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*The Sixth*



*Gunnison Valley Journal*

OUT OF MANY, ONE

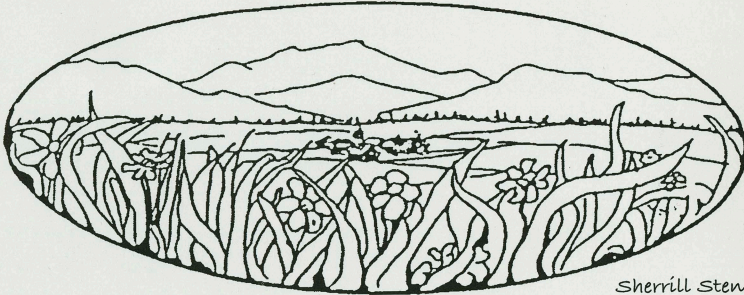


Cover photo by L.R. "Mac" McGraw: The last run of Engine 268 in 1956. 20 miles west of Gunnison. Engine 268 now rests on display at the Gunnison Pioneer Museum.

## The Sixth Gunnison

When I used to work at the college, I would tell the students that Gunnison is like the Hotel California: You can check out, but you can never leave. Live in Gunnison long enough and it becomes a part of your identity.

—Julie Luekenga



Sherrill Stenson Logo

Once every two years, members of the Gunnison Arts Center Poetry Alliance ask their fellow artists in the valley to come out of the closet and share their work, mostly as it pertains to this valley in which we all live or visit.

The result is an astonishing range – in age of the artists, in their views of the valley, in what gets focused on, from amateur to professional – all brought to you with an impressive sincerity.

Our theme this time around (our sixth!) is “Out of the Many, One,” and it is our hope as you peruse the musings and photographs of everyone from people still in their first decade to those in their ninth that you will find we all have similar passions: for this place, and for our art.

The overall mission of the Gunnison Arts Center Poetry Alliance (melodiously abbreviated as GACPA) is to spread our love of the written word. We want to foster poetry and other literary arts (along with those photos, each of them worth 1,000 of our humble little words) in venues such as schools, the workplace, and the world in general. We like to think of our Journal as a prominent means of doing so, and hope you enjoy this edition. Perhaps you’ll even come up with something you’d like to contribute to the seventh in 2006.

In the meantime, if you would like to learn more about our group, or even join us, you can inquire at our parent organization, the Gunnison Arts Center, 102 S. Main St., and the friendly folks there can direct you our way.

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# OUT OF THE MANY, ONE

BY MRS. HAAS'

5TH GRADE CLASS 2003-2004

After brainstorming ideas for this year's journal topic on the board, someone in class asked, "Couldn't we just use all of those ideas together, instead of creating individual pieces?" While reading it aloud to decide the best order for the lines, Chris came up with the fun sounds for the chorus. Voila', a poem was born. The hardest part was figuring out how to spell those sounds.

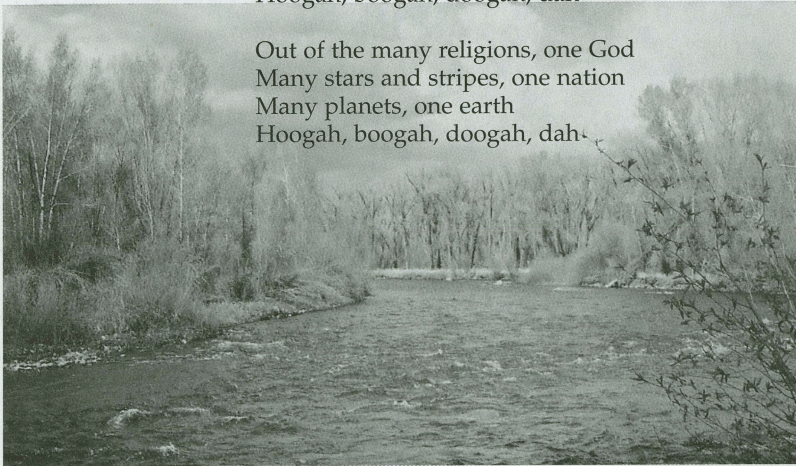
Out of the many people, one you  
Many seas, one fish  
Many leaves, one tree  
Hoogah, boogah, doogah, dah

Out of the many clouds, one sky  
Many fields, one football  
Many colors, one rainbow  
Hoogah, boogah, doogah, dah

Out of the many brains, one school  
Many pennies, one dollar  
Many leprechauns, one pot of gold  
Hoogah, boogah, doogah, dah

Out of the many stars, one universe  
Many people, one world  
Many drops of H<sub>2</sub>O, one lake  
Hoogah, boogah, doogah, dah

Out of the many religions, one God  
Many stars and stripes, one nation  
Many planets, one earth  
Hoogah, boogah, doogah, dah



Stephanie Eastman photo

Barb Haas is a fifth-grade teacher in Gunnison. Her student poets last year were Conor Adcock, Chris August, Nicole Rollman, Trezden Ford, Gage Ginnnett, Josh Kossick, Ayla Mapes, Indeliza Marquez, Lucca Martinez, Kelsey Michaud, Ariana Mitchell, Mark Mykol, Julia Orbanek, Tyler Reese, Sarah Rochinski, Zach Roper, Ismael Sostenes, Kassia Wenger and Talen Williams.



## MEMOIRS OF A GOON GIRL

BY JULIE E. LUEKENG

I love visiting my friend Jean Douglas. I ring the doorbell on the lovely, wood-sided home on North 12th and wait, with anticipation, for the voice to call out, "Come in!" Peeking through the window on the door, I see her motorized wheelchair gliding into the room. This is my signal to let myself in. I slip off my shoes, settle myself on a comfy chair, and eagerly launch into conversation. Sometimes we talk about what's been on TV or what the weather is doing. But most times, as I hope she will today, she tells me stories of her childhood.

A lifetime resident of Gunnison, her family is woven into the history of Gunnison, Lake City, and Ouray. Although she is now in her mid-seventies, her face is beautiful with a smile that still portrays the youth she talks about. Her sweet voice paints pictures of a time I wish I knew.

They were 12 years old, and the year was 1939. Jean LeFevre and her best friend Audrey McCully soundly stomped on the tin cans, molding the metal to their feet. Tentatively, at first, they moved their feet up and down. Ahhhh—there it was—the wonderful clip-clop of the cans creating rhythm with the pounding of their feet. With secret smiles they began their mission. Running up and down the steps of Taylor Hall at Western State College, not caring that it disturbed the students inside, they delighted

in the echoing sound of horse-like hooves as the cans on their feet met the pavement. If someone happened by, they would roll on the ground pretending to be in some kind of physical fit. Later, they would collapse into peals of giggles at their prank.

Warm, summer days were ideal for a rousing game of Tin Can Nurkey. Young Jean offered to be "it" first. As the rest of the kids ran and hid, Jean prepared, waiting long enough to increase the tension then yelled at

the top of her lungs, "Tin Can Nurkey!" With shouts, all the kids ran out at the same time and tried to be the first to kick the can. Jean stood her ground and defended that can to the best of her 12-year-old ability. Kicked shins were the price one paid for the pride of top defender.

Should the amusement of cans grow dim, there was always "Annie Over," another favorite.

No complex equipment needed—just a house and a ball. With one kid on one side of the house and another on the other side, a shout of "Annie Over" signaled the propulsion of a ball, over the house, to be caught by an eager child on the other side.

Wheels and children have always held a magical attraction. In 1939, there were no Rollerblades, helmets, kneepads, or elbow pads. But there were roller skates—wonderful, sturdy, metal skates that fit over shoes and tightened with a twist of a key. Jean, her brothers, and friends pushed with strong



Photo Courtesy of Jean Douglas

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strokes to move the wheels against gravity and up the hill to the college. Finally, cheeks red from exertion, they reached the top. Smiles spread across their faces as they looked down the long hill—the reward for all their efforts was at the tip of their wheels. With a push they were off. Picking up speed as they soared down the hill, they sped faster and faster. Occasionally a skate would fly off, and skin would meet pavement, leaving angry, red scrapes on a knee or elbow. But that didn't stop this game. The thrill of the speed was—and is still—an enticement youth just can't resist.

Winter sports are a hallmark of living in Gunnison. Rare is the child that hasn't skied down a slope or skated on a frozen pond. The passion was no different 60 years ago. Even then, the city maintained an ice skating rink for local kids. It was the evening get-together in the winter. If there was something to be communicated, some tidbit of gossip to be shared, the rink was the local "who's-who" tabloid of the 1930s. Flooded the night before and cleared of any accumulated snow, the rink became a frozen mirror of slick ice ready for games. A favorite was the Whip. Children would clasp hands tightly and form long ropes of excited bodies. The lead skater would push off, gather speed, and increase the dare of turns and curves, whipping the trailing children faster and more severely. Screeches, giggles, and pink cheeks painted the picture of children content and happy even in sub-zero temperatures. Jean and her brothers were mindful of their 10 p.m. curfew. They would take turns climbing the big piles of snow scraped from the rink, to catch a glimpse of their house. At 10 p.m. sharp, their mother would put on the dining room light. When one of the siblings spied the light, skates were hastily removed, and they would run down the alley to their warm, waiting home.

A sunny winter day was the perfect environment to test out freshly waxed skis. A

convenient ski hill was located just behind the college. At the top was a cabin for warming cold toes and fingers. And it was needed by the time the children reached the hill's apex; there was no tow. Twenty minutes of hiking was the payment extracted for a fast, few minutes down. Later at home, in the dimming light of the evening, skis were lovingly maintained, filling the senses with the smell of a hot, melting wax on wood.

As teenagers, Jean and Audrey continued their friendship. Audrey, the lucky one, lived above the Sweet Shop on Main Street. The enticing smell of chocolate, syrups, and sugar was more than a visiting Jean could stand. The best treat was a slice of pecan roll, made right there in the shop, or maybe a chunk of Brazil nut brittle. In the back of the shop, down a slight slope in the wood floor, groups of kids gathered and ordered their favorite drinks: chocolate Cokes, cherry Cokes, or the popular "500s," a delicious combination of chocolate milk and ice. They would gather, flirt, and talk about their favorite movie star or the new feature showing at the theater.

The Unique Theater, on Main, showed the latest movies. Each Saturday Jean and her friends would excitedly pay their ten cents and enter the cool darkness of the theater to watch the latest installment of the serial movie—a continuation of the previous week's drama. They couldn't wait to see how the hero would win the heart of the heroine and save the day. After the movie they would meet together, talk about the handsome lead man or glamorous actress, and write for autographs. A few weeks of anxious waiting were soon rewarded with a treasured black and white glossy photo displaying a hand written note: "To Jean, love Bette Davis."

Each evening, Jean and her girlfriends would cook up delicious batches of fudge. As the owners of the Blue Spruce Grocery Store on Colorado, her family always had access to sugar and other prized baking goodies, even

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*Julie Lukenyga has lived in Gunnison for 11 years. "Listening to and gleaming wisdom from long-time residents — as I was privileged to do in this place — allows me to feel as if I was painted into a landscape of history, culture and community."*



Since 1993, Wendy Mannis and her family have enjoyed their annual summer visits to the Gunnison Valley from their home in Boulder, Colorado. A Gunnison native, Stephanie Eastman is a high school senior who has recently taken up photography as a new hobby.



Photo Courtesy of Jean Douglas

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during the Depression. The routine never got old; the sweet, softness of fudge never lost its allure. Once, her brother added an experimental gourmet touch of rose extract to a batch. Even though the girls initially wrinkled their noses, they later admitted it tasted delicious.

The fine waltz of flirtation is a timeless dance. During those teenage years, Jean and her friends formed an all-girls club called the "Goon Gang." Dedicated to "man-hating," they spent evenings giggling, making fudge, and sharing coveted pictures of glamorous movie stars. But despite their dedicated mission, Jean and Audrey still flirted shamelessly with local college boys. Heaven help the boy who caught their attention and discovered his reward was the giggling shadow of teenage girls following his steps.

Eventually Jean married one of those Western State boys. Life would briefly carry her away from Gunnison to other states, as she traveled with her husband, involved in his military career. She would later return and raise children who treasure their own memories of Gunnison life. Like a thread in a complex tapestry, Jean's history adds to the fabric of the valley home. With the help of modern-day e-mail, she and Audrey still reminisce and share stories.

As for me, I'll be back. I might hear a story about her grandfather, a local physician, or an uncle who may have saved Lake City from the flu epidemic, or maybe the relative that brought the first car to this area, or maybe . . . Ω

## SAPPHIRE DEBUT

BY WENDY MANNIS

Three-quarter moon  
 Stains dawn  
 Pale indigo  
 Seeps into aspen  
 Porcelain pale stands  
 Knee deep in delft drifts.  
 Sound wakes  
 In whispers where lodgepoles  
 Stretch  
 Shrug off mantles of sugared twilight  
 Four cobalt chisels  
 Crack the sky  
 Splintered facets  
 Crow salutation:  
*There there*  
 Truant sun yawns  
 Drizzles  
 Gently the crystalline slope.



# LIKE SLEEP, BUT BRITTLE

BY MARK TODD

Like sleep, but brittle,  
a film that crackles  
from each toss to turn  
and then returns  
to the starch of wakefulness.

And still the moon stalks  
across the floor, its snarl  
a predation of light  
ready to sink shafts of claw  
into sleeping wood.

My shallow breaths  
pull at the hours, each a gate  
of brass and hinged shadow  
that will not open  
until the knock of time.

But a cat purrs warmth  
into my back, kneads the ridges  
of my spine with soft throbs,  
as I drift, unaware,  
on the margins of a thin night.

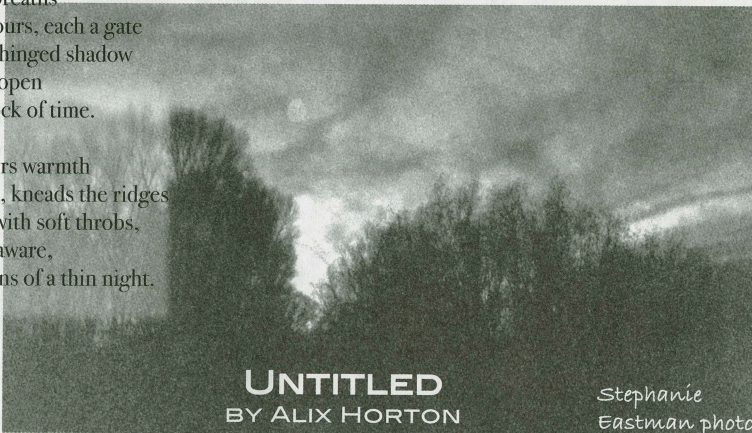
# NEW MOON SONG

BY GEORGE SIBLEY

That barest hint of newest moon,  
That hangnail light in the western sky,  
Never fails to make me glad, but  
Without a clear translucent why.

I think I flow and ebb with moons;  
My brain expands and shrinks inside  
As moonlit time from dusk to dawn swells  
Then backs down the night to finally hide.

The sliver moon last night glanced askance  
On a world more blessed with beauty than sense,  
But the way the day was unmade by then  
And the sky so translucent bottomless deep  
Made me think there's more than this for life:  
That there's better than beauty to come



# UNTITLED

BY ALIX HORTON

Stephanie  
Eastman photo

I step outside in my robe to find the cat,  
and as my toes press into grass slick and cool like melted ice  
the moon

Hits me in the chest.

Orange, gold and fat, belching into summer air, I think he is  
Drunk, tripping awkwardly from behind a cloud, slurring to the stars.

I am not drunk – I just want to find  
the cat, but this moon

reminds me that drinking the steely blue wicked air is no sin, just  
pleasure,

And makes even gods laugh.

Born in Sweden, grown in Gunnison, Alix Horton now holds two degrees from Stanford University and is a middle school teacher with the Teach for America program in Roma, Texas.



## COMMUNION

BY JACKIE DEVORE

The women of my family were always in a rush  
 They had no time to waste . . .  
 Their work was too important . . .  
 I see them darting about their comfortable kitchens,  
 Stirring generations into cups of sweetened water.  
 Life bubbled there, yeasty and full . . .  
 An eager gray foam spilling over rims of self-determination.

In one swift turn, strong, capable hands pour impatience  
 Into cradling piles of clean white flour,  
 Firm fingers mix structure into form.  
 Around and around . . . the easy, confident motions circle the sides,  
 Scooping unfinished crumbs inward,  
 Holding essential ingredients together  
 As the polishing begins.

Over and over the mass is gathered and pushed . . . gathered and pushed . . .  
 Pressed, squeezed, stretched, massaged and molded.  
 Heart's resolve assembles hope . . .  
 Kneads it into elastic potential . . .  
 Creates a promise anointed with oil . . .  
 Covers it with a clean white cloth . . .  
 And leaves it to ascend alone in the guarded warmth.

Now the rising begins . . . as form meets freedom  
 Rushing upward . . . pushing purpose too fast . . .  
 The common cloth is lifted.  
 Refinement presses down . . .  
 Deflates the haste . . .  
 And sends it back to rise again  
 In the shadow and sunlight  
 Of the family bowl.

As fullness blooms, the loaves are shaped . . . allowed . . .  
 Becoming what they will in the heat of the oven's fire.  
 At Last, the alchemy of bread and roses combine  
 Sending fragrant invitations forth to call us home.  
 It is taken to the Supper . . .  
 Celebrated . . . Exclaimed . . .  
 Anticipated . . . and sliced apart . . .

But, these are women who do not release easily.  
 We wait . . . holding back to question goodness . . .  
 Tasting for salt, savor, soul . . .  
 Tasting for truth of texture . . . flavor of tenderness . . .  
 Tasting for a quiet presence of love on the tongue . . .  
 As blood and bread unite to form the words which speak or hold silent  
 One final blessing for the language of the heart.



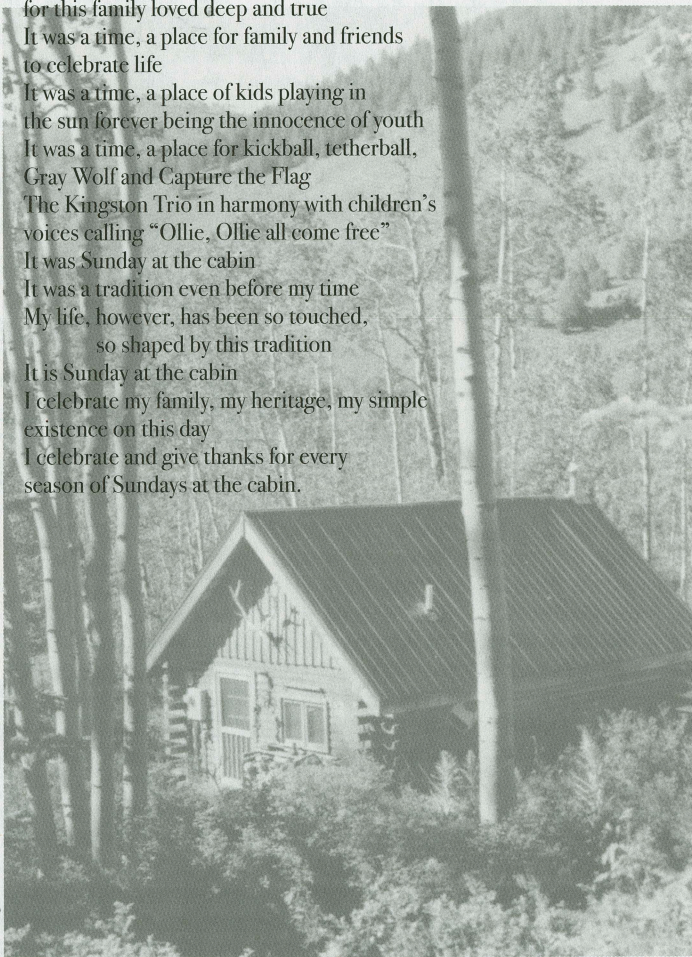
Judy Cox photo



## A SEASON OF SUNDAYS

BY KIM EASTMAN

It was a tradition even before my time  
It was a time, a place for family to  
share love, togetherness, joy, sorrow, emotions  
of all kinds.  
It was a time, a place to simply relax  
to visit or argue  
conversations could run heated – emotions high  
It was a time, a place to cry  
for this family loved deep and true  
It was a time, a place for family and friends  
to celebrate life  
It was a time, a place of kids playing in  
the sun forever being the innocence of youth  
It was a time, a place for kickball, tetherball,  
Gray Wolf and Capture the Flag  
The Kingston Trio in harmony with children's  
voices calling "Ollie, Ollie all come free"  
It was Sunday at the cabin  
It was a tradition even before my time  
My life, however, has been so touched,  
so shaped by this tradition  
It is Sunday at the cabin  
I celebrate my family, my heritage, my simple  
existence on this day  
I celebrate and give thanks for every  
season of Sundays at the cabin.



Judy Cox photo

*Kim Eastman was born in Gunnison and continues to live in this wonderful valley. Kim's father, Whit, was born here also and passed on to her his love of this valley. Much of Kim's poetry focuses on family and the cabin west of town where the family still gathers on Sundays.*



*Darin Portnoy has been a resident of the Gunnison Valley since 1999 and lives on Ohio Creek. He works as a physician in Crested Butte and in the San Luis Valley but spends as much time as possible exploring and fishing local waters.*

## OUTSIDE THE KNOLLS

A SHORT STORY BY DARIN PORTNOY

Even here, in these cold mountains, her dark irises described a closed arc around his heart. He had left his name and his language, his world of sand and wind, veiled faces and the woman he could not have. Now, in this cold place, where he had come to delve into the earth, delve deep and forget—he lay burning with fever. Burning like the sands duning toward noon in a land heavy with sun and old hatreds. Arabic words tumbled from his lips as he lay consuming himself; the woman watching him crossed herself.

When they buried him she kept her own counsel, let him lie beneath the last rites offered by the Irish priest. Her daughter died the next winter and she buried her next to the Muslim, left blessings on both their graves. Each left with useless lungs that refused to bring in sweet mountain air. Tuberculosis, ever the efficient disease, was surely the cause of both of their deaths.

The Gunnison Valley's doctor would have never come out this far to consult on patients. Tin Cup's residents were known as those who couldn't guarantee his fees. Money was never easy to come by and the doctor had guessed right: she couldn't afford his services.

A dusting of snow was on the ground and another brutal winter not far behind. She thought about this as she rounded the bend in the road, approaching a footbridge over the creek in front of the cemetery Knolls. Each Knoll, carefully marked and fenced in; as if that would keep the dead of different faiths separated forever. She reminded herself that there was no mixing in this conservative town, whether in life, or the afterlife.

She never married this Muslim man. It just wouldn't have set well with the righteous businessmen who ran the town. Their god-fearing and gossip-bent wives would never have approved either. Ellie was so much stronger those many years ago. What other people thought of her would have had little impact on her actions; best to just do what in your heart seemed right.

She'd had a loving husband and a good

marriage before coming out to Colorado, her long dead man drawn to the promise of easy riches and a life of great adventure in the mountains. They'd left what seemed a dead end life in the coalfields of West Virginia to come out here and start over. Their families believed they were headed to the end of the earth, and now for Ellie, it began to feel as if they'd been right.

Everyone believed in some God; call him whatever you want to, she thought. The Muslim had his Allah. And he had his ever present and well-worn Koran, the one by their bedside that he pored over by lamp each morning. It would always be still and dark when he awoke, giving him enough time to read before dressing for work. Ellie was always awakened when he stirred, placing his prayer rug on the cold wooden floor and beginning the reading and silent prayers. She could see his hands and lips move to a rhythm of well-practiced verse.

For all of their life together the Muslim must have thought her to be asleep, unknowing and likely uninterested in his faith and the first of his daily prayer rituals. She had never shared her interest and respect for his tireless devotion to routine and prayer. Walking up now to his grave she thought about all of this with an immense sense of regret.

The town's elders never could understand the Muslim's actions in prayer or that he might be praying to the same God that they worshipped every Sunday. He was not like them in the least, and when Ellie tried to bury him in the Knolled area with all the other dead of Tin Cup, this became so clear. "Put him anywhere you want, just not in our cemetery. We won't make no special Knoll for someone who doesn't believe in God."

No matter that he prayed to God five times a day and lived by strict rules of behavior and diet with intermittent fasting. No matter that he helped the poor of the village when they had no food or firewood. No matter that after 10 hours

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Dow Mills photo

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below ground in the mines he would patiently sit and help out the slow readers at the one-room schoolhouse in a language he too was just learning. No matter that he had an unflinching love for a widow and her daughter and had helped them when they most needed him.

Across the footbridge and directly ahead of her was the Catholic Knoll. She recalled how those influential Christians fought hard for the best view from the cemetery and they got it. Here the dead could look out over a small lake and a gorgeous meadow and from there outwards the huge granite peaks facing towards the north. She remembered town meetings discussing burial sites for the dead and how heated they always became. Do the dead really care, she murmured, as she moved forward into the cemetery.

The Protestant Knoll was the largest. It was set off to the left and under the shade of enormous Ponderosa pines. Here were buried the first to die in Tin Cup.

And set far off to the south and apart from the other Knolls, perhaps as an afterthought, was the Jewish Knoll with its two small wooden markers beside the huge gnarled tree trunk that took up most of the space in this fenced Knoll. Two Jewish brothers had ventured out this way after a short

stay in Durango, set on opening a dry goods store and turning a profit enough to bring their large families out. Neither brother made it past the first winter. Ellie wondered just how the town's elders could understand the need for a separate site for these two relative newcomers and their strange faith and yet be so unmoved by the Muslim's seven-year life in Tin Cup.

As if without any faith, veterans were in a separate Knoll to the west of the cemetery. She thought how odd it was that they'd be identified separately for what they'd done to defend the country and not by the faith that may have carried them through the most trying of times in war.

Set off to the north of the cemetery and near the small frozen lake were the two markers she sought. The larger one for the Muslim and the one ringed by a collection of small, smooth river stones where her daughter lay. While the other Knolls had the attention of a fairly meticulous groundskeeper, this site was as wild as all the terrain as far as Ellie could see. She was certain that this is how the place would look once she left Tin Cup. No one else had the slightest interest in caring for these gravesites. Ellie wanted to know what this place would be like forever, and without the tedious weeding and cutting, this was surely as it would be. Ω

*A native of Gunnison, Dow Mills now lives in Arvada, where he works as a sports camera operator. He returns to Gunnison as often as possible to capture scenic images with his still camera.*



After spending 2003 in Gunnison, Soledad Beltran is now back home in Arequipa, Peru. She still has a love for Gunnison that is expressed in her poetry. • Mary Burt has lived in the Gunnison Valley for 20 years and loves to explore the area by bike.

## MAYBE SOME DAY

BY SOLEDAD BELTRAN

SPANISH INTERPRETATION BY MARY BURT

My love for you is very big  
 so what that you are very far  
 so what that you don't feel the same way  
 but I love you now  
 maybe some day  
 I can say  
 don't be in my heart  
 you are always in my memories  
 maybe some day  
 I can go to bed  
 without dreaming of you  
 maybe some day  
 when I remember you  
 my tears won't fall  
 and wet my cheeks

*Quizàs de algún día*

*Mi amor por ti estan grande  
 Así que no te sientes el mismo  
 pero ya te quiero  
 Quizàs de algún día  
 puedo decir  
 no estás en mis memorias  
 Quizàs de algún día  
 Me voy a dormir  
 sin soñar contigo  
 Quizàs de algún día  
 cuando te recuerdo  
 no se caen mis lágrimas  
 y no se mojan mis mejillas*

## GUNNISON

BY SOLEDAD BELTRAN

ENGLISH INTERPRETATION BY MARY BURT

*Gunnison en apariencia pequeño  
 pero grande en corazón  
 gentil como el más fino galan  
 acogedor cual tierna madre  
 ACARICIADO por el frío helado  
 que congela lágrimas i sentimientos  
 i hasta los pensamientos  
 Gunnison perla blanca  
 perdida en las montañas  
 vestida de blanco como novia virginal  
 adornada no por guirnalda  
 pero si por árboles i hojas de extrañas formas  
 que como blancos espectros muestran su desnudes  
 ofendiendo la pureza  
 de esta novia pueblerina  
 que su corazón rebosa de felicidad  
 aun cuando sin piedad  
 mancillan su inmaculado lecho  
 los que a tu encuentro vienen  
 enamorados de tu belleza*

Gunnison: small in appearance  
 but big in heart  
 graceful like the best lover  
 welcoming like a new mother  
 CARESSED by the cold ice cream  
 that congeals tears, feelings and  
 those thoughts  
 White pearl Gunnison  
 lost in the mountains  
 dressed in white like a virginal girlfriend  
 adorned not with garlands  
 but with trees and strangely shaped leaves  
 that like white ghosts expose your nakedness  
 The purity of this native girlfriend  
 whose heart is  
 brimming with happiness  
 offended  
 even when without mercy  
 they dishonor your immaculate bed  
 and they come when I am with you  
 in love with your beauty





Robert Valdez photo

## WHAT WE CARRY

BY JOE LOTHAMER

sun pours light upon the stream  
 these drowning colors  
 these fallen leaves swirl  
 around the glassy  
 surface of my eyes  
 a few rain drops  
 ride these brittle ships  
 under twig bridges and over stone falls  
 the sky carries the sun  
 the water the leaf  
 and the leaf  
 the raindrops

I imagine we are not as important as what we carry  
 and  
 what we carry we learn to love

## BREAKING CAMP AT BLACK CANYON

BY MARLENE WRIGHT ZANETELL

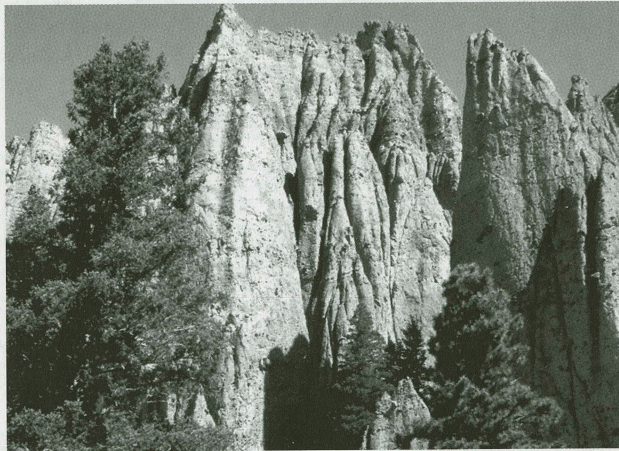
The river curves  
 the canyon heart  
 and moves on.

This bivouac  
 has armed me well  
 for here I have honed

my edges.  
 Forgive me  
 If I cut

quick to the quick.  
 A sharp knife will  
 Be reckoned with

and it hungers  
 not for butter  
 but for hard, slabbed sides.



Dr. Mason Light photo

*Mason Light (1915-2001) came to Gunnison in the 1940s to fill in for another family physician, and never left. In addition to delivering many of Gunnison's babies for several decades, he also volunteered his medical services abroad through Rotary programs. One of his principle hobbies was photography, and his work appeared in many local publications.*



Valli Funk is a Gunnison native from the Vader/Phelps families. She works as a nurse at the hospital and has been a 4-H leader for over 20 years. She enjoys spending time with her family, especially grandchildren TeaLa Mears and Colton Funk. • TeaLa Mears is 10 years old and has lived most of her life in Gunnison. She rode her first horse at about a week old. She is really looking forward to riding her new horse, Sally's Jewel.

## LUCK BY VALLI FUNK

"Papa" and I bought our granddaughter, TeaLa Mears, her first horse of her own, Lucky, a little over a year ago. We made her look at several horses to find the best one for her. When she and Lucky met, it was love at first sight. We tried to convince her that she would perhaps be better off choosing a different horse.

A special connection was made between horse and girl at their first meeting. Many people observed a unique relationship between the two of them that could not be explained. Adults who had known Lucky before were surprised at how he responded to TeaLa. He would have done anything for her. If she got upset or cried he would stop, turn his head toward her and "watch" her very carefully, trying to figure out what was wrong with his girl.

TeaLa loved spending time with him. She could catch him just by calling his name and he would come to her. She learned to ride without holding on; we called it "Flying Like an Eagle." She talked to him all the time, told him her happy and sad news. She said once he was her best friend because she could tell him anything. One day when I was driving her home after she rode she wrote a song about him. I came right home and typed it up for her.

*Everyone is walking around going  
You are so lucky to have him standing  
by you every day.*

*I wish I had someone like him to be  
with me.*

*I would never trade him in for anybody  
or any animal*

*Since I love him so muuuch . . .*

*My heart goes boom, ba boom when I  
see him.*

*I would never sell him for anything . . . not  
until I die anyway — or he dies.*

*I would be crying a whole ocean . . .*

*boom, ba boom, boom.*

*I will never have anyone like him again  
He's a beautiful horse and no one's ever gonna  
be as lucky as me.*

*I'm lucky, so lucky to have Lucky!*

Unfortunately, at the end of March, Lucky got kicked by another horse and broke his leg. We had to have him put down. TeaLa still struggles with losing him every day. One of her school assignments recently was to write about something and incorporate "senses." She wrote about Lucky.



## LUCKY BY TEALA MEARS

Even though my horse is dead I remember these things. I remember the smell of Lucky, it was like a horse plus leather smell, it made him smell great. I also remember his color was a mix of chestnut and copper color, which makes a bright sorrel. I remember when he was talking to the other horses it sounded as if I was at the rodeo grounds. When I touched Lucky, I was amazed because of how soft he was. When I was around Lucky I was really happy. My best memory was when Lucky went to the vet because he was playing with his tongue. All in all the memories of Lucky are still with me.

*—written for Mrs. Merrifield's fifth-grade class*



## THE LAST RIDE

BY BRENT WINSTON

It was an open rodeo, anyone could enter till it became all full  
I was toolin' around behind the chutes, I had been hired to help work the bulls

When I seen a cowboy sitting down, he was calmly taking out his rope  
So I walked up to visit a while, and maybe even bum a smoke

When I asked him for a puff, he looked up and I seen he was an old man  
His face looked like an old pair of boots, there were scars and calluses on his hands

His rope was tattered and his chaps, they used to be red, but now they're much lighter  
Beneath an out-of-date shirt, through the dirt and tarnished silver, I made out the words,  
"champion bull rider"

He was skinny and slow movin', so I said, "Old man, I can't let you ride."  
But when he looked up, I seen it, there was a fire in his eye

He said, "Youngster, try to understand," as he raised a ragged hat to wipe a bead of sweat  
"Ya see I'm old and I'm dying, if you'd let me have this one last ride I'd surely be in your debt."

I said okay as my heart sank, for I knew this cowboy had been born free  
And if I were in his boots I hope he would do it for me

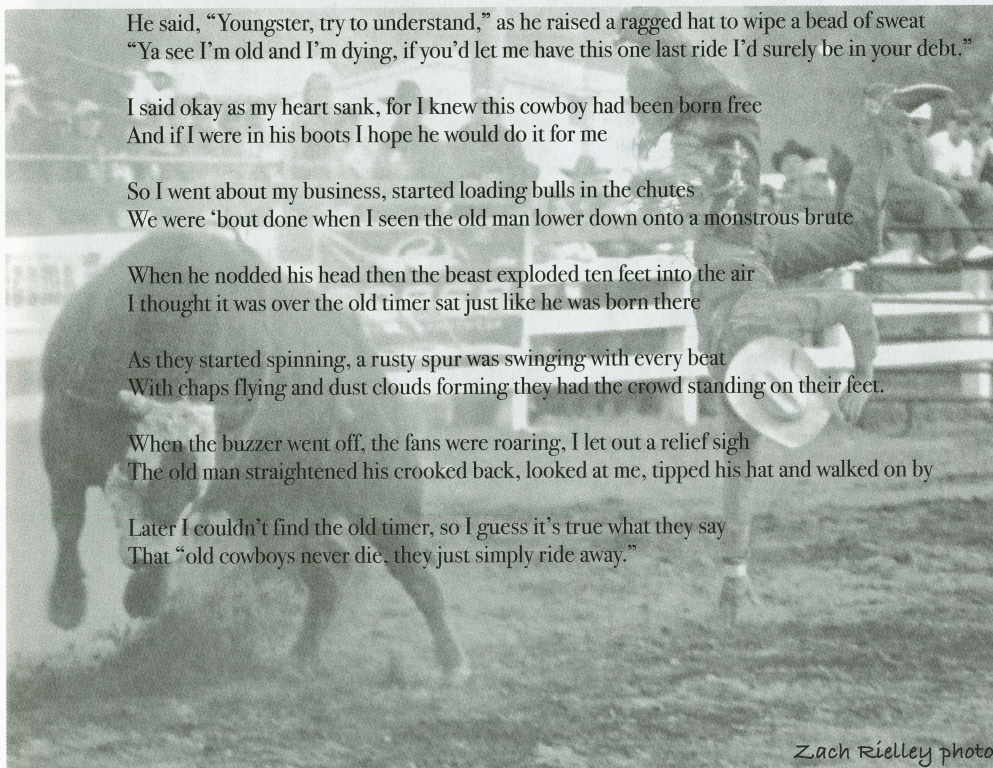
So I went about my business, started loading bulls in the chutes  
We were 'bout done when I seen the old man lower down onto a monstrous brute

When he nodded his head then the beast exploded ten feet into the air  
I thought it was over the old timer sat just like he was born there

As they started spinning, a rusty spur was swinging with every beat  
With chaps flying and dust clouds forming they had the crowd standing on their feet.

When the buzzer went off, the fans were roaring, I let out a relief sigh  
The old man straightened his crooked back, looked at me, tipped his hat and walked on by

Later I couldn't find the old timer, so I guess it's true what they say  
That "old cowboys never die, they just simply ride away."



Zach Rielley photo

*A longtime cowboy poet, Brent Winston is from Peyton, Colorado, but he has spent the past five years in this valley, most recently as a horse trainer for Johnny Leverett in Parlin.*



## THE THURSDAY CLUB

BY BOB BENELL

Attendance at the Thursday night gathering was mandatory. Consumption of day-old doughnuts ruled, along with the telling of corny jokes, liberal doses of cussing with an occasional new expression voiced and general rowdy decorum. But what could one expect from teenage boys?

The glowing fire in the old wood burner kept the backyard workshop barely habitable and little altered the frost-covered windows. The end of hockey season created a void in activity unless one considered school an activity, which the members did not.

"Last hand," declared Jimmy, the oldest and self-considered wisest and therefore, again in his view, the man in charge.

"What's wild?" asked Alex.

"Just the players," answered Lester, the dealer. "Cards, gentlemen? Alex?"

"I'll take three." Maybe Alex had a pair.

"I'll take two," said Andy. A look of concern passed around the table—Andy might have a pair, not a good sign. He might even have three of a kind but probably drawing for a flush or maybe a straight, inside, of course.

"How many, Jimmy?"

"What did you say was wild?" A sure sign of a hand in trouble.

"Nothing wild."

"Well then, I believe I'll take just one, no maybe I won't, all right—give me one. But make it a good one this time." Jimmy's hand might be straightening or he could be working on a flush but most likely he was bluffing as usual.

"And the dealer will play these!"

Another look of concerned passed around the table.

"Alex, it's up to you," said the dealer.

"I bet one," Alex replied as he threw his matchstick in the middle of the table.

"Andy?"

"I'll cover Alex's one and I'll raise two.

I've got a pretty good hand."

"Jimmy?"

"I believe that's three to me and I'll raise two."

Everyone thought maybe Jimmy hit his straight; surely he didn't have four of a kind, did he?

"Well, it's around to me, is it?" asked Lester to no one in particular. "I'm in. Pot square?" he asked. Without drawing any objections, Lester said, "Alex, let's see 'em."

"I'm right proud of these. I hit just right.

**CONTINUED NEXT PAGE**

Bob Benell and his wife were drawn to Gunnison as vacationers. Now part-time residents, "We've discovered that the friends we've made and the solid sense of community have made this place home."



Photo Courtesy of L.R. "Mac" McGraw



FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE

Does anyone want to fold?"  
"Course not, we already bet. Let's see 'em."

While the others were distracted, Alex clumsily elbowed his matchstick pile off the table. He slid his chair back and went about the tedious task of picking matchsticks off the floor.

Andy removed his hat and brushed his hair and Lester scratched his back.

"All right, read 'em and weep. Four queens," Alex said as he spread his cards.

"My, my! Ordinarily I'd say that was a good hand. . . but I've got a little club flush. Queen high of course!" said Andy.

Jimmy gave a little tug on his right sleeve. "Andy, that's a fair poker hand but I believe a king-high diamond flush beats your small flush, don't it?"

Everyone held his breath to see Lester's hand. He hadn't drawn anything.

"I surely don't know how this happened.

But straight off the bat I drew a royal flush in hearts. Ace high, of course, and everything lined up pretty as you please!"

"Well, I guess that does it. Lester won, fair and square. Let's call it a night," said Jimmy.

The players threw in their cards and counted their matchsticks. Surprisingly, well maybe not surprisingly, no one made mention of the seven queens and other assorted good cards lying on the table, some with red backs and others with blue ones—some edges missing or bent.

Alex was the last to leave. "Jimmy, I really enjoy these Thursday games but I wish my luck was better."

After some consideration Jimmy said, "Alex, lots of folks think poker is about gambling but it's a gentleman's game. It's about ritual and form. And as for luck, there's always next week."

"I think you're wrong about poker, Jimmy. It's all about friendship." Ω

HAIKU

BY BETTY LIGHT

Staccato raindrops  
offer drink and cleanse the world.  
Higher up, it's snow.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thunder, dark storm clouds,  
staccato rain and wind gusts.  
A rainbow hugs the earth.

\*\*\*\*\*

When we see the light  
in a distant galaxy,  
it'll no longer be.

Don Mills photo



Betty Light has been part of the poetry of the valley since 1942. She bestows her light and grace on many community activities. From art to health to justice.



## TWENTY BELOW IN GOD'S COUNTRY

BY JOHN NELSON

*John Nelson owns and operates the Gunnison Country Guide Service and has been a professional guide and outfitter here for 26 years. • Editor and publisher of Conundrum Press, and a finalist for the Colorado Book Award, David J. Rothman has been a faculty member at WSC, the headmaster at the Crested Butte Academy, and a co-founder of the CB Music Festival.*

It's 20 below in God's Country.  
My lord, it's cold today!  
We're so lucky to be in God's Country  
To live and work and play.

The truck won't start. The pipes are frozen.  
The door is stuck to the floor.  
It's a beautiful day in God's Country.  
So, who could ask for more?

I reckon I'll be wearing long johns,  
The coveralls and the pacs.  
There's livestock to be fed and watered,  
And I'm gonna need the axe.

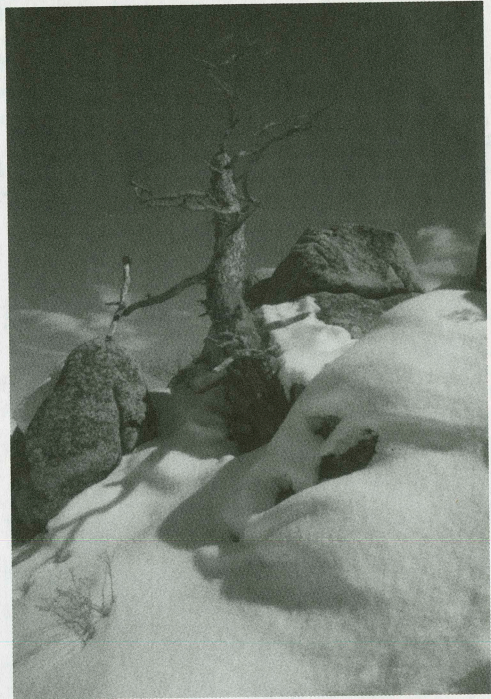
It's for sure that it could be colder.  
We've seen 40 below before.  
But, springtime is around the corner.  
I'm tired of the lion's roar.

Aaahh, springtime in the Rockies  
can dazzle and amaze.  
I just wish the springtime lasted  
More than a couple of days.

I'm thinking about fly fishing.  
Oh, wouldn't that be nice.  
But you bet, it would take an oil rig  
To drill through all the ice.

But my gosh, we live in God's Country!  
The weather's bound to change.  
There's an awesome ray of sunshine  
That blesses the West Elk Range.

I know I should quit complaining.  
I know I should change my tune.  
But, it's 20 below in God's Country,  
And it's the second day of June.



*Zack Rielley photo*

## HOW SPRING HAPPENS

BY DAVID J. ROTHMAN

Big sunshine angled higher fires the summits,  
Driving down last month's relentless snow  
To trickles, rivulets, cascades, and brooks now  
Grown to soggy meadows, and hear that hum? It's  
The tiny, spangled fighter birds returning,  
And dandelions sprouting to the south  
Of old sheds leaning further over. Mouth  
To breast we lie with spring, a season burning  
With red tulips and sage, marsh marigold,  
Even odd blades of grass, revealing bliss  
Better than new worlds, the old returning  
Morning, afternoon, and evening yearning.  
Goodbye to winter, long and lonely and cold.  
The only question is whether to drink, or kiss.



## EARLY AMERICAN TECHNIQUE OF SKIING

AS TOLD TO GEORGE SIBLEY BY JOHNNY SOMRAK

*Adapted from articles first printed in the  
Crested Butte Chronicle, Mar. 12 & 19, 1969.*

Johnny Somrak, one of a diminishing number of Upper Gunnison Valley natives from the valley's coal-mining era, died this spring, just short of 90 years old. Johnny spent twenty years in Crested Butte's coal mines, starting when he was 17, and then spent another 20-plus years working for the Forest Service.

He worked hard

all his life - but he played hard too, never missing a polka dance, or a chance to play in the snow. This included a lot of skiing, before there were lifts to ski from, or modern high-tech ski equipment to do all the work for the skier.

At least once a year when I worked at the ski area (1966-1970), Johnny would bring a pair of homemade skis for a demonstration run or two. I took notes at one of those demonstrations - on

**CONTINUED  
NEXT PAGE**



*George Sibley photo*

## HOCKEY HEART

BY JOHN STEELE

You lace 'em up,  
blades sharp, hungry  
to chew up ice.  
The sound of a sword  
drawn from its sheath.  
A twenty-dollar twig, ragged tape.  
CCM, Bauer, Easton -  
doesn't matter.  
Tighten your grip  
and don't let  
your edge slip.

You take a pounding in the corner.  
A shot to the back in front of the net.  
You feel the Pounding solidarity  
of the collective heart,  
left and right wingers, center, two for defense

-a sentient group, the goalie's peripheral.

Your adrenaline flows as the hockey gods  
conjure the sensation of anti-gravity, not only  
from the symbiosis of skates, the hand and stick,  
the bloody sweat dripping from the edge of your eye,  
but from the motion of your body on the ice.

You feel the exactness of your blades,  
cutting perfection into the ice, into time . . .  
You lose your lid in a scrum  
but you don't feel the pain, the sting of  
the puck delivering a terrible bruise to your body.  
No, all you feel, once that ice opens up, is the puck  
like a magnet coming to you,  
the shaft of your stick bending to your will,  
the game lending purity to your heart.



## FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE

what might be called the “Early American Ski Technique.” This, then, is the equipment and technique for an earlier age of skiing, as related by Johnny Somrak.

## EQUIPMENT

To understand the reason for rules like “don’t turn unless you have to,” and “if you have to turn, consider bailing instead,” you need to understand the equipment they used back then.

Due to there not being any ski shops, you had to make your own skis. You did this by getting two ten-foot one-by boards (ceiling boards worked well), and boiling the tar out of one end till it was soft. Then you bent this softened end back over something curved and tied it there till the wood dried out - hopefully staying curved. Then you carved the bent tip into a tapered shape to cut through the snow.

Some people spoke for keeping a rawhide thong or something to keep the tip bent, because if you stayed out too long in the spring when the snow was wet, the tips of the skis would straighten out again, and a ski

with no bent-up tip is no use at all.

The final step in preparing the skis for use was to put a good coat of beeswax or paraffin on the bottom. Then your skis were ready.

The bindings fastening the skis to your feet were very simple and ineffective leather straps that laced over the top of the foot. The heel was free to raise up and down. It was also free to slip side to side, for that matter, whether you wanted it to or not. In the event of a fall, the ski came off easily, which made it a safe enough binding for falling down in. But sometimes, the ski also came off before you fell, so it was not so safe a binding for skiing in.

The ski boots were whatever you had. “Ankle support” had a different meaning to skiers then than now: today it refers to the support your boot gives your ankle; then it referred to the support your ankle gave the boot.

The single ski pole featured a multipurpose staff of aspen or pine, an inch or two in diameter and about as tall as the skier. There was no basket. This pole had a much more direct use in skiing than do modern ski poles, serving primary functions in stopping, turning, and beating off resentful wildlife.

## GATES

BY DAVID J. ROTHMAN

A mystery: open, closed, delay,  
Hairpin, elbow, flush, and fallaway.  
But soon the patterns started to make sense  
And we could feel some faculty go tense  
Anticipating every turn’s design,  
As if our very spirits had grown fine,  
To set up, take a step, and look ahead,  
The world an alternation: blue then red  
Then blue again as we blew through them all,  
Standing on one round edge in a fall  
To grace, imagining initiation  
Then playing with pure gravity’s duration.  
Perfect for the gate, the pitch, the speed,  
The snow, the rhythm, tactics, and our need  
To go, to go, be beautiful and win,  
Every turn a new way to begin,  
We whacked ‘boo day and night till we turned black  
And blue from tightening each slack line’s track.  
Come dinner, bruised hips, shoulders testified  
To the hungry seconds we brought back denied.  
And slowly, slowly, we began to go  
Faster across the wild, indifferent snow.

## THE TECHNIQUE

And that brings us to the evolved art of skiing on ten-foot ceiling boards. It is important to remember that early skiing in the valley had an uphill component as well as a downhill component since there were no lifts until Pioneer Ski Area opened in Cement Creek just before World War II. The uphill component made gentle slopes preferable to steep slopes - but the task of negotiating any downhill slope on those ten-foot skis with leather bindings and galoshes made gentler slopes preferable anyway for all but the best or craziest skiers. Chicken Ranch Hill, off to the right on the way up the Slate River Road, was a favorite in Crested Butte; the slopes above the college (Cupola Hill) were a Gunnison favorite when there was enough snow to cover the sagebrush.

Since the ten-foot skis had the general maneuverability of a ten-foot toboggan split in two, the technique involved the rule “Stand up straight and go straight, as long as possible.”

The act of stopping brought into play the ski pole - that sturdy six-foot aspen or lodgepole staff. To slow down or stop, you placed the pole between your legs

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so it was dragging in the snow behind you, between your skis, and gradually "down-weighted" on the pole, forcing it into the snow. The back was kept straight, hands about four inches apart on the pole, and cheeks clenched on the pole in proportion to how fast you wanted to slow down or stop.

Turning on ten-foot skis was possible, but was sufficiently difficult so that you only tried it when trees, houses, cliffs or other intrusions made going straight too difficult or dangerous. But what's true of oil tankers on the ocean is also true of ten-foot skis linked to the skier by soggy leather bindings: all turns needed to be planned and begun well in advance of necessity. When the need for a turn has been properly

anticipated – and there's no need for a turn if there's no need – you began the turn by dragging the ski pole on the side toward which you hoped to turn; then locked your knees and ankles as best you could and leaned on the pole.

If the turn did not proceed quickly enough, you commenced a process of rapid up-weighting and down-weighting, otherwise known as "hunkering" – the act of trying to impress on the skis the need to turn much faster. If that still didn't work fast enough, you simply up-weighted and fell, you hoped, into something soft.

In the end, whatever your technique for skiing, being able to fall down with some measure of grace and élan is the essence of survival skiing. Ω

## SHE WALKS OUR VALLEY

BY JUDY COX

There is a time  
As Dawn  
Walks up our valley  
When the blue-gray  
Of the sky  
Matches  
The blue-gray  
Of the snow.

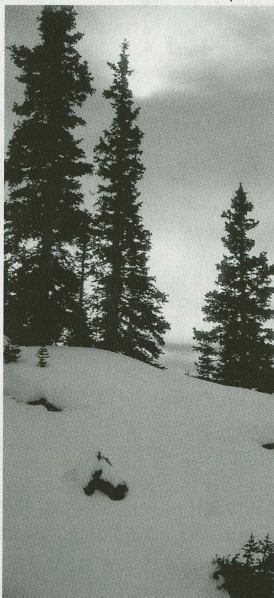
Now is this time.

Silhouettes of aspen  
Frozen as the snow,  
Branches  
Laced across the sky,  
Trunks,  
Thin lines  
Against the white.

Dawn's cape  
Trails pale pink  
Tinting Whetstone Peak.

She pauses at our stones  
Not wishing to disturb  
The circle of Coyote tracks.

Robert Valdez photo



## THE RIVER IN WINTER

BY BETTY LIGHT

Jewels edge the river  
sparkles made of ice.  
This special cold beauty  
adds some winter spice.

Winter creates brilliance  
and dresses up the scene.  
The trees are cloaked in ermine  
with the river in-between.

The water's always moving  
like the minutes of our life,  
sometimes smooth and shallow  
sometimes deep with strife.

We mustn't miss a second  
to enjoy our every dream.  
We have to take advantage  
or it'll flow away downstream.

*You can find Judy Cox most mornings greeting guests at breakfast at The Nordic Inn in Mt. Crested Butte. If not there, she is walking in the woods, gazing into her kaleidoscope or enjoying her summer trip.*



**PAEAN TO WINTER**

BY VIRGINIA JONES

Tiny glittering rainbows of ice shower down  
as sun breaks to the East;

Tree branches black beneath the crystals  
clinging there from smothering fog;

Wind tracks leave little cornices atop the hill  
and walk down the slope around the sage;

A gasping breath of freezing air creates a line  
of perfect bliss into my soul.



Judy Cox photo

**AUTUMN  
EQUINOX**

BY WENDY MANNIS

Today I saw leaves breathe  
color into the sky  
Spit out sweet blue  
from deep green bellies  
They pant and pant  
jaundiced – flushed  
from exertion.

Today I heard pine cones giggle  
Tickled by squirrels  
seeds cackle  
Dive headlong  
onto moist needle beds.

Today I flew with crows  
Heavy wings launch  
like oars slapping water  
We croak  
from lodgepole roosts  
a dozen navigators  
track the setting sun.

**WE LOVE OUR VALLEY**

BY PHOEBE CRANOR

When lots of folks from warmer lands show up to visit  
We never have to ask ourselves “What season is it?”  
We know we have a paradise in this fair spot.  
It’s full of streams and hills and fun, but seldom hot.

In Summer  
The fish bite well, the flowers dance, the sky is blue  
And all the ads in praise of us are really true!

In Fall  
Skies are of the deepest blue, the hills aglow.  
Hunters come, thinking each day might bring in snow.

In Winter  
Outside that snow is sparkling white, just right to ski  
Though some folks like to sit inside, content to see.

In Spring  
It’s sometimes warm and sometimes cold from thaw to freeze.  
Most “locals” play or dig or plant (but some just sneeze).

From harvesting to birthing calves, we love our seasons.  
See? All the things I’ve written here point out the reasons!

In other words Whatever’s up your alley,  
we have it in our valley!



Stephanie Eastman photo

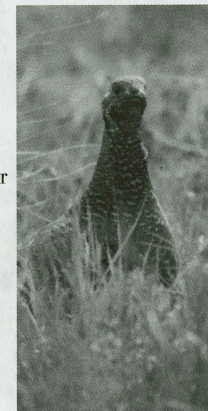
**SPRING FEVER**

BY LORI SPENCE

I don’t have time . . .  
I need to be outside . . .

The birds are back  
Squabbling over the perfect nest  
The burbling brook teases its banks  
Splashing merrily over earth and rock  
Great green outcroppings grow by the day  
And soon the landscape will be dotted with color  
It’s been monotone too long . . .  
The reawakening is here  
Spring thrusting forth  
In every crevice  
In every sheltered nook

I need to be outside  
To feel the warmth of sunlight on my cheek  
To hear the chorus of the universe  
Practicing its overture of renewal  
Call me tomorrow  
Or in the fall . . .



Don Mills photo

**SUMMER  
SURPRISE**

BY BETTY LIGHT

All along the parkway  
yellow dandelions scream summer.  
Many think of them as weeds  
and ignore this early comer.

It almost hurts our eyes to look  
they put on such a show.  
But there are some who like them  
the people in the know.

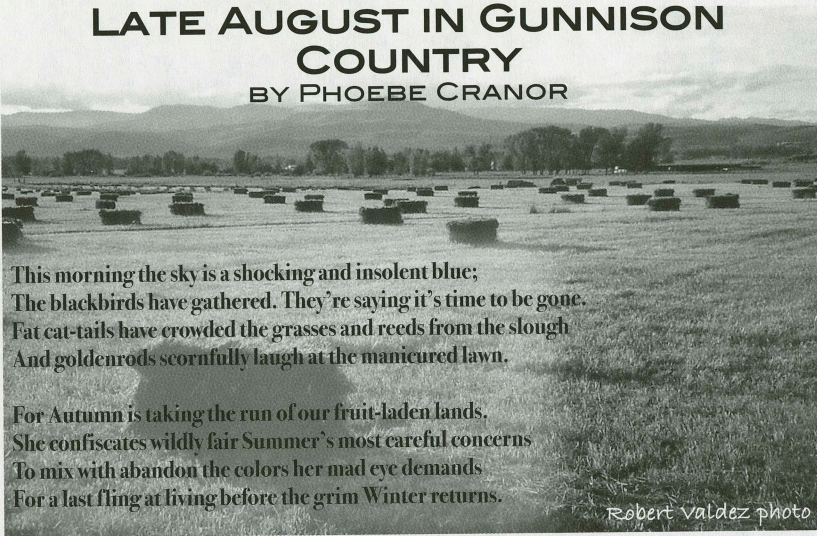
Many say they make them sneeze  
others find a taste divine,  
they know an old-time secret  
they make dandelion wine.



A poet, essayist, music aficionado and retired ranchwife, the versatile Phoebe Cranor has published two volumes and numerous columns about her Ranch Life here in the valley, as well as a number of religious books.

## LATE AUGUST IN GUNNISON COUNTRY

BY PHOEBE CRANOR



This morning the sky is a shocking and insolent blue;  
The blackbirds have gathered. They're saying it's time to be gone.  
Fat cat-tails have crowded the grasses and reeds from the slough  
And goldenrods scornfully laugh at the manicured lawn.

For Autumn is taking the run of our fruit-laden lands,  
She confiscates wildly fair Summer's most careful concerns  
To mix with abandon the colors her mad eye demands  
For a last fling at living before the grim Winter returns.

Robert Valdez photo

## METAMORPHOSIS

BY LORI SPENCE

Hues of gold and brown adorn the hillsides now  
Powdered sugar peaks loom in the distance  
The air is crystal clear and brisk  
Aspen leaves quiver and shimmer in the breeze  
Wildflowers are but a memory  
Winds toss their seeds about for next year's display  
The smell of wood fires wafts across the valley

A hawk floats in lazy circles high above  
Nervous little sparrows chatter on the fence  
Busy chipmunks scurry to and fro  
The cat is enthralled by their relentless activity  
Timid deer enter the garden at dawn  
To risk a nibble at what's left of summer's bounty  
The sounds of gunshot echo as hunters stalk their silent prey

Soon summer's warmth will be but a memory  
Soon snow will blanket all in endless white  
Soon Nature's activity will all but cease  
Metamorphosis in progress



Judy Cox photo



## A RECIPE FOR PIE

### FOR THE CELEBRATION OF ANN GERY'S LIFE

BY MARK TODD

First of all, let's make it clear, this pie is not common pie, it's made to end all pies, and when it's done, aroma good as taste will linger on for years and years, and even years.

As for ingredients, just make do, make it with what comes your way, make it full of the flavors of home and life, and you can always find the sweetness of a friend to cancel out a bitter word.

Make sure the crust is made from scratch. It's got to last 'til the pie is gone. And it's easier to knead the husband in from the start, but not too smooth, a gob of husband will have lumps, they come that way, and then add fire with care. Crust needs heat — not scorched or brittle, but so the edges hold for all the filling to come.

Now the fun part: Add love and just a dash of zest for life, then briskly stir until the children come. A pinch of heartache brings out flavor, but sprinkle in a palm full of work and season well with zeal and all the hope and joy that you can stand, and next blend it with those secret things that suit your tongue — an acumen for politics adds spice, and movies help it all to rise and match imagination's flights and fits of fancy.

The cooking's done before you know and there for all to eat and there for all the lip-smacking teeth-and-tongue torrents of taste.

And later, when the kitchen light is out, the home quiet, the cook gone, aroma still remains, and memories fresh with wildberry sweets, a lingering across the house that tells you when the pie is done. A pie worth the making after all.



Don Mills photo

## UNTITLED

BY VERONICA BERKES

The furrow runs behind me,  
 deep and true.  
 Resting, I think of the butterfly  
 I saw yesterday,  
 wings wet with a new maturity,  
 so fragile,  
 and my hands tremble with the  
 mother-sweet smell of new-turned earth  
 and the promise  
 of roses.

*A published poet and a teacher of words at Western State, Mark Todd is also a student of the world, with recent interests such as reading hieroglyphs, watching the stars and competing in eventing with his horse, Habit, all of which he does from his home in Doyleville.*



A flutist of Canadian extraction, Veronica Berkes, whose poem appears on page 23, is a Canadian citizen who has called Gunnison home for 15 years. She serves on two accountability committees for the school district.

## HARRY

FICTION BY NATE LIEDERBACH

I moved in with Sharon's brother for those two months after. He lived in Silverton, in southern Colorado, tucked away in the San Juan Mountains where no one could find us. Where we didn't have to repeat the tale. I went there because everybody told me what to do, saying, "Time heals all wounds," and it felt fine to hide, natural.

My brother-in-law's name was Harry, but he told people to call him Lewis, the middle name. He never liked me. When we first met, at the wedding, he was sixteen, and walked up to me and said, "I bet you have hair on your back. I bet you have hair all over your back?" And that kind of stuff just worsened with age.

In Silverton, I slept on Lewis' couch because boxes labeled SHARON packed the spare bedroom. I was supposed to go through them, but I never felt awake enough. Cardboard

boxes on the floor, dresser and bed, stacked up, wedged like bricks, choking the windows.

Lewis' couch was short, gritty and stank of barbecued potato chips. It was floral pattern, too, lemon yellow and lime. It gave me a headache if I looked at it so I covered it with a flannel sheet that just got gritty and stinking of barbecue too. And as for the rest of his cabin, well it smelled like molding hockey gear. Every time I'd walk in from outside, I'd get the image in my head that I'd opened a hatch and stepped right into the man's sweaty testicles.

Mostly, we drank. Pushing my sleeping bag aside, Lewis would plop next to me on the couch and we'd watch DVD's and finish case after case of

Lucky Lagers. Sun and moon spun across those misshapen windows. Time-lapse photography.

Sometimes I'd have little panic attacks. I'd move my eyes without moving my head to look over at Lewis and see his pug nose and wide chin, just like Sharon's, and for these slivers of seconds I'd be sure it was my wife.

But that was probably from the movies Lewis picked. Wacky, independent stuff with plots that always lost me ... but I liked the names—*Box of Moonlight*, *Ghost World*, *Ghost Dog*, *Wild at Heart*. One called *Gummo* was nothing more than



Robert Valdez photo

this ugly kid with a huge forehead who rode around on his BMX and stared at shit all the time. Just stared. It annoyed me, but Lewis thought it was the greatest thing. He'd rewind this one chapter and play it over and over, where this

group of drunk trailer trash—I didn't know if they were supposed to be Gummo's folks or what—stood around their kitchen WWF wrestling with a metal folding chair. They pretended the chair was the opponent and yelled and cheered on the guy beating it up. "Oh god! Oh god!" Lewis would laugh, pitching forward and snorting like Sharon used to, and that's when he'd become her. That's when I panicked.

But like I said, if I'd sit still, Sharon would go away and it would just be Lewis calming down or reading the short riddles printed underneath the Lucky bottle caps. Glancing at them, he'd huff, "Yup, got it," and flick them at me. "You got it?"

**CONTINUED NEXT PAGE**



## FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE

"Nope," I'd say.

"You didn't even fuckin' try."

"They're stupid."

"It's 'Easy Come, Easy Go.'"

"No shit, Sherlock."

"Get the fuck out my house."

I'd shrug. "Okay."

"We're not technically related," he'd growl.

"We're nothin' anymore. You're not my goddamn brother—"

"Fine with me." Standing, I'd search the place until I found my fleece. I'd make a lot of noise, stomp around, cuss about where my wallet was, and Lewis would pout. But the moment I'd reach the front door he'd say, "Suicide," and start bawling. This was my cue. I'd sit back down next to him and we'd finish the Lucky's, watching men riding bikes backwards to symbolize lost time, or midgets in seersuckers mumbling about fires in the brain.

Sometimes, around midnight, I'd lean back.

Sometimes I'd close my eyes and act like I'd passed out. When I did this, Lewis leaned over me, nose to nose, and made sure I was asleep. Then he'd talk. He'd tell about his dreams the night before. They were always about his sister.

He and Sharon would be playing in a giant sandbox as big as a beach, or swinging from the branches of a huge Amazon tree. They were always nice and sweet dreams. "...So I pulled out my tooth, just yanked it out like it was nothing, and stuck it in her gums where hers was missing so she could share the talking apple with me..."

Always polished and clever dreams. I told myself he made them up.

Me, I've never

dreamed about Sharon, not once. It's been years now. The psychic told me I would, that Sharon would contact me, but it hasn't happened and I don't want it to.

"Oh, you'll know," the psychic said. "You'll feel a breeze, light bulbs will burst, radios will play your favorite song over and over."

Sharon's parents hired the woman to meet with me. She drove down from Montrose, wiped crumbs off my sheet, and sat next to me knee to knee. Lewis was out of town. I'm sure of it. He had a tournament in Crested Butte. He'd told me three times they were gonna whip the Pigs that year, and I'd watched him drive off.

The psychic said, "I'm not going to channel Sharon or talk to her, but I do need to kiss you."

"On my lips?"

"Pete," the woman said, and she kind of looked like Maria Shriver but with more meat on her cheeks, "on your forehead. Through a kiss, through my lips, I feel your wife's energy in your brainwaves. I might kiss your temples, too."

Snatching a Lucky cap, I squeezed it. "Go for it."

"Hmm..." The woman breathed from deep in her throat. She smelled of cinnamon.

I squeezed it until it cut me.

Her lips moved like insects on my forehead.

"Oh, yes," she whispered, "Sharon is here. She's in the room. Her beauty is light blue. I hear her singing. It's a song about clouds ... no, no ... rain clouds."

"Great, she's fucking crying—"

"Yes! See, you know—"

"Does that mean she's in Hell?"

"Calm, calm.

Watch what you say ... Shhhhh—"

I focused on the woman's cinnamon

## THE FEAR OF HEIGHTS

BY CHRISTINA SALAMONE

*I remember depression  
as if it were a dream of flying.*

*I had never allowed myself  
to stand so close to the lip of a gorge.*

*From that spot I could hear  
whispers of temptation,  
the depths of my hell.*

*Lord, Ithaca was beautiful  
that damp day in April, the earth still  
dripping with winter, the sky crying  
something that was almost snow.*

*The air hung crisp, substantial.  
I could've soared, considering not death,  
only descent from the place of loneliness.*

CONTINUED  
NEXT PAGE

Tina Salamone lived in Pennsylvania and California before moving to the Gannison Valley. She intends to stay here for a time and learn the lesson of mountains, but plans to retire in Hawaii at the age of 35.



## FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE

smell but it only made me realize I've never enjoyed cinnamon.

"Okay, now I want you to call to her. Not out loud, just in your Mind Voice. This is your wife. Bid her come. Bid her come."

With my Mind Voice, I said, "Sharon..." but it sounded more like "Shhaaroooon..." like a ghost moaning down a chimney.

"Here she comes ... light blue... Hello, darling..."

"Look," I whispered, "You want a beer?"

The woman yanked her lips away. She glared at me for about ten seconds, but then softened. "I understand," she said, and left.

Listening to her tires spin out in the gravel, I finished half a warm Lucky then jumped up and ran out into the yard. There were so many stars. And all of them North Stars, I thought. I thought, If I were a pirate I'd be hopelessly lost. All shining brightly with their own little Bethlehem mangers to protect. Protecting hope. Except over me.

I looked for the psychic's taillights inching up Red Mountain Pass. But you couldn't see that direction from the cabin, just trees. Still, I yelled, "Wait! Come back. Wait, what do you understand? Huh, what do you know that we normal people don't?"

The last thing Sharon said to me was, "Call in sick. You've never taken a sick day. We'll play board games. They're in the attic, Chance, Life, Mousetrap—come on, Harry and I had every game you can imagine."

"But I'm not sick," I told her.

"You could be."

"I don't want to be." And then I went to work, and she died.

There was a full moon the night I left Silverton. Full like a ... I don't know, an empty dinner plate on a black table? Lewis went out to a party, an equinox bonfire or something where they burned effigies and sang euphonies and ate magic mushrooms. He invited me, "Get in the car, asshole," he said. "Quit moping around." But I told him I didn't feel good. I didn't know I was leaving. I hadn't packed anything, didn't bring anything.

After midnight I heard his footsteps. Muting the TV, I pulled my sleeping bag up to my chin and closed my eyes.

Stumbling in, he stood over me for a good minute before sitting down. "Pete?"

I moaned like I was deep in dreams, and rolled onto my side, away from him. I heard him reach down and pull a warm beer from the box. It opened with a gentle hiss. He tapped my shoulder. I didn't move. Leaning over, he pressed his lips on my temple and held them there. I must have jerked a little—well, my breath definitely caught, I know that—but I held it together. Plus he was drunk and jerking himself, so I doubt he noticed. But he kept his lips on me. The hot, stale wind of his nostrils fingered through my hair and dripped down my cheeks—

"Where were you?" he whispered. "You were supposed to take my place. She's here. She's telling me she needed you..."

And I'll tell you, that man smelled of smoke, of autumn, and my mind turned to the coming of winter so late in the year and I almost cried ... but didn't.

I didn't stir.

There were no riddles. No answers. Lewis, Harry, whoever he was, went to his room, and I drove east into the desert until the white sun pulled me to the ocean. Ω

Nate Liederbach teaches creative writing at Western State College. When he's not impacting young minds, they're impacting him.



Stephanie Eastman photo



# UNTITLED

BY FELICIA HORTON

Things sort of degenerated  
Until the girl burned the house down  
It all started in the morning  
When the egg burst into a million shards of calcium  
And placenta  
She figured that if she left everything alone  
It would dry, and she could chip it  
Off the counter  
With a screwdriver and a rubber mallet  
But then she broke a glass  
A picce stuck in her wrist  
And blood soared through the air  
Rained onto her upturned face  
She opened her mouth to catch some  
Before she realized it was her  
That she would taste on her tongue  
She went to the hospital  
In the emergency room  
The doctors thought she had slit her wrist  
Purposely  
They gave her drugs  
Officious saviors in childproof plastic bottles  
So she would believe life is precious  
When she returned she remembered the egg  
She had to run around the house  
And in the back door  
To avoid the broken glass  
She pounded the screwdriver  
Until all the egg was gone  
When she finished she remembered the shards of bloody light  
She got the vacuum  
And pulled her life and the glitter  
Together, to mix in the belly  
Of the trash bag outside  
Alone in the alley  
When she pulled the cord  
Out of the electric socket  
To put everything away  
She dropped it  
And it fell to the hardwood floor  
Where the flames quickly burned through  
Raged in the rafters of the basement  
Pointed accusingly at the roof  
Like a murderer's jury  
Before their condemnation  
She drifted to the ground as if she were boneless.

*Felicia Horton is a Gannison High School student who is taking summer classes with an eye on early graduation. For her birthday last year, she received her first flying lesson, and the clouds may be in her future.*



## ODE TO THE HIGH COUNTRY

BY HILLARY BUSCOVICK

Up in the mountains there is a town,  
Where everybody wears coats filled with goose down.  
It might sound frigid and extremely cold,  
But in the summer it's a sight to behold.

Long before Gunnison or even Crested Butte  
The land was inhabited by the Native American Ute.

The town was founded before its state,  
All the men were drawn here by that shiny bait.  
Gold and Silver were metals to claim,  
But only a select few rose to fame.

After winter when runoff's in full swing,  
Our river rushes, waves like wings.  
Our river used to flow free and awake,  
But now has been dammed and called Blue Mesa Lake.

To the land came ranchers with all of their might,  
And still to this day they'll give a good fight.  
Up north where the mountains are majestic and steep,  
They built a ski area because the snow was so deep.

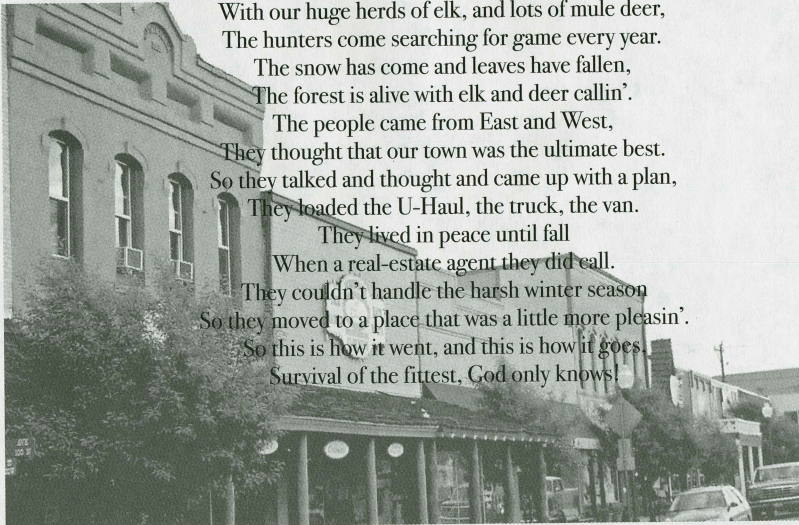
Tourists, they flocked from far and near,  
And news of the ski area reached their ear.  
Tourists came, some stayed, and some went,  
While during that time, many a dollar was spent.  
They built houses, and condos and a variety of shops,  
Some were successful, others were flops.

With our huge herds of elk, and lots of mule deer,  
The hunters come searching for game every year.  
The snow has come and leaves have fallen,  
The forest is alive with elk and deer callin'.

The people came from East and West,  
They thought that our town was the ultimate best.  
So they talked and thought and came up with a plan,  
They loaded the U-Haul, the truck, the van.

They lived in peace until fall  
When a real-estate agent they did call.  
They couldn't handle the harsh winter season  
So they moved to a place that was a little more pleasin'.  
So this is how it went, and this is how it goes  
Survival of the fittest, God only knows!

*Hillary Buscovick, a Gunnison native who is now a senior in high school, wrote this poem as an eighth-grader. She enjoys sports, being outdoors and acting in the theatre. • Hap Channell is a long-time Gunnison resident who has recently retired from teaching eighth-grade science.*



Hap Channell photo





Dr. Mason Light photo

## THE ANSWER

BY SUNSHINE WILLIAMS

What will we do  
 When we silence the violence?  
 Learn to levitate?  
 Psychic skills cultivate?  
 No power games,  
 No tanks, no planes.  
 Like a little kid  
 With nothing to do  
 We'll sit and sulk  
 And tip a few  
 Drinks down our gullet,  
 And fill the skillet,  
 And toss and turn,  
 And fume and burn,  
 'Cause we can't make sense  
 Of a world without violence  
 'Til we learn the answer  
 Just may be  
 To redirect our energy.

## GROWING A PEACE FLOWER

BY SANDI ROSSMAN

From a seed it grows inside me,  
 From the depths it twines up and around,  
 Branches spreading, leaves sprouting.  
 Larger and larger it grows in joy and exuberance,  
 At last bursting into flower,  
 At the center, at my heart.

A sunflower, big of heart,  
 Surrounded by glowing petals,  
 Beauty incarnate.

Such scintillating beauty knows no bounds  
 Cannot be contained.  
 It bursts through my skin, my eyes, my ears, my toes!  
 Growing stronger, vigor bursting at the seams.  
 Faster, faster it spreads, flowers bursting into bloom!  
 I hear it laughing with the joy of its freedom!

Faces it encounters, enfolds, beam with happiness, joy!  
 Around the world it spreads its joy, its life, its freedom!  
 Bestowing Peace on all.



Dr. Mason Light photo

Sunshine Williams was a Crested Butte resident from 1977 to 1982. Now she calls it her second home when she comes from Austin, Texas, in her motor coach to visit her son and her friends. • Sandi Rossman has lived in Crested Butte for 26 years. Her interests include hiking in the woods with her dog, natural medicines and health care, and spirituality.



# THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHY I CAME

BY LINDA DOW

They didn't know why I came.

They raised cattle, they skied.  
They ran all over the land in 4-wheelers  
In ATV's and OTV's  
They hunted the wildlife  
They fished and ran the white water.

They talked  
About life in the valley,  
About living here yesterday, and yesteryear.  
They talked about the cold, the harshness,  
About being raucous, and boisterous,  
About being hard and tough

They didn't know the power of the cold to heal.  
They didn't know the power of the wind to heal.  
They didn't know that here wasn't singular  
They didn't know that here was the universe,  
Something to stand in the midst of  
Called to from the midst of very self.

A place not as place has been known,  
A place high on the earth, found alone.  
No sound beyond the sounds of the cosmos  
Felt, breathed, heard, seen.  
A place where we've been told there's nothing.  
This place upon creation's currents.

They didn't know the universe itself  
Sweeps across,  
Beyond time, beyond what we know,  
Beyond what we've been told to know,  
And breathes life, and healing,  
A strength never defined,  
A spirit unbroken.



Robert Valdez photo

## FIRST DRAFT

BY MARK TODD

Her face, luminous  
with the albedo of new snow,  
flexes into a smile  
at the work she's penned,

laser-etched and eager  
on sheets spread across the desk,  
like flat patches that hide  
the contours of thought.

Too soon, I say, because her lines  
read with the smooth face  
that blankets December ground.  
So she gathers her thoughts

to walk out under the blue eye  
of day, careless to its rhythms  
and how the glare sculpts  
the powder of a fresh word.



## THE CLIMBER IN THE WINTER OF HIS DISCONTENT

BY LUKE MEHALL

He has always given climbing the utmost of his attention and energy but I know he would rather fall in love. But falling in love is not easy and going to climb some rocks is. He has climbed from the throughout the West, coming of age and learning the truth of life, that it will most certainly end, but can bring happiness that most don't get to feel. But he knew the feeling of love was more powerful and lasting than the feeling of scraping up a big chunk of granite or bouldering in a desert paradise. Well, he thought he knew this, but he really only hoped.

From all the lonely old timers he had met he knew there was no way he would end up like them. They were probably just as happy as he was at 25 and assumed all they needed was themselves. They were high on marijuana and conquering rocks they most definitely one day thought might be impossible — high on that feeling of indestructibility that is just as false as the drunk's feeling that he can drive home after a night at the bar. He hoped he wouldn't end up like them but maybe he wouldn't even live to see his forties. If there was one thing he had learned from failing in love and succeeding on climbs, it was to appreciate the moment.

But it's hard to appreciate the moment sometimes when you live in the coldest city in the lower 48 and you've pursued every decent-looking woman to see if there was a spark of interest in her eyes for you. When the rocks will be covered with snow for four more months and the only climbing is the greasy holds at the college gym. But he knows love will come his way someday so that's where he lives. Quitting his daily pot habit only made him more alert to his desperate situation, but he accepted it all the same.

And in that cold time I know he would rather fall in love than climb any particular rock. He'd trade a couple days in the vertical for a good opportunity in the horizontal. He

walks around town, hangs in the coffee shops and bars pretending he's not looking for love, but the thought of it dominates in his head.

I'm sure — well, I hope — love will find him when he least expects it. At the time when he should expect it. Grasping the same climbing holds in the area he fell in love with long ago, he might look over and see a beautiful woman. In the climbing competitions at the college she may be there. I know he will impress her with the skills he has developed because he took college nice and slow. She may be in the computer lab I am writing from right now. About him.

But like a big climb it's impossible to know what might happen next; it's best to stay in the present. It's best to stay in the present even if it's 15 below, you're down to your last dollar, and you won't work for another three days.

He has lived in the coldest city for enough time now to appreciate the suffering, while at the same time dreaming of those perfect days climbing a sexy wall where he feels the most alive, the days that are logged into the back of his memory for cold alone days like this one. He has learned to appreciate the cold, knowing it's the only way to know the warm. That the only way to know a good day is to have a bad one. The coldest city in Colorado provides the perfect environment for a person like him, life on the edge, where he can survive on six grand a year and be satisfied. Where he can read about the extreme actions of the national government and be thankful it doesn't really affect him. Where the local newspapers primarily report on good things and the only real bad news is when it doesn't snow.

He fits into the town where an outsider would expect him not to, with the exception of those who know you don't have to ski to be a mountain man. You don't have to make a lot of money to be rich. And you don't have to be in love to long for it. Ω

*Luke Mehall, a recent WSC graduate, spends his time climbing rocks, working on his local event planning business called Mile and a Half High, and washing dishes at Domita's. His writing guru is the wise George Sibley.*



## MY LIFE IN GUNNISON

A WORK OF FICTION

BY CAYLOR E. ALBERS

Hi, my name is Elizabeth Concoon. I was born on March 11, 1986, at the Gunnison Valley Hospital. I remember the kind nurse. Her name was Marilyn Parcon. I remember the night I came home from the hospital. It was weird at first because I wasn't used to the wall color, the table, the couch, and the chairs. After a few nights, I got used to everything in the house, especially Mr. Teddy. I slept fine every single night after that first one.

When I was four years old, I grew too big for my cradle. I got my own room and bed. On October 17, 1990, my mom had another baby girl. I thought she was so cute. There are a lot of rules for her, just like me. Her name is Jasmine. Well, back to me. Months passed one by one until it was June 17th and at this time I am

five years old. My Dad's taking me to the car show at Jorgensen Park at 2 p.m. I wait and wait and wait. Finally it is 1:30 and it is time to eat and leave for the car show. My Mom is staying home with Jasmine. As we leave, I hug and kiss my Mom and Jasmine. I am wearing my navy blue T-shirt that has cars zooming along the highway. As we pull into the parking lot, I look at all of the cars and notice how different they are. They have different shapes, sizes and colors. We walk by all of the cars and I decide my favorite car is a minivan. I got to sit in it. It's just like the one on my shirt. Time sure has flown. It's already time to leave. There will be another car show next month. As we go home I wave to all the cars, "Bye cars," I say. When we

got home I received a telephone call from my friend Samantha.

Samantha wanted me to come over and play at her house. My Mom drops me off at Samantha's house on the way to the grocery store. First, we play house. I am the mother and Samantha is the daughter. We have a lot of fun playing. We play for two more hours and then we have dinner. After dinner, I have to go home. A few minutes after I come home, my parents ask me what we did at Samantha's house. I told my parents that we played house,

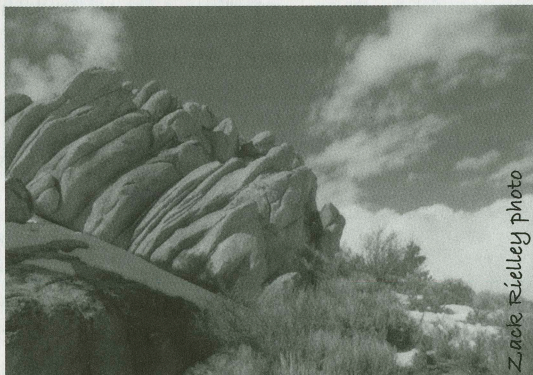
store, school and horses.

The next day, my cousins from Arizona are coming for a visit. We are going up to Hartman Rocks tomorrow with our cousins. We let them get their bags in my room and then my

Dad, me, and my cousins leave for Hartman Rocks. We have fun climbing the mountains. Last year, we hiked up to the beaver ponds and can't do it today because we are too tired. Maybe we will tomorrow.

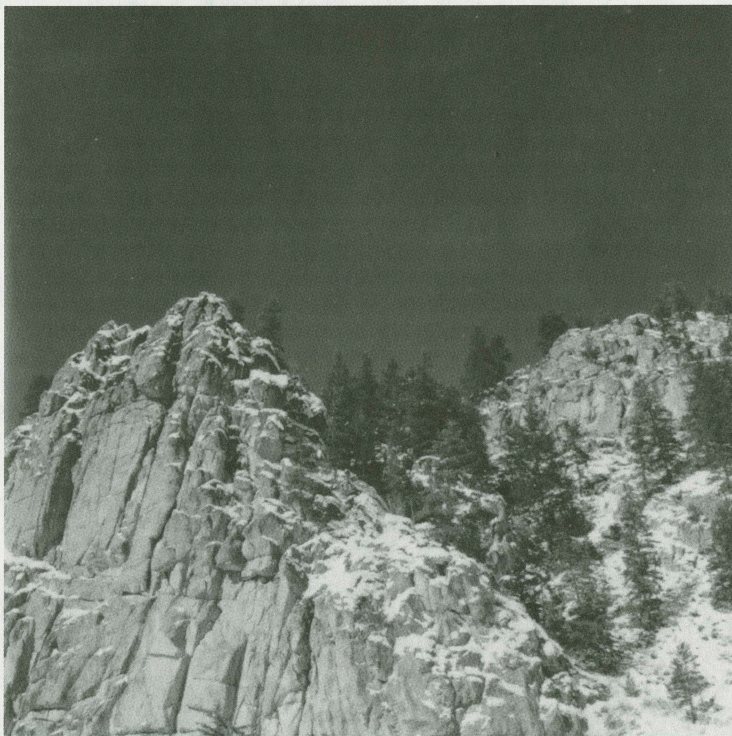
When I am six years old, I start to go to school. We have fun at school. We get to play and learn our shapes, colors, ABC's and numbers. When I come home I have lunch and I read.

Now that I am seven, I like to go to my favorite place by the river. There is a new water park and it is fun to watch the kayakers and their dogs. The river keeps getting higher and higher as the snow melts. My life has been splendid so far. Well, there you have a little bit of the story of my life in Gunnison. Ω



Zack Rielley photo





Zack Rielley photo

EXCERPTS FROM  
**FLYING INTO THE SUN**  
BY MARLENE WRIGHT ZANETELL

I. The Peonies

For now,  
I go to re-plant the peonies,  
Rich foliage the sun cannot wake to bloom.  
The tubers have got too deep  
In these years. The eye if blinded  
By the ground can  
Never see to blossom.

Here everything under the sun  
Is reliably flat  
And the earth is easy to work with.  
Nothing topples off the edge of it.

II. The Task

I bend to the task, turning  
My back on everyone  
And give it soft, and pale to the sun.  
The sun is relentless in its furious heat.  
Will I suffer when it burns  
So deeply? It is too busy  
With me to speak

And no one even notices.

*Marlene Wright Zanetell is a former public school teacher and two-term Gannison County commissioner who continues to work to protect the Gannison River Basin from Front Range water raiders. • Zack Rielley recently moved to Gannison from Chicago. He has been enjoying all of the mountain biking in the valley and is attending Western this year.*



## IT TAKES A VILLAGE . . .

BY T.L. LIVERMORE

My dog owed her life of about 14 years to an entire community.

I acquired Reprive from Tricia Winslow, then the city's animal control officer, in August of 1990. A border-collie mix, Reprive had been rescued from the corner of Main and Tomichi by my late friend Caroline Gandy, and although she had a collar on, she languished in the city pound for 11 unclaimed days and was on Death Row when she came to live with me, more or less.

This dog turned out to need far more exercise and social interaction than I was

providing her, even though we went for daily walks and she spent lots of time around other dogs. So she ran off. And off. And off. A regular Houndini, she escaped off chains, through fences, off chains that were inside fences . . .

Jack Crumpton, then a security guard at Western State, repeatedly brought her home in the middle of the night after he found her roaming on campus. Other times, I would get calls from college students who had let her spend the night in their dorm rooms before returning her.

Peg and the late Jim Furey and their dogs opened their yard to Reprive, who became a regular visitor. Peg took her horseback riding and served as her fierce guardian protector every time I was ready to give this dog back. Because of her association with Peg, Reprive was recognized by people I didn't know wherever we went. "Hi, Reprive," strangers would casually say, and after a question or two, I would discover these people had gone riding with Peg, her dogs and Reprive.

Jim and Bonnie Baril took her cross-country skiing and also let her come play in their yard with their two dogs. Evan Lukassen took her bike riding. The nursing staff at Gunnison Valley Hospital wouldn't let me yell at her for running off in the field behind the hospital, because they liked to watch her when they were out on their breaks.

My friend Matt Gaylen, now of Illinois, went back to Spring Creek with me a day after Reprive disappeared on us. We found her right where we had parked the truck the day before, after tracking down numerous reports from a variety of campgrounds as to her whereabouts the previous evening.

Eventually, Reprive grew out of this almost feral stage and was content to stay at home, if we broaden the parameters of home to

**CONTINUED NEXT PAGE**

### CAMPING TRIP

BY ELLIE MILLS  
AS TOLD TO TIA MILLS

I just got back from camping up Spring Creek. We spent a lot of time with Grandma. We went fishing but we didn't catch any fish because they didn't bite. I got to ride in the back of my daddy's truck and it was fun. It was hot and dusty and I saw grass, flowers, trees, but I didn't see any deer. I saw one chipmunk in the field.

My favorite things about camping were seeing all the butterflies, when Grandma got to come and making s'mores with Grandma, Papa, Mommy, Daddy and Justin - when he got to get out of his bed. I thought there were bears coming to our camping site and that they would pop my ball. I didn't like that.

I love visiting Gunnison because I like seeing my grandma. When I am with Grandma, I get to sleep in her bed, play with her buttons and eat ice cream cones with sprinkles. I found three arrowheads at Grandma's house. One was a long white one, one was short and black and red and one was just black and medium. It was fun playing with the doggies, but it wasn't fun when Taz jumped up on me. She was loud too.

*Ellie Mills is a kindergartner in Arvada. She visits Gunnison often with her parents Tia and Don, both of whom grew up in Gunnison. Ellie plays soccer and loves Disney princesses and anything pink.*



## FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE

include my neighbors, all of whom were remarkably tolerant and encouraging of my errant dog. She had regular rounds that included visits to Lucy Trujillo, Terry and Myrna Schneider, Mary Jo Somrak, the Hoots family and then LeighAnn and Dave Yaeger, and I'm sure several others I didn't even know about.

We would go for daily walks with Bingo Barry, the yellow Lab from up the street, and one evening it took us two hours to walk the five houses home because we stopped to talk to all our neighbors along the way.

The most calming influence in Reprive's wild, carefree life was Veronica Berkes and her family: Jim, Alix, Ben and Felicia Horton.

This family served as Reprive's doggie daycare and so much more for those last seven or eight years. At last, Reprive found a place so interesting and active that she never felt compelled to try to escape or run off.

Those halcyon days of running 60 miles each week eventually took their toll, and we spent more and more time at the vet's, repairing ACL's, biopsying livers and trying to

combat the deleterious effects of arthritis. Despite the best of care, my poor old dog grew gimpier and gimpier. Finally she was content to perch for hours on end on a snowbank in the front yard, letting the world come to her rather than racing to meet it.

Then one September day, even that became too much, and Reprive just stopped. It was time to say good-bye.

As we knelt in the front yard, awaiting our friend Tim Holt for one last professional visit, a neighbor whose name I don't know came by on her daily walk. She stopped to ask if everything was okay, and when I said no, she wondered what the problem was. "She's old," I said, and my neighbor accepted the explanation. Without knowing it, I don't think, she then offered exactly what I needed right then, as I waited alone with my failing Reprive: "She's a lovely dog."

Yes, she was. There were many times in her younger years when I wasn't so sure of that, but my friends and neighbors — my community — knew, and they were always there to take care of us, of both of us, of Reprive — and me. Ω

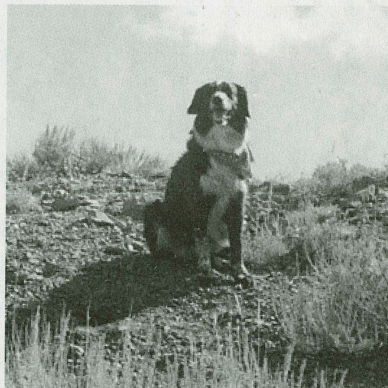
## LAMENT

BY T.L. LIVERMORE

*I can hear her  
still  
in the somnolent black rocks that  
bring up  
the glissade of the river*

*Boulders incandescent  
in the lowing gasp of day  
alone*

*Leaves ululating  
on the surface  
'best of all he loved the fall'  
although the fall  
often  
let him  
down*



T.L. Livermore photo

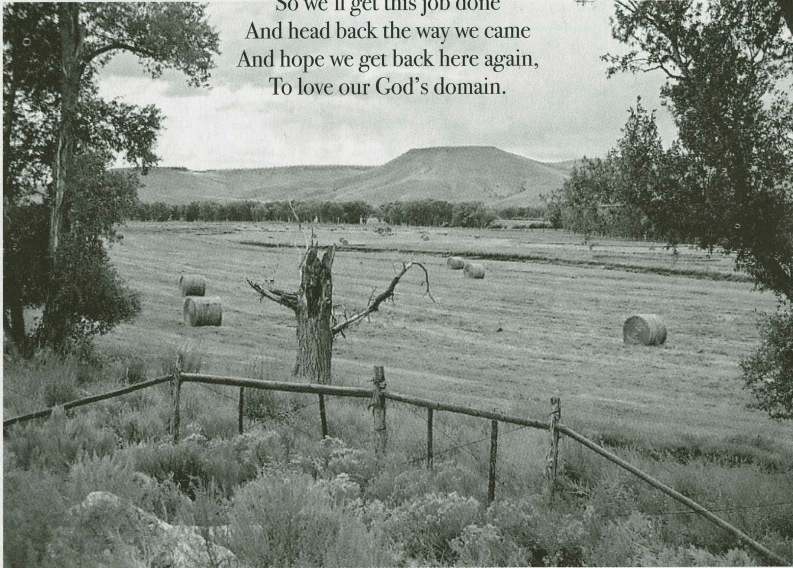


*A self-described old cowhand and "ridgerunner," Mac McGraw has published several books of local lore and history, as well as his poems, stories and essays. He spent a lot of time in his younger years in the country west of Gunnison, which is now under Blue Mesa Reservoir. • As the editor of Hometown Happenings, Jan Badgley has chronicled the goings-on of this valley for years.*

## GOD'S COUNTRY

BY L.R. "MAC" MCGRAW

The firelight dances on the trees  
 The shadows slip and fall  
 The embers glow and smile  
 Like a happy painted doll  
 My head rests upon my saddle  
 As I lie upon the ground  
 We find our lives rapturous  
 As we hear each nature sound.  
 The water babbles in the brook  
 The owl hoots way off yonder  
 We hear insects buzzing  
 As our hearts love and ponder.  
 A coyote howls way out there  
 And our horses start to neigh  
 We hear hooves stomping  
 As a pack mule starts to bray.  
 The stars wink and twinkle  
 And the moon gives a smile.  
 The tree-lined mountain is lovely  
 Like some models practicing style  
 So we'll get this job done  
 And head back the way we came  
 And hope we get back here again,  
 To love our God's domain.



Jan Badgley photo



# THE SECOND NIGHT, DREAMING IN COLORADO

BY K. NICOLE WILSON

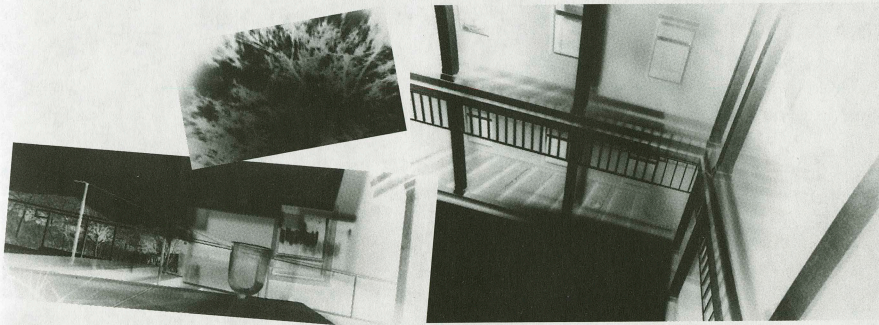


Robert valdez photo

Last night, beside you, I dreamed you left me hastily, without regard for the love I thought I knew. In my pain I sat at my Mother's dining room table where she told me Dad had just broken off a long-standing affair with a co-worker, and that she thought I should know.

But this morning I woke inside of cool mountain air, knowing you were still there, burrowed inside of blankets, still in dreams and body except for your breath.

In Kentucky, thirty sun-colored roses celebrate a happy anniversary in a vase on my parents' great white dining room table.



Ben Horton photos

## HAIKU

BY BEN HORTON

Black ink drips downwards  
Blood of the papyral clan  
Meanings become shape.

\*\*\*\*\*

Swift flies the arrow  
Across darkened dead wastelands  
Leaves coming to age

Running toward old age  
Youth becomes the tunnel's light  
But the ends have switched.

\*\*\*\*\*

Undulating groan  
Crickets' chirp becomes a hum  
Calves dance youth's short song.

*A student of life, Ben Horton is currently undertaking the classics as a junior at St. John's College in Santa Fe, while also experimenting with a variety of camera techniques, including pinhole photography. • A Kentucky native, K. Nicole Wilson is currently pursuing her Masters of Fine Arts in poetry at Spaulding University in Louisville, KY. Though new to the Gunnison Valley, she already feels at home encircled in the Colorado mountains.*



Ron Flemming lives in Gunnison with three daughters. He has written several novels. • Hugh McGee is well known for his environmental "trash" poetry appearing in the Gunnison Country Times, but he is also a serious poet. He now lives in Washington.

## TRASH, ETC.

BY HUGH MCGEE

Man has seldom seemed to care  
Or even think about things eternal.  
This day, this week, this year, perhaps,  
His thoughts are immediate and fraternal.

There are movements in the universe.  
Slow, almost unnoticeable,  
But driven by an inexorable force,  
Persistent and irreversible.

There are those in our society  
Conscientious environmentalists  
Seeking to warn of eventual disaster,  
But labeled a controversialist.

The saddest part of the scenario  
The most glaring virulence.  
Our children and our children's children  
Must bear the consequence.

Trash is not controversial,  
Trash is trash, universal.

## GEMS OF COSMIC SPLENDOR

BY RYAN DOLEZAL

Your eyes, speckled pearls of gray  
Entrancing my gaze, making my day

Gems of cosmic splendor  
Diamonds of wonder

All grows dim and distant  
Lost in your eyes for an instant

Blue, green, or anything in between  
Nothing do they mean

A star darts across the sky  
The moon illuminates the heavens of high  
Does not compare to the gleam from just one eye

## TAKE A GOOD LOOK

BY RON J. FLEMMING

*Take a Good look  
Into your own soul  
Go for a long walk in the woods  
Sail the seven seas  
Watch the waves roll  
Dare to stand  
Where you have never stood*

*Take a bold voyage  
Out to See  
Look further, look past  
Look again  
At the tiny acorn  
That became a Tree  
Then Be the very best that you can*

*Take an ocean Journey  
Through the Sky  
See the stars twinkling in the night  
They Are The Light  
Within your Spirit's Eye  
Our farthest Dreams  
Come into Sight . . .*

Multiply that by two  
Add at least a few  
That still doesn't compare to you

Caught in your starry gaze  
My mind in a blaze

As the smoke clears  
I erase my fears

I wanted you to know  
Your eyes put on an exquisite show  
This is not a line  
Your eyes are divine



## ODE TO GIRL AND DOG WITH MOUNTAIN BIKE

BY KRIS SCUCCIMARRA

Pedals turning perpendicular to the street in the dark,  
secret comets above the light of your lantern  
straight they shoot like radiant spokes  
that spin round the sky.

Girl and dog with bike  
going north in the night up Taylor street.  
The light-fingered chill of late summer  
is a scarf for your bare shoulders.  
with loose leash in a low arc to fur,  
flash the dog's illuminated eye  
with a grey snout's loving wag beside you.

The gear crank teeth clank  
a creaking wire basket talking codes with the pot holes,  
Girl and dog with bike  
going north in the night up Taylor street,  
Steady as a flat land highway  
With yard flowers humbled about in the dark,  
Where does this road take you?

When the tires cease to chirp and roll on gravel  
then the panting paw scratch at the screen door  
brings the knob's turn, the soft smells of home  
and a bathroom light later clicks on in an echo.  
Foul be any mirror that does not display your lovely face  
or not shout that born to beauty, you have been for all your days.

Now setting with the moon,  
pulling the quilted covers close about you  
nightstand lamp just gone dark  
its bulb's heat slipping sequentially into space.  
hair falling to the sea foam fractals of a mathematician's dream  
may today tick back for you in time across closed eyelids,  
as gravity tugs the bones to rest in space,  
may you see the worth of all your works in the world.

Girl and dog with bike  
a still life trinity in the dark of night,  
destined to pass the speed of light.  
may each breath take you towards  
the diamond dreams that sleep as seeds within your life.  
may you canter cleanly the course to all tomorrows,  
and let each day see your soul dawn clear upon you.

*Kris Scuccimarra came to Gunnison to attend Western State; now he lives in New York City, where, among other things, he has had a book of poetry published. Ryan Dolezal, whose poem appears on page 38, grew up in Gunnison and Ohio City. He is now a third-year student at Western State who also works for Avalanche Roofing.*



*A local writer, poet and artist, Joe Lothamer is most proud of his new granddaughter, Anyana. He also has a novel with publishers which will probably be available next year.*

## SERPENTINE HEART

BY JACKIE DEVORE

Step off this path of mind into a softened place . . .  
 The place where belly-rounded flesh begins.  
 Find the opening, as magic meets the morning.  
 Drop slowly to the ground . . . release . . .  
 Smooth, cool muscle unwinds.  
 Slip easily through the warming sand  
 And wander quietly at the edge of the Desert Sea . . .  
 . . . This seas of moving light whose tides pull back the sky.  
 Slither down stone-cobbled canyons.  
 Seek the Si Pa Pu . . . the Kiva . . .  
 The space where Spirit was given voice to sing and feet to dance  
 Flick Tongue to memory . . .  
 Find vibrations of drum in the dusty earth  
 And notes of flute on the empty wind.  
 Somewhere a swift turning . . .  
 Heart cells coil and shake their rattles against the silence.  
 Under a cold-blooded star there are no tears to cry.  
 Water is too precious to waste  
 In this long drought on Dry Land.



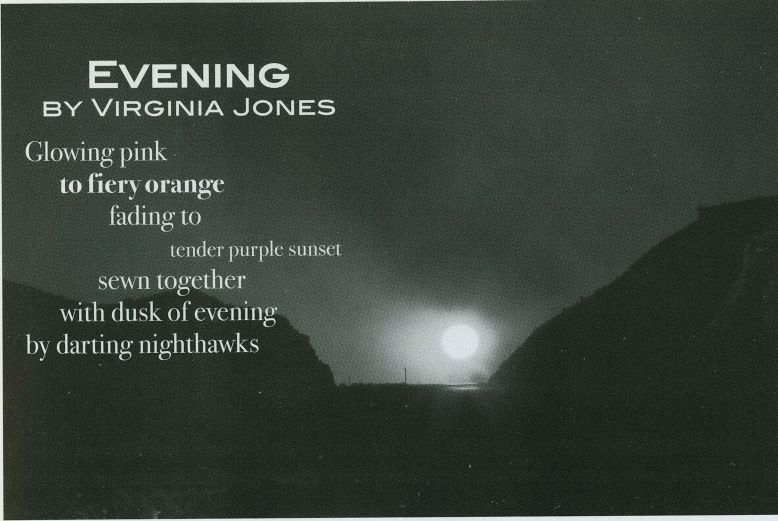
Zack Rielley photo



## EVENING

BY VIRGINIA JONES

Glowing pink  
to fiery orange  
fading to  
tender purple sunset  
sewn together  
with dusk of evening  
by darting nighthawks



Robert valdez photo

## CELESTE

BY JOE LOTHAMER

golden snake slides across a copper sea  
her starry trail left here to shine  
her diamond eyes  
her crystal tail  
swell the atmosphere  
where she swells  
the sound of Chinese triangles  
against enamel dragon  
phoenix lightning  
exploding into grey matter  
turning intelligence into  
brilliant showers raining

down through the gutters  
of your heart  
pearls of clouds fall  
these ringlets on your  
forehead ablaze the intricate  
beat of flesh against the  
rib cage  
Oh! that crown found  
in this blinding light  
as  
your nakedness blushes the  
stars and awakens the night

Robert Valdez, familiar to locals for many years as "the man at the Job Center," has been taking pictures for an equally long period of time. His work is on permanent display at the Gunnison gallery. • Kristen Dickey, working under the alias of Offcenter Designs, has lived in the Valley for 11 years.