

## Notes from Colorado

Jeff Custer

The cool of the Edge is a faint memory, under the assault of the 90° plus Colorado summer. The election season is gearing up - primaries in August, and we're going to have some interesting times this year.

I take a short trip to Buena Vista in the central mountains, a place called the South Park area, where the Collegiate Peak mountains dominate, mostly "fourteeners", the term we use for the ones over 14,000 feet high. As the song says, Winnebagoes and road construction everywhere, as sure a sign of summer in Colorado as the Columbine, cougars in our neighborhood following the young deer, and the Kentucky Bluegrass lawns turning brown from lack of water. Dark, forbidding clouds, dry lightning, but not much traffic once out of the metro area on this weekday other than semi trucks. I run through rain and sun - the clouds produce big drops for a half mile, then give way to sun for another mile, then appear again, the big expensive sky full of them, all the way to the mountains in the near distance. Not enough rain for the vegetation or the forest - the firefighter's nightmare, this dry lightning, and our newspapers are full of the Glenwood Springs tragedy.

Buena Vista is a quaint little town, only showing the first signs of upscale-ness. The early morning mountain air is crisp and cool, different from the Boulder, Front Range, flatland prairie stuff that I left behind - you can almost drink it. This has always been a vacation area, the hiking, fishing, river rafting in the summer drawing lots of people. You can see how the town evolved around the railroad that bisects it, once the major link of the Arkansas Valley with Denver and the Front Range. The town hall, next to the tracks, was a hotel; the old train station is gone, unfortunately, and only the RVs and cars occupy the dirt between the tracks and the beginning of the 1903-era buildings that line the main street of town. This area had the unfortunate honor of being named one of the ten best places to retire, by *Money* magazine, so stay tuned.

The town is filled with early morning river rafters, resplendent in their red life jackets. They're brought into town by the expedition outfitters to be put in the Arkansas river at the east edge of town, and fished out later this afternoon ten to twenty miles downstream. The Arkansas is threatened with dams - and the same bumper sticker is for sale that was seen several years ago - "Frankly my dear, I don't want a dam."

Some of the rafters are buoyed by an early morning latté. "Can't give the stuff away to locals," says Marlene, the proprietor of Cache, the only coffee shop, as she mixes my tall decaf. "They like their regular coffee. I even have a hard time selling the different variety of beans. The Europeans who come through in the summer asked about espresso so much, we just had to make the investment - and only the folks like you from the Front Range (that's Boulder, Denver, etc.) ask for it in the winter." Nice to know that there are some parts of this old USA where dishwasher coffee still reigns. She won't let me take her picture with the machine, though.

On my bike, I head west, out of town. Mount Princeton looms impressive, along with the rest of the Collegiate peaks only a dozen miles away. Later there will be ominous clouds and lightning over this imposing giant - and the firefighters wait nervously for the call. In a few miles, the planted trees give way to the native varieties - piñon and other pines. The landscape takes on a Southwestern, almost New Mexican look, with the low hills, native trees, and the earth colors of the Southwest now revealed. There are lots for sale out here, too - and immigrants from California to buy them.

Later, as I take my leisurely soak at the Cottonwood Hot Springs, four miles west of town, I admire Mt. Princeton as a few raindrops ripple the surface of the outdoor hot tub. Clothing is optional, but few of us patrons today seem up to it. This resort is old, funky, and comfortable - a good place to stay if you don't want to be in town.

On the way home, I stop at Leadville - named after its primary industry and the Climax Mine which provided all the jobs and the destruction of a lot of the surrounding environment. It's cold here at ten thousand feet, despite the sunny day - "A typical perfect day," remarks the lady tending the wildflower garden in front of the Wildflower Cafe. The beauty of the quaint old downtown section and the mountains in the background contrast with the boarded up buildings and abandoned trainyard on the edge of town; mining has only recently stopped here, and the area has been declared a Superfund site.

All Colorado in two partes divisa est - The Denver Metro area and my own People's Republic of Boulder primarily Democratic, the rest primarily Republican. Health care? Dems yes, Repubs nay - Anti-gay bigotry, Amendment Two style? Repubs yes, Dems nay - and so it goes, pretty much across the board. We had an interesting development in the last election - a local Boulder County assembly seat held by the Democrats was contested by the conservative Christian candidate. Just before the election, the Democrat incumbent dropped out, much to the consternation of the Democratic party in general and yours truly in particular. A certain Dottie Lamm ran for the Dems as a write-in, hoping to block the Republicans, and received more votes! Unfortunately, our Secretary of State ruled that many of the write-ins were invalid,

because they misspelled the candidate's name, or didn't include her full name, or other things that would probably upset our Founding Fathers. After three recounts, the Republican was seated, and has proceeded to act from his conservative Christian agenda, as we expected. Vigilance is the price of liberty, folks - believe me, many of us won't be fooled again.

We have a new challenge to Amendment Two in the Colorado Supreme Court - and we'll see what happens. I regret all of Colorado has to suffer for the bigotry of many; there are times when majority rule doesn't seem like such a good idea after all. This year, there are lots of folks who want initiatives on our ballot. There are people everywhere you turn with a handful of petitions for the cigarette tax, term limits, teacher pay equity, and others too numerous to mention. I seems like folks don't trust their legislators any more, and frankly, when they spend days and days debating a produce slander bill (can't tell people when their food contains chemicals, now can we - it might frighten someone (and hurt agribusiness)), I can see what they mean. But, if we're not willing to get involved in the process, we deserve what we get.

Until next time -

## Sweet Retreat By The Sea :

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## Waste Stream Reduction

By Kim Bossé

In 1991 the Oregon State Legislature mandated in Senate Bill 66 that by 1995 municipalities with a population over 4000 must decrease their solid waste tonnage by 25%. Nationally most professional recyclers agree that this benchmark is achievable. According to the National Solid Waste Management association, Americans produce 180 million tons of commercial and residential waste per year and only 23.5 million tons or 13% of this wastestream is recycled. If 25% were reclaimed the tonnage to landfills or combustion plants would be reduced by 45 million tons. Oregonians produce more than 5000 tons of garbage daily; enough to cover one acre of land 8 feet deep. In 1989 when the City of Cannon Beach assumed responsibility for the recycling program it reduced its landfill tonnage by 9% and has continued to decrease the volume each subsequent year.

Recycling is defined here as a three step process;  
1. Separating reusable materials from trash.  
2. Processing them to replace virgin materials.  
3. Returning the reprocessed materials to consumers.

People often wonder if an individual can make a difference and I believe that Waste Stream Reduction is an area where the grass roots efforts of an individual will make that difference. For an effective Waste Stream Reduction program to work, each of us must take a look at our own behaviors regarding consumption and recycling. The waste reduction triad asks us to reduce our use, reuse what we have, and then recycle what we can't reuse. Far too often we concentrate on recycling and forget the first two principles of use reduction and reuse. While adapting our behavior isn't glamorous to the average consumer it does offer us rewards. For some the intrinsic knowledge that we have taken less out of and given back some of what we have taken from the environment is enough, while others need more tangible rewards such as community recognition or financial savings. Whatever motivates you to manifest consumer behavioral changes is your best choice.

One way to make a difference as a consumer is to take a look at what you buy and how it is packaged. Packaging accounts for 50% of all paper manufactured in the United States, 11% of aluminum and 90% of glass. Packaging is responsible for 50% of the volume and 30% of the weight in landfills. For every dollar you spend in the grocery store ten cents offsets the packaging expenses. 60% of the 200 pounds of plastic consumed by the average American is used in packaging

## Council Fire on Permaculture

at Wanderland Rainforest near the Oregon coast the weekend of October 1-2. A chance for people interested in the practice of permaculture farming to share stories, problems and solutions with like-minded folk. Free. Bring donation of food and/or firewood. For more information call 503-368-6389.

and only 3% is recycled.

When considering the purchase of products the following guidelines may help you become more consumer conscious and reduce the waste stream:

- Educate yourself on recycling issues and consumerism
- Avoid excessive packaging
- Buy recycled & recyclable packaging
- Avoid plastics
- Read labels to determine what is in a product
- Avoid products that contain CFC's
- Buy in Bulk
- Buy local products
- Encourage your grocer to buy locally to cut down on transportation, pesticides and refrigeration
- Reduce your use of electrical or motorized products and try hand generated tools and appliances
- Buy products that will last
- Avoid disposable items
- Use cotton diapers instead of disposable diapers
- Avoid impulse buying
- Buy used products
- Repair broken products
- Volunteer your services to conservation efforts
- Purchase & use energy-efficient products
- Write to companies & tell them why you like or dislike their product and its packaging

For additional information on recycled products and services contact the following resources:

Seventh Generation Catalogue and Co-Op American Alternative Catalogue, 126 Intervale Road, Burlington VT 05401 (802) 658-5507

Ecco-Bella, 6 Provost Square, Suite 602, Caldwell, NJ 07006 (201) 226-5799

Shopping for a Better World, 1-800-U CAN HELP

Metro Recycling, 2000 SW First Avenue, Portland, OR 97201 (503) 224-5555

DEQ, 811 SW 6th, Portland, OR 97204 (503) 229-6046

The Natural Choice, 1365 Rufine Circle, Santa Fe, NM 87501 1-800-621-2591

Real Goods Catalogue, 966-F Mazzone Street, Ukiah, CA 95482 1-800-762-7325