

"All the news that causes fits."
THE CANYON COUNTRY
ZEPHYR

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All America lies at the end
of the wilderness road, and our
past is not a dead past, but still lives
in us. Our forefathers had
civilization inside themselves,
the wild outside.
We live in the civilization they
created, but within us the
wilderness still lingers.
What they dreamed, we live,
and what they lived,
we dream.

T.K. Whipple



TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT...

By Jim Stiles

THE WAY IT WAS...

By Jupiter, I was a cute little feller, wasn't I? What in the hell happened? How did I get from there to here in just a few blinks of the eye? How did any of us?

For this issue I have been looking at hundreds of old photographs and reclaiming dozens and dozens of memories from the dusty corners of my own brain. It is amazing how many images survive.

As Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim used to say, I can almost become 'unstuck in time' when I allow myself to fall deeply enough into an old album or into that maze of memories.

I have spent so much time with Herb Ringer's pictures, I often feel that I was with him. Sometimes I think I was. I'm sorry to tell you that Herb is really struggling these days. He moved out of his old Smoker trailer last summer, on the eve of his 85th birthday, and it hasn't been easy. That trailer was his home for 40 years and its contents, the many chapters of his own remarkable life. Now those mementoes are in boxes in closets.

But what a life he has had. I found the picture of three year old Herb (that appears on the cover) not long ago. The photograph was taken in 1916 near Colorado Springs. I might have to admit that he was even cuter than I was. In the intervening years, Herb has seen more of the beauty of America than anyone I know.

Herb once confessed to me that he had never been interested in sports or watching the game of the week on tv. "I just liked to be with nature and with animals," he said. And then, with an almost worried expression he asked, "Do you that was a mistake?"

"Herb," I said, "I wouldn't change a thing."

I had another memory gash open recently. I had stopped by a new store on Center Street, Walkabout Travel Gear, to talk to the owners about an ad. Brad Boyle introduced himself but then advised me that we had actually met before.

Really, I said.

"Yeah," he grinned. "...You arrested me."

It all came back to me slowly. And with the slow down of recollection I could also remember what a complete dork I have been at various times in my life. Brad Boyle was the first recipient of a ticket from Wrathful Ranger Stiles. I think I was about three weeks into my first season at Arches. My uniform was still crisp...I even had creases in my loden green Levis. And I looked like I was about twelve years old. But full of righteous indignation.

Full of something, that's for sure.

I spotted Brad and his friends on a road that had been closed for 'seismic restoration' and I decided right then and there that these violators were going to pay the price. At the time, the federal judge in Salt Lake City hated the federal government with such a fervor that he automatically threw out of court any and all NPS citations. To get around this obstacle, we were deputized in our respective Utah counties which gave us the authority to write tickets for violations of state laws. Somewhere in the state code, believe it or not, was a regulation about the destruction of natural features, so I cited Brad for heinous crimes against the plants and grasses of Arches National Park and advised them to follow me into Moab, to the Grand County Courthouse, where they had to post a bond.

Old Heck Bowman was sheriff at the time. There wasn't much that riled Heck and it seemed as if just about everything amused him. Heck thought I was pretty amusing. I had delivered Brad and his co-conspirators to the Dispatcher's office and Heck stuck his head in the door...

"What's goin' on here? Who are you fellas?" he asked as he examined my creases. He was already grinning.

"I'm a ranger out at Arches and I caught these guys. They're here to post a bond."

"What'd they do?"

"Well they drove off the main road and...uh...rode over the...the flora."

"The...the what?"

"You know...the plant life. The..."

"You got these boys in here because they drove over some of them wildflowers? Is that it ranger?"

"Well...yeah...you see..."

"Hey fellas," Heck called to the other deputies. "This here young ranger has hauled these fellas in here fer runnin' over some wildflowers out to the Arches." Heck turned back to me. "Well hell son," he asked, "Why didn't you just shoot 'em? Or at least put the cuffs on 'em. Runnin' over wildflowers...I don't know...maybe we ought to jes' lock 'em up and throw away the key."

So it was like that. Brad paid his \$35 and I left there humiliated. I didn't write another ticket for three years.

Life in Moab, Utah has changed some since Herb Ringer first pointed his camera up Main Street in 1948. Even since Heck Bowman was sheriff. It's a different world. And while I know change is inevitable, I can't help but cling to those memories. 'Hopelessly' clinging, as I recall.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN...

In the wake of our most recent land development controversy, i.e. the grandiose river road plans of Robbie Levin and Colin Fryer, I can't help but think how different things might have been. I even hesitate to call this issue 'controversial' because in the apathetic deadfromthetrenches activist climate of 1998, nothing seems to generate any outrage or indignation in Grand County. Unless, of course, the issue is garbage collection.

It is apathy and complacency that put us here in the first place and, oddly enough, I have a difficult time sympathizing with some of the last minute protestations of many Grand County residents when they were so dead as silent six years ago. Their indignation might have made a difference then; it's an exercise in frustration and futility now. Seriously, call anybody really think the current Grand County Council would suddenly go schizophrenic on us and vote to restrict or limit growth and development? Or even to agree to a moratorium?

We elected these guys. With the exception of one, there is not a sitting councilman who has any desire to consider restricting individual property rights for the rights of the community. And that ultimately is what the battle to limit growth is all about. I realize that in the American West of 1998, that is a controversial topic and one that few politicians are willing to confront. But there was one governing body in Grand County in recent memory that would have addressed that and other issues critical to our future, if we had only given them a modicum of support. We elected those guys too. But then we abandoned them.

The first Grand County Council, elected on February 9, 1993, were apparently a group of mutants, because I doubt if we will ever see their like again around here. I've lived in Moab for 20 years and I cannot recall a finer, more dedicated, more responsible group of citizens to serve the people of this county. None of them had a hidden (or not so hidden) agenda or a bone to pick. They sure didn't do it for the money. They came to serve and they served us well.

They ran for office with the promise to shut down the Grand County Special Services District which was promoting the \$100 million Book Cliffs Highway project (about as goofy and grandiose idea as anyone could conceive) and they stopped it. They promised to bring fiscal responsibility back to the courthouse and they did. Refusing to spend money they didn't have always ruffles a lot of feathers and they ruffled their fair share.

They considered and implemented ideas that most of the town thought were insane and proved themselves to be right. To the horror of many longtime residents, the Council supported a plan to greatly reduce the use of Malathion in the county's mosquito abatement program. They hired a scientist, Bob Phillips, to tackle the problem and his non-poisonous approach to mosquito control was so successful that even his most rabid opponents eventually congratulated him.

In short order they fulfilled their campaign promises and were ready to look ahead. The future loomed large and frightening in Grand County six years ago; signs of rapid and runaway change were everywhere. But there was still time to grab the tiger by the tail while it was just a kitten. All they really needed was the encouragement and support of the citizens who elected them.

Nothing. Month after month, the councilmen came to meetings only to be confronted by the last election's sore losers.