

**MONICA LEWINSKY
in the BACKBONE??**

REMEMBER WHEN THE
BIGGEST PROBLEM IN
THE WORLD WAS
WORRYING ABOUT
ME AND BILL?

THE BACKBONE #17



STEVE LESJAK
The Sonora



**DR RICH
INGEBRETSEN**
SLC, UT



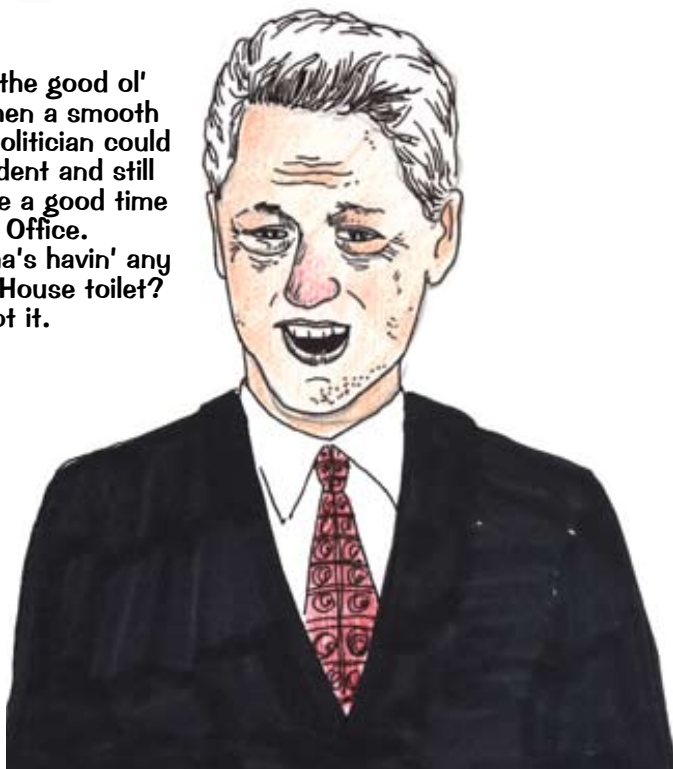
ROB FILLMORE
Gunnison, CO



SAM ALLIS
Boston, MA

OH YEAH...
FEELS LIKE A
HUNDRED YEARS
AGO

Yeah...I miss the good ol'
days myself...when a smooth
talkin' Arkansas politician could
be elected president and still
know how to have a good time
in the Oval Office.
You think Obama's havin' any
fun in the White House toilet?
I doubt it.



**YEP...WHEN IT COMES
TO BIKES, WE ARE
STILL YOUR MOAB
HQ EAST.**

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POINTBLANK GETTING OVER GREEN

Re-Coloring the American West
By Dave Kuntz

It's time to get over the color green. Or, more to the point, get over using the word and the term "green" and "greening" to denote environmental protection and resurrection. Green is not the color of the American West. In fact the long held notion of environmental greening, in concert with a pantheon of other long held Western myths, has done as much damage to the realities of the semi-arid Western landscapes and ecosystems as the rapacious mining, logging and grazing the region has endured for the past 150 years.

The idea that green is the color of an environmental paradise grew out of the humidity and lowlands of Western Europe and was transplanted to the welcoming shores of the Eastern United States. Here, green reflected the ample rainfall and environmental conditions to support the lacustrine and riverine movement of goods and people and the cultivated agriculture of settlers and colonists. Aridity was not a concept the early European immigrants understood. There was no desert in the social conscience in early America. West was a place to go, a prospect always beyond the next horizon. Deserts and dryness were understood as failure, a deficiency in land and man that destined societies could neither comprehend nor tolerate.

At first, green in the American West denoted the "oasis landscape" and the thin green lines of the region's streams and rivers. Green was the life-support in a sea of brown desolation. Western riparian areas contained enough moisture to support greenery, trees and grasses adapted to little rain and scarce moisture. Green vegetation was a natural attraction to the Western migrants. Many of these green ribbons were ephemeral and seasonally wet and flowing, but mostly dry and rocky. The tawny grasslands of the Great Plains and the gray granite barriers of the Rocky Mountains were obstacles to overcome and get through quickly. The immigrant trails west followed the streams as much as possible, clinging closely to the familiar and the secure.

Early American explorers crossing the Western grasslands were unprepared for the landscapes and scenery that they encountered. Lewis and Clark stuck to the rivers and depended on the local knowledge of Native American guides. Pike and Long, Fremont and others were aghast as they struggled west. They called America's treeless Great Plains grasslands a "sea of grass" and the "Great American Desert." These early explorers saw no value in the brown and treeless expanses. They became blank spaces on the maps, places where later immigrants simply hurried to get through. Early pathfinders followed the West's major rivers and connecting Indian trails to forge the great migratory routes to the West: the Oregon Trail, the Santa Fe Trail and the Overland Trail. Water and greenery were always welcome sights and often salvation for the thousands of immigrants who trekked and struggled westward an average of 20 to 30 miles a day for 2000 long, hard, dangerous miles. Green was the immigrant vision. Green became the goal and destination, and the places of respite along the way.



sional catastrophe of subsequent dust bowls and the diaspora of the late 1800s and early 1900s that depopulated America's Great Plains. Early Western boosters and developers became vociferous proponents of rain following the plow, where cultivating agriculture would ensure that sufficient moisture would arrive by heavenly will. It was manifest destiny that this would happen. Bolstered by the mantra of rain and the assurance of a riparian doctrine, and supported by the Homestead Act of 1863, settlement of the Great Plains, the Great American Desert, began in earnest. Immigrant waves broke against the shores of this sea of grass.

The American West became one big speculative real estate deal. Land was virtually given away. Scant thought was given to the building of community or the preservation of place. Social destiny became the foundation of the region's sense of itself. It gave us the glitter gulch of Las Vegas and thousand acre corporate farm conglomerates. Green represented it all – green grass, green trees, green acres and greenbacks. But, as noted writer Wallace Stegner observed, "sooner or later the West must accept the limitations posed by aridity."

We know better now. Green is not the enduring symbol of hope and promise in an arid environment. Green is often a false promise, a mirage disappearing under the glare of a relentless sun. The ephemeral green circles of the center pivot sprinklers on the eastern plains of Colorado camouflage the mining and depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer, the Pleistocene reservoir underlying the shortgrass prairie where the rain never followed the plow.

In discarding the yoke of green denoting environmental protection and resurrection we can restore ourselves as individuals and communities. Green is one color in the regional rainbow evidencing the coming together of water, air and light. In coming to terms with aridity the words we use and the symbols we choose for environmental merit and value are important. Using leftover words and symbols reflects a scarcity of understanding

of a region's character and does little to demonstrate the collective knowing and appreciation of the significance of this place. If we need symbols for environmental protection and restoration in the West, they should reflect an understanding of the realities of aridity. A mixture of colors forms the best symbols in the West. In fact, a reddish sun rising, or setting, over a mountainous horizon fronted by prairies more accurately reflects regional hopes and promises. We should be choosing symbols that make sense in an arid landscape, not perpetuating worn-out myths.

The West is a place of environmental diversity and geographical complexity. We can finally recognize the region for what it really is – a dry place and a landscape of space. Environmental resurrection is many-hued, as are the region's terrains and people. The

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Once they got there settlers were determined to turn brown into green. In a sea of dryness water became the lifeblood. Understanding the importance of irrigation to the greening of the Western landscape, migrants either settled next to water or quickly developed ways to move it to them. Moving water required having reliable sources, which were relatively scarce in the American West. Reliable water sources had to be developed if perennial green was to happen.

Western water development began with purposeful vengeance and continues today. Only a few early voices questioned the pattern of Western settlement with its accompanying water use dictated by the pervasive humid Eastern experience. Early on the Eastern "riparian doctrine" of water use was abandoned as unusable in the West, replaced by the "doctrine of prior appropriation." This so-called "law of the river" was founded on the notion of "first in time, first in right." The greening of the American West began in earnest.

Now the idea of greening is accepted dogma for universal protection of the Earth's air, land and water. In the American West the idea is a vestige of an earlier idea that became the single most damaging philosophy of semi-arid environments, underwriting the ero-

West is a palette of vibrant colors, all contributing to what Stegner called "a geography of hope." Knowing and understanding the importance of brown and gray, red and black, rust and sand, as well as green, underlay the regional resurrection of environment and community.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Since Mr. Kuntz sent us this essay, we have been unable to contact him (Bouncing emails!). If you know Dave, ask him to contact me...JS

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