

COLORADO CENTRAL

MAGAZINE

March 2020 • Nº. 304

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The monthly magazine for the better angels of our nature

Who Was Shavano?
Ursus Americanus
The Recycle Blues

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*"We shall find peace. We shall hear angels,
we shall see the sky sparkling with diamonds." – Anton Chekhov*

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Cover art: "Angel of Shavano,"
by Paulette Brodeur.

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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 Shavano rises above the floor of the Upper Arkansas River Valley in mid-February. Read about Shavano's name-sake, the mountain itself, and tales of climbing this venerable peak in the Sawatch Range in this issue. Photo by Mike Rosso.

About the Cover Artist: Paulette Brodeur

GROWING UP IN EUROPE, specifically Germany and France, and visiting galleries, museums and historical sites, instilled an appreciation of the arts and motivated Paulette to create.

She has been selling her paintings since she was 10, when her private art teacher, Josephine Mahaffey (The Texas Dynamo) entered her painting, "The Circus," in the Texas State Fair and it won second place. She has never looked back. She continued to paint and sell art through grade school, high school, college and throughout the years.

Living in Boulder, Colorado, from 1978 to 1994, her art career began to take off, not only in Colorado but also internationally.

After moving to Salida, she and her family lived in a tent on land they owned, but painting proved to be difficult in the wind and dust. In 1994 she found a building in downtown Salida in which to work for the next 25 years. Her arrival in Salida predated the popular art scene and Paulette has been described in publications as the "midwife of the art community" that now thrives in Salida.

She prefers to work on six, or so paintings of different subjects at a time, depending on the day and the mood she is in, showing off the many styles she is able to create. She has never really tried to control her creativity and has allowed it to roam. People seem to feel freedom when they greet her art. Her paintings can be abstracts, funny animals, impressionistic landscapes, portraits, an emotional expression of spirituality or a blending of all the above. They are rich and complex with colors that mingle themes including art, culture, dance, music, nature, poetry and religion. The images are full of humor, light, motion and always are created with the desire to reveal something hidden.

The common thread is the experience of color, happiness, joy and peace that paintings seem to evoke when a viewer comes face to face with them. This is her spirit and it definitely shines through.

"The highest possible praise of my work is to have people say of a painting, 'This makes me so happy,' and they decide to take some of that happiness home."

You can find more of Paulette's work at her gallery in Salida at 133 E. Second Street or online at www.brodeurart.com ■



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From the Editor

Road Trip

"If you ever plan to motor west. Travel my way. Take the highway that's the best." – "Route 66" by Bobby Troup.

THE WORDS TO THAT ICONIC SONG swirled through my head during a recent road trip to California.

I decided to drive to visit family instead of the usual jet travel. The road offers so many sights as well as hour upon hour of vast, empty landscape – good time to mull over life in general.

Although the iconic Route 66 has been officially decertified, remnants of it are still found along portions of the route I took to "motor west." The trip began with friends overnight in Santa Fe. Then, onto Interstate 40, and a tasty lunch stop at Jerry's Cafe in Gallup, New Mexico before ending the day in Flagstaff, Arizona. It's hard to imagine traveling without a smartphone these days. Not only does it direct you to your destination, often choosing the fastest route, but applications like Yelp help take the guesswork out of choosing a decent eatery in an unknown town. AirBnB offers alternative lodging options, often at lower rates.

From Flagstaff, we diverted off the old 66 route and headed south to Sedona, mostly because I'd never been, but to also get in some redrock hiking to break

up all the driving. That long day of motoring also took us through the unique – and vertical – mining town of Jerome. One of the oddest locations ever chosen for a town.

Then, north to Ash Fork, also once a stop along Route 66, and back on I-40 and on to Kingman where we got off the old historic route and headed straight up and over to Las Vegas. (We programmed Elvis on the smartphone while driving through to get the spirit.) That city has grown immensely since I was last there. I couldn't wait to see it in the rearview. We arrived at our next destination Beatty, under the cover of Nevada darkness, and set out the next morning for Death Valley. But first, we went to Rhyolite, Nevada, a fascinating ghost town just on the outskirts of the park.

I'd never been to Death Valley and my only regret about this trip is that we hadn't allowed more time to spend "below sea level." January was a great time to enjoy the vastness of the Valley. It was neither hot nor cold, and there weren't a lot of other tourists at that time. Hiking and exploring around Death Valley was definitely a highlight.

The next night was spent in Bishop, California, on the eastern side of the Sierra mountains. It was there we discovered the Looney Bean coffee house, which helped us fuel up for our final leg of the trip; across the Sierras and on to Sonoma County. It was weird to be back on U.S. Hwy. 50, as my home in Salida is only a mile from that motorway. But 50 is quickly gobbled up when you hit I-80 in Sacramento and from that point on, it's all exurbs, suburbs and traffic. Basically, California.

The return trip was more about speed than scenery. A rainy night in Elko, Nevada, was followed by an evening in Vernal, Utah, where my friend Ken has recently taken a job. Next was Dinosaur, Colorado, back roads to Grand Junction, and again onto 50 for the final stretch before arriving home.

I had definitely gotten my "kicks." ■ – Mike Rosso



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Who Was Shavano?

By Virginia Simmons

ON MOUNT SHAVANO, west of Salida, melting snow in late spring and early summer creates the image of an angel, but surveyors or early-day mountain climbers honored a warrior instead of the angel when this peak was named. Who was Shavano, people may ask today? He was the most famous war chief of the Tabeguache Band of the Ute Indian Tribe during the last half of the 1800s.

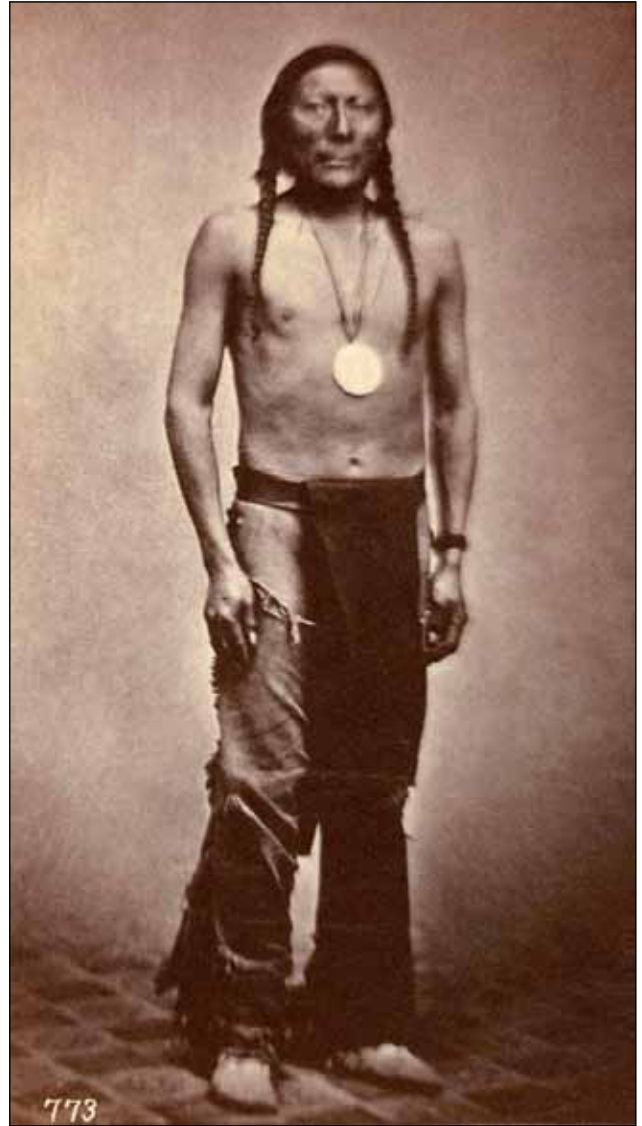
The peak bearing his name is the 14,231 foot-high Mount Shavano in the Sawatch Range in the group between the South Arkansas River and Chalk Creek. Two other fourteeners are the neighboring Tabeguache, the name of his band, and Antero, the highest in the group, which was inexplicably named for a Ute war chief in Utah rather than one of Colorado chiefs. South of the South Arkansas River in this range lie slightly

***“Not one to tolerate any opposition,
he killed one of his own three wives ...”***

lower summits honoring the Tabeguache Chief Ouray, his mate Chipeta, and his son Pahlone who was stolen by Arapahos. One of the D&RG's passenger trains that crossed Marshall between Salida and Gunnison, a water tank on that pass, and a short-lived silver camp on Monarch Mountain also carried Shavano's name.

Although Shavano roamed throughout Colorado's mountains, his usual home in winter was the Uncompahgre Valley, the Uncompahgre Plateau, and Uncompahgre Peak, another fourteener. Utes who lived in that area were a sub-band of the Tabeguache Band. After the Indian agency was moved from Los Pinos Creek, which is northwest of Saguache, to the Uncompahgre Valley in 1876, the entire Tabeguache Band was typically called the Uncompahgres. After the Meeker Massacre by White River Utes in northwestern Colorado, in which the Uncompahgres had no part, Shavano's band was forced to move to Utah.

Except during the winter season, the Upper Arkansas River area had been one of the places that Shavano, with his nomadic companions and their families usually visited once or more times a year, often for a few weeks. South Park was a favorite place that Shavano frequented to hunt game, to obtain other native foods, and to trade. Game had been their main source of meat and of materials from which they also made tipis, clothing and tools. With the arrival of Spaniards in 1598, Utes began to get horses, guns, and metal implements. During the 1860s when thousands of pros-



pectors, miners and settlers moved in, wild game and unoccupied land quickly began to disappear.

Other changes were the advent of Indian agencies and the distribution of rations. The government and Chief Ouray advocated the idea, ignored by most Utes, that they should settle down and become farmers and raise cows and flocks of sheep instead of raiding settlers' crops and livestock. An episode exemplifying Shavano's own temperament, however, took place in 1865 after peaceful Utes were killed by Mexicans in the Sangre de Cristos, east of the Great Sand Dunes. In retaliation, when Shavano encountered an apparently innocent Hispaño on a nearby trail, Shavano gave him a whipping and absconded with the goods on his pack saddle. Then, as further retribution, Shavano proceeded to steal five horses from white settlers in the Arkansas Valley and the Fountain Creek area.

Not one to tolerate any opposition, he killed one of his own three wives, according to Una Hogue, whose

Opposite page: A photograph of Shavano which appeared in M. L. Simonin's "Le Tour du Monde" (1868). The peace medal was awarded by President Lincoln in 1863 in Washington.

At right: Studio portrait by William H. Jackson of Warets and Shavano, seated left to right, sub-chiefs of the North American Indian Tabeguache (Uncompahgre) Ute band, circa 1868. Courtesy of Denver Public Library, Western History Digital Collection.

typescript is in Salida's public library. Una's informant was her father, an early resident who shared his gossip with her.

As the top man of the Tabeguaches' police, Shavano kept everyone in line. A rare photograph of him, thought to have been made by G.D. Wakely in Denver in about 1867, shows him wearing an Army coat with a belt, a hat with an embroidered emblem, a long cord with tassels across his shoulder, a knife in a beaded sheath on his belt, and a rifle at his side. His stern expression is that of a man whose words should be taken quite seriously.

After the Tabeguache agency was moved from Los Pinos Creek to the Uncompahgre Valley, Shavano followed Ouray's example and had a farm and lived in a house, but life even then was not always peaceful. For example, one evening when some teamsters were hauling goods west from Saguache, Shavano's popular son Johnson Shavano and his companion entered the teamsters' camp and asked for food. One of the gringos, who was drunk, responded to this request by shooting Johnson Shavano, who died that night. When this news reached the Uncompahgre Valley, angry Uncompahgres headed for Gunnison, where the murderer was being held, and strung him up.

After the Meeker Massacre was perpetrated by White River Utes in 1879, in which the Uncompahgres were not involved, Shavano was one of the Utes who accompanied Chief Ouray during the following winter to Washington, where they signed the agreement that removed both the White River Utes and also the Un-



compahgres to Utah. When Ouray died in 1880, Shavano campaigned to become the band's chief, as he had been doing for a few years previously when Ouray fell ill, but Shavano failed to win the title.

In 1881 the Uncompahgres were sent to an arid wasteland in Utah, where Shavano died in 1886. The husband of one of his daughters adopted Shavano's name and became a chief, so the old warrior's name lived on for a few more years in Utah. ■

Virginia Simmons is the author of "The Ute Indians of Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico."



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Shavano, the Mountain



Photo by Elk Raven Photography.

RISING 7,200 FEET above the floor of the upper Arkansas River Valley is Mount Shavano, named for the famous war chief of the Tabeguache band of the Ute Indian Tribe. Shavano lies north of Mount Ouray and Mount Chipeta and south of the Collegiate Peaks. In times past, the mountain was also known as Mount Usher or Mount Chavanaux.

According to best estimate use reports compiled by the U.S. Forest Service, Mount Shavano saw about 5,000-7,000 hikers in 2018 and continues to be a popular 14er for mountain climbers. (See page 33 for a first-hand account).

During early winter and spring, the appearance of a snow angel is formed in the melting snow and has led to several legends. In one of them, a year of little snow in the mountains left the valley so dry the Indians were forced to start searching for another place to live.

An Indian princess, heartbroken at the prospect of having to move, went to the base of the mountain and prayed, asking the spirits to end the drought. The Indian god of plenty said he would answer her prayer, but only if she sacrificed herself to the gods.

The god then transformed the princess into the Angel of Mt. Shavano. Each spring, the princess reappears and cries for her people. The tears melt the ice and snow and provide water to the river and streams below.

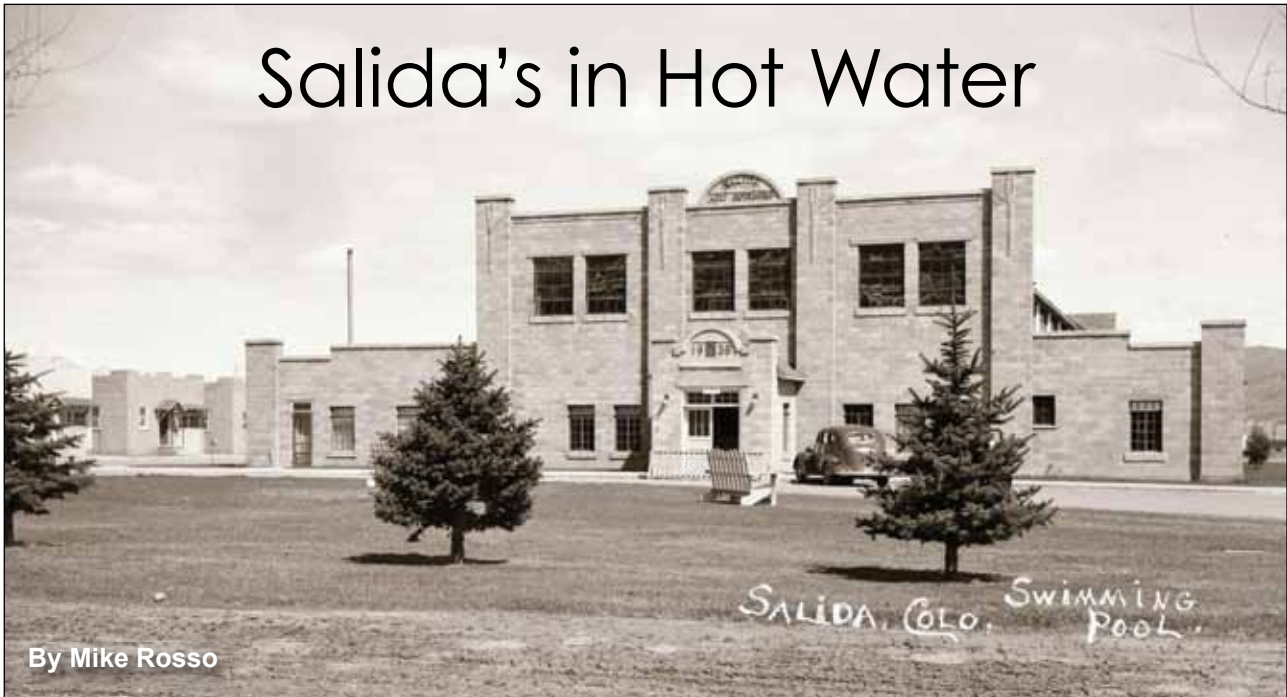
A second legend has Shavano becoming friends with a freed slave and mountain man named Jim Beckwourth. Another version of the story tells of Chief Shavano's friendship with a scout named George Beckwith. In both stories, the chief's friend was severely injured in an accident. The chief went to the base of the mountain to pray for his friend. As a sign the spirits had heard his prayer, an angel of snow appeared on the side of Mt. Shavano.

A third legend has the goddess Jupiter exiling a young goddess who's unpredictable and mischievous behavior annoyed her. Jupiter turned the young goddess into an angel of ice and told her she would be stuck to Mt. Shavano until tragedy struck the humans in the valley below.

One year, there was very little snow. A severe drought brought on sickness and death. This made the goddess angel cry which caused her body of ice to break apart and fall towards the valley. As it traveled down the mountain, the ice melted and filled the river with water ending the drought.

The goddess Jupiter returned and told the angel she was freed and could leave the mountain. The angel told Jupiter she wanted to stay so she could care for the people below. The request was granted but only on the condition, the angel would melt away every spring. ■

Salida's in Hot Water



By Mike Rosso

Above, the Salida Hot Springs Pool, circa 1939. Courtesy of the Salida Museum, Salida, Colorado. At right, the Aquatic Center today.

IT IS BILLED AS one of the largest indoor hot springs in North America. The Salida Hot Springs Aquatic Center consists of a 25-meter, six-lane lap pool, and a warmer leisure pool as well as private soaking pools. Besides tourists and drop-ins, it serves nearly 50 user groups, including kayak roll sessions, senior fitness classes and the Salida Cyclones swim team, according to Salida Parks and Recreation director, Diesel Post.

The hot water at the facility originates six miles west of Salida, on 185 acres above the town of Poncha Springs. It delivers 145 to 150 gallons per minutes from a source temperature of 140 to 150 degrees F, arriving at the facility at around 115 to 126 degrees. Once at the facility, the hot spring water feeds two different pools. The lap pool is maintained at an average of 84 degrees F and the leisure pool at approximately 99 degrees F. The Center also offers special adult soak nights where they allow the temperature of the leisure pool to go as high as 104 degrees F. Lifeguards are on duty whenever the facility is open and aquatic safety staff are also available to help keep visitors safe. An ADA compliant lift allows for easy access into either pool.

The natural hot water offers many health benefits. Minerals and compounds found in the water include: Silica, Aluminum Iron Oxide, Sulphate, Calcium, Bicarbonate, Potassium, Chloride and Sodium.

Jennifer Davisson, Aquatics Supervisor at the Center



is a Salida native and has worked at the pool since 1995. She discussed Balneology, the study of the art and science of baths and bathing in natural mineral waters for health and wellness purposes.

“Calcium-rich mineral waters helps with muscle contraction, blood vessels, the secretion of hormones and enzymes, and helps maintain strong bones and help prevent osteoporosis. Potassium rich waters helps regulate the heartbeat and are necessary to move nutrients and wastes through the cell walls. It also can reduce inflamed joint conditions,” she said.

“Silica-rich waters are beneficial for strengthening connective tissue, bones, keeping hair, nails and skin healthy. It also accelerates the healing process and fights hardening arteries, skin disorders, insomnia and tuberculosis.”



As for her personal experiences with the mineral water, she said this, “The water makes my body feel good, it takes away the aches and pains. My hair has grown faster than it has in the past. My nails are very strong. It’s great for removing toxins from my body. I also think it helps me to stay healthy. I do not get sick that often.”

David Daley, also a Salida native, is the Hot Spring Facility Maintenance Supervisor. He explained that the state of Colorado considers the facility an industrial wastewater treatment plant, and thus is strictly monitored. The need to chlorinate the pools is mandated by the state for disinfection, then the water is dechlorinated before continuing to the South Arkansas River. The private soaking pools use untreated spring water and are cooled down by the individual users by adding treated domestic water.

HISTORY

During the dark days of the Great Depression, President Franklin Roosevelt created the Works Progress

Administration (WPA), a federally-funded infrastructure and employment program to help put Americans back to work. At the time, the national unemployment rate was at 20 percent, and the citizens of Salida were suffering along with the rest of the nation.

A municipal swimming pool, using hot water piped five miles from Poncha Springs was proposed and several hundred men were employed by the WPA who completed the collection system, pipeline and pool on Feb. 14, 1938, St. Valentine’s Day.

Though initially successful, maintenance of the pool started to become a drain on the city’s budget over the next several decades and

the city considered selling the facility more than once. In fact, Elmo Bevington, former owner of the Monarch ski area, offered to buy the pool for \$110,000 in the mid-1960s. On November 3, 1965, voters narrowly rejected the notion of selling the pool.

A natural gas explosion at the facility in 1975 led to another discussion of the future of the pool. The city sued the insurance company representing Salida Gas, whose line to the facility seeped and caused the explosion in which no one was injured. A bond issue for \$450,000 to make improvements to the pool was rejected by the voters, 745-488. Eventually the city recovered \$93,000 from the insurance company and used it to help repair the damage from the explosion. In February 1978, repairs began to replace the rotting roof of the facility.

In a change of heart, voters in 1979 passed a \$280,000 bond issue to make improvements to the facility, including a heat exchange system and a sunbathing area on the west side. Unfortunately the bid for the im-

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provement came in at over a half million so a minimum amount of renovation was done.

Controversy continued to dog the facility in the coming years. In 1982, the then pool manager was charged with embezzlement of public funds. The original pipeline began to deteriorate and needed to be replaced. In 1993, voters again weighed in on the fate of the pool and approved a funding request of \$780,000 from the city. After many fits and starts, the replacement pipeline was finally completed eight years later – at a final cost of \$1.8 million. But, the saga continued.

A snowstorm in early May 2001 damaged the roof and structure, requiring additional public funds for repair. The larger, six-inch pipeline used to replace the old four-inch pipe delivered the hot water at a lower pressure. Added to that was the fact that 1,500 feet of the pipeline route ran through standing groundwater along the highway. Another lawsuit was filed in 2005 – this time against the water engineers who designed the replacement line.

But, in the past 15 years, the Salida Hot Springs and Aquatic Center has weathered the bad times and has made many needed improvements to the facility, which is loved by locals and tourists alike.

THE FUTURE - By Diesel Post

As this iconic park and facility approaches its Centennial, the Salida community around it has both exponentially evolved and yet stayed the same. While it is used and loved by thousands, it is challenged because of its age, efficiency or “potential.” An 84-year-old pool has some wear and tear that must be addressed. Anyone who has been to the source near Poncha Springs dreams of ways it could be similarly developed as a private resort. Visitors and community members routinely offer suggestions for ways to manage, develop or divest from “The Pool.” It is with this reality that The Salida Hot Springs Aquatic Center, Centennial Park – “The Park” – and the Salida community’s relationship grows and evolves.

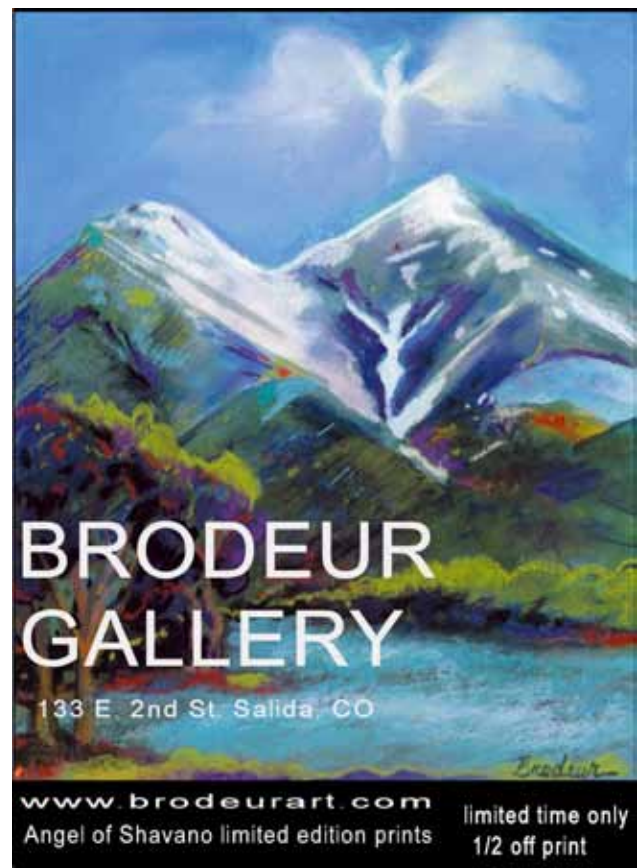
The 2020 Department Master Plan, which obtained input from hundreds of Salidans, included concept designs for Centennial Park and the Aquatics Center. The concept designs call for developing the space into a very active location which includes a splash pad, skate parks, soaking pools, playgrounds, updated bathrooms with a concession pavilion, and a large Community Center.

Bids are currently being accepted to build five outside soaking pools (similar to the historic soaking cabins which used to be scattered throughout the park) and a splash pad in the park. The organization,

Friends of Salida Skateparks collaborated with the city to write a GOCO grant for the construction of a skate park and the Chaffee County Amateur Hockey Association employed a previously-used space to build a regulation-size (100 by 200 feet) skating rink which will be operational next winter. The Peak to Peak Pickleball Club and other community members were vital in writing and being awarded a grant to update tennis and pickleball courts in an unused dirt lot

on the property. Inside the facility, staff are holding an “Adult Soak Night” twice a month where they turn down the lights, allow the pool temperature to rise to 102-104 degrees, and let the community enjoy the hotter water for a couple of hours. Finally, city council approved improvements to the lobby and locker rooms in the 2020 budget.

Further development of this community resource will require continued support, and after more than 80 years of playing a unique and endearing role for the Community “The Pool and The Park” are poised to continue to serve Salidans into the future as it evolves along with the city. ■



REGIONAL NEWS ROUNDUP

(and other items of interest)



Working the CB Ranch near Coaldale in Western Fremont County. Photo courtesy of the Palmer Land Trust.

Palmer Land Trust Assumes Stewardship of CB Ranch

The revegetation of CB Ranch near Coaldale will continue through a stewardship agreement between the Colorado Springs-based Palmer Land Trust and the Security Water and Sanitation District. The 200-acre plot of land near Coaldale was acquired by the city of Security in 2013. Under terms of the acquisition, the Security Water and Sanitation district owns both the senior water rights, and the land itself. The city applied in Colorado Water Court to convert the water rights from agricultural to municipal use, bringing agricultural use of the land to an end.

The Coaldale Alliance, a local citizen's group, raised more than \$10,000, and along with the Upper Arkansas Water Conservancy District, filed a letter of opposition in water court. The parties subsequently negotiated a plan to revegetate the area, as well as for future plans for the property. "It is one of the remaining swaths of open space in the Pleasant Valley," said Kristie Nackord, Coaldale resident and a communications director at Palmer Land Trust. "We wanted to find a solution that works out in the best interests of both communities."

Security, along with other communities along the

Front Range, face a water crunch of their own. The district has noted perfluorinated compounds (PFC) contamination in their water supply, potentially threatening the health of their steadily growing population of 19,000 residents. Security and other Front Range communities filed suit alleging that firefighting foam used in military training exercises is responsible for the contamination. Both the civil action and studies of the degree of contamination, as well as potential health impact of the contamination, continue.

In acquiring the CB Ranch water rights, Security also assumed responsibility for the land, including revegetation; ceasing irrigation and the subsequent dry-up makes the land vulnerable to proliferation of noxious weeds, such as tumbleweeds, as well as increased erosion risk. Security hired an environmental firm to prepare a revegetation plan.

The Alliance and Security reached an agreement in December 2019 to enact a five-year stewardship covenant on the land, managed by Palmer Land Trust. "What makes this arrangement unique," Nackord said, "is that it is enforceable in court."

Security retains the option to sell or subdivide the land. However, the stewardship covenant awards Palmer Land Trust oversight of the revegetation effort for a five

year period regardless of who owns the land or how it is used. Their oversight includes determining the types of seed used in the revegetation, monitoring progress.

“Roy (Heald, head of the Security Water and Sanitation District) and his board did not have to do this,” Nackord said. “It was important to have an agreement that was in the best interests of everyone.”

“I see people stopping along Highway 50 to take photos of the Sangres rising above these lovely fields, and we’d like to keep CB Ranch as open space for everyone,” Nackord said. “This covenant is just the first leg of the journey.” – **By Ron Sering**

Wilderness Act Clears House

The Protecting America’s Wilderness Act, sponsored by U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette, cleared the House by a 231-183 vote. It proposes to protect more than 660,000 acres of land in Colorado. The measure would provide wilderness protections to nearly 1.4 million acres of land in Colorado, California and Washington state, and add some 1,000 miles of rivers to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. It now faces an uphill battle in the Senate which is controlled by Republicans.

Shorts ...

- **Dale Enck**, former prosecuting attorney for the Town of Buena Vista’s municipal court, was arrested in late January on four felony charges related to allegations that he stole thousands of dollars from an at-risk person for whom he had power of attorney in 2019.
- **History Colorado** announced the start of a new Rocky Mountain Center for Preservation – a dynamic preservation education center, headquartered in Leadville at the Healy House Museum & Dexter Cabin.
- **The Chaffee County Community Wildfire Protection Plan** was approved on Feb. 4 by County Commissioners, local fire chiefs and the Colorado State Forest Service. The plan uses new computer modeling techniques developed by Colorado State University to map the level of risk and identify areas to treat the forest for the highest cost efficiency.

• **The Bureau of Land Management Royal Gorge Field Office** is seeking the public’s input on a draft Environmental Impact Statement evaluating the proposed expansion of the Parkdale Quarry, west of Cañon City. Public comments will be most helpful if received by March 23 and must be submitted through the BLM ePlanning site at www.go.usa.gov/xy6tn or mailed to “Parkdale Quarry Expansion Comments,” 3028 E Main Street, Cañon City, CO 81212

• **TJ and Cody Reynolds**, two brothers from Leadville, have been sentenced to prison for pulling a gun on a neighbor after driving recklessly in his driveway. The neighbor shot back, hitting Cody in the torso.

• **Iniki Vike Kapu, 27**, of Colorado Springs was jailed after pleading guilty to illegal possession of bighorn sheep in Fremont County, as well as to illegal possession of three or more big game animals. He was sentenced to six months in jail and three years of supervised probation.

• **Solvista Health** was recently awarded a \$700,000 grant to help build a comprehensive Regional Assessment Center in Salida to treat mental health and substance use needs in the region. The grant was made possible through Colorado House Bill 19-1287.

• **Erin Kelley** has been named Interim Clerk for the city of Salida.

• **Former Salida City Attorney Ben Kahn** has been named in a lawsuit filed in Denver District Court as one of four co-conspirators in a securities fraud case in Denver.

• **Two men who escaped** from a Westcliffe jail on Jan. 12 have been found and are back in jail. Jerry Williams, 39, and Bryan Webb, 30, were both discovered in Walsenburg within a week of each other.

• **Marcia Martinek**, editor of the *Leadville Herald Democrat* since 2002, has retired. She has been replaced by Rachel Woolworth. Will Shoemaker, editor of the **Gunnison Country Times** also announced his departure and is taking a new job at Crested Butte Mountain Resort. He has been replaced by Chris Rourke, an occasional contributor to **Colorado Central Magazine**.

“Notable Quotes”

“We cannot continue to celebrate a man whose legacy causes so much pain and suffering to so many in our state.” – Rep. Kyle Mullica, D-Northglenn, on a proposal to create a new holiday in place of Columbus Day that recognizes humanitarian Frances Xavier Cabrini. – *The Pueblo Chieftain*, Feb. 14, 2020.

“They are breaking state law, but nothing short of a lawsuit will get them to return to clearing the snow along Main Street.” – Westcliffe Mayor Paul Wenke, after CDOT decided to no longer clear snow from the parking spaces along Highway 96. – *Wet Mountain Tribune*, Feb. 6, 2020.

“I’m hoping this doesn’t turn into a divisive debate. It’s really easy to frame this as urban versus rural, left versus right, environmentalist versus rancher.” – Gunnison resident Tom Zieber, who supports ballot Initiative 107, “Restoration of Gray Wolves,” which will appear on the 2020 Colorado General Election ballot in 2020. – *Gunnison Country Times*, Jan. 9, 2020.

News from the San Luis Valley

By Chelsea McNerney-Martinez



Monte Vista, Del Norte Seeking New Police Chiefs

Both the town of Del Norte and city of Monte Vista will be searching for a new chief of police in the coming weeks.

Del Norte's Robert Fresquez resigned in January following the advice of his attorney after he heard the town would not be renewing his contract. Fresquez expressed frustration at his final town board meeting in January, stating after 32 years he was being pushed out because he couldn't find more than two other officers to serve the town, despite a statewide shortage. Community supporters later held an honor ceremony and dinner for Fresquez.

Monte Vista's John Rosecrans announced in early February he would be leaving the area sometime in the near future, but a specific date has not been set for his departure. Rosecrans cited personal changes that require his eventual resignation and he thanked the community for their support over the last two and a half years. Rosecrans' wife, Nikki, the former San Luis Valley VOAD director, recently started a new position with Arapahoe County.

Saguache County/Town of Moffat Annexation Conflict Continues

According to *The Center Post-Dispatch*, the controversial Area 420 annexation in Moffat was approved by the town board on January 21, but required the inclusion of County Road 59, which the Saguache County Board of County Commissioners has refused to vacate. Commissioners allege the annexation is not in compliance with zoning regulations and the town of Moffat

has not provided them with an impact statement. Area 420 opponents allege the Commissioners' concerns "have no legal premise" and the town believes they can move forward with the annexation without the county's approval.

Alamosa Woman Charged with Running New York Prostitution Ring

According to the *Valley Courier*, 45-year-old Tracy Reynolds of Alamosa and Izhak Cohen of Israel were charged by federal prosecutors with running a high end prostitution ring under the name "VIP Escorts" since 2012 and laundering \$10 million through that operation. According to the Southern District of New York news release, "Reynolds and Cohen required escorts to deposit the proceeds of their commercial sex acts into a large number of bank accounts that they controlled, many of them in the name of fake entities. Reynolds and Cohen then laundered the money through thousands of domestic and international financial transactions."

Reynolds was arrested in Florida while trying to board a flight to Mexico on Feb. 11. Reynolds was a musician who performed at events throughout the San Luis Valley under the stage name Maggie Rains and with the band Maggie Rains and the Crooked Keys.

Racist Remarks Cause Controversy

The Monte Vista Elks Lodge has apologized to the community after a video surfaced of one of their members allegedly harassing a woman for speaking Spanish at their weekly bingo event on February 5. A video sent to news outlets and shared on social media shows other attendees confronting who *The Denver Post* identified as Elks Lodge member Tom Tancula, after he allegedly told Maria Yanez, a Mexico native but 30-year legal resident of the US, to speak English when she requested two bingo cards by holding up two fingers.

Tancula can be heard on the video telling those confronting him "I'm not a racist, I'm saying 'speak English,'" "If you don't like it get the hell out of here," and "I don't speak taco." Tancula was charged with harassment and faces up to a thousand dollar fine and up to 90 days incarceration. ■



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In The Colorado Glass Recycling Game, David Can't Beat Goliath

By Michael Elizabeth Sakas
Colorado Public Radio

Mickey Barry, co-owner of Angel of Shavano Recycling, at his facility in Poncha Springs. Photo by Michael Elizabeth Sakas.

RECYCLING BUSINESSES HAVE taken a hit after Colorado's biggest user of glass dropped the price it will pay for some materials.

MillerCoors, which co-owns Rocky Mountain Bottle Company, said in a statement that the price drop brings them in-line with industry standards.

It's made it almost impossible for some recyclers to operate.

At Angel of Shavano Recycling in Poncha Springs, just outside of Salida, all the material they collect has an end-user – newspaper and phone books go to Penrose, where it's turned into insulation. Mail goes to Oklahoma to become toilet paper, and the glass goes to Rocky Mountain Bottle.

The company is one of the largest bottle producers in the country, and not just for six-packs of Coors Light. Colorado has a closed-loop economy for glass. It's used here, recycled here and then reused here. It's also incredibly heavy to transport.

Mickey Barry, co-owner of Angel of Shavano Recycling, said that's the biggest challenge for rural recyclers. The price paid for his glass dropped from \$60 to \$20 a ton. Barry said that doesn't even cover the cost to get it to Wheat Ridge, where Rocky Mountain Bottle operates.

"It gets really hard for us to get a high market value for a clean commodity because our shipping rates are so high," Barry said. "We've got a long way to go."

That's when Barry went to Chaffee County and asked for help. Chaffee County now subsidizes Barry's shipping costs. Robert Christiansen, the county administrator, said people want recycling here.

"It's either that or everything goes to the landfill," Christiansen said. "But we also want to start having conversations around other alternatives."

Even before the price change, Chaffee County subsidized Barry's business. Christiansen said they will look at local alternatives as the subsidy grows.



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Mickey Barry, co-owner of Angel of Shavano Recycling, watches as aluminum products are placed on a conveyor belt for sorting. Photo by Michael Elizabeth Sakas.

Alamosa might be one of those alternatives. Recycling coordinator Keith Price said the high cost of shipping kept the city from recycling glass for years. That changed when they bought a glass crusher.

“And then everything that’s been crushed so far, we’ve put in a pile in one of our yards here in town, and use that here and there for different projects,” Price said.

Those projects include backfill for ditches, foundations and road covering. There’s a high enough demand that all the collected glass is used, Price said. However, Alamosa collects less glass than Salida and a lot less glass than along the Front Range.

At #1 Recycling in suburban Arvada, Frank Rodrick collects around 140 tons of glass a month from nearly 300 bars, restaurants and other businesses. Rodrick sold glass to Rocky Mountain Bottle for 30 years before they cut their prices.

“It was difficult at the \$70 a ton to make this work. And so with the reduction to \$35, it has been almost impossible,” Rodrick said. “I’ve had to self-subsidize this to keep it going because I didn’t want to just see it go away. The future here is very, very much in question.”

Rodrick always offered his services for free to incentivize companies to recycle. That will have to change if his business is to survive.

“We have gotten to a percentage of [businesses] that are on board, and I’ve continued the service to all of those who still haven’t paid anything,” Rodrick said. “I just don’t want to see the stuff go back on the landfill.”

Rodrick and others who own small recycling businesses wonder why MillerCoors changed their prices. In an emailed statement to CPR News, MillerCoors said it “more accurately reflects what it costs to sort, clean and process [mixed recycled glass].”

Mixed recycled glass is what Rodrick and Berry sell. Rocky Mountain used to consider their product “amber” glass, which is a higher color grade and desirable for

creating the right shade of bottle.

That desire for amber glass is where things changed for Rocky Mountain Bottle. In 2016, another facility called Momentum opened in Broomfield, right outside of Denver. They can clean, sort and crush 15 tons of glass every hour. This product is called cullet. It’s high quality, color-specific and kiln-ready.

The company now sells 80 percent of its cullet to Rocky Mountain Bottle.

Momentum can do what Rocky Mountain Bottle couldn’t – take glass from single-stream recycling and get it ready to be a new product. Before 2016, most of the glass collected along the Front Range was ground up and used as landfill liner.

Momentum changed that.

It now gets 90 percent of its glass from Denver, Boulder and Colorado Springs. None of that glass was becoming new bottles before. John Lair, the president of Momentum, said it’s made an impact.

“If you’re a business and you can buy something that’s two or three times the quality, for only a little bit more in costs, that makes a lot of sense to a lot of businesses,” Lair said.

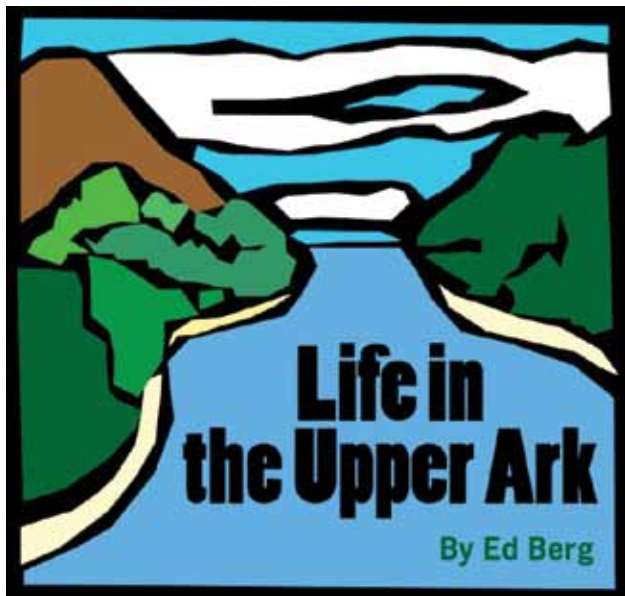
He said it’s not the only factor for Rocky Mountain Bottle’s price cut. The economics of recycling are changing. He points to rising labor costs and fluctuations in demand for glass, as some breweries move to aluminum cans.

Lair agrees that Rocky Mountain’s new price better matches the global market. He said he was a little shocked to learn how much they had been offering folks like Rodrick and Berry.

“My impression is, they chose to do that to provide some level of glass recycling in an environment where glass recycling was nearly impossible,” Lair said. “So I think hats off to them. I just don’t think they were able to sustain that.”

MillerCoors said Rocky Mountain Bottle Company still works directly with more than 30 vendors, most of them small and most of them in Colorado. The question is, can the small businesses afford to keep working with them? ■

Originally published by Colorado Public Radio News, Feb. 7, 2020.



Paradigm Shifts

HERE BEGINS a semi-regular column about living in Central Colorado in ways that help make the place healthier and lovelier than when we moved here.

Place is important, whether we make a living on the land raising cattle, or carrots, or fixing cars, or building houses, or making music, or making policies. Connection to place and its inhabitants is the basis for living well. Disconnection tends to create unhappy endings.

Max Plank said, “Old paradigms die one funeral at a time.” He should know; he was one of the founders of a new paradigm that flew directly in the face of everything that was believed about the nature of the universe, back in the first quarter of the 20th century. It drew criticism and ridicule from those who believed that Isaac Newton’s physical principles

“Part of the old paradigm that is changing in Central Colorado is that technology and free enterprise can insure us against catastrophic failure.”

could describe all of observable reality. The new paradigm described the nature of things smaller than we could see. It was quantum physics, the foundation of the electronic age we now live in.

At about the same time, Albert Einstein developed the theory of relativity that described the motion of stars and galaxies at the very large end of things. Neither of the new paradigms described the whole range of things from sub-atomic to intergalactic. For the next century, the holy grail of physics was the Unified Field Theory, and it has only recently been discovered, and this new theory is receiving its due share of ridicule and criticism. But that’s another story.

What’s this got to do with living in Central Colorado? Paradigms shape our actions. The paradigm of our age is that separation defines our relationship to the world around us. If we believe that those who are different from us are somehow less than we are, what’s to stop us from enslaving them? If we believe that maximized cash flow is the ultimate measure of the worth of an enterprise, what’s to stop us from turning a fertile land into a desert? If we believe we can fly, what’s to stop us from jumping off the roof of a ten-story building?

The way we live in the American West is heading for the sidewalk. Virtually everything we do as a consumption culture has a short life expectancy and is based on I-can-fly beliefs based on the paradigm of cheap, abundant energy, land and water. The West is occupied and used by newcomers who see the attractive wide-open spaces through a lens that was shaped by the rain-greened landscapes of the East, or worse, the well-watered lawns of suburbia. But the paradigm that shapes our actions isn’t based on the whole reality of the West. We believe that the land we see is as it has been and will be forever. We believe that if we “own” the land, we should be free to use it pretty much any way that prof-



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its us. We newcomers don't see the land as it was two hundred years ago, and even those who were born here rarely see the changes that have occurred in the landscape since their grandparents were the newcomers. The whole reality is that we are creating a desert around us, one subdivision and parking lot at a time.

Part of the old paradigm that is changing in Central Colorado is that technology and free enterprise can insure us against catastrophic failure. The change is toward a deeper understanding of long-term natural processes, coupled with economic practices that are based on feedbacks instead of extraction.

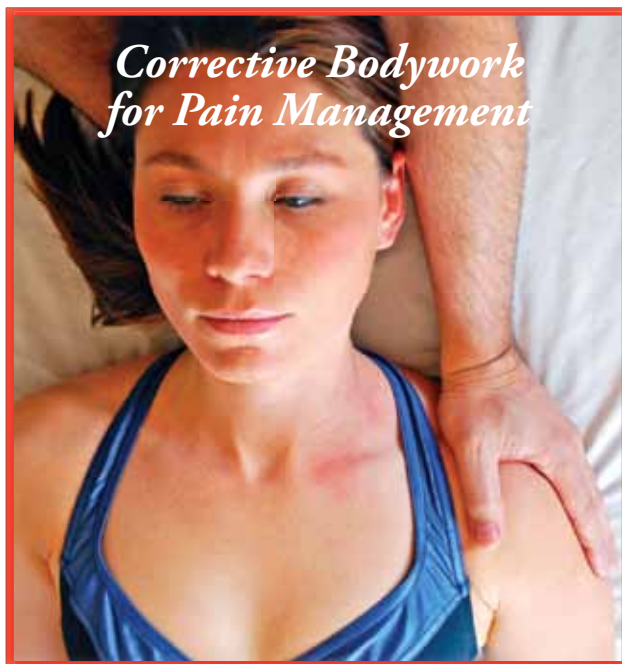
A hundred years ago, more than 95 percent of the food we ate here was also grown here in the Upper Arkansas Valley. Now, more than 95 percent of the food we eat is shipped in from over one thousand miles away. We have become accustomed to eating food that doesn't grow in our climate, or that doesn't ripen in a season when we have a craving for it. But there are problems with a diet that depends on food wrapped in plastic containers that degrade into nanoparticles that strain the endocrine systems of every animal that drinks the water, even here at the upstream end of the water supply. There's a disconnection here.

Every time I buy a seductively packaged food item from halfway across the hemisphere, with a

shelf life that approximates the half-life of uranium, I do my small part to grow the desert around me. It isn't just that eighty-five cents of my food dollars disappear from Colorado, those eighty-five cents are no longer available to invest in local businesses, local land and water management, and maybe houses for local people.

A small community here is seeking ways to increase the amount of healthy food we produce locally. It sounds like an obviously good cause, but it is caught between two entrenched and opposing forces, neither of which encourage a resilient economy that improves the land and the lives of its tenants. One force is the existing paradigm of using water and land as profit-generating commodities apart from their ability to support life. The other force is the lack of consumer awareness of the long-range consequences of their shopping choices, whether for a meal or a homesite.

Chaffee County is in the midst of updating its Comprehensive Plan. The wisdom we embed in this plan will determine what our place looks like in the near and distant future. It will directly affect the quality of life of those who live in this place, and it can be a beacon for much of the Rocky Mountain region, or it can be a reminder of what went wrong, like the crumbling ruins of the deserts of the Middle East in what was once the Fertile Crescent. It all depends on how we change our paradigms, and there isn't time to wait for funerals. ■



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Ed Berg is recovering from his retirement from the oil industry by becoming an agricultural activist. It pays to give back to the Earth.



Book Review

Ski Patrol in Colorado

By John B. Cameron and Eric D. Miller

ISBN: 978-1-4671-0251-3

Arcadia Publishing: 2018, \$22.99; 95 pp.

**Reviewed by
Eduardo Rey Brummel**

FOR THOSE OF US who live in Central Colorado, there's the strong likelihood that a ski area is just a couple of hours from our front door. And skiing is, after all, what brings so many people to Central Colorado – from both inside and outside our state. When they finally do arrive, ready to ski, it's a solid bet that members of the ski patrol have been at work since early that morning.

Just over a year ago, for those curious about these enigmatic red-clad figures, Arcadia Publishing released “Ski Patrol in Colorado,” written by John B. Cameron and Eric D. Miller. John Cameron is a ski patroller, freelance writer and journalist. Eric Miller is a member of the Air National Guard, a flight-nurse, and volunteers for a Colorado ski patrol as an Advance Life Support provider.

Arcadia Publishing has produced thousands of books. Two of them, “Images of America – Salida Colorado,” and “The Hash Knife Around Holbrook,” have been reviewed in earlier issues of *Colorado Central*.

This, from Arcadia's website:

For over 20 years, Arcadia Publishing has reconnected people to their community, their neighbors, and their past by offering a curbside view of hometown history and often forgotten aspects of American life. Composed in a unique pictorial format with over two hundred vintage images and accompanying captions, Arcadia books animate the cherished memories, people, places, and events that define a community.

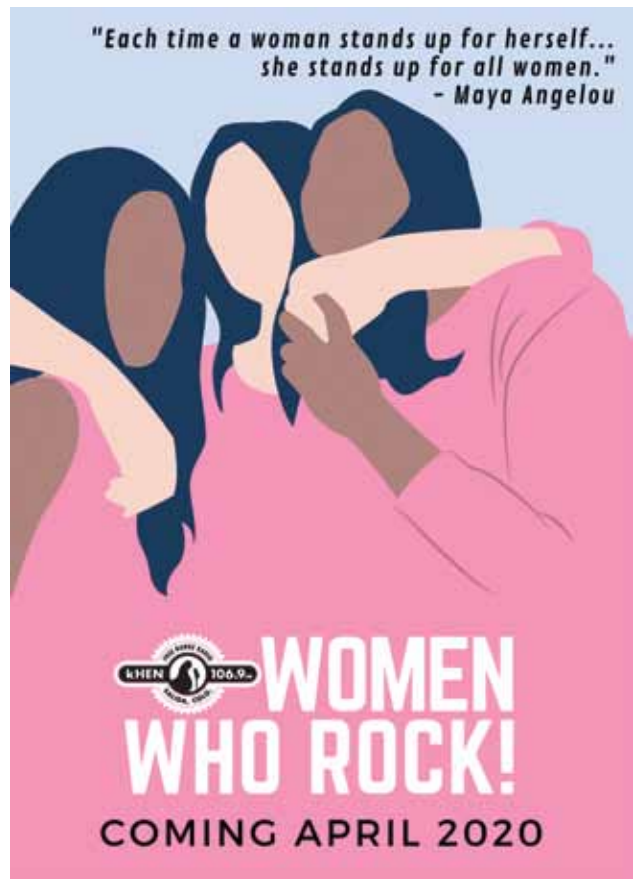
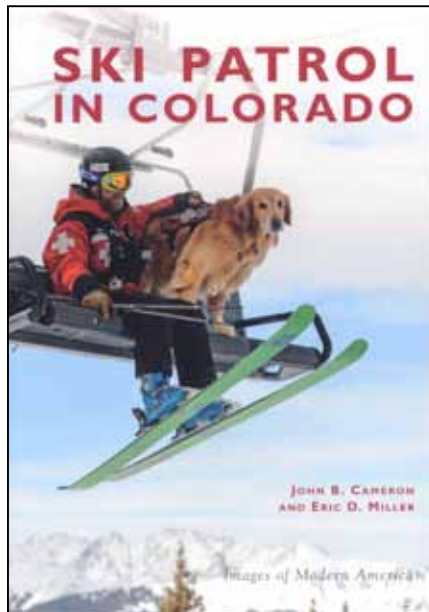
A depth of care is obvious in this book. Cameron and Miller's research, energy, and effort are clearly evident. The photos are well-chosen, and their placements are well thought out. Combined with their captions, they do a wonderful job telling

the progression of ski patrolling. I continue returning to this book, whether for specific photos (an injured Vail skier being carted by patrol members, one with a cigarette in his mouth, is a current favorite) or to simply leaf through it.

I reveled and delighted in this book. I foresee years of repeatedly returning in order to marvel, guffaw, and/or gasp.

Cameron recently purchased The Book Haven in downtown Salida. Me thinks this book will be kept in-stock. ■

Eduardo Rey Brummel's tele skis and boots patiently wait for the next sizable early morning snowfall allowing him to ski to his job at the local hospital.



THE NATURAL WORLD

By Tina Mitchell



THE BLACK BEAR

HIBERNATION. Some days, it sounds like a lovely way to spend a long, dark, cold winter – day after day, sleeping snugly regardless of the winds or ice or blizzards screaming outside. But what's actually involved in hibernation? How does it compare to our sleeping through a gloomy winter's night?

Colorado's best-known hibernator is the black bear. When a human falls asleep, the heart rate drops from 60-100 beats per minute to 45-75 beats per minute. A bear's heart rate dips from 40-50 beats per minute to 8-19 per minute. A human's respiratory rate slows very little; a bear's moves from one breath every 6-10 seconds to one breath every 45 seconds. A human's body temperature decreases only a degree or two; a bear's, from 100 to 88 degrees.

Okay – so hibernation is not *quite* like sleeping.

In the past, some people didn't consider bears to be "true" hibernators, since their body temperatures don't drop very dramatically. Most small hibernating



mammals – e.g., yellow-bellied marmots, chipmunks, white-tailed prairie dogs – really crank down their bodies' thermostats, relinquishing one of the key features of all mammals: warm blood. For instance, the arctic ground squirrel's body temperature drops to freezing or even slightly lower. But such critters have to wake up every few days, shivering to raise their body temperatures to near normal for a few hours; some may eat a bit and eliminate body wastes before heading back to the biological deep freeze. This process cycles throughout the winter.

Bears, according to more recent definitions, are actually *super-hibernators*. These days, a steep decrease in body temperature need not be the major criterion for hibernation. Instead, the definition now

focuses on "specialized, seasonal reduction in metabolism concurrent with scarce food and cold weather." A bear indeed experiences many dramatic metabolic changes. It eats nothing during hibernation; instead it lives off a layer of fat as thick as four inches that it generated during a late-summer/early-fall period of *hyperphagia* (when it eats 15,000-20,000 or more calories a day). Many lose 15-30 percent of their pre-hibernation body weight; lactating females can lose up to 40 percent. A bear's metabolism rate drops by 50-60 percent. Bears eliminate no metabolic waste products

during hibernation – no urination, no defecation. Instead, they recycle, recycle, recycle. For instance, they reuse calcium that would otherwise be lost due to months without weight-bearing activities. Urea from fat metabolism is broken down and the resulting nitrogen builds protein to maintain muscle mass



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and organ tissue. As a result, bears can actually *gain* lean-body mass while hibernating. (Who among us wouldn't kill for *that* skill?) Females give birth to one or two cubs during this period, without waking up. (Again, where's the sign-up sheet for *that* feature?)

What would happen to us if we stayed in bed for six months or so? One study showed that we could lose more than half our skeletal muscle strength. Without weight-bearing activities, humans would suffer weakening of the bones, with increased risk of osteoporosis. But, as noted above, bears actually recycle nitrogen back to their muscles and calcium back to their bones during hibernation.

So – super-hibernators indeed.

Starting in mid-March, Colorado's black bears begin to emerge from their winter-long dormancy. (Males leave dens about two weeks before females; females with cubs leave even later.) They take some time to stumble around and get moving again. They eat tender sprouts of green grasses to kick-start their digestive systems. Once those systems get revved up again, bears look for winter-killed carrion and, later, newborn ungulates (deer, elk) for protein to replace the modest skeletal muscle mass they may have lost.

If you've let your "bear-proofing" guard down this winter, it's time to ratchet that up again. Don't feed pets outdoors. Bring in bird feeders at night. Double-bag and store your garbage in a bear-proof or airtight container in your garage or secure storage area. Clean and store outdoor grills after use and don't leave food cooking outdoors unattended. Colorado Parks and Wildlife has a "two-strike" policy: Bears that have engaged in an episode of "nuisance" behavior may be tranquilized, ear tagged and relocated *only once*. If a tagged and relocated bear is physically dealt with again, the bear is euthanized. So do your part to protect these magnificent creatures from themselves and us. A fed bear is a dead bear. ■



After 25 years of watching the natural world in Colorado, Tina now watches it in San Diego County, California. There she works to protect her tiny corner of the planet through wildlife rehabilitation and outdoor education with elementary school kids – two load-bearing columns of Nature's future.

The Natural World is sponsored by Ann and Henry Klaiman.

DISPATCH FROM THE EDGE

By Peter Anderson

“DAD, I’M SCARED,” my oldest daughter said, and she had good reason to be. We were going on our second hour of being stranded in a ground blizzard on the shoulder of Highway 285, out in the middle of South Park. Seventy mile an hour winds were rocking her little Subaru. It was scary but not nearly as scary as it had been trying to navigate in a whiteout. Were we still in our lane? Where was the shoulder? Were we getting crossways and about to drive into a ditch? Might we end up in the path of a northbound semi? We rolled to a full stop and I opened my door to see if could determine where the edge of the road was so that we could park safely off to the side. A gust of wind ripped the door from my grasp and it was all I could do to pull it shut.

Finally, we were able to orient ourselves, pulling up behind another stranded car. We weren’t in any immediate danger, but the wind was blowing snow through a crack in the seal, depositing a mini-drift on the inside corner of the passenger side window. I imagined it getting bigger and bigger. Fortunately, we had a full tank of gas. We left the engine running to generate a little heat – less and less as the day wore on it seemed – but heat nonetheless. My youngest daughter had burrowed into a sleeping bag in the back seat and was entertaining herself with movies on her phone. My oldest daughter and I wrapped ourselves in some reasonably warm layers and maintained our vigil in the front. I confess that the bunwarmer, which I had cranked to the max in my seat, no longer seemed like the bourgeois device I had always thought it was.

“Our job is to stay put and stay warm. That’s all we can do right now,” I said. “The wind will let up eventually.” But the word “eventually” carried a lot freight. What did it mean? Two hours from now? After dark? After midnight? Tomorrow morning? How long would we be able to generate heat from the engine? And after that? It was three o’ clock. A wind advisory, we were able to determine, ran till 6 p.m. So we just sat tight, listening to her playlist and hoping for the best.

Periodically, the windshield would ice up to the point that we couldn’t see out. We busied ourselves with the project of preserving our ever-shrinking view of the outside world. I had broken and disposed of the windshield scraper earlier in the day – Doh! – trying to de-ice before we left Arvada. All that we had for the job was a plastic CD case. Occasionally, through

whatever opening in our windshield glacier we were able to chip away, a break in the snow cloud revealed a plow driver parked twenty or thirty feet ahead of us in the oncoming lane. No one was going anywhere, not even the plow guy, but we were glad he was part of our frozen convoy.

Six o’clock came and went but the wind didn’t know that. Then, sometime around seven, it began to let up. Visibility was improving, we thought, but only in small increments. And then, we noticed some movement through the ice on the driver’s side window. A truck was edging forward in the southbound lane (by that time, there were no worries about oncoming traffic), following the snowplow guy who had also started moving. “See if you can pull in behind that Silverado,” I told my daughter, and 10-4, Rubber Ducky, we soon had us a convoy, moving slowly, but moving nonetheless.

Turned out we were only able to get as far as an isolated fire station to the south of the highway near Como, where we would be marooned for the rest of the night, but so what? We had lights. We had heat. And after we emptied our cars of whatever provisions we were carrying, we had an impromptu post-Thanksgiving potluck. Later the good people of Fairplay somehow managed to deliver some hot cooked meals. Someone broke out a twelve pack of beer. By the time a gust of wind took down a flagpole outside of the fire station, we were happily settled in for the night and able to reflect on our good fortune. As in any emergency, the first responders, in this case the volunteer firemen of South Park, deserved our unending thanks, having led our convoy out of harm’s way. My youngest, who had been wrapped up in murder mysteries all day, amused herself by imagining that someone in our temporary firehouse community would turn out to be a serial killer. Fortunately, the better side of humanity prevailed. It was reassuring to spend the evening in a room full of strangers sharing food and drink, telling tales about our collective misadventure, and appreciating one another’s company. ■

Peter Anderson recently retired from teaching in order to become a full-time word wrangler. He lives in Crestone.



**MARCH
2020**

REGIONAL EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS

BUENA VISTA

13 – BV Community Dance. Congregational Church at 217 Crossman Street, 7-9:30 p.m. As always, no experience or partner is needed to enjoy the great tunes and instruction from local musicians and callers. \$4 (\$2/students). Call Carole or Randy at 395-6704 for more info. Sponsored by Arkansas Valley Music and Dance and the Country Dance and Song Society.

CAÑON CITY

8 – Freedom in the Groove. A performance of jazz and contemporary classical music, will be presented by the United States Air Force Academy Band's Falconaires Combo and Saxophone Quartet. 3 p.m. Cañon City H.S. Auditorium 1313 College Ave. Free. freemontcountyconcerts.org
11 – Dunking Donut Basketball Tournament. Basketball game between Starpoint HoopSTARS and Canon City Police Department. Mountain View Core Knowledge Elementary School Gym, 6-8 p.m. Suggested Donation - \$5

COALDALE

14 – The Second Piepalooza, with a concert by the bluegrass band Smeltertown. 7 p.m. Admission is \$10, or \$5 if you bring a pie to share at intermission. Coaldale Schoolhouse, 287 Hayden Creek Road.

GUNNISON

5-7 – 31st SonofaGunn: "It's Always Sunny in Gunny." Gunnison Arts Center's annual fundraiser. Doors 7 p.m., Curtain 7:30 p.m. gunnisonartscenter.org
20 – Grant Farm in concert. Moonlight Music Series at the Gunnison Arts Center. Doors 7:30, Concert 8 p.m. Tickets: \$20/adults, \$18/members & students. gunnisonartscenter.org

LEADVILLE

6-8 – Leadville Ski Joring and Crystal Carnival Weekend. Ski Joring is an action-packed sport where a horse and rider race down snow-packed Harrison Avenue in Leadville's downtown, pulling a skier who's holding onto a rope. Downtown Leadville. leadvilletwinlakes.com
22 – Winter Fun Day at the Leadville National Fish Hatchery. 2846 Hwy. 300, 1-3 p.m. Guided Snowshoe or Cross Country Ski followed by hot chocolate, tea, s'mores & social time around a campfire. Free admission.

SALIDA

1 – Central Colorado Humanists Sunday Science program, "Modern Gold Mining - the Hole Truth" at 10 a.m. at the Salida Scout Hut, 210 E. Sackett Ave. Geologist Brad Leach, a retired veteran geologist will explore aspects of hard rock mining and placer mining operations. The program is free, and doors open at 9:30 to ensure the program begins promptly at 10. A discussion and light refreshment will follow the program.
6 – Ark Aces movie night fundraiser at A Church, 419 D St. Doors open at 6 p.m., movie at 7 p.m. Join them for Ben Knight and Pete McBride films featuring strong river women. Proceeds will benefit Salida's National Rafting Teams. Pizza and Soulcraft beer will be available for purchase. \$10 Adults \$5 kids.
9 – Kickoff To Summer/Business After Hours at the Salida SteamPlant Event Center. Hosted by the Salida Chamber of Commerce 5-7 p.m.
11 – Colorado Symphony's: Beethoven 2020. This year marks the 250th anniversary of iconic composer Ludwig van Beethoven's birth, and the Colorado Symphony embarks on a year-long celebration, performing over two dozen concerts and events across the state of Colorado. The full orchestra and small ensembles will feature some of

Beethoven's greatest works, including Missa Solemnis, Violin Concerto, Symphony No. 3 "Eroica," Symphony No. 9, and many more. Salida SteamPlant, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. \$25. salidasteamplant.com

11 – Community Game Night at A Church, 419 D St. from 6-8:30 p.m. Play games, eat pizza and share a potluck dish. All are welcome.

12-14 – Housing and Health Storytelling Workshop, sponsored by Chaffee County Office of Housing and the Public Health Department. 9 a.m.- 5 p.m. Contact CCHP at 719-539-4510 for more info.

14 – CCU Soccer Club is hosting a silent disco, a fundraiser to assist funding for a coaches training with TOVO Academy's Todd Beane at A Church, 419 D St.. For more information go to www.salidasoccer.org

21 – Salida Contra Dance. (New location) American Legion Post 64, 235 W 10th St. The band will be First Rodeo. Beginning lesson at 7 p.m. Music 7:30-9:30. Dessert potluck. \$7 (\$5 AVMA members). The dance is co-sponsored by Arkansas Valley Music and Dance, and the Country Dance and Song Society.

25 – Salida Old-Time Music Jam, 6:30 p.m. Soulcraft Brewing, 248 W Hwy 50. All abilities are welcome, and tunes are shared round-robin style. Sponsored by Arkansas Valley Music and Dance.

SAN LUIS VALLEY

4 – Annual SLV Tourism Conference. "Let's Get Sustainable!" Elks Lodge, 406 Hunt Ave., Alamosa. 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

6-8 – Monte Vista Crane Festival. Enjoy thousands of Sandhill Cranes, ducks, and geese flying against a backdrop of mountain scenery. Raptors will adorn the power poles and owls will be sitting with their young. A visit to the Monte Vista Crane Festival is an opportunity to see an amazing natural spectacle as well as experience a unique rural community. The lineup of activities includes crane viewing tours, raptor viewing tours, ranch & unique landscape tours, free family movie, "Rango." Featured movie "Bird of Prey," guest speakers, Teddy Roosevelt - keynote speaker, and an arts and crafts fair each day. mvraneffest.org

7 – San Luis Valley Seed Exchange. Joyful Journey Hot Springs Spa, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. This annual Seed Exchange connects gardeners, seed producers and the community over agricultural education and exchange. Speakers, vendors, trade and more. SLVSeedExchange.com

7 – Discover Day - Adams State University. 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Register: adams.edu/visit Call: 719-587-8146.

14 – Maestas Case Opening Event & Dinner, to commemorate the historical 1914 Maestas Case. Proceeds will help fund the Colorado touring of the bronze relief, storyboards and accompanying speakers in what is believed to be America's first Hispano educational desegregation case. The Barn at Mananilla Farm, Alamosa. To reserve a seat, call 719-588-5467 or email katie@slvproperties.com

28 – VEGI Kick-Off: Barn Dance. The Barn at La Manzanilla (6487 Highway 17, Alamosa). Tickets are \$35 or two for \$60. Tickets include one complementary beverage, one plate, and a night of dancing. www.lapuentehome.org/kickoff OR call (567 201-3324).

WESTCLIFFE

22 – Veronika String Quartet. The group is known for its versatility and extraordinary musicianship. Westcliffe Center for the Performing Arts, 119 Main St., 2 p.m. An art show by local artists in Studio 2 will accompany the concert. General admission \$15, Student \$5. jonestheater.com

places...

Catching the Chief to Las Vegas, NM

By Forrest Whitman

WINTER IS THE PERFECT TIME to catch the train called the Chief. The trip begins early with a drive along U.S. Hwy. 50 to Cotopaxi. Snow highlights those fantastic rock formations, and the upper Arkansas River sparkles in the pink dawn. You're in a good mood – off to catch a train!

The Cotopaxi store is a good place to stop. It's a throwback to an old country store, where you can buy a shoelace, some nails or maybe a breakfast burrito. Gas is cheap there, too. Probably you'll continue on uphill to Westcliffe, where you'll find the Sugar and Spice Mountain Bakery on Main Street. Carry out tea or coffee goes sweetly with their fried cherry pies. The Mennonite ladies have smiles as big as their slices of pie.

Soon enough you'll be on the platform in Trinidad waiting for the Chief. You are boarding the AMTRAK Southwest Chief that will take you to The Casteñeda Hotel in Las Vegas, New Mexico. The Chief is successor to one of Santa Fe Railroad's legendary trains. Started in 1926, the Super Chief settled into a schedule of 36 hours traveling Los Angeles to Chicago.

You'll see original tourist signs along the way, like "the Continental Divide" and "Dick Wooton's



Photo by Mike Rosso

bar." If Wooton had sided with the Rio Grande Railroad instead of the Santa Fe, the history of the West would have been different. Both railroads wanted to get over the pass, but he set up the famous midnight rail-laying allowing the Santa Fe to win by six hours.

Relax in the sight-seeing lounge with a beverage and swap stories about movie stars who rode the train. Gloria Swanson in "Three for Bedroom C" (1954) isn't memorable as films go, but it was filmed on the Chief.

Before long you're in Las Vegas, New Mexico. As you detrain, you can't miss the nicely kept station, where the original Santa Fe brick has been cleaned, and the waiting room is spotless. Look to your right and behold the three-story Casteñeda Hotel with its central tower. It is the latest in a series of historic hotels being re-built by the legendary Allan Affeldt and his artist wife Tina Mion, who share the dream to save all the old Harvey House hotels along the route of the Chief.

Allan and Tina have set up housekeeping in one wing of the old hotel, where they supervise the rebuilding of the structure to strict standards. They

VICTORIA

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- Samuel Johnson

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Photo courtesy of the Casteñeda Hotel

work to keep investors happy and fulfill the tax rules for restoring historic structures, which is not easy.

Consider bricks: Each brick was placed on or about 1898. The location of the brick kiln was usually stamped on the brick. Many came from Las Vegas, but others were from Trinidad, Colorado, or locations farther away. The hotel is U-shaped and much of the central courtyard is brick.

Soon all of the rooms will be redecorated and furnished with period furniture. The restaurant is open and thriving. You can see the second floor window where Teddy Roosevelt stood to address the rough riders. Today's visitors are as impressed as they were at the turn of the last century.

Another food experience is only two blocks away. Charlie's Spic and Span is a converted laundry with huge portions and a mammoth tortilla machine. You'll want to have lunch there before

boarding the Chief for home. The Casteñeda is one place you'll want to visit. ■

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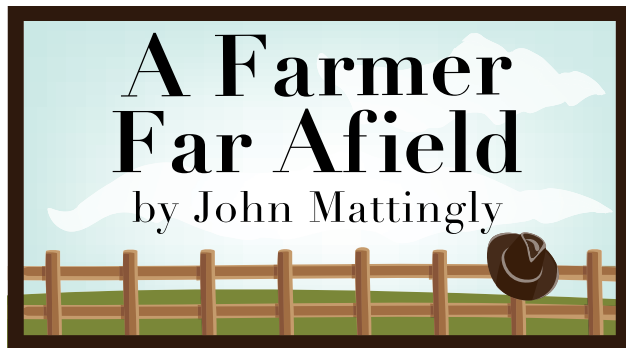
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WATER EXPORT NEWS

Part One: Conflicts of Interest

IT'S BEEN A YEAR OR SO since Renewable Water Resources (RWR) went public with a plan to export San Luis Valley groundwater to the "great and growing cities" on the Front Range. So far, there have been meetings and discussions and opinions but no actual filing by RWR with the district water court.

The pause is not surprising. Water projects take time, measured in decades rather than years. A project might start with certain assumptions and goals, only to change in reaction to input and actions from both citizens and government. Of special note, the current Republican administration has taken action in various agencies to reduce permitting and compliance requirements for pipelines and other large infrastructure projects, a leniency that could change after the presidential election.

While the RWR project appears to be in a slow spot, the inglorious work of building an administrative framework to restore, sustain, and manage Valley aquifers to the levels measured from 1978 to 2000, proceeds at a similarly glacial pace. Each water basin in the Valley is managed, in part, by a subdistrict of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District (RGWCD).

Each subdistrict has a board of managers, comprised of qualifying citizens, responsible for a water management plan that will meet sustainability requirements, replace injurious depletions, operate a water budget, and assess water users. If the subdistrict effort fails, the state of Colorado could curtail pumping until the aquifer is restored to the levels mandated by law.

This puts measurable pressure on the citizens who serve on the various subdistrict boards to get it right. Failure would mean that Valley irrigators and citizens did to themselves what only the most rapacious of water exporters could do: deplete the groundwater to the point that the state has to come in with command and control measures.

Last fall, citing a conflict of interest, the RGWCD removed Jerry Berry from the board of managers representing the San Luis Valley RGWCD Subdistrict #4, respon-

sible for restoring sustainability to aquifers in the San Luis Creek basin, also known generally as Water District 25 in the State's basin designations, and more recently as RGWCD Subdistrict #4.

Berry manages several large farms and ranches within the Subdistrict #4 boundaries. Following nomination to the board of managers at formation of the Subdistrict several years ago, Berry was elected by the other managers as board president. The position required a commitment of time to meetings and tedious deliberation without compensation.

Few farmers and ranchers in the north end of the Valley are universally loved, but whatever else is true of Mr. Berry, he is a good farmer, and his skills extend to economies of scale, as he manages operations that account for a substantial percentage of the water users in Subdistrict #4.

In addition to managing farms and ranches, Berry has a financial interest in Renewable Water Resources (RWR), and this interest represented a potential conflict with the conservation interests of the RGWCD, whose board had a stated policy of opposition to the RWR plan to export 22,000 acre-feet of SLV groundwater to the Front Range.

Water export plans – like the one currently incubating as designs and dreams of RWR – are subject to special scorn among some in the Valley, whose activists did their part to beat back American Water Development Inc. (AWDI) and Stockmans Water Company (SWC) in the past.

THE RWR STORY is similar to those of AWDI and SWC, in that all three entities pointed out that selling Valley water to Trans-Mountain Diversion (TMD) projects brings prosperity to all, and that claim (distribution issues aside) is true, largely because TMD water, as "new water" to the Front Range (also known as "foreign water"), can be used and reused to extinction.

"Extinction" in this context is a term of art meaning that the foreign water falls under a separate administrative regime, essentially outside the priority system, because TMD water, by definition, cannot cause injury to existing water rights in the recipient basin because it increases, rather than re-distributes, the total water supply.

Accordingly, return flows from the foreign water from a TMD, if controlled and moved into a municipal or industrial water supply system, can be recaptured, treated, and reused or sold downstream until it is fully consumed by users. Typically, the return flows from municipal water systems such as those for Front Range cities and towns are about 90 percent. Only about 10 percent is consumed with each cycle of passage through the municipal system, so the inclusion of foreign water is like turning

"There's no question that pressure on Colorado's water resources will be tested and strained into the future."

water into wine: a single acre-foot can result in as much as ten acre-feet of consumptive use, making that TMD acre-foot worth as much as ten times its value when applied to growing crops, which is one way that water currently leaves the Valley in spuds, vegetables, grains and alfalfa).

The claim from water export entities that there is a lot of money to go around has merit. Everyone knows that “water flows uphill toward money,” but sometimes that expression fails to capture the magnitude of the magnetism. There are several variables involved with the RWR plan, but allowing some speculative indulgence, the RWR plan to export 22,000 acre-feet to the Front Range annually could, through reuse of those 22,000 acre-feet to extinction, amplify to as much as 220,000 acre-feet of wet water to Front Range cities at a retail value close to \$10,000 an acre-foot, or \$220 million annually.

Getting the water to the Front Range incurs costs of construction, carriage, exchange and treatment, plus repairs and maintenance, together with legal and administrative costs, but having an annual cash flow of a couple hundred million dollars relieves a lot of pressure on the bottom line.

An export project would likely create a few good paying jobs in the Valley, but there is no assurance that the farmers or ranchers who sold their water would keep the money active in the Valley. RWR has proposed a stimulus package for Saguache County of \$50 million, but so far, it

appears that this offer caused more bickering than good will among potential recipients bent on endorsing themselves for the biggest piece of the stimulus.

Those antagonistic to the prospect of exporting SLV water to the Front Range point out that once trans-mountain diversions start – no matter how small at first – they will proceed unabated until, at a minimum, the agricultural nature of the Valley is diminished along with all the support industries, or, at a maximum, the Valley becomes a desert. This concern also has merit.

As Subdistrict #4 president, Berry had the potential to influence the conservation and sustainability interests of the State and the RGWCD, and also influence his own interests as a farmer and businessman in the Valley. Such conflicts of interest are common in water organizations. Everyone on a board of managers for a water organization is likely to have a conflict at some point in their service.

Once the conflict is acknowledged, it can be mitigated through accountability, transparency or recusal. Removal from office is an extreme measure: as we saw when a conflict of interest case came to light at the highest levels of U.S. government. The ruling by our U.S. Senate was that as long as a public official has some level of the public interest at heart when making a decision, it's okay to simultaneously pursue a personal interest.

Even allowing that Trump's acquittal expanded the acceptability of advancing personal interests from a pub-



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lic position, there is no indication that Berry was using his public position to advance his own, or RWR's interests, beyond the suggestion that the RWR project might benefit both farmers and municipalities. Given that RWR has yet to file with the water court, there is no actual basis for a conflict by anyone, and there is no certainty that the RWR plan will be the start of an irreversible degradation of Valley aquifers. Until the RWR plan is actually filed and scrutinized, the benefit-to-liability ratio of the plan remains an open question.

Much of the antagonism toward water export plans comes from people who have a job administering, defending, preserving, or overseeing water, but not actually diverting it to make a living. These folks are needed, and there is nothing wrong with them wanting Valley water to stay home, but they also have a conflict of interest: by advocating for policies that limit a farmer's options to sell water, they support the cheap food policies of this country that have kept many farmers in a position where they can make a living from farming, but must sell some of their assets in later life to cover medical expenses, pass something along to their kids, or enjoy some level of comfort in their final years.

A man who loves to farm and is good at it, and also has an interest in a water export project, is the sort of person needed in the tedious process of resolving the larger conflict between competing uses of Valley water resource-

es, which boils down to sustaining both water and financial resources. It's more than a matter of keeping enemies close, it's a matter of including people in the process of resource allocation who have actually worked with the resource for their livelihood.

There's no question that pressure on Colorado's water resources will be tested and strained into the future. The underlying conflict, shared by Berry and the RGWCD, is that irrigated farming usually doesn't pay until part of the capital formation of the farm is sold, and most Valley farmers (including, I suspect, Mr. Berry) would prefer that irrigated farmland and crops become the highest bidder for water rather than municipal and industrial users along the Front Range.

Next month: Can the Valley have its water and drink it too? ■

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

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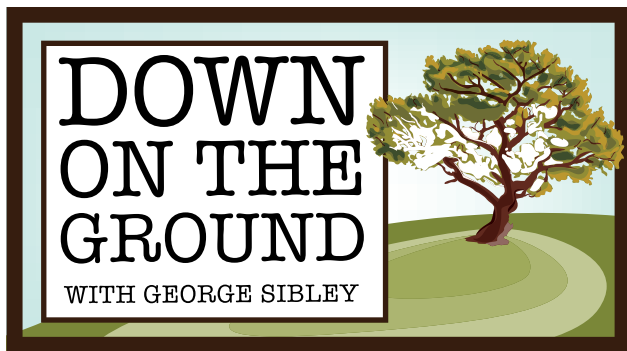







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Down on the Ground With Winter

WELL, HERE WE ARE a little past the Ides of February, already on the spring side of winter. Not that spring is close. But by the middle of February, we can harbor at least the illusion that we are past the hard depths of winter.

The night temperature will probably still drop below zero frequently for at least another month, and maybe down to minus twenty a few more times, and the snowpack will continue – we hope, we hope – to build up for at least another six weeks. And we may get one of those long cold snowy and soggy “springtime in the Rockies” extensions of winter, on into May, that we love to hate because it drives the water supply from “ehhh” to “wow.”

But hallelujah, the long dark cold nights of December and January are behind us now; we tilt a little closer to the sun every day, and even a day that starts out at ten below zero at sunrise will be above freezing by lunchtime (in the sun, anyway).

When I came to the Central Colorado headwaters half a century ago (I’m still a newcomer), I came for the winters – came to ski, and lucked into a Ski Patrol job at the then-struggling ski resort in Crested Butte that

“Sometimes a civilization survives these winters, as in the late 1940s; sometimes it doesn’t.”

paid me the princely sum of \$300 a month to do just that. To put that in perspective, I could rent a “Dr. Smith house” in Crested Butte for \$75 a month for the winter (September-May), so long as it was vacant in the summer for Dr. Smith’s Law-Science Academy – which was fine with me; I was just there for the winters. Until I finally experienced a summer, anyway.

I can say that I loved those winters, but I think that what I really loved was just the miracle of having the technology and cultural infrastructure to winter in such a place at all, going out swaddled in goose down and various fabrics that had no animal origins, on skis made out of materials that never came off a tree, fueled by food and beer and propane that kept rolling into town in trucks, and riding a conveyor contraption powered by electricity from somewhere, up a mountain into environments that would have killed me had I not been so thoroughly outfitted and equipped.

Irony snuck into my life that first winter: I’d come to the relative wilds of Central Colorado, to a place at the end of the road, thinking I’d left behind the imperial overbearing civilization that wanted my body and soul for its foreign entanglements and institutionalized inequalities, et cetera. And my ability to be there, my love of those winters, was almost totally underwritten and enabled by that

civilization, so hugely ubiquitous as to be all but invisible to those who lived in it. A fish doesn’t think about the water he lives in; thus it was with me in my early winters and western civilization in its early winter.

That was when I was 25 years old, and now that I am a few years north of 75, I don’t like winter as much as I did then, but I undoubtedly respect it more. I still don’t like the civilization much either, but respect it more too, and no longer have delusions about escaping it while still living off of it.

Now I get most of my outdoor winter fun on the energy-input end of a snow shovel; I haven’t been ski-





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ing on the steeps and deeps at the ski resort for years. I still like to go out on my cross-country skis, but after a hamstringing accident a few years back, I mostly go places where the slopes are as laid back as I'm trying to be.

IKNOW THERE ARE seniors older than I who are up there skiing the steeps and deeps, candidates for the cover of *Modern Maturity* magazine. When I think of that, there's that residual niggling voice of the male ego, that inner Trump asking why I've wimped out on my healthy outdoor life of 50 years ago. But it isn't an age thing so much as an acknowledgment that industrial progress has gone too far too fast for my liking. I was spoiled by being a ski-area skier in the era of the two-passenger chairs, before ski areas got really efficient at moving people uphill with quads and gondola buckets. The slopes were never crowded then because most of the customers were in lift lines; now the recreation industrialists have gotten so good at moving people uphill that the slopes are always full of people going downhill every which way, and it's just too – industrial. If you want to ski without crowds now, you have to go where the industrial conveyors don't run.

And, I tell myself, I have better things to do anyway, once the walks and the driveway are cleared down to the mandatory street level required by the automobile, and the cobwebs are swept out by a pass around the golf course nordic trail, or more likely by a hike on the yax trax down to the grocery store. Winter days, here in the winter of this particular life, are better spent getting my mind organized about this particular life – reading and writing, in other words. I'm like E.M. Forster: "I don't know what I think until I see what I've written."

I'm not a voracious reader, nor am I a fast reader, but I'm an active reader who does what the students of the reading process say active readers do, which is to constantly be predicting where writers are going to take us next – getting bored if I'm always right in those micropredictions, and being most truly engaged only when they take me somewhere I haven't been yet in the exposition of ideas.

I read the way Henry Thoreau thought about winter: "The winter is thrown to us like a bone to a famishing dog, and we are expected to get the marrow out of it." I'm not sure how Henry applied that analogy to winter, but we are certainly thrown a pile of bones to gnaw on every day in our overinformed society, looking for marrow. Entirely too much of my reading time these parlous days is taken up in maintenance of the bonepile in my email inbox, looking without much hope for something worth reading beyond the headline and first paragraph.

What I mostly learn from my inbox – where I've tried to balance the liberal echo chamber some well-meaning friends have set up with conservative serv-

ings like BizPac Review and the RNCC itself – is that we Americans are truly, deeply, into the winter of our discontent. We are not split, as the craven mainstream media would have us believe, between Democrats and Republicans, but between those who cling to the rule of law and the conviction that no man can be above the law, and those who are so frightened and confused that they want strong authoritarian leaders and will let them do anything they want, rewrite any rule, so long as they say it's done to address their xenophobic fears.

And as run-up, "boogaloo" events like the show of civilian firepower demonstrated to the Virginia legislature, things could get dangerously uncivil very soon. We have a president who has as good as promised that he would not leave office just because of a loss in the election, since that would only be because of election rigging by those corrupt Democrats. He is the commander-in-chief of not just the United States armed forces, but also of an army of irregulars who think he walks on water, is indeed the Chosen One. "I have the support," Trump has boasted, "of the police, I have the support of the military, I have the support of the [20,000] Bikers for Trump – I have the tough people." In 1930s Germany, these were the paramilitary Brownshirts, the *Sturmabteilung*.

I could observe that no one seems to be taking this very seriously – but how would we effectively take it seriously? What would we, should we do? A *Salon* essay in mid-February carried the plaintive query: "Can we stop tiptoeing around the fact that Trump is behaving like a dictator?" But given the way the federal government is currently stacked behind Trump, what can we do about this descent into what history shows to be civilization's periodic long dark winter? Sometimes a civilization survives these winters, as in the late 1940s; sometimes it doesn't.

And sometimes it's just hard to tie up one of these ventures into thinking out loud with a positive note; the best I can do here is say there could be worse places to be in the coming winter than Central Colorado. Remember Robinson Jeffers:

But for my children, I would have them keep their distance from the thickening center; corruption.

Never has been compulsory, when the cities lie at the monster's feet there are left the mountains.

One thing I've been reading recreationally lately is novels of the French resistance. ■

George Sibley gathers wood and wool in Gunnison. george@gard-sibley.org

Down on the Ground is sponsored by Tom Arnot and Rae Pederson.





Coming Soon To a Political Stage Near You

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE Nancy Pelosi reached out to shake the President's hand, but he ignored hers. In his customary manner, President Trump studded his speech with kudos for himself, and jabs at his rivals. Then he gave liberal-baiting, Democrat-hating, media celebrity Rush Limbaugh a medal. At the end of the State of the Union address, Pelosi grimaced behind the President's back, then deliberately tore up her copy of his speech in full view of the cameras.

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In February, the Salida City Council voted on a proposal to raise the minimum age for tobacco use to 21 and ban flavored tobacco products. The age limit passed, but the ban didn't. Salida's decision was not imperative – since Trump and Congress had already approved the age change, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had issued new restrictions on flavorings. Yet our local board's split decision probably helped us dodge a bullet.

"What exactly would Salida do? Get grandpa to report his supplier? Tail teens? Sniff out culprits?"

Federal government attempted to reduce the availability of flavored tobaccos that targeted under-aged users. Salida's law was far more draconian, and would have eliminated menthol cigarettes, pipe tobaccos and cigars often favored by seniors. If that ban had passed, Salidans almost certainly would have expected their city to do something about illicit users. But what exactly would Salida do? Get grandpa to report his supplier? Tail teens? Sniff out culprits?

At this point, it's not clear what Salida's role would have been had both measures passed, but enforcement would have required additional resources. Prohibitions are usually a response to extreme situations that wreak death and destruction, but small communities don't necessarily have the funds nor training to conduct such operations well.

How did Salida plan to address enforcement, costs, penalties and possible litigation? In January, a judge blocked New York state from enforcing a tobacco ban because the governor issued it, and only state legislature had that authority. Curiously, small Colorado towns can pass legislation. But what happens when people charge discrimination? Or defamation? Or harassment? Or resultant hardships, damages, or pain and suffering?

Yes, Salida employs a lawyer, but alternative counsel is often prudent for complaints, especially if they involve civil liberties, which has led to trouble before. Once upon a time, Salida became the site of a splendid demonstration by the Atlantis Community Foundation after our city decided to cut back on the requisite number of handicapped-accessible curb cuts. Dozens of protesters rolled up and down F Street, bringing traffic to a halt for days as they tried to negotiate our lofty curbs without help. A few decades ago, Salida passed a loitering law, and was successfully sued because the city let some people loiter while making others move on. Salida also passed

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laws against biking, skateboarding and roller skating downtown, and got lambasted because tourists were allowed to bike and skate.

Novel laws can lead to novel lawsuits, and novel new ventures need funding. Salida had good reason to sit this production out, especially since far bigger stars than ours were already addressing problems with tobacco products.

In Salida, several merchants who sell tobacco products expressed distress about our city's harsher position on prohibitions. They had followed Salida's laws, served their customers, paid their taxes, and what did they get? Insulted.

At this point their concerns aren't threatening. There have been no protested searches, seizures or enforcement issues, and I hope things stay that way. I don't know what the future will hold for tobacconists, but federal and state oversight seems far fairer than local jurisdiction in this matter.

Why? Because what did Salida plan to do? Could it have kept out mail-order contraband and illegal dealers? Or kept people from buying tobacco in Poncha Springs? Would Salida have been able to monitor online trafficking, the post office, or UPS? Or interfere in interstate or international commerce? Would Salida have tested products for flavoring? Or policed our city's borders? Or raided local establishments? Yes, Salida planned on selling vendor licenses, but that sounds more greedy than efficacious.

Making popular tobacco products unavailable hardly strikes me as the best scenario for a tourist town. But perhaps what proponents wanted to do was make people regard tobacco use more seriously. Given recent headlines regarding deaths, that desire is understandable.

Tiny towns can't provide optimal oversight in this matter, and civil liberties are at stake here. Surely we can protect ourselves without sacrificing anyone's liberties. In a free nation, you have to persuade free men and women to take care of themselves. Currently, we're not doing that very well, but are we actually trying? Or do we just criminalize substances, and punish people for using them?

The U.S. Center for Disease Control and the FDA are doing more. They're investigating what happened and investing in scientific research to keep it from happening again. They're also publishing extensive information on safe usage, inherent dangers, common problems, and what's legal, what's not, what went wrong, and what can go wrong. They're also working closely with state and local officials to investigate respiratory illnesses that may be connected with vaping products.

So how serious was the e-cigarette/vaping related outbreak? The CDC started tracking a sudden spike in problems in August 2019, cases peaked in September,

and then steadily declined. As of February 4, 2020, 2,758 patients had been hospitalized, with 64 deaths confirmed. Only 15 percent of all patients were under 15, and the average age of the deceased was 51.

To put this in some perspective, the two leading causes of death for juveniles in the United States are accidents and suicide. In 2017, 13,441 people aged 15 to 24 died of unintentional injuries, and 6,252 committed suicide; 860 juveniles aged 10 to 14 died of unintentional injuries, and 517 died of suicide. In that same year, a total of 169,936 people in the U.S. died of unintentional injuries and more than 47,000 people committed suicide. The FBI estimates 450 children a year are killed by their parents.

Now the feds are monitoring public health, and the state of Colorado is looking into ways to curb online deliveries and oversee legal retailers. Salida's local council and police officers have no special expertise in the chemistry or products involved, but Salida will definitely have a role in enforcement. Under the circumstances, I think we're lucky not to have a lead role in this, and I'm thrilled with our council. But these are early days and new parts will come.

Recently, for instance, a troubling old script has returned, in connection with e-cigarettes and many other matters. Once again, people locally, statewide, and nationally are insisting that people should willingly sacrifice their rights, pleasures, and even livelihoods for the sake of the children.

We've been here before. Children provide an old stratagem for urging unjust actions and over-the-top responses. A few decades ago, therapists used specious methods to get toddlers to talk about nonexistent Satanic sex cults in their daycare centers, and faulty repressed memory therapies put innocent parents in jail. In Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692, young girls accused neighbors of witchcraft.

If you think people should willingly sacrifice their rights and interests for the sake of children, bear in mind that pleas to safeguard children could legitimately be used to ban beer, wine, whiskey, marijuana, bonfires, river rafting, dangerous sports, knitting needles and poisonous garden plants.

During the last six months, U. S. public health agencies investigated and averted a public health crisis that involved vaping. We should kick back and celebrate, because this is 2020, and you can be sure many more spectacular, stomach-churning, nerve-wracking productions are headed our way. ■

Martha Quillen would rather read about smoking, drinking, vaping or bungee jumping than participate, but realizes she didn't always feel that way.



THE LAST WORD

By Craig Nielson

Notes from the Mountain: Climbing Shavano

“NOBODY CARES that you climbed a mountain.”

It wasn't what I wanted to hear, just six months after resuming my nascent pursuit of vertical objectives after a much-needed break from 25 years of climbing mountains. But my friend was right, it truly doesn't matter in the larger scheme of things whether we climb mountains or not. There is nothing at the summit but a pile of rock and ice. In fact, this idea that climbing mountains is rather pointless has been around a while and was famously exemplified by the great French Alpinist Lionel Terray in the title of his seminal book, “Conquistadors of the Useless” published in 1963 and considered by veteran mountaineering writer and climber David Roberts “the finest mountaineering narrative ever written.”

So, what is it then that compels us to voluntarily do what is not easy: to will our soft bodies and a pack full of gear to the higher elevations? What draws us upwards to test our endurance and mental stamina in the pursuit of “the useless?” It's not an easy question to answer and yet a clue to this time-

“It's often referred to as ‘organized suffering’ and climbers will tell you, among other things, that to be a good mountaineer, you need to have a bad memory.”

less riddle might lie in the sublime nature of the mountains themselves.

And there is no better mountain to test this enigma than the gentle hometown giant, Mount Shavano. Whether you are a veteran of climbing 13ers and 14ers in Colorado or a new climber who simply wants to give one of the big ones a try, you can't go wrong scaling this iconic summit. At 14,229 feet, Shavano has all the attributes of a classic and climber-friendly 14er: It's non-technical, relatively short distance-wise, has an easy mellow approach, a decently maintained trail and the best summit views of the Upper Arkansas Valley you could ever hope for. With that said, it still is a 14er and there is just no way around the fact that you must get yourself up 4,429 feet of crumbling granite to reach the summit. But the effort is well worth it.

Mount Shavano, named after the Ute Chief and medicine man, anchors the southern end of the main branch of the Sawatch Range and is a key landmark for Salida, dominating the western horizon. Perhaps the mountain's most famous feature is the Angel of Shavano, a snow field (almost a couloir) that appears in early winter and again in spring as a white, somewhat new age, figure of an uninhibited angel who's graceful up-stretched arms and blissfully canted head seem to gesture to the whole range, suggesting: “Hey baby, come ski my silky flanks.” And many do, considering that climbing and skiing “The Angel” is a Salida classic and a bucket-list tick for any local back-country skier. Don't ski? No problem. The Angel is also one of the friendliest and safest snowfields around for glissading, the alpine act of sliding on your backside in a controlled and exhilarating descent (ice axe and crampons strongly recommended).

If you are game for an even more adventurous route up Shavano, you can match your wits

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and nerve with the seldom-climbed South Direct Couloir which carves a glorious and dramatic 5,000 vertical foot line from just above the banks of the North Fork River to the sub-summit of Shavano's southern massif. We climbed this route last Spring with the hopes that it may have been a first ascent and a fulfillment of a line I'd been looking at for the last five years, being very visible from the town of Poncha Springs. As a climber, once a line grabs you, its hard to let it go.

Perhaps the biggest challenge with largely uncharted mountaineering routes like this one is, well, route finding. In Colorado when you hear the words "route finding," think bushwhacking, because that is what you will be doing. And "doing" we did, battling our way up the dead fall choked approach of the southern face to find the mouth of the couloir. Limb whipped and krummholz skinned, we finally found a reasonable on-ramp only to discover the biggest avalanche debris field we'd ever seen.

REMEMBER THOSE HEAVY SNOWS in the winter of 2018-2019? Well, all the snow on this side of the mountain came straight down the couloir in a huge release, leaving behind an enormous disaster zone of splintered trees, crushed rock and enough pine boughs to decorate the entire Salida Thanksgiving parade route. By the way, this is why it's advisable to only climb couloirs in Spring when the avalanche danger has been reduced to "manageable" but not waiting too long for warm temperatures to trigger slow moving but deadly wet slides. It's a sweet spot and when you hit it right, it can be some of the best steep snow climbing around. But, I digress ... after slogging through 1,500 feet of avalanche debris (I've never climbed green snow before), we finally broke out into another 1,000 feet of open snow followed by the apex of the face where the couloir relents into the sustained 50-degree slope of the face headwall. We hit this section just in time for the early afternoon sun to soften up the snow too much. Post holing for another 1,000 feet to the Col and then the final 600-foot slog to the false summit. Did I mention mountaineering is a lot of work? It's often referred to as "organized suffering" and



Courtesy of the author.

climbers will tell you, among other things, that to be a good mountaineer, you need to have a bad memory.

But enough of this story, its time to grab your pack and get yourself on the well documented Shavano standard route, after the last snow has cleared at 12,000 feet so you don't get lost in the stubborn forest below tree line. Make your way up to a huge saddle at 13,389 feet. From there, it's less than a 1,000 talus-strewn feet to the summit proper, where you can stand proud of anything else around you, see the Ark Valley far below, and maybe, just maybe, you will be the only one who cares. ■

Climber and mountaineer Craig Nielson keeps a basecamp in Salida, Colorado.

