to nature and the earth. That's a big part of my job.

"In all of my murals, I try to celebrate the best about the area. That's what I love about murals; they maintain a sense of community and local and regional identity. That's really important.

"Murals show that positive change is possible and it doesn't take that long. When someone sees it, I'm always in the position to tell them to go for their ideas because of my paintings. They stay there every day and give value." ■

Anthony Guerrero is an award-winning journalist and writer from the San Luis Valley. He was suspended once in fifth grade and again when a high school junior for his controversial stories and poems. The suspensions came from two different school districts.



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REGIONAL NEWS ROUNDUP

(and other items of interest)

Election Results

Democrat Keith Baker won Chaffee County's District 1 commissioner's seat and unaffiliated candidate Greg Felt won the District 2 seat.

Chaffee County voters approved ballot issue 1A, which will add a five percent excise tax on unprocessed marijuana products grown within the county.

In Buena Vista, voters rejected ballot issue 3A which would have increased the school district's mill levy to fund new schools, gyms, a football field and auditorium. 3A would have increased property taxes by 28 percent within the school district. It was defeated on a 2-1 margin.

In Leadville, Republican Mark Glenn edged out Democrat Bud Elliot by 98 votes to become Lake County District 3 commissioner. Referendum 1A was defeated. It would have raised the sales tax by 1.5 percent in order to build a new justice center.

In Gunnison County, incumbent Democrat Jonathan Houck beat his opponent Paul Wayne Foreman by a margin of nearly 73 to 27 percent for the District 2 commissioner's seat and Democrat John Messner won in District 2, defeating Brad Tutor 59 to 41 percent.

House District 59 has a new rep as Democrat Barbara McLachlan defeated incumbent J. Paul Brown (R-Ignacio). Incumbent Rep. Millie Hamner (D-Dillon) kept her seat, easily defeating challenger Bob Schutt. Three-term Republican Congressman Scott Tipton fought off a challenge by former state Sen. Gail Schwartz to keep his 3rd Congressional District seat.

In Custer County, Republican Donna Hood defeated an unaffiliated candidate, John Johnston, for the District 3 commissioner's seat. Nearly 82 percent of registered voters in Custer County went to the polls.

Residents of Florence rejected a recreational marijuana grow operation, 1,029 to 738. Two Fremont County commissioner candidates, both Republican, ran unopposed.

Incumbent state Sen. Larry Crowder, R-Alamosa, bested his Democratic challenger, Las Animas County Sheriff James Casias, to retain his seat. Republican incumbent Darius Allen retained his seat on the Alamosa Board of County Commissioners and will be joined by Democrat Helen Sigmond.

Statewide, voters rejected Amendment 69, the proposed state healthcare system, with nearly 80 percent voting no. By 64.5 percent, voters passed the End of Life Options Act, legalizing the option of assisted death for terminally ill patients who have six months

or less to live. Coloradans voted yes on Amendment 70, raising the minimum wage to \$9.30 per hour in 2017 and to \$12 by 2020. They rejected an amendment to increase the taxes on a pack of cigarettes and, with the passage of Prop 108, will now allow unaffiliated voters to vote in presidential primary elections.

Sen. Michael Bennet fended off a challenge from Republican Darryl Glenn and will keep his seat. A poorly-worded question on the ballot which asked if voters would like to remove an archaic reference to slavery in the state's Constitution was defeated by a very slim margin. One thing is for certain; Coloradans turned out to vote. It's estimated as of press time that 71.3 percent of state voters turned in ballots, making it the third-highest in the U.S. The national average is 58.2 percent.

No Vertex for Buena Vista

Organizers who brought nearly 8,000 concertgoers to the town of Buena Vista this past summer for the Vertex music festival have pulled the plug for an encore performance in 2017.

The promoters, Madison House, were hoping for a three-year permit for the event but county commissioners balked at that proposal, offering a one-year special use permit extension. With the arrival of two new commissioners in 2017, it's possible that Madison House might be back with a new proposal.

Junkins Fire Out

The 18,403-acre Junkins Fire, which began on Oct. 17 near Wetmore, has been declared 100 percent contained. Nine residences and 17 outbuilding were lost to the fire which lasted nearly three weeks.

DA Says No to Grand Jury

The newly-elected 11th Judicial District Attorney Molly Chilson has decided not to convene a grand jury in the unsolved murder case of a Salida woman who disappeared without a trace in 1980.

Beverly England, who was 32 at the time, left her children with a babysitter to meet with an unknown person in Riverside Park the night she disappeared. Human bones discovered on Mount Shavano in 1992 were identified as England's in 2015 using DNA sampling at a Colorado forensics lab.

Chilson says her decision is final, basically shutting the book on the cold case.



Cartoon by David LaVercombe

39-Year-Old Murder Solved

Buena Vista police and the Colorado Bureau of Investigation have solved the 39-year-old murder of Elizabeth Hurtao, who went missing from her home in BV in July 1977. She was later found stabbed to death along Cottonwood Creek.

New DNA evidence recently led investigators to determine she was killed by a 15-year-old white male identified only as C.K., who died in a motorcycle accident in California in 1981.

Shorts ...

- **The Land Trust of the Upper Arkansas** has officially changed its name to the Central Colorado Conservancy.
- **Matthew Krob** has been sworn in as the new Florence City Attorney.
- **Chris Guccione**, formerly of Salida, was an umpire at the 2016 MLB World Series.
- **Buena Vista Town Trustee** Dr Eric Gibb resigned from the board on Nov. 16.

“Notable Quotes” (post-election)

“But now politics is everywhere. And that takes up precious brain space we could be using to remember all the things we actually have in common, ... So whether your side won or lost, we don’t have to do this shit for a while.” – Comedian Stephen Colbert.

“Once you dust for fingerprints, it’s pretty clear who ruined America: white people ...”
– Comedian Samantha Bee.

“He was saying that he was going to be the champion of the American working class. Well, Mr. Trump, we have a list of everything that you said and we are going to hold you to account.” – U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders.

“Fidel Castro is dead!” – President-elect Donald J. Trump via Twitter, Nov. 26, 2016.



LETTERS & CORRESPONDENCE

The First Amendment

Hi Mike:

Good work on the First Amendment editorial. Trump hasn't done journalists any favor, that's for sure. You may or may not have seen the recent Facebook posting of the t-shirt saying "Rope. Tree. Journalist. Some assembly required." What we do is important and I think we have to keep making this clear to our readers. Which you did.

Marcia Martinek
Editor, *Herald Democrat*
Leadville, CO

Thanks to Hal

Hi Mike:

Please extend to Hal Walter my thanks for his column each month. I follow with rapt attention all the trials and successes he traverses with his amazing son. I am sure many authors are read regularly and hardly ever hear from their thankful readers ... Hal's shares are profound and full of lessons, some obvious, others harder to grasp until the aha! moment hits sometime later.

Truth be told, I enjoy all your authors, but felt moved to be especially thankful for Hal.

Rita Leydon
Salida, CO

Reality Check

To the Editor:

I enjoyed the article on Marie Scott (Nov. 2016). I was transferred to Montrose, Colorado in 1980 when Ralph Lauren was in the process of buying her ranch. As usual, *The Montrose Daily Press* was full of letters discussing the pros and cons of the ultra-rich buying the local ranches as I am sure the *Mountain Mail* is receiving many letters on the changing of Salida now.

After reading John, Martha and George's interesting take on our dysfunctional election this year, I enjoyed the heartwarming "Gorilla named Train." It gave me a reality check as to what is really important in our lives, surviving each day to its fullest.

John Swartley
Springfield, MO/Silver Cliff, CO

Cache Creek Panning

To the Editor:

I see that the Bureau of Land Management is proposing new rules for mineral collection in Cache Creek. On October 5, as seen from just below the Granite Cemetery, we spotted several people doing just that – pan-

ning for gold in the gravel where a great deal of gold was recovered a century ago.

Kenneth Jessen
Loveland, CO



A New Tagline

To the Editor:

"The monthly magazine for people who shouldn't gloat till after the vote." I do enjoy *Colorado Central Magazine* with all the art and interesting features. Keep up the good work!

Joe Engesser
Red Wing, MN

A Correction

To the Editor:

With my deep apologies, I must correct statements I made in *The Way We Really Were* that appeared in the November issue of *Colorado Central Magazine*. My dates erred, obviously. With a very red face, I shall now correct them.

To begin, William McKinley took office as president in 1897. The vice president, Garret Hobart, died in 1899, and the office of vice president then remained vacant until after the next election, which took place in 1900. McKinley took office for his second term in 1901, and Theodore Roosevelt became the vice president at that time. In September, after President McKinley was assassinated, the vice president Theodore Roosevelt was elevated to the presidency. The office of vice president then remained unoccupied until after the next national election in 1904, when Roosevelt was *elected* for the first and only time as president and Charles Fairbanks was elected as vice president. They took office in March 1905 and remained in those offices until 1909.

Virginia McConnell Simmons
Del Norte, CO

News from the San Luis Valley



By Anthony Guerrero

Town Under Boiled Water Advisory

The town of Romeo has been under a boiled water advisory since Saturday, Nov. 12. Routine testing of the town's water supply identified some bacterial contamination, according to Conejos County Emergency Management. No known illnesses as a result of the contamination have been reported. For precautionary measures residents have been advised to use boiled or bottled water for drinking, ice, washing dishes, brushing teeth and food preparation. Bottled water distribution sites have been set up.

Del Norte Rejects Marijuana

The electorate of the town of Del Norte have rejected efforts to set up a marijuana grow facility in the town limits. Ballot Issue 2A also asked residents if they wished to allow any form of recreational or medical marijuana facilities, to which 391 voters responded with no and 316 responded with yes. The question came after an investor from Texas sought to turn the old hospital building into a grow facility. Discussion of the issue created very contentious town board meetings. The board decided to let the people of the town of Del Norte make the decision.

Inmate Commits Suicide

Jonathan Rutherford, 39, allegedly committed suicide at the Rio Grande County Jail on Oct. 19. According to a press release provided by Sheriff Brian Norton on Oct. 21, a deputy conducting routine checks found Rutherford deceased in his cell at 11 p.m. According to Norton, inmates had been placed on lockdown at 10 p.m. and Rutherford was in his cell alone. The inmate allegedly hanged himself, resulting in his death. CPR was conducted on Rutherford and he was transported to the Rio Grande County Hospital. He was pronounced dead 40 minutes later. Friends and family of Rutherford question this story because Rutherford was scheduled to be released during this same time frame, and they do not believe he committed suicide.

On Oct. 26 the Rio Grande County Commissioners toured the jail. Sheriff Norton conducted the tour and showed the commissioners the cell of the alleged suicide. He explained how it is believed Rutherford tied a sheet around a bed frame to commit the act. The Rio Grande Public Works department also attended the tour to brainstorm ways to prevent future tragedies. Norton also informed the commissioners cameras would have to be updated because the cell in which Rutherford was being held was a camera blind spot.

Hickenlooper visits Valley

Governor John Hickenlooper, Lieutenant Governor Donna Lynne and several members of his cabinet held a town hall on the campus of Adams State University on Tuesday, Nov. 15. A large portion of the town hall focused on constituents' anxieties for the future under President-elect Donald J. Trump's incoming administration. Hickenlooper remained optimistic, even though saying that Trump's rhetoric, which he used to get elected, was disturbing. "I think we should give him a chance to demonstrate what he's going to do," said Hickenlooper.

The governor stated that he believed if Trump led the nation while using the personal attacks and language of the campaign, which go against some of the values of the United States, he suspected even people who voted for him would rise up. Hickenlooper said that he would not allow any effort of mass deportation of Colorado families. "If anybody is going to go house to house, start rounding people up, it's not going to happen in Colorado," said the governor. Hickenlooper pointed out he was not the only governor or person in power to make this statement, as the Denver Police Department has also made clear they will not be a part of a "deportation force."

Lopez Named MV Police Chief

Evan Lopez, a 16-year veteran of the Monte Vista police department, was hired as the new police chief for the city. Lopez has moved up the ranks of the police department and was a sergeant when he was named interim police chief in late July after the resignation of Jim Grayson. Lopez applied for the position and was selected above other candidates on Friday, Oct. 14.

SAR Receives Drone

The Mineral County Search and Rescue team has received a drone which will be used regionally. The drone was paid for by funds from the Rio Grande Watershed Emergency Action Coordination Team (RWEACT). RWEACT was developed after the West Fork Complex fire ravaged areas in Creede and South Fork. The drone will be utilized for search and rescue, wildfire mitigation and other services. The drone will be available to Hinsdale, Mineral, Archuleta and Rio Grande Counties. People in the area who are interested and qualified will be trained to pilot the drone and associated equipment. Pilots will all be from Mineral County.

PRIVATE PROPERTY!

Mt. Shavano Summit Riddled with Mining Claims



By Maisie Ramsay

THE ENTIRE SUMMIT OF MOUNT SHAVANO, in the Sawatch Range, is located on private property, but not of the “trespassers will be shot” variety.

There are no fences. There are no signs. Save for a cairn and a couple of weather-beaten survey posts, there’s nothing to indicate that the entire summit block is composed of private mining claims – except, perhaps, the poor condition of the trail.

Private, high-elevation mining claims have precluded the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) from restoring the path to Shavano’s summit, leaving the route to degrade steadily with each passing year.

The Colorado Fourteeners Initiative (CFI) has come up with a novel solution to this problem: buy the mining claims and give them to the Forest Service.

“Shavano was a high priority for the agency, but was stuck behind the private land inholdings,” said Lloyd Athearn, executive director for the Colorado Fourteeners Initiative. “I put together a proposal on Shavano to investigate who owns the lands and acquire them, whatever was necessary to build the trail.”

The Golden-based nonprofit raised the necessary \$40,500 to close the deal, and has formal option agreements in place binding the properties through mid-February. Athearn expects the transaction to close by the end of 2016 – CFI’s first-ever property acquisition.

“The most expensive thing we’ve purchased before was a pickup truck,” Athearn said. “This is a totally new thing.”

CFI will eventually cede the land to the USFS, returning Mount Shavano to the public domain.

This was not your typical real estate transaction. Not only did CFI have to play real estate detective just to track down the owners – one of whom lived in Florida – it had to convince them to sell their claims.

Two owners were immediately amenable to selling their claims, but the third was less interested. He had inherited the parcel from his father and was hesitant to let it go, Athearn said.

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Just when it seemed as though they were starting to make progress after months of dialogue, CFI discovered the parcels were mapped incorrectly. The entire summit was on private land.

Murphy's Law being what it is, that crucial summit parcel was held by the least enthusiastic of the property owners.

"There was no other way," Athearn said. "We couldn't move the route north; we couldn't do anything but cross those two pieces of land."

The whole project hinged on the summit parcel. If the landowner refused to sell, there was no way forward. It was a tense moment.

"There was some nail biting to see if we could get the last guy to come in," Athearn said.

The property owner eventually assented, laying the groundwork for a long-overdue restoration project.

The Colorado Fourteeners Initiative has undertaken major trail projects on nearly all of the highest peaks in the Sawatch Range. Each takes thousands of hours and millions of dollars. Shavano will be no different.

The trail is heavily eroded, especially as it approaches a 13,400-foot saddle en route to the summit.

CFI's 2011-2013 trail inventory gave the trail an "F" grade. Two years later, that moved down to "F minus." The trail ranks as one of the worst in Colorado.

Loretta McEllhiney, Colorado Fourteeners Program Manager with the USFS, estimates it will take at least four years and around \$1 million just for bare-essentials maintenance.

Work could start as early as 2019, depending on funding and permitting.

"You ask the public, and 90-95 percent of them think trails just happen," McEllhiney said. "They have no idea how much time and money goes into these mountains."

Mount Shavano isn't the only Sawatch Range fourteeners in need of some TLC.

The Forest Service and CFI are in the process of overhauling Mount Columbia's notoriously foul route along its western flank. That project alone will take at least five years and close to \$2 million, according to McEllhiney's estimates.

Statewide, CFI estimates Colorado's fourteeners need \$24 million worth of trail reconstruction and restoration to reach long-term sustainability. Advancing Mount Shavano's restoration is one more step toward that goal. ■

Maisie Ramsay writes from her home in Poncha Springs, where she will celebrate the holidays with lengthy hikes in cold weather.



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THE CROWDED ACRE

By Jennifer Welch



Butter and Waffles

I THINK I'M GAINING GROUND. In the early days, my request for a house pig would have simply been ignored. Along with my ideas of owning goats and cows and chickens and ponies, it might have even been scoffed at. I think the initial resistance was due to the fact that my husband didn't really want any animals, likely due to the fact that he had never really had any animals. I, on the other hand, can't remember a time in my life when I didn't have any animals. In just over a decade together, we have grown a family, built a farm, lived in a yurt, turned a school bus into a food truck, and loved every minute of it. It just seems logical that the next phase of our relationship will be "house pig" ... at least to one of us, that is.

Perhaps I'm using the wrong wording regarding this next step in our relationship. House pig could

"From my husband's point of view, a companion pig is ludicrous."

literally mean "a pig that lives in the house," which is not what I am after. Don't get me wrong, a pig in the house sounds amazing! But I know the limitations of my marriage. No, what I am truly after is more of a companion pig, a pet instead of a food-stuff. A pig I can take on walks down the road, let loose in the yard on a sunny afternoon, or dress in a sweater on cold winter nights. Oh, the things we could enjoy together! Marshmallows, potato chips, pumpkin pie, crisp apples and all the other delicacies we can find. What's not to like?

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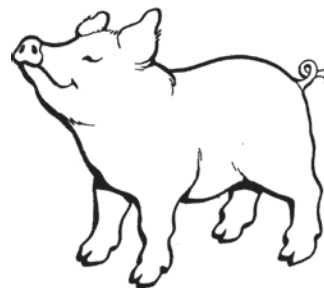
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From my husband's point of view, a companion pig is ludicrous. He will say that they eat too much, poop too much and weigh too much. He complains of the possibility that they will dig up the yard and destroy the landscaping, or run rampant around the barnyard upending the status quo. I offer counterpoints to each of his concerns, some of which I even believe to be true, but that is beside the point. The point is so simple that it risks being overlooked and underappreciated ... the point is that we are having this conversation at all. He is no longer laughing in my face or ignoring my request. We are actually discussing the merits of having a house pig. It only took ten years, ladies and gentlemen, to go from I'm not sure if I even want animals to I mean, what would we even DO with a house pig? That has to be some kind of record.

I don't know if I'll actually go through with it. While I do plan on retiring my lead sow, Clara, after she is done breeding, she is far from a house pig. At six hundred pounds, I can't imagine she would do very well at the end of a leash, nor could I count on her to share a bag of marshmallows. Lucky for us, I happen to have a potential solution sitting out in the barn right now: Two American Guinea Hog piglets in a stall, named Butter and Waffles,

that are desperately waiting for their first handknit sweaters. They are also going to need body harnesses and leashes. And, let's be honest, we've already shared a bag of marshmallows because these things are important. Will they ever actually come inside the house? Who knows. Will they really tear up the yard? Quite possibly. Will it be the last crazy thing I manage to talk my husband into? Hardly. ■

Jennifer Welch lives and writes in the Upper Arkansas River Valley and she celebrates all of her failures and successes alike.



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THE LEGEND OF TREASURE MOUNTAIN

By Mary Cornum



THERE ARE MANY RUMORS and legends surrounding a vast discovery of gold by French explorers near Summitville, Colorado, in the late 1700s.

With approximately 300 men and 450 horses plus supplies, an expedition of Frenchmen, based in New Orleans, reportedly left an outpost near present-day Leavenworth, Kansas, bound for the Rocky Mountains in search of precious metals.

Their initial prospecting efforts were unsuccessful, leading them south to the area near present-day Summitville on the east side of Wolf Creek Pass in Rio Grande County. There, they reportedly discovered a large amount of gold in and around what is now called Treasure Mountain, located in nearby Mineral County. (There is another such-named peak in the Elk Mountain Range in the Raggeds Wilderness).

Legend has it that the French mined nearly \$33 million in gold by today's standards and cached the vast treasure in three different locations, carefully mapping each spot.

The native Americans who lived in the vicinity, likely Utes, initially left the prospectors alone, but some records indicate there was an uprising and the expedition was attacked by the natives, leaving only 17 to 35 survivors. The gold was hastily reburied with new maps drawn. The explorers were again attacked when they reached the Front Range, leaving only five remaining of the original 300.

Escaping with their very lives in the middle of winter, cold and starvation conditions soon took three more lives; the other two staggering back to Fort Leavenworth. Upon arrival, one of the two surviving explorers died, leaving a lone survivor of the expedition, a man by the name of Le Blanc, the expedition's

historian, who possessed two copies of the map to the treasure.

After he recovered, Le Blanc returned to France with the maps. They contained a series of clues which would allow others to return and recoup the treasure at some later date. One map was kept by Le Blanc and the other was given to the French government. A party of 50 was later dispatched to recover the gold. It is not known whether it was Le Blanc or the French government who instigated this second mission. A guide was hired out of Taos, New Mexico, to lead the expedition, but he returned months later, without the expedition team. He claimed the Indians attacked and killed them, but soon became suspected of committing the murders. This is where more speculation begins:

- The guide was possibly paid off to keep the rediscovery of the gold a secret, and the French expedition went quietly back to France.
- Several maps are rumored to have appeared over time. A William Yule claimed to have had one and searched as far north along the San Luis Valley as Saguache, with no luck. Yule Lakes and Yule Creek are named for him.
- Later, a prospector named Asa Poor alleged to have gotten the map from Yule and he, with two partners, searched, claiming to have found several of the landmarks indicated on the maps but no gold.
- A partner of Poor's named Montroy supposedly retained the map but later lost it.
- A local family claiming to be descendants of Le Blanc are said to have an original map and over three

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MEN & WOMEN'S CLOTHING

generations have quietly been treasure hunting.

- While on such a treasure hunt in 1993, a family member stumbled upon a three-foot opening with a four- by five-foot tunnel behind it. He followed it down to a cave-in and then returned to get help.

- The next day, 20 people returned with him to dig further. Thinking they had found the long lost “eighth clue” to the treasure’s whereabouts in the tunnel, they were soon spooked by a snake, bats and an owl. Was the gold being eerily guarded by entities unknown?

The only other reported information suggests this same unnamed family has filed for Colorado State Treasures Rights to enter the cave legitimately and claim the contents if any were to be found.

If any treasure has indeed been found, it is not known, though it’s possible that some word of it would eventually have leaked out. Treasure hunters everywhere are hereby challenged to come to our beautiful mountains, specifically Treasure Mountain, and if you are getting close to any clues, let me know so that I can strike one more thing off of my bucket list. ■

Mary is the adventurous mother of five and grandmother of 20. When she’s not hiking the caves or swimming in the Rio Grande, she is escaping reality by diving into books, much like she did as a young girl in a family of 16!



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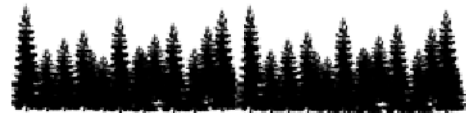
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THE WIND TRAP

The cabin door blew open.
I entered,
invited by the wind
who had forced its way in,
through cracks and broken windows.
We stood there,
the wind and I,
engaged in airy chatter.
The wind had reveled here before,
now it was my turn to view the decor.

Breezed through – I side-stepped destruction
entering what appeared to be the kitchen.
A Mason jar lay broken on the floor.
Cupboards once painted cream were worn raw,
a pantry latch, lacking a catch,
revealed wind-swept shelves of shared vacancy.

My craving for the past found nothing in store.
Gusting me through another door,
I met meagerness glued to the wall,
layers and layers of newsprint, now peeling.
Feature stories; headlines of 1894
filled the cracks, like wind traps.

Could this be my only rendezvous with the past?
Perhaps, if time is on my side,
I can read the past in print,
before the sun sets
and my glass slipper shares fate with the Mason jar.

By Joyce Gregor, Westcliffe, CO



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Water Update

By John Orr

NOVEMBER ELECTION RECAP

Normally this column deals with water issues and water folks in Central Colorado, but in the aftermath of the weirdest election season in my lifetime this iteration will take on a statewide and national flavor.

Del Norte rancher Travis Smith, currently serving on the Colorado Water Conservation Board, likes to remind folks in the water business, that “We are more connected than we’d like to admit.”

With all the uncertainty before us, is it possible to glean some idea of the effects the voters have wrought upon themselves?

President-elect Trump is rumored to be about to install a non-scientist, Myron Ebell, as the head of the Environmental Protection Agency. Mr. Ebell has spoken out against the “hoax” of global warming, and many hail his ascension as necessary to clip the wings of a federal government run wild under President Obama.

Martha Henriques writes in *The International Business Times*, “Climate deniers have been on the sidelines for years. What will happen now they’re in charge?”

A lot will happen no matter who is in power. Chris Mooney writes in *The Washington Post*:

“It’s polar night there now – the sun isn’t rising in much of the Arctic. That’s when the Arctic is supposed to get super-cold, when the sea ice that covers the vast Arctic Ocean is supposed to grow and thicken.

“But in fall of 2016 – which has been a zany year for the region, with multiple records set for low levels of monthly sea ice – something is totally off. The Arctic is super-hot, even as a vast area of cold polar air has been displaced over Siberia.”

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY PROJECTS

The Arkansas headwaters up at Leadville were an acid mine drainage collection system in the days before the EPA’s California Gulch Superfund designation. Now there is a treatment plant run by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation at the mouth of the Leadville Mine Drainage Tunnel and a gold medal trout stream below the site.

There was a massive fish kill in the Alamosa River downstream from the gold cyanidation operation at Summitville.

Some folks blame their cancer and loss of friends and family down the Arkansas River at Cañon City where the Cotter Mill uranium processing operation polluted the groundwater.

These are Environmental Protection Agency Superfund sites, all of them. The Feds are the only organization capable of this type of cleanup. Colorado can’t afford projects of this magnitude due to the restraints of TABOR, and most counties are clipping off workers or freezing payroll just to keep plowing snow and managing roads.

The EPA took a beating from Republicans after the Gold King Mine Spill into the Animas River in 2015. The agency always admitted that opening up the mine was a mistake and they’ve steadily worked on mitigation planning and water quality control.

“San Juan County Administrator Willy Tookey, too, heaped praise on the EPA for reimbursing the more than \$349,000 the county spent in response to the spill, as well as contributing to the local economy,” – *The Durango Herald*.

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The recreation economy has benefitted from EPA projects and the Clean Water Act, so a dismantling of the regulations adds to business uncertainty and environmental angst.

STATE CONTROL OF WATER RESOURCES

Every candidate from the top of the Colorado ballot to the bottom stood firm regarding water resource administration. Colorado water rights law and administration should be continued as controlling over federal water rights, they say.

AMENDMENT 71 AND POWER TO THE PEOPLE

There may be some certainty with respect to Amendment 71. Colorado may not see another citizen initiative due to it. The oil and gas industry and Denver politicians hoodwinked Coloradans into giving up power. Here's what the Colorado Legislative Council had to say before the election:

"Amendment 71 adds a requirement that signatures be collected statewide for the citizen-initiative process and increases the percentage of votes required to adopt changes to the constitution in most situations ...

"Of the total required signatures, some must be collected from each of the state's 35 senate districts in an amount of at least two percent of the registered voters in each district."

The new signature requirement will be quite a trick to pull off. The last time that many registered voters agreed on something was while voting down Referendum A in 2003. The referendum would have established a two billion dollar fund for water projects to ease some of the pain incurred during the historic 2002 drought. Proponents didn't have a project list and the referendum failed in all 64 counties.

The opponents of the oil and gas industry could have roped in the entire industry with their 5,000-foot setback requirement initiative and they may be back. I wonder if two percent of Weld, Routt, or Moffat will sign on?

WATERSHED HEALTH AND FIRE SHARING

The U.S. Forest Service budget has been taking a beating with the massive wildfires in the West over the past few seasons. As we go to press the new administration has not named their choice for Interior Secretary.

State governors are stepping up to advocate against "fire borrowing" in the new administration. The Western Governors' Association recently wrote:

"Western governors have urged timely action by Congress to end the practice of 'fire borrowing' used by the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of the Interior to fund wildfire suppression activities.

"We strongly urge Congress to resolve this enduring issue as among its highest priorities when it returns to complete the business of the 114th Congress.

"Fire borrowing is a budgetary practice that occurs when federal agencies divert funds from forest health and fire prevention programs to fight wildfires." ■

John Orr lives in Denver. He became interested in writing the "rough" history of Colorado water after the failure of Referendum A during the November 2003 election. No one was aggregating water news for Coloradans so John stepped into the void. He works as a water resources administrator for a Front Range utility when he isn't linking and writing. www.coyotegulch.net.



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Buena Vista

3 – Christmas Opening 2016, all day in downtown Buena Vista. Chocolate Walk from 10-4. The Equine parade brings Santa to town at 2 p.m. and heads through East Main to South Main. If you want to enter the Equine parade call Erin at 395-8599. The Parade of Lights at 5:30 p.m. takes Santa to the lighting of the Community Christmas Tree in the Optimist Splash Park at the corner of Railroad and E Main at 6 p.m. Chili Cookoff from 1-5 East of CKS at 327 E Main. Donate money to vote for your favorite chili (money goes to Buena Vista Heritage to maintain the museum). Call Tom at 966-5318 to enter the chili contest. For more information or to take part in this event call the BV Chamber at 719-395-6612.

9 – “Follow that Star!” presented by The Noteables & You’ve Got Male, Clearview Community Church, 457 Rodeo Rd. Suggested donation of \$10. For more information, call 539-2428 or visit www.salidasings.org. 7:30 p.m.

10 – 2016 Holiday Home Tour,

Buena Vista Chamber of Commerce (343 Hwy 24). Come celebrate the season with your neighbors while touring six festively decorated homes in the Buena Vista area. Tickets are \$15, reception included. To purchase your ticket and to pick up a map, stop by the Buena Vista Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center or any local bank. Proceeds benefit your Chamber of Commerce. 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.



13 – BV Celtic and Old Time Jam, Creekside Gathering Place (203 Cedar St.). Bring your instrument and tunes to share! All abilities welcome. Celtic Old Time Traditional Free with donations appreciated. Call (719) 395-6704. 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Cañon City

2 – Apple Country Memories, Coyote Den Coffee (1338 Phay Ave.). A FREE event with Santa and carolers. Join them and help spread the holiday spirit. For more information, please call (719) 372-3994. 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

3 – Parade of Lights - the Miracle of Christmas, Main Street. Vendors at selected corners with yummys to eat and drink. For more information, please call (719) 275-2331.

4 – 4th Annual Holiday Home Tour. A self-guided tour through area homes with some decked out for the holidays. The event is presented by the Fremont County Community Concert Association and benefits the association, enabling them to present nationally and internationally acclaimed performers for student concerts and residents of Fremont County. The tour includes two Cañon City homes and three locations in Florence. Tickets may be purchased at Touch of Love & Tailored West, or at The Fox Den in Florence - \$15 each or two for \$25. For more information, call (719) 275-3065. 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Gunnison

2 – Gunnison Night of Lights. Families and friends will be moving around downtown Gunnison enjoying holiday light installations, Santa at the Elks Lodge, and the lighting of the community tree. 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. www.gunnisonchamber.com

2 – First Fridays Art Walk and Music showcases fabulous art venues every Friday from 5-8 p.m.

16-17 – Holiday Cabaret. This family friendly Holiday Cabaret will be a fun evening of song and dance held in the Gunnison Arts Center Black Box Theatre. This evening will include a sing-along to your favorite holiday carols. Directed by Enid Holden. Tickets \$15/adults, \$12/kids 12- & seniors 60+. www.gunnisonartscenter.org

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- Samuel Johnson

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Leadville

3 – Victorian Homes Tour & Parade of Lights. 6 p.m. on Harrison Ave. Pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Free hot chocolate and cookies, Courthouse lawn.

4 – Tour of City Hall by Judge Neil Reynolds from 1:30 - 5 p.m. **Tours of historic Victorian homes**, with free appetizers and punch from Noon - 1:30 p.m. Tickets are \$25. Advance tickets online or at the Visitor Center, 809 Harrison Ave. 719-486-3900. Sponsored by the Leadville/Lake County Chamber of Commerce.

7,10 – Cross Country Ski Day Trip. Colorado Mountain College, Timberline Campus, 901 South Highway 24. Cost is \$50. coloradomtn.edu/campuses/leadville/continuing-education-calendar/

10 – National Mining Hall of Fame and Museum Community Free Day.

Salida

8 – Creative Mixer hosted by Salida Council for the Arts will be held in the SteamPlant Event Center's Paquette Gallery from 5:30-7 p.m. This monthly happy hour is a great chance to socialize with fellow artists in a relaxed atmosphere. Free and open to the public. Appetizers and beverages available. www.salidaartists.com.

10 – 8th Annual Land Trust Benefit Party (now the Central Colorado Conservancy), 6-9 p.m. at the Joshua Been Studio Gallery, 139 West 1st Street.

10, 11 – “Follow that Star!” presented by The Noteables & You've Got Male, SteamPlant Event Center (10th), First Presbyterian Church (11th). Suggested donation of \$10. For more information, call 539-2428 or visit www.salidasings.org. 7:30 pm (10th) & 2 p.m. (11th).

15-18 – Stage Left Performance of Miracle on South Division Street at the Salida SteamPlant Event Center. www.stagelefttheatre.org

17 – Handel's “Messiah” Community Sing-Along. About 1.5 hours of the 2.5-hour oratorio (15 of the 20 Choruses) with instrumental accompaniment and some of the solos and arias, too. Episcopal Church of the Ascension, 4th and E. 7 - 9 p.m.

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20 – Cafe Dawn presents Live Poetry, 203 W. First Street. Free admission, donations accepted. Featuring Valerie Haugen & Kim Nuzzo. Open mic, two-minute maximum. Sign-up starts at 6:15 p.m., event starts at 6:30 p.m.

21 – Salida Holiday Festival. Enjoy some old fashioned carols and hot chocolate while you browse all of the local shops that will be open late. 4-8 p.m.

San Luis Valley

2 – Del Norte Parade of Lights. Fireworks, Merchants' Open House, Santa Claus at HVCC, Gingerbread Houses at Lil' Tikes. 6 p.m. www.delnortechamber.org/parade-of-lights

3 – Gingerbread Festival - FREE to all children. 9 a.m. Decorate your own Gingerbread people, special appearance by Santa with toys for all children attending. Please bring canned goods or nonperishable items to benefit the Tu Casa food pantry in Alamosa. 719-589-5252.

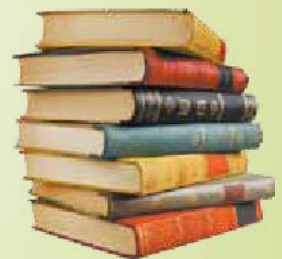
3-4 – WinterFest. Arts & Crafts and Christmas gifts, kids' activities, live music, Santa Claus, food & fun. For vendor information contact Mati Fuller at MatiFuller@gmail.com. Saturday 11-6, Sunday 11-4. Crestone Charter School.

3 – 6th Annual Friends of the Library Holiday Bazaar, Saguache Community Building (7th and Pitkin). Get a jump start on holiday shopping. Many handmade crafts are available as well as fudge, homemade baked goods, hand-painted ornaments and much more. Come early and get a hot breakfast or lunch on site from Mama Laurie's Kitchen. For more information, call Hillary Conroy at (303) 507-4821.

9 – 2016 SLV Holiday Book Fair. This first time Book Blizzard features local authors who have the opportunity to share their books through readings & sales. All genres are welcome: poetry, novels, essays, non-fiction, anthologies, how-to books. 719-588-7066.

13 – Society Hall - Chris Collins, John Denver Christmas

Show. A fundraiser for Valley Humane Society. 719-937-2636. 711 State Avenue, Alamosa. www.societyhall.org



Westcliffe

2-3 – Festival of Trees. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Co-Sponsored by Valley Park, Recreation & Youth Center & Families Matter to Custer County. 783-2739 or 783-0377. www.valleyparkreandyouth.org

3 – Christmas Parade. 6 - 7 p.m. Contact Candace McDaniel, 719-783-4050.

Reviews

Early Days in South Park: Parked in the Past

By Laura Van Dusen

Vandusenville Publications, 189 pages

ISBN 978-692-72310-4

Reviewed by Forrest Whitman

SOONER OR LATER, if you live in Colorado, you'll drive through South Park. It's a lovely ride in its own right, but this book will keep the motorist seeing it all in a fresh way. Van Dusen, long-time writer for many publications (including this one), opens up the surprising history of the park.

Her vignettes about early notables in the park are well done and give us a new look at them. Some of them, like Willia Hamilton Johnson of Alma, or Marshall Lewis Link, are especially crisp. She reveals them in "the bad and the good." They emerge as real people.

She draws on the letters of Wilbur Fisk Stone to show us just how dastardly some of our early heroes and villains were. Her historical accounts of the outlaws are gripping. Some of the bad guys, like the Espinoza brothers, were terrorists of the most incredible kind.

Wilbur Stone spared neither Governor John Evans nor Reverend Chivington (the fighting Methodist minister who led the massacre at Sand Creek). Both were crooked and amazing liars, as were many others who dealt with the Indians.

A weakness in Van Dusen's coverage concerns the Utes. They were very much a part of South Park history, but other than a brief appearance by Chief Saguache, they don't come through. On the other hand, Van Dusen can write only about the accounts of the first settlers, and the Indians were only backdrops for them.

Especially interesting is her coverage of how hard life was in South Park. For instance, Benjamin Berg, second owner of the Fairplay Hotel, lost three of his children to typhoid. During World War I, *The Fairplay Flume* reported death after death to the Spanish influenza. Some 675,000 died in the U.S. in that outbreak.

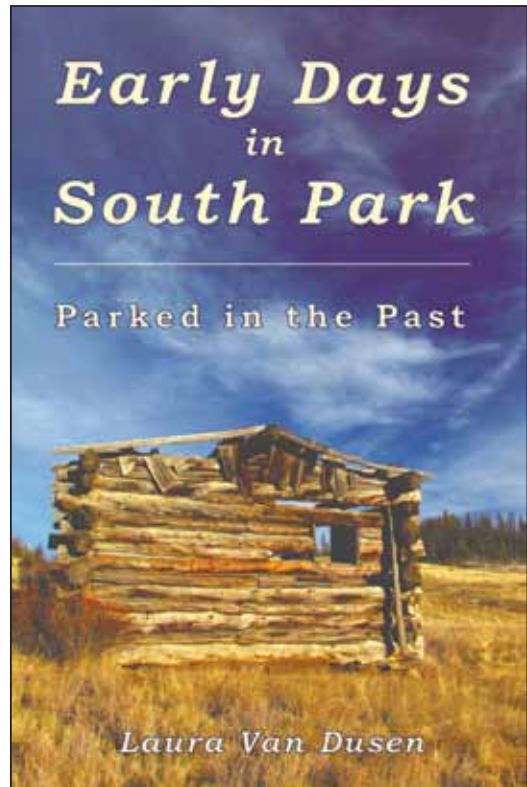
There were interesting cures to various diseases, which she covers in detail, including Bayer Heroine, Lydia Pinkham's Herbal Remedy (popular with women partly because of its alcohol content) and Magic oil (87 percent alcohol).

Driving on U.S. Hwy. 285, the motorist will have a new understanding of how hard travel was by stage coach. You'll also learn more about Como. This was a big rambling coal mining town with its own "war" to remember. Her chapters on Como and the Antero Reservoir fights are especially good. The motorist may even pause to think of the King Coal disaster where so many miners died. The book makes a routine trip through South Park fascinating.

There's more to the book than the 19th century too. Her accounts of pre-history and the Porcupine Cave are compelling. So are her accounts of modern history. She covers the death of JFK and the beginning of the Ed Snell race.

I'm always looking for books to add to my holiday giving list. *Early Days in South Park* is on mine this year. Laura Van Dusen has done an outstanding job here. ■

Early Days in South Park is available at the South Park Ranger District Office, and the Hand Hotel in Fairplay and the Mountain Man Gallery in Como. It can also be found online at www.Facebook.com/parkedinthepast and at Amazon.com. By mail, send a check to the author at P.O. Box 445, Como, CO 80432, for \$23.77 (includes tax and mailing fees).





SHEL – Just Crazy Enough

THE 19TH CENTURY PHILOSOPHER Friedrich Nietzsche prefaced his book *The Will To Power* with this line, “Of what is great one must either be silent or speak with greatness, that means cynically and with innocence.” I will attempt to relate honestly the virtue of music amidst my own opinions in order to set free for the listener the product’s appeal and cultural relevance. Discovering paths within modernity can be a difficult task, but within the right hymns sometimes there are steps that lead us to hope. Not outside the advent of SHEL’s present work lives this new faith.



Just Crazy Enough encompasses a huge wave of groovy tunes that roll into a single solid album. Four sisters from Fort Collins form the acronym namesake, Sarah, Hannah, Eva and Liza Holbrook. They have prodigious voices and are each also dynamically talented musicians in their own right. The Blue Room Studios in Nashville recorded an aural masterpiece with crisp, cool notes flowing graciously throughout harmonious interplay. Female voices form quartet choirs wavering inside dense beats underlying violin bird calls. Mandolin and piano dance together in synchrony like devious whirling dervishes achieving nirvana.

SHEL’s style stupendously suspends any contemporaneous notion of moral equivalence in pop music, achieving popular sounds without populism or plurality that are naturally inherent within a plebeian folk movement. SHEL remarkably

integrates the timeless appeal of classic rock within an amorphous envelope of Delta blues, eternally cementing the standard of progressive pop into an audible revolution. In the past virtuoso groups were a dime a dozen: Pink Floyd, Jefferson Airplane, Crosby, Stills and Nash. The rare DNA of SHEL is infused with highly combustible rhythms and soaring sing-song serenades. All ears are cocked towards this source for sounds from the future.

Most notable is a cover of the very popular Metallica song, *Enter Sandman*, in the style of a lullaby sonnet. Eva’s vocals are at once effervescent, fluid and consoling while whispering into the mic preceding a slow chirp from Hannah’s hands thumbing piano. Sarah’s pizzicato throws down to follow Liza on percussion, and with brevity SHEL reinvents the classic metal tune for a new millennium. *You Could Be My Baby* mixes Zeppelin infused song structures under soulful style. “You could be my baby, you seem just crazy enough to love.” *Stronger Than My Fears* invokes native heritage, sings vocal chants and wraps around world beats. “Every day we have a choice, fear has nothing but a voice, it may whisper it may scream, but I no longer listen.”

If you like SHEL, you’ll absolutely go bonkers for this new album! Still only the sophomore studio CD from an independent group, I venture to say this is definitely the best work of their career to date. If you’re unfamiliar with the powerful sounds escaping from these young majestic musical pioneers and want to hear what the fuss is about, please visit www.shelmusic.com and taste a sample of solace or drop in on a dose of fun. ■

Brian Rill is a teacher, performer and activist poet. Voted *Salida’s* best musician 2009 and award winning Latin songwriter.



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places...

Simmons Peak

Story and photo by
Ericka Kastner



As of the writing of this column, snow had not yet fallen in Central Colorado's banana belt, making it pertinent to write about hiking places rather than snowy adventures for December. Should a descent of the white stuff begin to grace the San Luis Valley and accumulate by the time this piece is published, the road approaching the route would be a fabulous cross country ski, and the trail at higher elevations would provide beautiful and challenging terrain for snowshoeing.

YOU CAN KEEP YOUR FOURTEENERS. I prefer to explore Central Colorado's 12 and 13,000-foot peaks. It is at these lower elevations with fewer visitors that I find more wildness, increased solitude and a grander sense of adventure.

Simmons Peak (12,050 feet), situated between Methodist Mountain and Hunts Peak, is in direct

line of sight out my kitchen window, and had been calling to me since I moved up Bear Creek last spring. After studying maps of the Sangre De Cristo Range in detail, I discovered that the route to approach Simmons was to be found on the west side of the range, in the San Luis Valley, and I put it on my list for a late autumn hike.

The 2.8-mile forest service road to the Simmons trailhead is rough in spots, but passable by low clearance vehicles and certainly worth the drive alone via vehicle, ATV or dirtbike for its breathtaking views. On the trail itself, the route can be challenging to follow at times, and offers route-finding enthusiasts the opportunity for exploration. There are also numerous spots for dispersed camping.

Initially, the Simmons Peak trail follows narrow Decker Creek, where rocks and fallen logs

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resting in the stream are thickly wrapped in bright green moss. Because the trail is not well maintained by the Forest Service, there are plenty of logs to climb over and trees to tunnel under along the way (lovers of Crossfit, rejoice!). Higher up on the first ridge and just past a short section of switchbacks, a large area of blown down trees covers the route. An uncultivated trail now exists just to the southeast of the original trail and can be discovered with a little bit of patience and fortitude.

Freshly cleaned bones in the area make it clear that hikers are in big cat territory and add to the feeling of remoteness along the trail. Continuing further, remnants of an old cabin are the marker for a crossroads on the route. Staying on the main trail will take hikers to Salamander Lake and a one-way route to Dorsey Creek Trailhead. Those interested in a Simmons Peak summit will exit the trail here, looking for a faint deer trail just behind the cabin, and begin a combination of route finding and bushwhacking up the drainage and onto the higher ridge leading to the summit and incredible views of Salida, Howard and the mountains beyond.

GETTING THERE: From the intersection of U.S. 50 and U.S. Hwy. 285 in Poncha Springs, travel south over the pass 11.5 miles, turning East onto Rock Gulch Road 5335. The road is not well marked until you turn onto it, but is also signed Alder Creek Pit and you'll see a small gravel pit right before the turn. Continue along the road .6 mile (there are some decaying cabins and out-buildings to spot along the way) until coming to a "Y" in the road and take the left turn into Decker Road 948. The road becomes somewhat rugged and rocky at this point. At 2.3 miles (from the turnoff at U.S. 285) the road splits again; stay to the left on FS 948 as a turn right goes to Rock Creek. At 2.6 miles take a gentle right for another .2 miles where you will park your car in a clearing just after a creek crossing. Walk uphill from your parking spot, looking for the creek and a spot to cross on foot just after ducking under a couple of fallen trees. It is here you will see a well-worn national forest marker indicating a wilderness boundary and the start of the trail. There are several opportunities for dogs to find water along this trail. ■

Places columnist and word lover Ericka Kastner keeps a running list of wild places she longs to experience in Central Colorado. View her work online at erickakastner.com.



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John Mattingly

The Tail of Dingdoggy

AN OLD YELLOW DOG NAMED Dingdoggy came from fortunate breeding and circumstance. His daddy, Dongdaddy, had been a well-cut dog with excellent cunning who ate well, accumulated an enormous number of bones, lived large with attractive bitches, and worried little about necessities. In short, Dongdaddy mastered his masters, for the most part. They occasionally spanked him with a newspaper, but that did not stop him from teaching his son, Dingdoggy, the ways of big-league dogliness, which went back to grandfather doggy, Drumpfdog. The Drumpfdog line were purebreds who, to be honest, dominated at dog shows where young Dingdoggy learned that he could chin, snag and even mount female dogs at dog shows, without them being in heat, an opportunity and privilege afforded by his heritage, and his huge and growing status among show hounds and assorted bitches.

Dingdoggy dug up a few of his daddy's bones, though he was never forthright as to how many bones he secured from his own hunting prowess, and how many bones he exhumed from Dongdaddy's many bone banks. Dongdaddy had buried so many bones that he honestly did not know how many bones he had, and Dingdoggy also gathered many bones beyond his actual bone needs, taking bones from many other dogs, and after a short time, bragging that he had, himself, earned all of the bones. Given the nature of canine purity, many dogs admired Dingdoggy's ability to claim the success of other dogs for himself, while other dogs only growled when he came around.

A Farmer Far Afield



"As he matured, Dingdoggy began to think there was something special about his exudates."

Dingdoggy learned that he could even excrete a big brown pile on a lawn or street or even in a vehicle and only good things happened to him. As he matured, Dingdoggy began to think there was something special about his exudates.

Dingdoggy was a particularly barkative dog as a pup, which confirmed his philosophy that if he barked long enough, and loud enough, and lifted his leg to water various territorial structures frequently enough, food and good fortune would fall from above. Ding-

doggy let other dogs know that his exudates not only did not stink, they were sweet to the eye and nose, a claim that many dogs recognized as the workings of a dog deluded by his failure to deal with his exudates when he was pup. Yet other dogs fell into a uniformed stupor, and

even though they knew Dingdoggy's exudates were foul to both nose and eye, they did not seek to offend or correct. They simply fell in with the pack and followed the stink.

This coaxed Dingdoggy to an even more unusual assertion as to his abilities: he began to walk on his hind two legs. This caused a huge disturbance among all purebred dogs, who were appalled at the mere notion of walking on fewer than four legs. They asserted that, yes, sometimes a dog lost a leg in a fight or a trap and had to get around on three legs, and these dogs were more pitied than admired for their adaptation. But Dingdoggy declared that three-legged dogs were beyond pity and worthy only of jokes and mockery for their lack of leg.

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Dingdoggy claimed that walking on two legs while keeping two legs in reserve was smart, even though several alert dogs pointed out that if Dingdoggy's hind legs failed, there was no way to transplant his front legs. Instead, he would be walking with his muzzle in the dirt.

DINGDOGGY DID NOT PAY ATTENTION to dogs who pointed out the obvious. Moreover, when Dingdoggy discovered a way to bark over great distances – known as BLEEPING – due to an invention of highly social dogs known as dogrammers, Dingdoggy bleeped out to his fellow canines that walking on one's two hind legs was proof of his superiority. To which some dogs told him to get back on four legs before he upset his own balance. Dogs, according to those who knew about such things, did not defy gravity or seek to ignore their primary, front legs. To walk on their hind two legs was not only a waste of two legs, it was an unnecessary display of their nakedness, which throughout the history of all dog-kind, had never been wise. Best to stay with four legs.

Despite the wisdom of purebred elites, Dingdoggy found that many other dogs thought it remarkable that he could walk on his hind two legs, and though they would never try such a thing themselves, they did not growl or fight this novel way of locomotion. So fond of hind leg walking did Dingdoggy become that he began to chase move objects on two legs, which, of course, demonstrated the folly of his ways. But Dingdoggy did not give up. He practiced and focused and found that he could, with some deception and a lot effort, moving quite fast on two legs.

Dingdoggy's success with two-legged locomotion led to other dogs giving it a try, eventually getting into various kinds of competition. One day Dingdoggy descended from a long porch stairway to brag to all dogs around that he could not only run on two legs, he could catch the Great Dumptruck that drove by every day on its way from the gravel pit. All dogs scoffed at this notion and several dogs bit him on the rear end for even making such a claim. The biggest, baddest, fastest dogs in history had, on occasion, got hold of a mud flap or two of the Great Dumptruck, but stop the dump truck? No, this was pure fantasy.

Not to Dingdoggy. He had been practicing, and when the dump truck left the pit, Dingdoggy took out after it, and to the unmitigated astonishment of all dogs watching, caught the dump truck.

It was then that several alert dogs on the left side of the truck noticed the driver had stopped to check the suspension just before Dingdoggy locked his jaws on the right front running board. ■

John Mattingly cultivates prose, among other things, and was most recently seen near Poncha Springs.





Quillen's Corner

By Martha Quillen

Are Our Political Leaders Leading Us Astray?

SURPRISE! The November 8 election delivered a shocker, not just to Democrats, but probably even to Donald Trump himself. From the beginning of the 2016 season, Trump was the candidate whom reporters noticed. Even when Hillary Clinton was deemed the presumptive winner, Trump was the media star. Pundits and pollsters kept saying Trump's chances were almost nil, but Trump won.

Afterward protesters marched in the streets. Then some citizens urged Electoral College participants to overturn his victory, and I was astounded. What would happen if they actually succeeded? Riots? Shootings? Pandemonium?

The answer is obvious, because subverting and repressing other people's rights, opinions and votes is nothing new. Districts are gerrymandered. Polling places get shut down. Complainants are shunned, booed and heckled at public meetings. Drifters, minorities and street people are harassed because they look different. And America's poor, homeless and unemployed frequently get disparaged by national and local governments and citizens alike.

Violence is common in our society. So I suspect our first priority today should not be to attack our opponents or ignore their concerns. We've been doing that for decades, and it has clearly made things worse.

Our current level of distrust is alarming. This season, I've heard perfectly sane citizens say there's undeniable proof that the Clintons killed Vince Foster and that Foster wasn't their only victim. I've heard all about how Hillary Clinton planned to put gun owners in concentration camps, and how Trump was going to round up and torture immigrants and Muslims. And I've heard about how both Clinton and Trump planned to plunder the public monies.

And since the election? I've heard tales about Chicano kids who have been so traumatized by Trump's victory that schools have sent them home to assure them that their parents hadn't already been deported. I've likewise heard stories about Islamic children who can't be lured out of their homes.

"At this point, we've become so polarized, that we recast every issue into a story in which our political rivals are villains."

And if those stories are exaggerated? Well hyperbole seems to be the only viewpoint Americans still share. The *National Enquirer* on display at our local grocery store during election week announced "Hillary: Corrupt! Racist! Criminal!" And the nearby *Globe* pronounced Doomsday was at hand because Hillary was going to trigger World War III.

Gone are the days when alien babies and serial killers led the pack in terms of tabloid fear-mongering. Now, government officials are scarier than Martians, Ted Bundy and Big Foot combined.

Trump's belligerent style likely exacerbates such fears, but his contributions are a mere dollop in an ocean of paranoia. So how did this come about?

Recently I came across a book of essays called *Burning Down the House* by Charles Baxter, an author who used to head an MFA writing program at the University of Michigan and currently teaches in Minnesota. The book was released in 2007, but the lead essay,

"Dysfunctional Narratives: or: 'Mistakes Were Made,'" establishes a theory about political rhetoric that still resonates in 2016.

Baxter laments "the concept of deniability" common in political discourse today, and credits the Presidents who first established it with changing story-tell-

ing, modern literature, his student's views on life and our entire culture.

"Following Richard Nixon in influence on recent fiction," Baxter contends, "would be two runners-up, Ronald Reagan and George Bush ... In their efforts to attain deniability on the arms-for-hostages deal with Iran, their administrations managed to achieve considerable notoriety for self-righteousness, public befuddlement about facts, forgetfulness under oath and constant disavowals of political error and criminality, culminating in the quasi-confessional passive-voice-mode sentence, 'Mistakes were made.'"

"... What difference does it make to writers of stories if public figures are denying their responsibility for their own actions? ... So what if the President of the United States is making himself out to be, of all things, a victim? Well, to make an obvious point, they create a climate in which social narratives are designed to be deliberately incoherent and misleading."

Baxter then compares new politicians with old, and affected novelists with their predecessors, and introduces another consequence: "How can the contemporary disavowal movement not affect those of us who tell stories? We begin to move away from fiction of protagonists and antagonists into another mode, another model. It is hard to describe this model but I think it might be called the fiction of finger-pointing, the fic-

tion of the quest for blame. It often culminates with a scene in a court of law.”

According to Baxter, “deniability” eroded literature, changed people’s attitudes and infiltrated television. People started going on Oprah and Montel to blame their families for their addiction, misbehavior, crimes and depression.

Baxter’s thesis is compelling and sometimes downright funny. Yet I suspect he’s also deadly serious in his implication that our politics, literature and culture have been hijacked by whiny, self-pitying narcissists.

I also suspect most Americans agree that there is something deeply disturbing about modern political narratives, with the blame games, accusations, denials and unrelenting dissatisfaction and suspicion which permeate our society.

In 2016 our list of culprits has expanded. We are not just blaming fellow workers and dysfunctional families for everything, we are blaming the economy, sexual predators, rednecks, elitists, immigrants, Syrian refugees, Chinese peasants and little kids trying to escape serfdom and sexual exploitation in Latin America. And that’s only half the story.

AT THIS POINT, we’ve become so polarized that we recast every issue into a story in which our political rivals are villains. That’s the way politics trends these

days: One side pushes and the other pushes back harder, and we end up further and further apart in ideas, positions and standards. And our thoughts about class, money, religion and morality just keep widening.

So how are governments supposed to function when the nation is so thoroughly divided about what is wrong and who’s to blame? Actually, they barely do. During the last few decades, the U.S. Congress has engaged in internecine stand-offs with both parties determined to serve only half of the citizens – their half. And now Salida’s government keeps lawyering up so its internal factions (administrators, council and the NRCDC board) can fight one another.


And yes, dysfunctional narratives likely play a huge role in feeding our litigious, self-pitying, blame-anyone-but-ourselves society. But if we want to fix things, we can’t just indict presidents and politicians. In our democracy, we the people are surely part of the problem. And if we really want to change things, we’ll have to make ourselves part of the solution, because elected officials and government administrators can’t integrate our needs. They are too beholden to narrow constituencies: e.g., cities answer to businesses and taxpayers, congressmen to regions, and presidents to commerce and industry.

We the people, on the other hand, are free agents who man institutions aplenty, both public and private – including service groups, charitable organizations, churches, fire departments, libraries, museums, animal shelters and emergency and social services, which provide soup kitchens, food banks, legal aid, clothing, information, shelter and help for the indigent, elderly, ill and dying.

And we work together in these endeavors – young and old, rich and poor, right and left – to serve all sorts of Americans.

During his acceptance speech, President-Elect Trump talked about the importance of uniting Americans. That’s an excellent idea, but not one Trump will likely accomplish while building his wall, rounding up immigrants, scaring schoolchildren and terrifying minority communities. In fact, the ACLU has already received an unprecedented amount of donations and is gearing up to keep Trump very busy. So if Americans want to really change things and actually come together in the next few years, the people will have to take the lead, which should put us in a better position than taking the blame or dispersing it. ■

Martha Quillen blames time constraints for her narrative dysfunction.




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George Sibley

Down on the Ground Trumped and Stumped

THINGS MAY BE SETTling out a bit by the time you read this. All the cheers and jeers over the election, the anger in “Not My President” and “Build The Wall” rallies here and there, the stock market rollercoaster, the warnings and pleas from leaders around the world, and so on. All of that now settles into a hiatus like the runup to some kind of cross between chess and poker, as Trump begins lining up his pieces for the transition and his opponents start lining up the countering pieces. We’ll see who is bluffing as we move into the first hundred days of the future.

Was Trump’s victory truly a surprise? I will say that I didn’t really believe it would happen, but I also had a creeping feeling about the election from the moment that our English cousins voted to leave the European Union – no more illusions there about “Great Britain,” I guess. It felt like a preview for the morning-after headline in the *New York Times*: “Donald Trump is Elected President in Stunning Repudiation of the Establishment.” I guess when confronted with really hard realities, “stunning repudiations” are the equivalent of the “denial” stage in the grieving process.

Last month I wrote here about the nature – no, the *culture* – of democracy in a complex, technologically advanced mass society. Such societies are run, of necessity, by elites who know how to build, operate, manage and maintain the vast systems that provide the food, water, power, fuels and everything else we need to support “civilization as we know it.” It’s a system that works in part because no single elite can do it all; the private and public management teams, the scientists, the technicians, the creatives and innovators, the financiers, the lawmakers and lawyers, the media disseminators – all depend on other elites themselves, both in their work and in their daily lives.

The elites nonetheless do become an interlocked “Establishment” through work interactions – and through the (mostly) deserved rewards they gain for meeting their portion of the society’s needs, which put them on an economic plane increasingly insulated from the masses they supposedly serve. Remember how nonplussed the first President Bush was when



“So, the Establishment has been repudiated by a reactionary movement led inexplicably by a guy who is himself almost a caricature of Establishment-gone-wild excess.”

a campaign stop took him into a supermarket with self-checkout stations? There may be a danger in not having to go to the grocery store yourself where you might rub elbows with your constituency as co-participants. This election was a classic example of what happens when elites cease to really know

the people they supposedly work for, when they listen too much to each other and ignore rumblings from below.

So, the Establishment has been repudiated by a reactionary movement led inexplicably by a guy who is himself almost a caricature of Establishment-gone-wild excess. Sort of repudiated, anyway. As I write this, votes are still being counted in a lot of places, and Clinton, the Establishment candidate, clearly won the popular vote by a comfortable margin (over a million as of

11/18), more than Gore over Bush or Kennedy over Nixon. She would have been president, had America’s original Establishment, the wealthy, educated, white elites we revere as our “Founding Fathers,” not opposed the idea of a popular election for determining the nation’s leader. Instead, they set up the “Electoral College” in the Constitution; their stated intent, in the non-hiphop words of Alexander Hamilton, was that the choice of the nation’s leader should be “made by men most capable of analyzing the qualities adapted to the station” of president (*Federalist Paper 68*).

It was pretty clearly *not* the intent of the Founding Elites to bind these elite electors to some cockamamie decision by the masses – on another occasion, Hamilton told Jefferson, “Your people, sir, is a beast.” But custom and eventually numerous state laws decreed that the popular vote would determine the “winner-takes-all” casting of most states’ electoral votes. So one way to look at this election, where the Electoral College again trumped the Establishment candidate for the second time in two decades, is to observe that the elites sometimes outsmart themselves.

But there are more interesting ways to look at the 2016 election map – for example, to look at it in the context of the “urban-rural divide” I tend to go on about often, the city cousins and the country cousins. Colorado’s vote was similar enough to many other

states to use as an exemplar. “We” gave Clinton nine electoral votes (seven congressional districts plus two senators) because she won Colorado’s popular vote. But if we did electoral votes the way Maine and Nebraska do, one vote for the winner in each congressional district plus two votes for the winner statewide, we would be giving Clinton only six votes (Districts 1, 2, 6 and 7 plus the two statewide votes) and Trump three votes (Districts 3, 4 and 5) – essentially the mostly-urban districts against the mostly-rural districts (with urban El Paso and Mesa Counties wild red cards in that analysis).

LACK THE TIME AND ENERGY to do that exercise nationwide, but suspect that Trump’s electoral margin would be even larger if the electors were selected one per congressional district, bound by their district’s vote. The 2016 election map for almost every state is a sea of non-metropolitan red counties with islands of blue counties, most of which islands are metropolitan concentrations, or heavily minority, or “post-urban” resort/amenity places like my Gunnison County.

So, from, say, a Central Colorado perspective, the Electoral College process, as most states now execute it, amplifies the Democrat vote in states with huge urban populations, and the Republican vote in states without that. But if all states did their electoral votes by congressional districts, it would probably favor the Republicans everywhere.

What should we think of this? Americans have never been a city-loving people; the westward movement, all the way from England and Europe, was most commonly an effort to escape the cities growing out of the Industrial Revolution. The original American Dream was the freeman’s self-sufficient farm – “God’s chosen people,” Jefferson declaimed – and we passed laws and policies to encourage people to go settle those farms, create that decentralized economy and polity of agrarian communitarians.

Yet we have steadily, one might say, inexorably, become an ever more urbanized and industrialized people. Part of the reason for that is obvious: all the good farmland has been settled since the late 1900s; the hard truth is that there are now so many of us that we have no choice but to learn how to live in ever more dense and efficient societies. And our ever-expanding population also leaves us no choice but to continue moving aggressively into the natural environment, converting pre-human ecosystems into human-supporting systems that – some of us hope – can first, also continue to support what’s left of the original pre-human life if we are more careful and caring than we have been, and second, can be done with carbon-neutral systems that minimize the cli-

mate change Trump thinks we can eradicate by closing our eyes tight and wishing hard.

The great and growing cities have no choice but to push pretty hard on the non-urban areas to keep providing them with the raw resources and services they need to survive. We are already at the point where nearly all the production of the farms and forests and mines goes straight to urban-based industrial centers (along with a lot of water). We country cousins have given over to the cities nearly all the value-added economy built on the raw materials and foodstuffs we produce, and we have to buy back the finished products from the cities at their prices.

But without some cleansing catastrophe – disease, famine, one or all of the four apocalyptic horsemen – the city is humankind’s future, and this is not an awareness that the country cousins like, even though maybe we should.

And Trump, a cartoon of everything urban and elitist that the country cousins supposedly dislike – somehow managed to capture and feed off of that smoldering anti-urban anger, along with a lot of less rational smoldering xenophobic angers, mostly because the Establishment simply hasn’t been listening. The one-way message from the Establishment elites has been just trust us, and in the long run these changes will be as good for you as they are for us now – no pain, no gain. Trump, a consummate fantasist and bullshitter, didn’t even have to come up with serious ideas for addressing the causes of the angers; he just fed the angers, and it got him elected.

Now what? Trump did well in Central Colorado – about 60-40 for Trump if Cañon City is included in the region, 50-50 if we draw the line at the Arkansas River canyon. I hope that my friends and neighbors who voted for him will keep him focused on creating jobs that don’t destroy the planet, and not participate in a xenophobic blame-and-hate fest – although his early appointments aren’t conducive to hope on that.

And the other half of us? There’s a temptation to just fold our arms and step back and say, okay, see if you Trumpublicans can do better than the out-of-touch elites (who, yes, deserved a good stunning). But I don’t think we have that choice. I am, however, truly stumped right now, about what to do that isn’t just reacting against the reactionaries. Suggestions welcome. ■

George Sibley lives and votes in a blue part of Central Colorado, but likes to hear from readers of all colors (george@gard-sibley.org).



Hal Walter

Keeping the Darkness at Bay

IN THE WAKE OF THE recent election, I found myself pondering the future and reading a book called *Neurotribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity*.

We've all heard of the Holocaust in which six million Jews were killed by the Nazis. One piece of history I was not aware of is that the Nazis also exterminated more than 70,000 disabled people, as many as 3,500 of them believed to be autistic.

Through a program called Aktion T4, the Nazis carried out their ideology of "eugenics." Part of this was the notion that those who could not work were a burden – "useless eaters" and unworthy of life. This involuntary euthanasia program targeted mostly disabled or mentally ill people, primarily children, who were put to death by lethal injection, gassing, starvation and shooting. In many cases, parents were urged to send their disabled children to an institution and were later sent a letter saying their child had died of natural causes.

Also killed under this program were some political dissidents, including artists.

Since publishing my book *Full Tilt Boogie* two years ago, I've been going around giving talks about autism and the challenges of parenting a disabled child. Initially this was all about selling my book. This transformed into an effort to raise awareness about autism and neurodiversity, a term I prefer because it is more inclusive and less of a label. This theme has further evolved to a concept I call Endurance for Life, which refers to physical and emotional strength and determination, and embraces the gifts of patience, humility and empathy.

One of the points I include in these discussions is the social impact of autism on communities and the



larger economy. An MIT researcher predicts that half of all kids will be autistic by the year 2025. That's only about eight years away. What if she's only half-right, and "just" 25 percent of kids are autistic in less than a decade?

Many people ask how this could be. What's causing this? The MIT scientist believes the phenomenon is statistically correlated to glyphosate contamination. Glyphosate is more commonly known as RoundUp and is used widely in conjunction with genetically engineered crops. It is found in a strikingly high percentage of water and breast milk samples in the U.S.

Even if this MIT researcher is way off on her prediction about autism, we are talking about huge numbers of people who may not be able to attend a regular school, may never be able to live on their own or have a career. People who may need public assistance. People whose parents will eventually die hoping that their kids will have a place in this world.

Another statistic I like to quote is that more than 70 percent of autistic adults are unable to live on their own, and the economic cost is catastrophic. The Centers for Disease Control recently reported that placing an autistic adult in a group home costs an average of \$50,000 a year – more than a year's tuition at Stanford.

For someone like my son Harrison, who is 12, I can only hope that maybe, just maybe, he'll be one of the few who finds a niche in this world and excels at something. The jury is out.

• • •

One idyllic fall evening following cross-country practice, one of the boys on Harrison's team tossed a frisbee

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my way. I caught it and tossed it back to him. Micah and his brother Elias are both Ethiopians adopted by a local family from an orphanage when they were very young. Micah tossed the Frisbee back to me and then we just tossed it back and forth over and over for several minutes.

Meanwhile, Harrison stood nearby engaged in his own world.

Micah threw long passes and I ran for them, catching them over my shoulder, or reaching outstretched to grab them. I threw some long passes to him. Harrison nearly got beamed by one of these. We threw some flat-trajectory zingers in between the long bombs.

Micah's accuracy and distance throwing the frisbee, and his ability to run down and catch even my poorest throws, drew sharply into focus the difference between his motor and sensory-processing skills and Harrison's, not to mention the capacity for a simple game of catch. How rich and blessed I am that a boy from an orphanage in Ethiopia could provide a glimpse of something that has been denied to me as a father – the simple joy of playing catch with a frisbee. Somehow, this play allowed me to reconcile the contrast between how things could be and how they really are.

• • •

As time goes by I've realized that neurodiversity encompasses a wide variety of neurological differences. In addition to the autism spectrum, these can also include dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Tourette syndrome, sensory integration disorders and obsessive-compulsive disorders.

We tend to think of the autism spectrum as being linear. On one end of this spectrum is not autistic, or less autistic. And on the other end is very autistic. In the middle is "moderately" autistic. However, the notion of a linear spectrum is a vast oversimplification. In reality the spectrum is circular, with shaded areas spreading out from the center to different points on the circumference that may include traits like language skills, motor skills, sensory filters, perception, social skills, executive function and impulse control.

While my son has sensory processing problems and behavioral issues that are sometimes over the top, this same kid goes to a regular school and gets A's in some classes, can play the piano and sing before an audience, and runs on the school cross-country team.

Is he a larger burden requiring more resources than a neurotypical child? No question. He takes far more effort and energy for the school staff to manage. He also requires an inordinate amount of energy at home. Recently, someone who works as a counselor in the field of autism support, told me: "You are not in any position to have a real job."

In Nazi Germany, that might render me a "worthless eater," and since I write and speak out about this subject, I could also be considered a political dissident and artist.

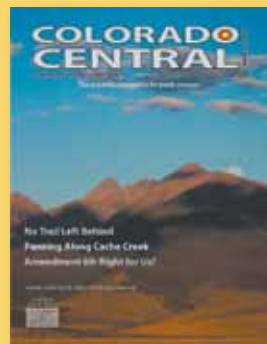
Which brings us to the recent election. The outcome was not a vote for patience, humility or empathy. Even more disturbing, it only served to embolden those who repudiate these qualities. The empowerment of those aligned with the alt-right is not encouraging for those who believe in the same freedoms and liberties for everyone, and it seems we find ourselves on a very slippery slope.

Meanwhile, I will continue to speak truth to power through the sharing of my human experiences in hopes of helping prevent history from repeating itself. To borrow from a famous wizard, "It is the everyday deeds of ordinary folk that keep the darkness at bay." ■

Hal's books *Full Tilt Boogie* and *Endurance* are available from *The Book Haven* in Salida.



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