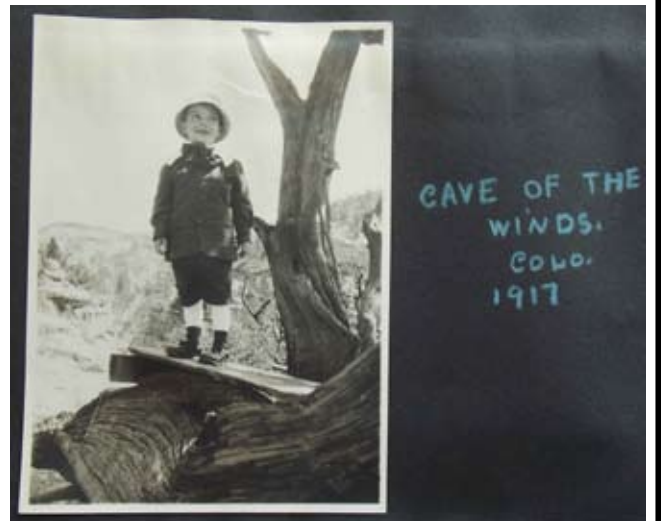
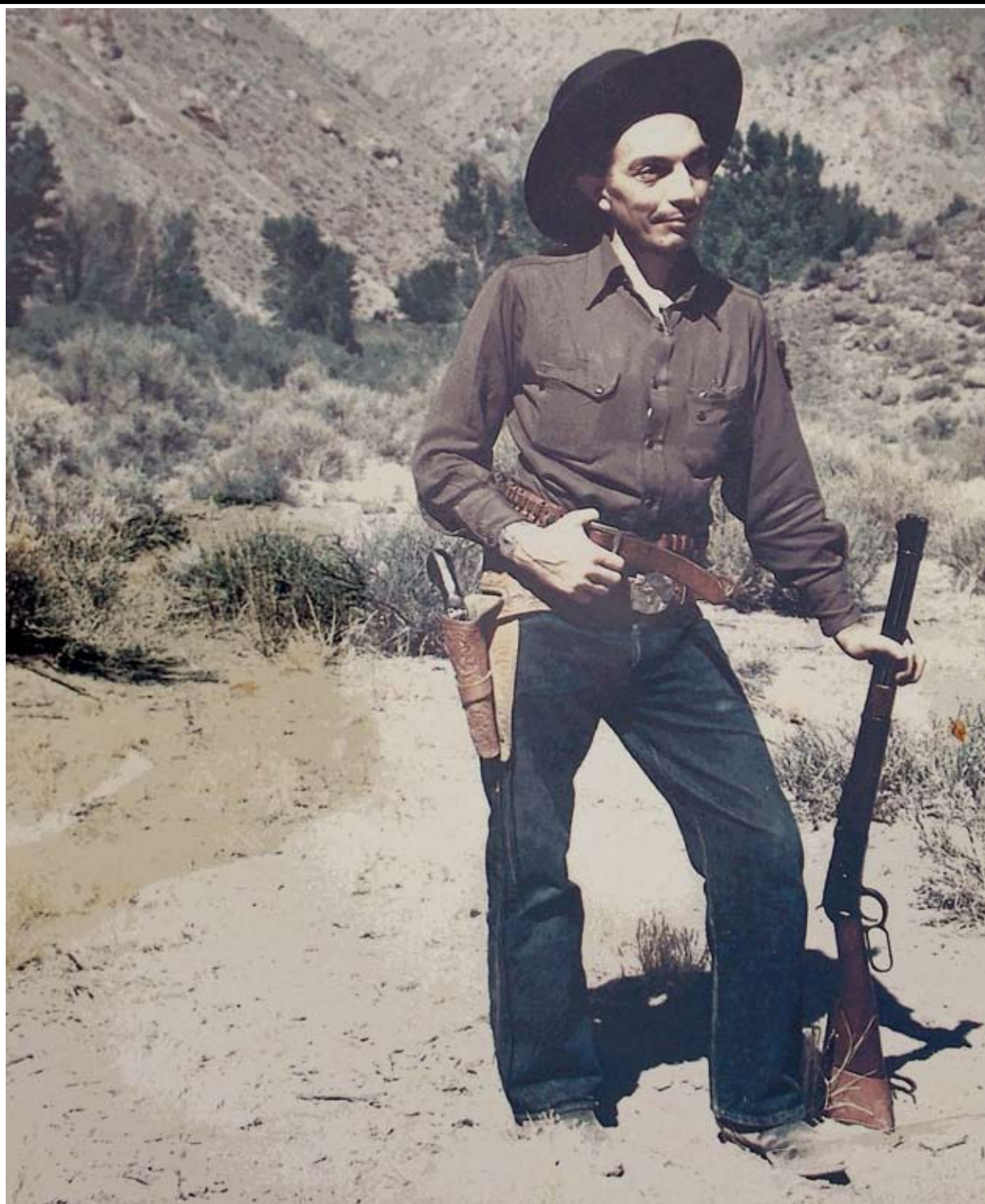


# THE CANYON COUNTRY ZEPHYR

PLANET EARTH EDITION

ALL THE NEWS THAT CAUSES FITS... SINCE 1989



## HERB RINGER

His Lifelong Love Affair with the American West  
(in words & images)



cczephyr@gmail.com

**‘OUR FRIENDS WERE DEARER THEN...’  
Herb Ringer...An Introduction**

I find it hard to fathom that almost 15 years have passed since my dear friend Herb Ringer left us, almost as long as the length of time we were friends. I met Herb in the late summer of 1981 and he died in the waning days of 1998. Both passages of time feel like a blink. He blessed me with the kind of friendship that rarely exists across generations, like a very special love between father and son. And, in fact, because Herb never had children, he once asked me if I could “fill in” as the son he never had. I always told him it was an honor.

He also bestowed upon me the role of the ‘keeper’ of his memories, magnificently told via the extraordinary collection of words and images he assembled in a lifetime. We offer a small but very memorable



portion of that collection in this very special issue.

Elsewhere in these pages, you’ll find a history of Herb as he told it to me and as I recount it here. And, of course, Herb tells his own story better than anyone. In this issue, you will hopefully examine and read and ruminate and marvel on the scores of new images and wonderful observations that we’ve posted from his original journals (and those of his father—Joseph Ringer). It’s like stepping into a Time Machine; at least that’s the way it feels to me.

But I’d like to offer a couple of postscripts here... one that occurred just days after Herb died, the other from a few days ago...

Herb’s health had begun to deteriorate in the

summer of 1998. In August, he gave up his home of 46 years and moved into a retirement center; he was almost blind from macular degeneration and he felt he had no other choice. But I feared that he’d lose his identity, if he walked away from the old Smoker trailer he bought in 1952. And indeed, within weeks,



**He also bestowed upon me the role of the ‘keeper’ of his memories, magnificently told via the extraordinary collection of words and images he assembled in a lifetime.**

he declined rapidly. For a man whose memory meant everything to him, Herb must have felt like an alien to himself, as the history of his life ebbed away.

In late November, I spent some time on the phone with Herb’s doctor. Though there was no immediate cause for alarm, it seemed to him that Herb had lost the will to live. I wasn’t surprised. Later that day, I described Herb’s declining health to a friend.

“You know,” I said, “I think Herb is going to die on my birthday.”

He looked startled. “Why would you say that?” I shrugged. “Don’t know. Just a feeling, I guess.” But the feeling didn’t go away.

The next Zephyr press day was December 11, and I’d already planned an issue called, “Then and Now—the way we were, the way we are.” On the cover were two pictures of Herb. The first was a childhood image, taken by his father in 1917. The second was one of my own, shot the previous August when I helped him move.

On the morning of the 11th, I made the two hour drive to Cortez, Colorado, where The Zephyr was printed for 14 years. All day I was haunted by premonitions. In early afternoon, I loaded the last of the copies into the truck and raced back to Moab, convinced I’d find a sad message on my answering machine when I got home.

But when I walked in the door, the blinking red message light was dark. I breathed a sigh of relief and walked up to Dave’s for a cup of coffee. An hour later I came home to the blinking light I’d been dreading.

Herb had died at 2 pm.

**An hour later I came home to the blinking light I’d been dreading.  
Herb had died at 2 pm.**

That afternoon, I contacted the hospital and then the retirement home. A wonderful woman there, an RN named Patty who had taken a personal interest in Herb, helped me deal with all those “arrangements” that have to be made, when we are least capable of dealing with anything at all but our own grief.

A few days later, I had the most remarkable dream....

I was standing waist-deep in a swift clear mountain stream, but safely in the shallows and out of the current. Floating on his back in front of me and looking perfectly serene was Herb. Only my firm grip on his shoulders kept him in the backwater.

The banks were green and lush but mid-stream granite boulders disrupted the water’s flow and created eddies and swirls. It looked dangerous to me, but Herb wanted me to push him into the current. I argued with him, insisted it was too risky, but he just nodded and smiled.

“It’ll be okay, Jim...just give me a push.”



I hesitated again and he put his hand on mine and patted it.

“Okay Herb.”

I reluctantly released my grip and as he floated by me, feet first, I gave his shoulders one last push. The current grabbed him almost instantly and I watched Herb enter the heart of the stream. But as he passed one of the granite boulders, Herb was snared by an eddy and I watched with alarm as he spun in small circles near the rock.

“Herb!” I cried out. “Are you alright?”

But no sooner had I called to Herb than the eddy released him into the free current. As he floated downstream, Herb Ringer raised one hand and waved goodbye.

That remarkable dream has stayed with me all these years and is as vivid in my mind’s eye now as it was then. I’ve never known such clarity, in the image of the dream or its meaning. I still feel good about it. All these years later, Herb, via our times

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since 1989

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together and the photographs and stories he left me, never seems far away. Last week, yet again, I would swear he stopped by to say hello.

I have been spending as much as 14 hours each day, reviewing and scanning Herb's photographs and re-reading his journals. It's been such a pleasure and at times I've forgotten just how long ago he left us. One afternoon, he seemed determined to let me know he was still here.

In 1997, as Herb prepared to sell his trailer and move to the retirement home, I became the recipient of many of Herb's treasures. Among them is a beautiful Swiss-made clock that had been in the Ringer family for decades. He presented it to me one day, carefully showing me how to wind it with the brass key he kept hidden in its base. "Not too tight," he warned. He advanced the hour hand to the twelve o'clock position so I could hear the chimes. "Lovely," he said.

We carefully wrapped it in a cotton sheet and placed it in a box for the trip back to Moab. I set it on my bedroom dresser and for years I fell asleep nightly to the tick-tock of Herb's clock and its hourly chimes.



Then one day, it stopped. I thought maybe I'd forgot to wind it, but no...the clock quit ticking. I searched unsuccessfully for a clock repair person who might be able to revive my beloved Herb Clock, but finally gave up. It was still a beautiful contraption, even without its ticks, so I took comfort in just looking at it and remembering all the memories contained within in it. A decade passed.

Last week, it started ticking again. I walked to my dresser to dump some loose change and heard an almost familiar sound--- and could not believe my ears. Or eyes. The pendulum was swinging back and forth as it always had. The familiar tick was back. And last night, about 2 AM, it chimed.

I'm not quick to believe in the Otherworldly, but on this occasion I'd prefer to. I'd love to believe that Herb dropped by, gave his beloved clock a tap in just the right spot, and silently chided me, "I told you not to wind it too tight."

Next time Herb, I promise to get it right.

### STILES' ROAD RULES #43 'CONFESSIONS AND COMPLAINTS OF A LIFELONG JAYWALKER'

Herb Ringer drove a succession of Ford cars and trucks over a period of 60 years; by his own estimate, he covered about a million and a half miles and not once, did he ever run over anybody. Or at least anybody who didn't deserve to be run over. And yet, if there was ever anyone worthy of being run over by a fast-moving automobile, it's me. As long, that is, as everyone plays by the rules of the road.

I am, and always have been, an unhesitatingly consistent, even dedicated, jaywalker. I've been doing the jay for decades. My wife can't believe I've lived this long. I maintain that the shortest distance between two fixed points is a straight line (mathematicians will support me on this) and I have

adhered to that rule for most of my life. I still do.

Though as recently as last week, one of my readers gracelessly noted on a public comment page that I am "no spring chicken," I still retain extraordinary, even lightning-quick reflexes that would make a man half my age drool with envy.

Also, I have always lived in small rural towns where not only crossing a "major" street never posed a risk, one could lie down in the middle of it and rarely tempt bodily injury. When a few of these communities became busier and the risk increased, I simply moved.

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So last week, during a brief visit to Salt Lake City, we attempted to negotiate North Temple Street, from the hotel parking lot to our accommodations for the evening. I boldly suggested we avoid the unnecessary detour to the corner and the stop light and, instead, make a beeline for our destination. It may have been near rush hour.

When we arrived at the opposite curb, several minutes later, it appeared my marriage might be in jeopardy. "Are you crazy?" Ms T implored. "You almost got us killed!"

I really thought she was overreacting---making a mountain out of a near-miss mole hill as it were. True, on a couple occasions, the blast of compressed air from vehicles passing very close to our bodies almost lifted us off our heels and threw us into their wake. And indeed, it was a bit dizzying for a few moments, but we made it. It was an adventure in its truest form, in that neither of us REALLY knew if we'd survive the 105 foot journey. This is a significant difference from the *faux adventures* that have become such a popular component of 21st Century recreation. No zip lines for us. This is REAL danger.



**The Author  
preparing  
to jaywalk.**

(NOTE: In Moab, well-meaning recreationist/capitalists are spending a million dollars on a tunnel UNDER the river road, because its proponents believe bicyclists lack the intelligence and the skills to negotiate two lanes of traffic. I laugh at such meek behavior. Where, I ask, is their gumption?)

Besides, had the drivers of those vehicles on North Temple simply adhered to their rules of the road, there would never have been a problem in the first place.

I do not mean to sound contemptuous of "good behavior" and recognize that trying to be helpful can, in some circumstances, be a good thing. But well-intentioned drivers are almost getting me (and now my wife) killed. I'm referring to those ill-ad-

vised Good Samaritans who, when they see me standing on the yellow stripe or negotiating a lane of traffic, feel compelled to suddenly brake in the middle of their lane and benevolently and generously gesture for me to proceed.

These selfless saints are a menace to the road far more than I am. Automobiles and the people that steer them are only obligated to brake for pedestrians at designated locations, like crosswalks and, of course, at stop lights and stop signs. Otherwise, they have every right to run over people like me. And, in fact, it's safer for everyone, including the pedestrian, for them to abide by that rule.

It is so easy to be seduced by the generous faces of drivers motioning me to proceed. And in my early jaywalking days, I was mesmerized by these benevolent acts. But on a four lane road, the kindness of a driver in just one of those lanes increases the pedestrian risk in the other three. I have almost been flattened by drivers who failed to notice or comprehend why a car had stopped suddenly in the adjacent lane and proceeded at full speed, as they should, to their destinations.

This, in fact, is what happened to Tonya and me as we sprinted across North Temple. A man in a Volvo



### The Ultimate Jaywalk Challenge... State Street in Salt Lake City

stopped, smiled and waved us on. You could see the compassion in his eyes. He was already patting himself on the back for his Good Deed of the Day when a plumbing truck in the next lane shot past him and almost snipped our toes. It was a close call. I glared at the kind man who had urged us onward and he seemed perplexed, as if he could not grasp the magnitude of his crime. Or that he had committed a crime at all. He'd almost got us killed and we were failing to display the proper level of gratitude.

Please understand, my words here are not meant to encourage more jaywalking, and only those pedestrians who possess the same lightning reflexes as I do should attempt this 'adventure' at all. This is intended to enlighten drivers more than walkers anyway. Any jaywalker who can't negotiate multiple lanes of busy traffic simply cannot cut the mustard.

Finally, when it comes to doing good deeds, I encourage it, but only ask that drivers re-direct their energies. If you're traveling down the road and you want to make somebody happy, find a little old lady and help her across the street. But ONLY at a designated crosswalk.

And only if she REALLY wants to cross it.

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## The Forgotten Conservative Case for Environmentalism

Gather a few confirmed environmentalists in any room and give them 90 minutes to get acquainted, and the conversation will inevitably coalesce around one question: What's the deal with those conservatives?

It is almost impossible for a liberal, especially one who exists almost exclusively with other liberals, to understand why anyone would oppose environmentalism. They ask: "Don't these people like to breathe?... Don't they want their kids to drink clean water?"

"Don't they see that we're all headed for a collapse?"

Eventually, they'll shake their collective heads and shrug their shoulders--- those poor corporation-loving people. What could they possibly be thinking?

Speaking as someone who has lived around "those people" most of her life, I can give you an idea of what they're thinking. With the notable exception of wealthy conservatives, who are fewer among the ranks than liberals would like to think, most conservatives are focused on everyday matters. They worry about how much money they need to buy food and how to protect their families from the terrors splashed across the nightly news. They think about how much gas they have in their cars, and whether those cars will be in working condition to drive themselves and their children to work and school in the morning.

Contrary to what we liberals might imagine, for the most part, such people do not spend a great deal of time hating gays, or women, or environmentalists.

When you do hear conservatives spouting off on one of the "hot button" social issues of gays or environmentalists, you can bet that their words are an almost direct quotation from someone they view as an authority: a parent, a pastor, a friend, who has assured them, for example, that many scientists still express doubt about global warming or that fracking is, without question, the most environmentally-friendly form of energy extraction.

This sounds incredibly patronizing, I realize, to suggest that half the country is only repeating what they've been told---like kids dutifully reciting to their parents what they've learned at school. Which is why I'm not suggesting that half the country is like that. What I'm saying is, the entire country is like that. We just each have our pet "experts."

I have found myself, in arguments with conservatives, referring a number of times to the "scientific consensus on global warming." Now, I don't wear a lab coat to work. I probably wouldn't recognize a raw statistical data sheet on global meteorological events if it sat on my lap wearing a fedora. But I'm perfectly comfortable trotting out that statement about "scientific consensus" to anyone who challenges me. Why? Well, I have my experts. I know a few people who understand science better than I do, and they have told me that, truly, everyone is in agree-

ment on this fact. All of the journalists I read believe in Global Warming. Also, my mother believes in global warming. Most of my friends believe in global warming. My husband believes in global warming. And I can almost guarantee that my cat believes in global warming, judging by her disdainful reaction to last year's hot Kansas summer.

My experts are perfectly sure of themselves, and, furthermore, most are sure that anyone who thinks differently must be crazy, stupid, or deliberately ignorant. So who am I to disagree?

But imagine I had grown up in a different family. Imagine I were raised in an environment dominated by conservative, instead of liberal, rhetoric. Imagine my experts were telling me that, in fact, liberals were the crazy, stupid, and deliberately ignorant ones. That so-called "scientific consensus" has undergone hundreds of revolutionary shifts throughout history, with each revolution rendering the previous generation's "consensus" irrelevant. That the statistical models supporting global warming have been consistently belied by reality, and that those models are currently undergoing re-evaluation as the doomsayers' predictions have failed to pan out.

For a semester in college, I found myself in such a conservative environment, facing exactly these arguments. I experimented with conservatism, out of curiosity, the way some students experimented with dyeing their hair or learning Frisbee golf. Ultimately, like hair dye, the conservative ideas just weren't for me, but who's to say whether that was due to the actual superiority of liberalism's arguments or to the stronger conditioning of my liberal upbringing? And, to the credit of the people I befriended, I emerged from my semester-long flirtation considerably more aware of the fact that conservatives weren't stupid at all.

Furthermore, I found that, when I talked with my conservative friends about the environment and about conservation, but divorced the conversation from the language of "environmentalism," we had a lot of common ground.

Want to alienate a Conservative? Or any poor person, for that matter? Just talk about how much you'd love for gas prices to reach \$10/gallon. I have heard more than one environmentalist express this desire, yet it never ceases to surprise me. Sure, it is entirely possible that the environment would ultimately benefit from the economic strife resulting from such prices. Maybe such a dramatic rise in energy costs would force the whole planet into a state of enlightened cooperation with our environment, in which the earth is granted her inalienable right to existence and animals and trees live unmolested by human development.

But I sincerely doubt it. More likely, the giant corporations would use the rise in costs to justify expansion of all forms of energy extraction. Businesses would fire thousands of their employees to compensate for the rise in their transportation expenses. The wealthiest would rejoice over the massive growth in their stock portfolios resulting from the increase in the valuation of energy stocks. And the poor, stranded in their homes, facing higher food costs, and unable to afford the drive to the grocery store, to their work, to their kids' daycare, would suffer.



Tell a poor person that, as an environmentalist, you love watching gas prices rise, and you will convince that person that environmentalism is not for them.

But there is another case to be made for environmentalism, or a form of it, which I almost never hear. A case that I discovered by talking with conservatives, which arises from the values most central to the conservative heart.

Imagine a small home near the center of a town—any town. The home contains a couple of adults and a couple of kids. Two bedrooms. One bathroom. Under one thousand square feet. In the backyard, a vegetable garden supplies tomatoes, zucchini, carrots, lettuce and cucumbers which are eaten fresh through the summer and then preserved to be eaten through the winter. Next to the garden, a small chicken coop houses a few chickens, who will provide eggs while they are young and then meat when they are older. The children rise each morning and complete a few chores before walking to school. One or both of the adults walk to work, for which they are paid an adequate wage to maintain this modest life-style and avoid debt.

Whose life is this? In 1940, it might have been anyone. In 2013, it might be the life of a family of hippie environmentalists, who distrust large agricultural corporations and large banks, and who wish to minimize their energy consumption and avoid passing on to their children the disease of materialism.

Or, equally, it could be the life of a family of conservatives, who look back on their grandparents' generation as a model of self-reliant and morally upright living, and wish to pass on that wisdom to their children.

What, after all, is more self-reliant and conservative than reclaiming the right to use the rain water that falls on your back yard for the purpose of growing food to feed your family? What is more conservative than producing your own energy, through solar panels or an individual wind turbine? What is more conservative than avoiding unnecessary waste? Than distrusting the large government-subsidied agricultural operations, which put generations of conservative family farmers out of business?

Forget about the big scientific arguments and the climate models. The small town conservatives and the environmentalists should agree on one thing: bigger is not better. The small, meaningful life of connecting with family and friends, and God, is appealing to anyone disenchanted with the shallow trappings of modern life. So why not rely on that common ground as a starting place for communication with conservatives? Environmentalists certainly have more to share with them than we do with the big-business Democrats who parrot meaningless platitudes about the environment while slipping ever more government contracts to their corporate friends.



Let's try this: instead of just continually talking amongst ourselves—bemoaning endlessly the ridiculous ignorance of conservatives—let's actually talk to a few of them. It isn't as though they're difficult to find. Contrary to what we might believe, most aren't sitting in corporate boardrooms. They are living across the street and they are

bemoaning to each other how those elitist environmentalists just don't understand the plight of the common man. How hard would it be to start a conversation? Share with them the memories of our grandparents---how they grew up during the Depression, with only their families and neighbors to help them through, and how they surely knew some things that we've forgotten. Like the real taste of a tomato. Or how to darn a sock. Haven't we all forgotten the beauty of that simple life? Let's help each other remember.

Photos from the HERB RINGER COLLECTION.

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# HERB'S FIRST TRIP WEST..SUMMER 1917



COLORADO = 1917

“When I was about four my father had an engagement to play the summer season out in Colorado Springs with a local band, the Colorado Midland Band, owned by the Colorado Midland Railroad. So we journeyed by train across the country to Colorado and my father rented a small cabin there. That cabin, by the way, stood until the 1980s when it was torn down for a new apartment complex. We spent a very enjoyable summer there. We loved the outdoors and we hiked every day. I remember they bought me a small red tin wagon which could be hauled quite easily to places like North and South Cheyenne Canyons.

“My father only had to play with the band in the evenings at the park so we had a lot of time to see many things. My mother and I sat on the grassy lawn and listened to the concerts each evening. We were there for most of the summer.”

FOR MANY MORE IMAGES OF HERB RINGER'S FIRST TRIP WEST, IN THE SUMMER OF 1917, VISIT THE WORDPRESS VERSION OF THIS STORY.



COLORADO  
1917





*In Notes on Paper, Falke walks us through the landscape of one man's mind, which contains both his past and an awareness of our common future. From within private memories the narrator reaches out to us with 'we' and 'you', and each spare line invokes the hope that we, like him, are worthy of return to our most longed for places. And if to return is not our fate,*

*and really it never can be, the narrator bids us survey our own memories, taking time in the present for the winds, and the words, that move the world.*

## NOTES ON PAPER DAMON FALKE

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**ANNE SNOWDEN CROSMAN**

## THE NEW IMMIGRANTS

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A new wave of pioneering immigrants has rushed headlong into Arizona the last forty years. Mexican entrepreneurs, Asian market and restaurant owners, Indian software engineers, European winemakers, and African community leaders, have all thrived in a rich atmosphere of business opportunity. Anne Snowden Crosman interviewed hundreds of immigrants, from Flagstaff and the Verde Valley to Phoenix and Tucson. To each, she asked the question, "What is your secret of survival and success?" They all answered, "Hope, hard work, persistence, and determination." "And why did you come to America?" she asked. In unison, they replied, "For the happiness to live in a free country."

*Anne Snowden Crosman, an Arizonan and world citizen, writes about people and social issues. She is the author of Young At Heart: Aging Gracefully With Attitude, winner of the Benjamin Franklin Award. She has been afternoon host of All Things Considered at KNAU, Arizona Public Radio in Flagstaff, and a CBS and NBC Radio Network correspondent in American and abroad. She lives in Sedona, Arizona, where she teaches memoir-writing at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute and volunteers for the Humane Society. She has established a foundation to help send young people to college.*



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*IN THE WINTER OF 1983, the largest El Niño event on record—a chain of "superstorms" that swept in from the Pacific Ocean—battered the entire West. That spring, a massive snowmelt sent runoff racing down the Colorado River toward the Glen Canyon Dam, a 710-foot-high wall of concrete that sat at the head of the most iconic landscape feature in America, the Grand Canyon. In the midst of this crisis, beneath the light of a full moon, a trio of river guides secretly launched a small, hand-built wooden boat, a dory named the Emerald Mile, into the Colorado just below the dam's base and rocketed toward the dark chasm downstream*



*Kevin Fedarko has worked as a river guide himself and is intimately familiar with the canyon's many secrets, and is the ideal narrator for this American epic. The saga of the Emerald Mile is a thrilling adventure, as well as a magisterial portrait of the hidden kingdom of white water at the bottom of the greatest river canyon on earth.*

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7

# “I can still see everything.”

## HERB RINGER'S remarkable life.

Jim Stiles

“Let me show you something.”

Herb Ringer paused a moment, then pushed his chair slowly away from the table and stood up. He turned and walked down the darkened hallway to the bedroom of his trailer, the same travel trailer he has lived in since 1954.

On November 21st of that year, the local Reno, Nevada newspaper reported:

### GIANT TRAILER HOME SOLD HERE.

Sale of what is believed to be the largest trailer home ever sold in Reno was announced today by Mr. Hall of the Old Orchard Trailer Court on South Virginia St.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Ringer and son Herbert will make their home in the new giant 45 foot “Smoker” trailer at the Old Orchard... The giant trailer will be on display to the public starting Friday.

It was quite an event. Herb saved the clipping, now faded and yellow, and tucked it away with a few thousand other tokens and artifacts of memories that document his life, an adventure now almost 85 years long. Each of those tokens is a story and all one has to do is wave the memento beneath Herb's nose and everything comes back, in extraordinary detail. He looks at a photo and he remembers the date it was taken, the place and the people who were there. But he also remembers the smell of it, the angle of the light, the warmth of the breeze...the feeling of that moment. He wraps himself in the memory and the glow of it warms us both.

### THE CRYSTAL-CLEAR VISION OF A CENTURY

His mind is as clear and crisp as the Rocky Mountain streams he spent summers by in years past. But his body is failing him. As I watched Herb disappear into his darkened bed room, I knew he was making his way there by memory as well. His eyesight has deteriorated to the point where he can't even see the vast collection of photographs he took of his favorite places over the last half a century. But he can still enjoy them. He pointed a finger to his head and said, “In here, I can still see everything.”

“Herb,” I'll ask, “Here's a picture of you on horseback and in the next picture there's a girl on her hands and knees under her horse. What's that all about?”

His worn out eyes sparkle. “Yes!” he smiles, “That's Skippy. That was in the High Sierras in about 1942. She loved her horse and the horse would do anything for her. She bet me she could sit right under it and I didn't believe her. So she climbed down and crawled right under the horse's front legs. So, I took a picture.”

I could hear Herb moving things about in his closet and a few moments later he emerged from the bed room, a manila-covered album held tenderly in his hands. He returned to his chair, a bit winded from the short trip, and then placed the large book in my lap. It was the size and shape of a photo album but was covered with brown wrapping paper and held together with yellowed Scotch tape. I opened the binding to the first page. In block letters it read:

1944 RENO, NEVADA STARTED ON XMAS EVE  
GIVEN TO ME AS A GIFT THIS BOOK BY MY SON HERBERT.

“This was my father's journal,” Herb explained. “I gave the blank book to him a couple of years after I moved my mother and him out here to Nevada from New Jersey. He kept it going until just a few months before his death in 1963. Now my eyes are so bad I can't even read from it any more...Would you read a few of the entries for me?”

I carefully thumbed through the hundreds of handwritten pages; Herb's father painstakingly recorded the events of their lives with a fountain pen and supplemented the text from time to time with old black and white photographs, newspaper clippings and telegrams.

“Well Herb,” I said, “Why don't I start at the beginning?” Here's your father's first entry...

*Christmas Day Dec. 25th 1944*

*We are in Reno, Nevada and it is our second Xmas here. We lived at 988 Watts Street and I have been working at the Washoe Market with Herb. Herb took us on a trip this day. We left Xmas Eve and got home tonight as we had two days off from the store. We left at 7 a.m. for Winnemucca and got there at 3 p.m. We took a hotel overnight so we walked around town and after supper went to the movies. We had a swell time.*

“Yes,” Herb nodded. “I remember that day so well. That was such a long time ago.” He looked at me and strained to see the outline of my face and he smiled again. “It's

even been a long time since we met, hasn't it?”

I nodded. “Where have the years gone, Herb?”

### A CHANCE ENCOUNTER WITH A REMARKABLE MAN

I met Herb Ringer in the early autumn of 1981 when I was a seasonal ranger at Arches National Park. In the evenings we used to walk the Devils Garden Campground to collect fees and to say hello. I found fee collection to be a tedious task most of the time, but the opportunity to occasionally meet someone special while making the rounds kept me hopeful. It was like that with Herb.

From the first evening, I found myself fascinated by his stories of the West and the passion with which he told them. After a several days we traded a few details of our personal lives. I was enduring the aftermath of a divorce that summer and when he asked me if I were married, I gave Herb the two minute version of the ordeal.

Herb placed his hand on my shoulder and nodded empathetically. “Yes,” he said. “I know...I know what you're going through. I was married once...”

His eyes drifted away from me as he remembered and talked and it appeared as though his gaze had settled on the distant La Sal Mountains. But I had the feeling his stare was cutting through the haze of time, not miles.

“...1938. I was married for a short time to a local girl. I traveled all the way to Reno, Nevada from New Jersey and got a divorce.”

His eyes welled with tears. “Oh I loved her...I still love her, I guess.”

I looked at this man, still staggered by a sense of loss, more than 40 years after his marriage failed, and I selfishly thought to myself, am I going to still feel this bad in another 40 years? The prospect of it made me shudder. But from that moment, Herb and I became kindred spirits.

### HEARTBREAK AND A NEW LIFE

Herb told me about his marriage. They had met several years earlier and were married on October 25, 1938. “She was beautiful...a beautiful girl. But we just couldn't hit it off right, and rather than destroy each other, I decided I would have to make the move to end it.” The details are still too painful for him to discuss but eventually Herb traveled all the way from his home in Ringoes, New Jersey to Nevada and seek a divorce. In those days, Nevada was the only state in the country that had fairly liberal divorce requirements and Herb simply

didn't want to go through the painful process of a divorce in his own home town.

After the divorce was finalized in Carson City, Herb returned to New Jersey. He had borrowed \$1000 to make the trip and so he went right to work to re-pay the loan. In six months he was debt-free but something unexpected had happened to him during the five months he spent in Reno; now he found himself dreaming and day-dreaming of the West he had left behind. He had never seen such magnificent open country and now he realized he could not bear to live without it.

“I had the great urge to return to the Western Way of Life. And so I did.”

**But he also remembers the smell of it,  
the angle of the light, the warmth of the breeze...  
the feeling of that moment. He wraps himself  
in the memory and the glow of it warms us both.**

For the third time in two years, Herb loaded up the '36 Ford sedan and headed West in the winter of 1941, just before Pearl Harbor. He would never return East to live again. “From then on,” he remembered, “I was a tourist when I visited New Jersey.” Herb set out to find work and make a home in this strange new land. He had learned the grocery business at a small store near Ringoes; it was Herb's first job and he loved it. Always the gentle gentleman, even then, Herb remembers that “I enjoyed being able to help people. My parents always taught me to be courteous and polite but this allowed me to do something for others.” So he applied for a job at the Washoe Market in Reno. He would stay there for the next 18 years.

And Herb set out at once to document his new life, although he failed to see the significance of it at the time. He loved to take pictures and he loved to write down his impressions and memories. He never considered himself proficient at either, but his efforts prove otherwise. Over the next 40 years, Herb took almost 10,000 photographs of an American West that simply doesn't exist anymore. And his journals fill dozens of spiral notebooks. For him, it was a simple but enjoyable exercise; even Herb could not dream or predict the changes that lay ahead.

But while Herb basked in the excitement and adventure of this new home in Nevada and scribbled notes and took pictures, he could not forget his parents, who still lived in New Jersey. His mother and father had seen hard times during the Depression



and now, practically penniless, they barely survived on the Ringer family's farm in a small house they had built several years earlier.

I don't know that I have ever met anyone whose devotion and loyalty and sense of responsibility to family was as strong as Herb Ringer's. And so, two years after his own migration to Nevada, he returned east yet again and brought his mother and father back to Reno with him. "They did so much for me," he once said. "Letting them stay with me for the remainder of their lives was the least I could do." His memories of childhood are still vivid and sweet, but sometimes touched by a hint of sadness. Herb remembers the early days...

"I was born on July 15, 1913 in Brooklyn, New York at 80 Cornelius Street. We were living in my grandparents' apartment while they traveled to Europe for a last visit. We moved to Cincinnati, Ohio not long after that. My father had a contract with the symphony starting in October. My father played French horn and my mother took care of me. I really don't remember much until I was four, but that is where my life really began.



"When I was about four my father had an engagement to play the summer season out in Colorado Springs with a local band, the Colorado Midland Band, owned by the Colorado Midland Railroad. So we journeyed by train across the country to Colorado and my father rented a small cabin there. That cabin, by the way, stood until the 1980s when it was torn down for a new apartment complex. We spent a very enjoyable summer there. We loved the outdoors and we hiked every day. I remember they bought me a small red tin wagon which could be hauled quite easily to places like North and South Cheyenne Canyons.

"My father only had to play with the band in the evenings at the park so we had a lot of time to see many things. My mother and I sat on the grassy lawn and listened to the concerts each evening. We were there for most of the summer; then we'd return to Cincinnati and he'd play with the orchestra. I went to my first concert when I was five and I remember that with a shaking finger my father told me to be very quiet and not talk or rattle a paper or in any way disturb the other people who had come to enjoy the concert.

"We lived at 123 Mason Street in Mt. Auburn, a part of Cincinnati, but later the landlord bought a large three story building with a cupola on Auburn Avenue, and we moved into an apartment there. It had a huge living room about forty feet long and a bathroom and kitchen, and so we were safely ensconced there and enjoyed several years at that location. It had a large yard in back and it had a playground atmosphere where I could play. My father always brought me toys when he was on trips with the symphony. One particular set of toys was a set of little colorful Swiss buildings and I placed them around my train set. They lasted me for forty years.

"So I had many enjoyable days in that yard and I had the company of lots of squirrels who served as constant companions. But I didn't have a lot of friends. I was a loner, even then. I learned to entertain myself quite well.

"That is partly due to my father, I suppose. He devoted his life to his French horn and practicing it to perfection and he didn't want to be interrupted by screaming children. I could play in the house and I had toys to play with beyond measure but I had to handle them gently. That's why they lasted me countless years. But I was pretty much alone. I didn't have the knack of making friends.

"When I was 12 I contracted rheumatic fever and it was treated much differently in those days. I had aspirations to follow in my father's footsteps and be a musician but when I got sick the first thing they did was take me out of school and my musical aspirations ended entirely. It was thought that I should be kept as quiet as possible; sometimes they kept me in bed for six months at a time. And yet, I didn't feel that badly...just tired I guess.

"And then, when I was 13 years old, we left Cincinnati forever, thanks to the murderous intent of the symphony conductor Fritz Reiner, who disliked all American musicians. He employed European musicians thinking they were better equipped to perform the great symphonic selections than their American counterparts. My father had already played 16 years with the symphony and it was a terrible defeat when he lost his position there. Up until the last three years, when Reiner arrived, he had loved his work, associating with all the great classical musicians of the world. So we moved back to New York.

"For a couple years, my father played with some of the large theater organizations. He played for the Lexington Opera House and for some movies. He played with many pit orchestras...he once played with Major Bowes of the Amateur Hour. He saw many good and many really poor performers on the stage. He often saw many of those poor performers 'get the hook.'

next page...

## NEW Backbone members for OCT/NOV

### THANKS ALSO TO:

Stephen Buzzell  
Eliot, ME

Andrew Harp  
Arroyo Grande, CA

Robert Carson  
Santa Paula, CA



MARCIA MARSHALL  
Minneapolis, MN



CLUTCH CARGO  
'Up North'

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GREG CAUDILL  
Louisville, KY



TOM WYLIE  
Centennial CO



MICHAEL COHEN  
Reno, NV



TONI MCCONNELL  
Flagstaff, AZ

## Herb Ringer...continued.

"But he gave it all up, the thing he loved most--his music--for me, and we moved to the country to the family farm. They thought the country life, a quieter atmosphere would help my heart condition. And it did. It worked wonders. Soon I was able to run... run across the fields. Plus I was working daily on the farm.

"But my father had no way of making a living. No orchestras. No bands. Nothing. So we tried to make a living off the poultry we raised. But the price of poultry feed kept rising and we could not keep up.

"By the late 1930s, they were just barely getting by. And so, considering all they had done for me, they came to live in Nevada in 1942. My father hoped that perhaps he'd find an orchestra to play with in Reno, but it never happened. And sadly, my father never really played professionally again."

I turned another page of the journal and read a passage or two to myself. Herb's hearing is not much better than his eyesight these days and he had leaned his ear close to me as I recited from his father's words. Now he wasn't hearing anything at all.

"Let's stop for awhile," he suggested. "I'm hungry. How about some dinner?"

I nodded. Herb went to the refrigerator, pulled out a pan of pound cake, a quart of strawberries, and a can of whipped cream. "If you don't mind," he said, "let's just go straight to the dessert tonight."

"We're kindred spirits in more ways than I ever dreamed possible," I answered. "We're two divorced guys trying to prove we can live a healthy and active life eating nothing but junk food. But you have about a 40 year lead on me, Herb."

"I didn't get all of that...miserable hearing aid," Herb grumbled, "but I got most of it...don't you want some more whipped cream on that?"

### GOING TO NEVADA AND 'THE WESTERN LIFE'

In many ways Herb began life all over again when he made the move to Nevada. And for Herb's mother and father it was a whole new world. Except for the summer trips to Colorado Springs when Herb was a small boy, the Ringers had not ventured farther west than Cincinnati. Now suddenly Joseph and Sadie Ringer were making a new home in one of the wildest and most remote parts of the American West.

Until 1942, neither of Herb's parents had ever camped out a day of their lives. Herb changed all that. The parents scarcely had time to unpack before Herb bundled them into his Ford and took them for a day trip to Virginia City. It would be the first of thousands of journeys, both short and long, to the remote and hidden corners of the West. In order to make ends meet, Mr. Ringer went to work at the Washoe Market with Herb who was by now the store manager. Even Sadie helped out during busy times. They worked six days a week, month after month. But they never seemed to squander a



moment of their free time.

On Saturdays, after locking up the market for the weekend, the Ringers hit the road. Herb had specially equipped the Ford so that his parents could sleep across the back seat. He pitched a canvas tent for himself and with a cook box and stove that he permanently kept in the trunk, the Ringers camped out almost every Saturday night (weather and season permitting) for years. They explored ghost towns in the Nevada desert and searched for the remains of the long abandoned Virginia & Truckee Railroad. In the summer they sought the cool relief of the High Sierras and, according to Herb's own count, made 120 trips to their favorite mountain getaway, Hope Valley. But their first overnight sojourn to Hope Valley, in June 1945, gave them more escape from the heat than they had in mind. Herb's father faithfully recorded the day...

*"June 5, 1945: Herb took us up to Hope Valley, Calif. to camp out there overnight for the first time. It was cold so we built a big fire and stood around it until it was time to go to bed. We all slept in the car & when we got up in the morning there was ice in our pots. It was 22 degrees. Where we slept it was over 7000 feet. It turned out to be a fine day and it got up to 82 degrees."*

And that is how Herb and his parents lived for much of the next 20 years. In addition to their weekend wanderings, they traveled to the Rocky Mountains, to the Pacific Northwest, to California, to Alberta, Canada, and sometimes back east to New Jersey to re-establish contact with the family. But they always seemed ready to travel whenever the opportunity presented itself. Even his mother, who by the time they made the move to Reno was in her 60s, adapted remarkably well to the outdoor life. To this day, Herb marvels at the way Sadie embraced camping and endured the lack of amenities. "I never heard her complain."

The Ringers owned a succession of vehicles. They sold the '36 Ford in 1945 and bought a '41 Lincoln Zephyr. And then a '46 Ford. And a '49 'Woodie.' And a '54 Ford pickup with one of the first camper shells ever made. They crisscrossed the West, again and again and traveled hundreds of thousands of miles in a part of America that was still

asleep and undiscovered.

And Herb kept taking pictures. From the beginning, he used 35mm cameras with excellent optics and later purchased a large-frame (2 1/4 inch) camera. When Kodak introduced its Kodachrome color film in 1946, Herb was one of its first customers and used it exclusively (Most of the black & white reproductions in the Zephyr are from those extremely clear Kodachrome slides).

Herb photographed the mountains and the deserts and the canyons. But he also photographed the small towns, the gas stations, the cafes, the road houses, and the people he met along the way. He created a portfolio of life in the West in the last years before Industrial Tourism grabbed it by the throat. His work is testimony and tribute to another time.

In 1963, Herb's father was diagnosed with cancer and Herb spent most of his life savings, trying to save his father's life. But Joseph Ringer died later in the year. In 1964, Medicare was enacted but it came too late for the Ringers. Herb and his mother continued to travel, to places as far away as the Canadian Rockies, even though Sadie was now in her late 80s. In July 1974, while at Banff National Park in Alberta, Herb suffered a massive heart attack. As he was being rushed by ambulance to a nearby hospital, the shock of seeing Herb unconscious and in critical condition was too much for his mother. Sadie was struck down by a cerebral hemorrhage; while Herb's heart slowly healed,



Sadie died a few weeks later. She was 92 years old. Herb had just turned 61.

Herb was devastated by the loss and discouraged by his own health problems. But one morning he arose from bed, looked out the window at the beautiful fall day that awaited him and decided he would not let his heart attack or the grief that still gripped him ruin the remainder of his life. "It was simply a case of mind over matter," Herb recalled.

He retired from his grocery job, re-located the trailer to Fallon, sixty miles southwest of Reno, and determined to make the most of every remaining day of his life. Now he would spend every possible moment exploring the West that he loved so much.

A routine, if you can call it that, began to emerge. He started packing up his 1970 Ford Econoline Camper late in January of each year. By the first week of February, Herb was ready to travel. He always headed south for warmer weather and stayed at that latitude until spring. Sometimes he journeyed all the way to the east coast; sometimes he'd only go as far as the midwest. But he was almost always back in his beloved Colorado by June.

And every autumn, I could expect Herb Ringer to arrive at the Devils Garden Campground along with his Burmese cat, Nami. He became a part of my routine as well. I could not imagine an October without Herb. Once nine years ago, I got a hastily written note from Herb; he feared he would most likely miss our annual rendezvous. Early in the summer, he had experienced some worrisome health symptoms and immediately drove himself back to Fallon. Herb was diagnosed with colon cancer and underwent major surgery the next day. A couple of weeks later, Herb wrote again to let me know he had survived the operation, but remained skeptical about his prospects.

But October arrived and here came Herb. "Well," he complained gently, "I already wasted part of my summer. I wasn't about to let it ruin the entire year." Mind over matter.

**The Ringers owned a succession of vehicles. They sold the '36 Ford in 1945 and bought a '41 Lincoln Zephyr. And then a '46 Ford. And a '49 'Woodie.' And a '54 Ford pickup with one of the first camper shells ever made. They crisscrossed the West, again and again and traveled hundreds of thousands of miles in a part of America that was still asleep and undiscovered.**

### 1994

And so the years passed and each visit from Herb brought more stories and pictures and memories. Herb became my Time Machine. I could say to Herb, "OK, it's the summer of 1941 and you're getting ready to head west again from New Jersey." And Herb will pause briefly, gather his thoughts and say, "Yes. I remember I left about eight in the morning. It was a clear cool day. Not too hot. I traveled north on Route 22 and stopped for breakfast at a little diner." It was like that.

In the summer of 1994, I met Herb in Crested Butte, Colorado and we camped by a lake near Kebler Pass. But something wasn't right and Herb was worried. Without any warning, his eyesight had begun to deteriorate. He had recently been to an ophthalmologist.

gist who saw no problem so it seemed unlikely that his vision could go so rapidly. But Herb was concerned enough to cut his summer trip short. He insisted he could still see well enough to drive and so we reluctantly watched him take to the road again in his camper.

By the time he reached Fallon, he could barely make out the road. And an eye examination brought bad news. Irreversible macular degeneration had robbed Herb of most of his sight and the condition would grow even worse. After more than a million miles, Herb's driving days came abruptly to a halt. He parked his beloved Econoline Camper and never drove it again.

I could not imagine how Herb would survive this sudden loss of mobility. Traveling was his passion and his life. All his friends lived along thousands of miles of highway, in large cities and small towns across America. He had not spent more than three months at a time in Fallon since he moved there in 1974.

I should have known better. Herb Ringer---the Unflappable Man. He had a phone installed for the first time in 20 years and we had an amplifier attached to it to aid his hearing problem. He made new friends. Adjusted to a new chapter. Mind over matter.

**After more than a million miles,  
Herb's driving days came abruptly to a halt.  
He parked his beloved Econoline Camper  
and never drove it again.**

Now, instead of Herb showing up on my doorstep, I started making the long 700 mile drive to Fallon. On my first visit, I found Herb worried about finances. He was trying to live on a monthly \$500 social security check and was barely getting by. "I don't know how I will get by with all these new medical expenses and maintaining the trailer."

At 81, Herb had never applied for any of the benefits that are available to lower income seniors. We made a trip to the local social services office and discovered all kinds of programs that could help---from energy assistance to food stamps and especially medicare---he had never applied for MediCare! His near blindness allowed for a boost in his social security payment and the state even provided a housekeeper to make him a hot meal and keep his trailer tidy.

Herb was ecstatic. "I feel rich!" he exclaimed, now that his income and benefits had been boosted by a couple hundred bucks a month. When he made his weekly visit to the social services office, he always brought them flowers.

Over the next four years, I traveled to Fallon again and again; we spent countless hours pouring over his photographs and journals. His eyesight was now so bad, he could not see the images he had so lovingly taken and preserved. Many of them were unlabeled, but Herb remembered---we'd sit at his table and I would describe the scene. "Ah yes. That's Beatty. 1941....That's Wes Moreland. He ran the casino at Rhyolite." We identified scores of old black and white photos in that fashion. He told me about the artifact he kept in a plastic jar that came from King Tut's tomb. And about Shorty



Yarberry. He remembered everything. Over the years, he began to give me his most treasured possessions, including his father's journal. "My life is in here," he said quietly. "Please take care of it."

On a visit in the fall of 1997, I found Herb in a bad way. He was having difficulty breathing and his ankles were badly swollen. From my ranger days, it looked like a case of pulmonary edema---congestive heart failure--- and urged him to go to the hospital. Inexplicably, he had been and they had sent him home. "Let's try this again, Herb," and we made the short drive to the emergency room. This time he was admitted.

He was in the hospital for a few days and with treatment, he began to feel better. Herb was a hit with the nurses, who loved his stories and tall tales. Herb loved it as well and when he was finally discharged, I could tell he wanted to stay. In most ways Herb had a remarkable ability to occupy his own mind. Once during the hospital stay, I sat next to his bed as Herb seemingly stared morosely into space, a sort of blank stare that worried me.

"Herb?" I asked. "What are you thinking about right now?"

Herb looked at me a moment, and smiled. "Do you remember Ariel Sharon?"

I nodded uncertainly. What does Ariel Sharon have to do with this moment in time?

"Well," Herb explained, "I was thinking back to 1973. I think it was summer. Sharon had come to Camp David to visit President Nixon and I still remember that when Sharon got out of his car to shake hands with Nixon, he didn't have a tie on. His shirt was open at the top...Nixon had a tie on. So did everybody else. So why didn't Sharon wear a tie? I thought it was very disrespectful."

I sat there a moment, utterly bewildered. Finally I said, "Herb? THAT is what you've been thinking about? Ariel Sharon's tie-less meeting with Nixon?"

Herb nodded.

"What made you think of that?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. Just bothered me."  
I squeezed his shoulder and said, "Herb, you're one of a kind."

But the following winter was hard on Herb, both physically and emotionally. As his health declined and his eyesight deteriorated, he began to feel more isolated from the life and the world he loved so much. In the summer of 1998, he made a momentous decision---he would give up the 'Smoker' trailer he had called home for almost 45 years and move into a retirement home, just a couple miles away.

I drove out in late July to help him sell the 'Smoker' and deal with his belongings. He filled my pickup with the artifacts and treasures of his life---even his kitchen utensils had a special place in his heart. He handed me a well-worn wooden spoon. "That was my great-grandmother's," he said sadly. "Please be good to it." Herb sat in his emptied trailer and sobbed. It was one of the saddest moments of my life.

In the next four months, Herb's health declined rapidly. We were still able to speak on the phone until late October, then we lost that connection. In a way, he almost willed himself to go. He couldn't be himself anymore, so what was the point?

On December 11, 1998, Herb Ringer left us. He died on my birthday...It was a death in the family.







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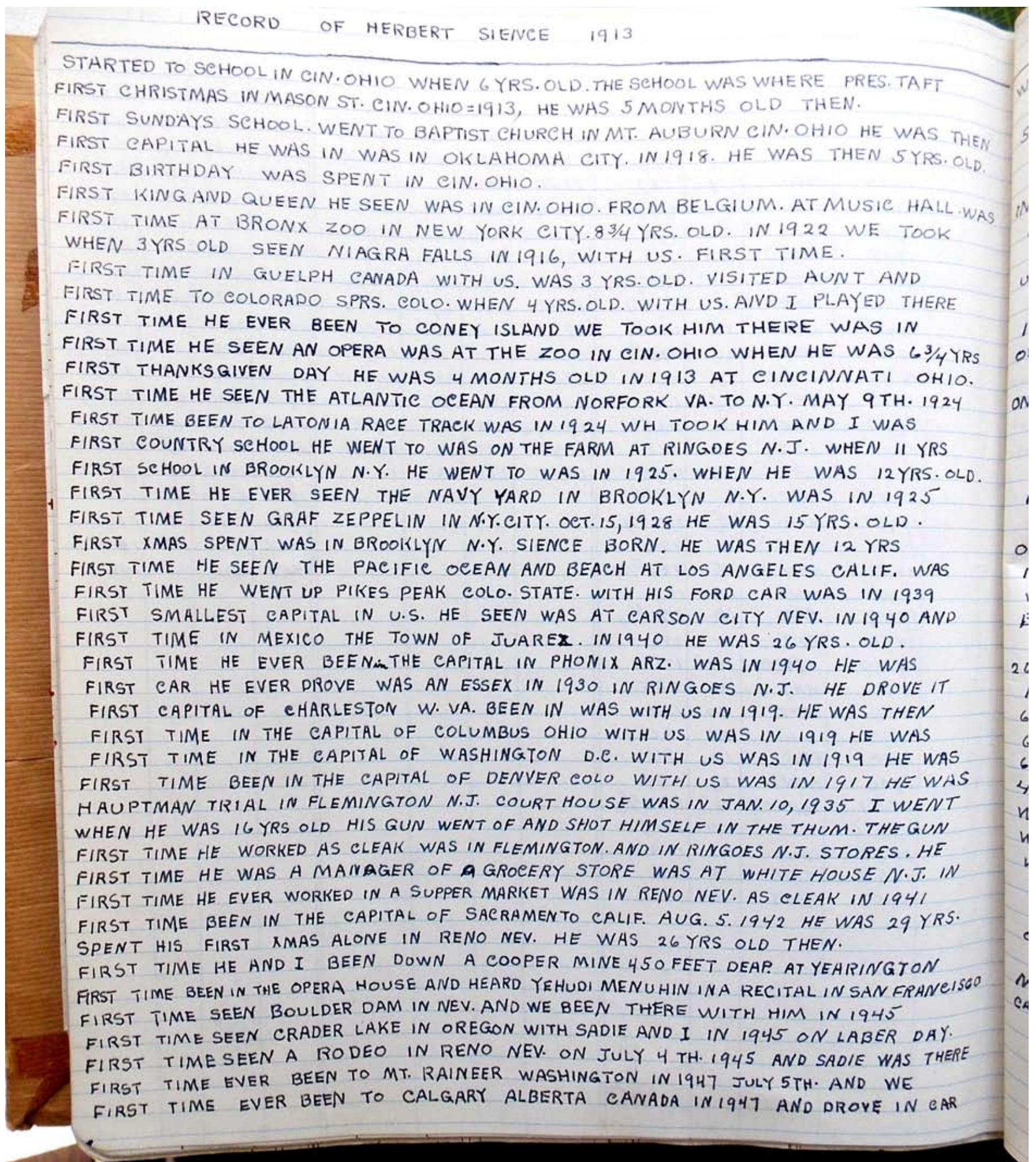
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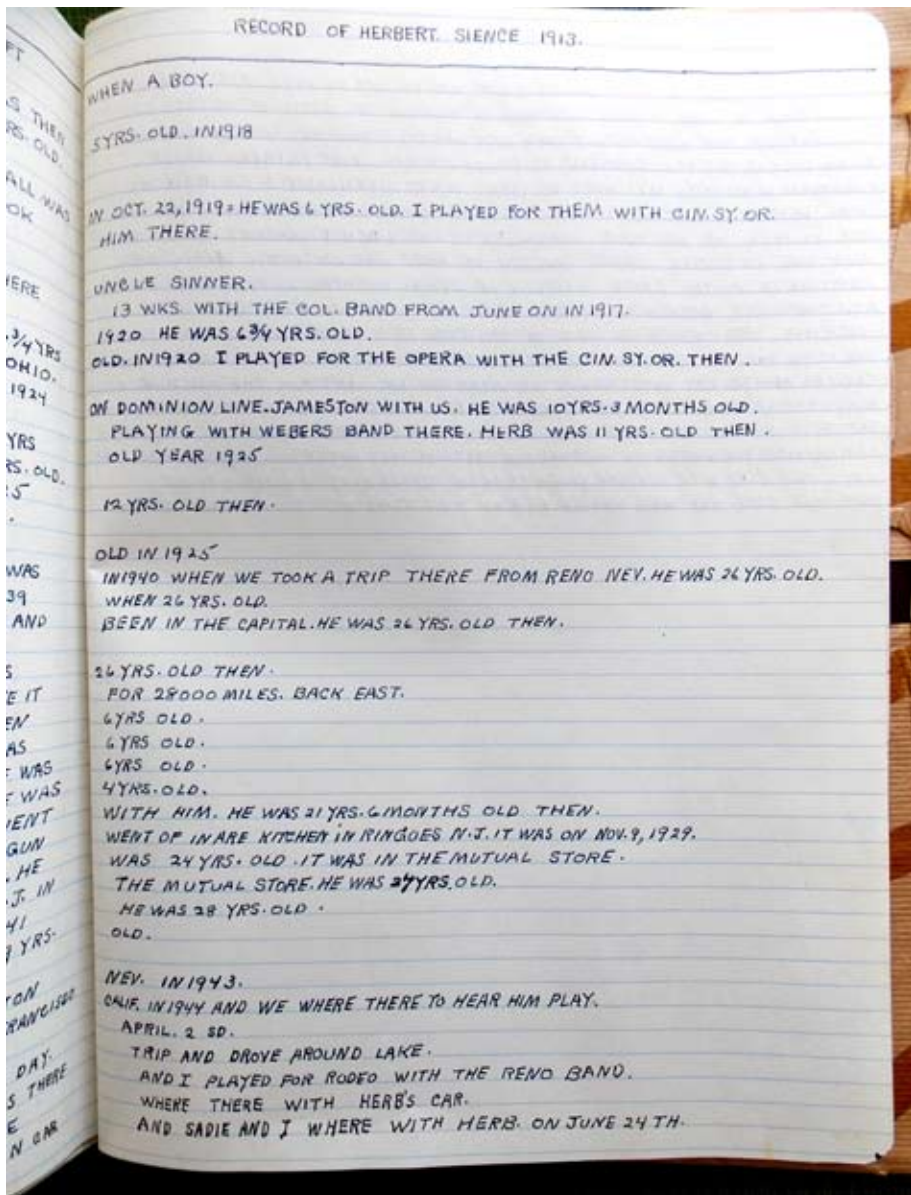
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# “FIRST TIME...”

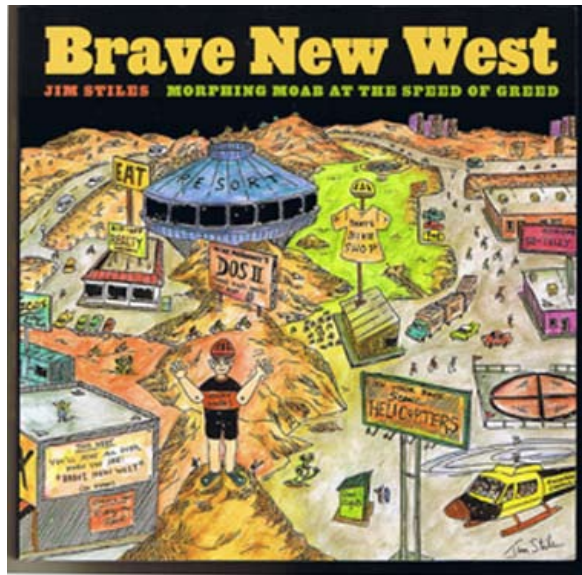
Herb Ringer's father, JOSEPH RINGER, offers this fascinating 'List of Firsts' in his son's life

When Herb gave his father a journal for Christmas in 1944, JOSEPH RINGER put it to good use. In addition to his remarkable commentary that spanned the years 1944 to 1963, he liked to make lists. This is one of my favorites...Herb's "Firsts." ---JS





next page



“Jim Stiles holds up a mirror to those of us living in the American West, exposing issues we may not want to face. We are all complicit in the shadow side of growth. His words are born not so much out of anger but a broken heart. He says he writes elegies for the landscape he loves, that he is “hopelessly clinging to the past.” I would call Stiles a writer from the future. *Brave New West* is a book of import because of what it chooses to expose.”

-- Terry Tempest Williams

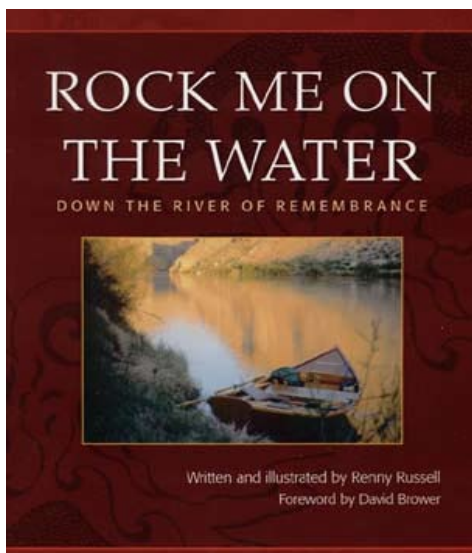
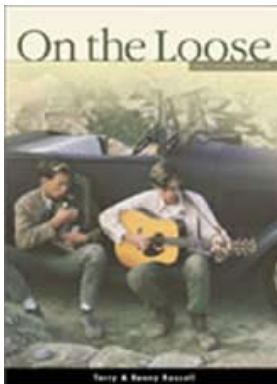
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Robert Redford

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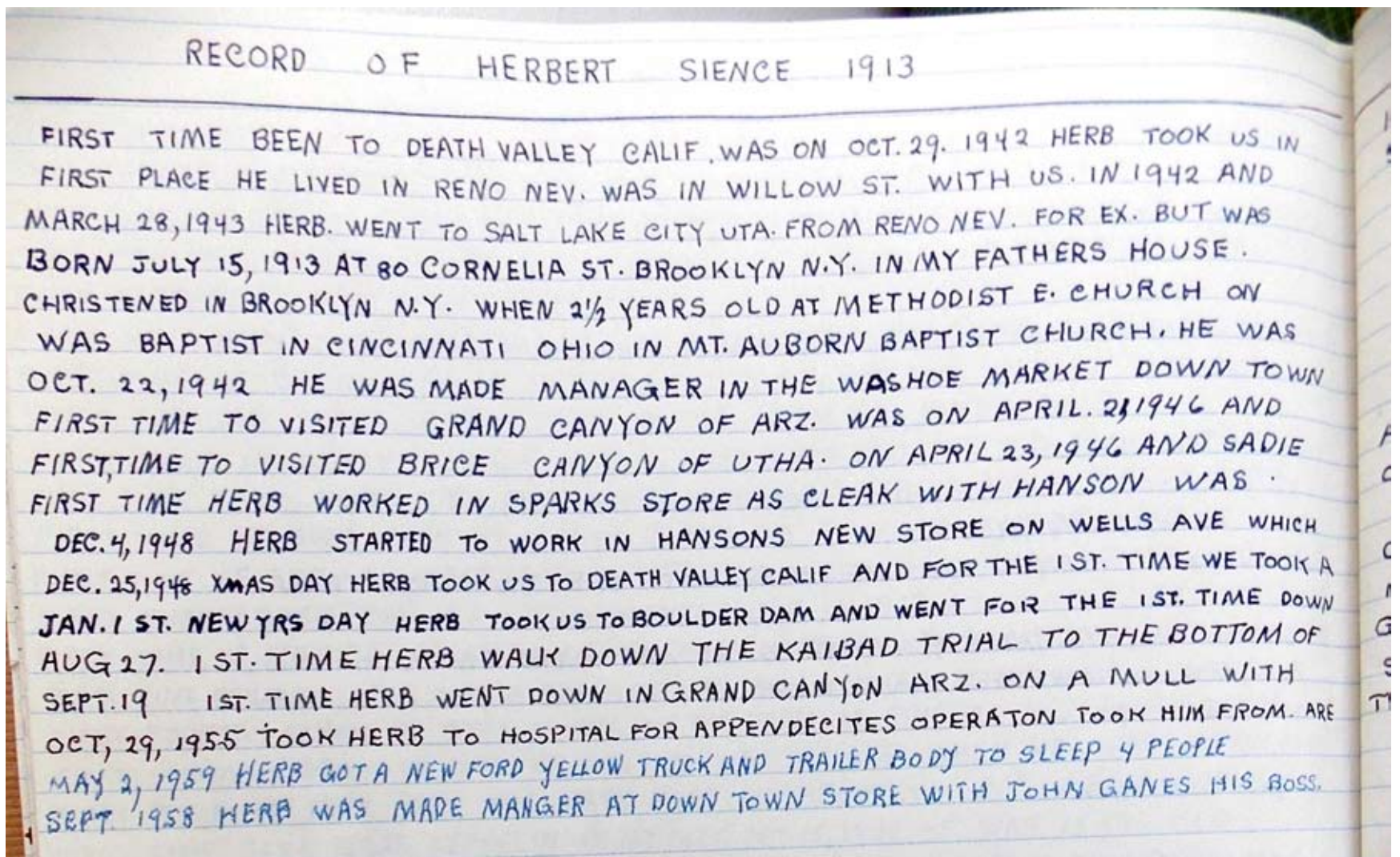
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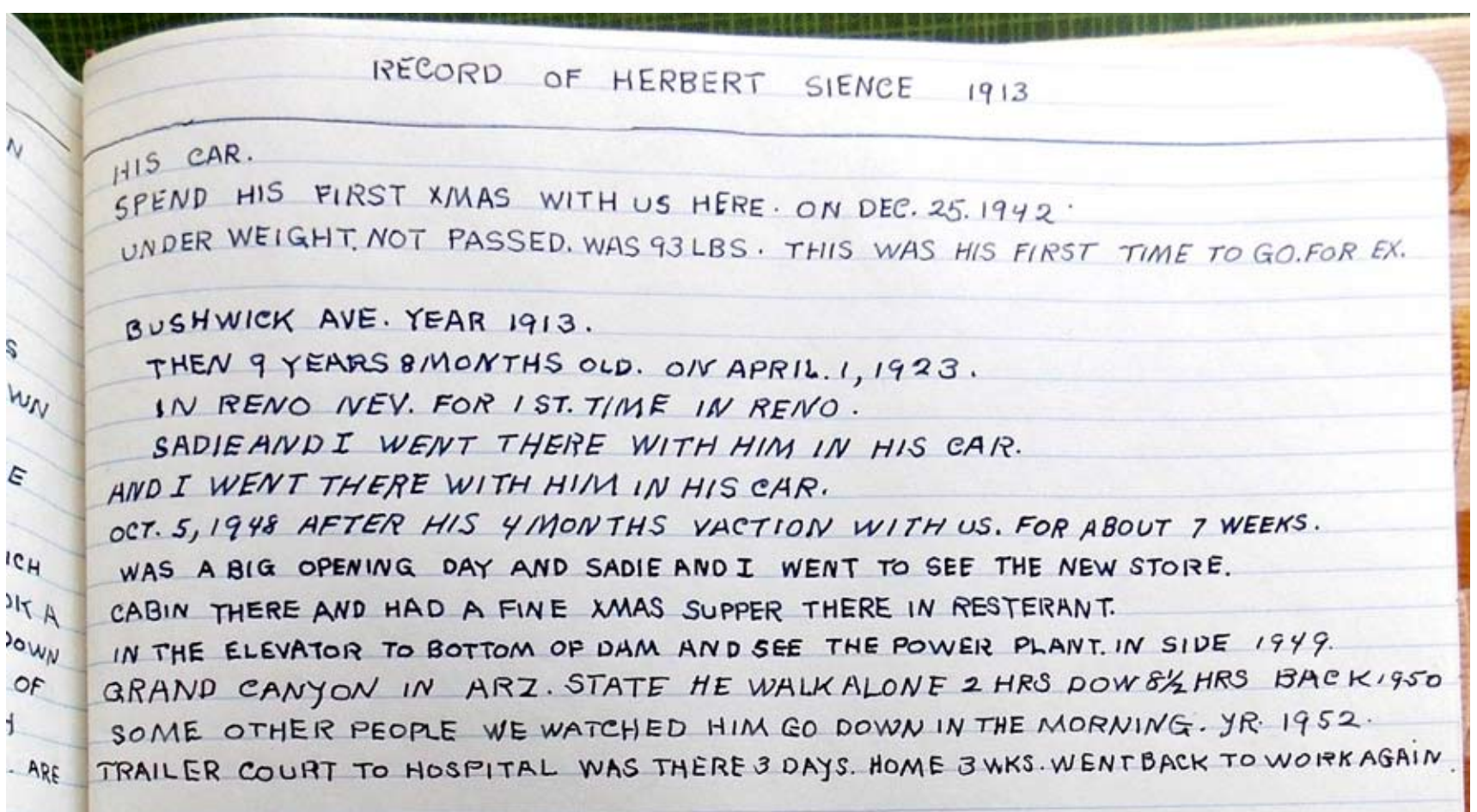
**STEVE RUSSELL**  
Moab, UT



## 'FIRST TIME'...continued.



**FIRST TIME BEEN TO DEATH VALLEY CALIF. WAS ON OCT. 29. 1942  
HERB TOOK US IN...FIRST PLACE LIVED IN RENO NEV.  
WAS IN WILLOW ST. WITH US. IN 1942  
MARCH 28, 1943 HERB WENT TO SALT LAKE CITY UTA. FROM RENO  
FOR EX. BUT WAS UNDER WEIGHT. NOT PASSED. WAS 93 LBS.**



# NEW BACKBONE MEMBERS for August/September 2013 #1

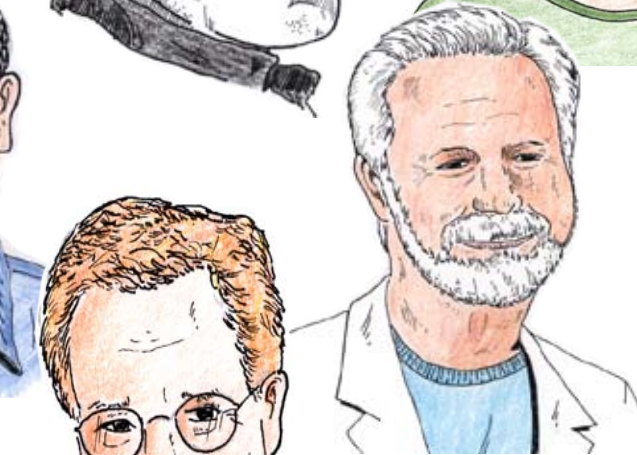
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# BACK BONE

#2

# “Notes on Reno and Vicinity”

Autumn 1939...Herb Ringer

*Notes on Reno and Vicinity*

People sleeping beside road on desert near Winnemucca and dog guarding.  
 Negro girl jumps aboard moving train - Limited 5:10 P.M. eastbound.  
 Fight in hotel - Jimmy Driscoll and Jimmy Hass.  
 Attend Baptist Church, woman faints.  
 Three people die from Lethal gas in hotel room in Reno - fumigation.  
 Met three people from town northeast of Stroudsburg, Pa on Salt Lake D.  
 Met two people from Titusville, Pa in Wells, Nevada, cafe.  
 Indian squaw in store with papoose in cradle - board, wicker work.  
 Tex Kennedy, drunk in my room, talking, stole Jimmy Driscoll's clothes  
 in exchange for debt, J.D. owned Tex. Later threatened to knife  
 McC. - Mrs. Ryan relieved him of knife. Wanted me to go with  
 him to Mexico - work on engineering project, or on ranch.  
 Reno - actually 25 miles west of Los Angeles.  
 Ben Wagoner was engineer on a southern railroad in the west.  
 Piled up a freight at 65 m.p.h. in Oklahoma, oil cars on the  
 train caught fire. Story of how he and friend walked beside  
 cattle cars, poking the steers in - cattle had eaten too  
 much spring grass - manure in friend's pocket - in plug-tobacco  
 Two New Jersey cars in Reno W796M W0502  
 Small searchlights send shafts upward in island center of Truckee.  
 Fountains send water upward, makes beautiful sight.  
 Montgomery Ward Fire - hunting thru debris.  
 Mrs Mildred Poole arrives - last week of November.  
 Stories about streamliner wreck - saw pictures of it. Poster in  
 Reno station offering \$5,000.00 reward for information.  
 The 49<sup>th</sup> a beautiful train, all silver finish, streamlined locomotive, hostess  
 aboard. One pullman about two feet higher than normal cars, had  
 small windows by upper berths. Car trucks pivoted to vestibules.  
 1000 cars passed intersection at 4<sup>th</sup> street and Alameda in 37 min. on  
 Friday evening Nov. 10, 1939 4:00-5:07  
 Hundreds of ducks and geese in Idlewild Park. Very tame. Two black  
 bears, coyote, fox, badger, 2 buffalo and birds were found in zoo.  
 McC. received \$25.00 for representing niece of court clerk of county in  
 Carson City.  
 Doreateo Arango - real name of Pancho Villa.  
 Hobo jumped aboard Pacific Limited at 5:10 eastbound in blinds be-  
 hind tender.  
 Hobo jungle southwest of hotel along Truckee River. Saw hobos

*In the fall of 1939, Herb Ringer traveled west from Ringoes, New Jersey to pursue a divorce in Reno, Nevada.*

*He stayed at a small boarding house on Virginia Avenue for the next several months. While he was there, Herb recorded his observations...*



**‘Fight in hotel-- Jimmy Driscoll and Jimmy Hass.**

**Attend Baptist Church, woman faints.**

**Three people die from lethal gas in hotel room in Reno-- fumigation.**

**Indian squaw in store with papoose in cradle-board, wicker work.’**

**‘Tex Kennedy, drunk in my room, talking. Stole Jimmy Driscoll’s clothes in exchange for debt, J.D. owned. Later threatened to knife McC--Mrs Ryan relieved him of knife. Wanted me to go with him to Mexico. Work on engineering project or ranch.’**



camp out here all winter. Girls, too. Cook, wash in the Truckee. Walk from Sparks, Southern Pacific division point. Bearded fellow from Trenton, stayed in hotel awhile. Picked up for attempted gas-station hold-up when he first arrived in Reno. Father has beer tavern near monument in Trenton. Ren told me he saw a Ponderosa Pine in California that cut 3 30 ft. sections and produced 26,000 ft. lumber. Visited Nevada State Prison at Carson City. Saw Cell Blocks, many of the prisoners, the new death house, gas (lethal) chamber and wall where prisoners were originally shot to death. Also the famous imprints of prehistoric animals. Padded "overcoats" for milk cans completely cover the cans. Tex, planned trip to Grass Valley, California in my room, drunk. His uncle, W. B. Kennedy, Narcotic Agent, Staten Island, N.Y. Tex used to run dope (Marijuana) and chinks across border. Lived with Blanch — Fan-Dancer from the Dug-House for awhile, also with Russel — wife while she was in hotel for divorce. Russel, lumberjack, threatened to knife Tex. Girl from New York and fellow from laundry in Reno, in Room 14 fighting, drunk, from 5: P.M. to 12 noon next day. American station - N6CW - in Reno, also am. W6BYR. In 1929 nearly 10,000 coyotes killed for bounty in one western state. California some years ago paid \$5.00 bounty on some 75,000 killed in state. First snow in Reno, Dec. 23, 1939. Mrs. Ryan married three times, rancher, Willows, California, died, butcher in Virginia City, Nevada, died, and Southern Pacific brakeman Sparks, died. Told me of home life as a girl on father's ranch, Willows, California. Thelma Brazil, now girl divorcee arrives with mother and daughter Janet. Martin Whalen, truck-driver and Viola — drunk. Had quart Bonded whiskey, treating everyone. Gave me pack of chewing gum. Viola tries to call taxi company. Too drunk. Montgomery Wards, opened again, completely redecorated. Mrs. Ryan, Hank and I argue regarding water rights. Hank insisted man who lived near Mt. Rose owned water rights on Government land in Mono National Forest. Jack Kausman went to Frisco with Bill, truck driver. Stranded there. Maxine Rice sent money. Jack took bus to

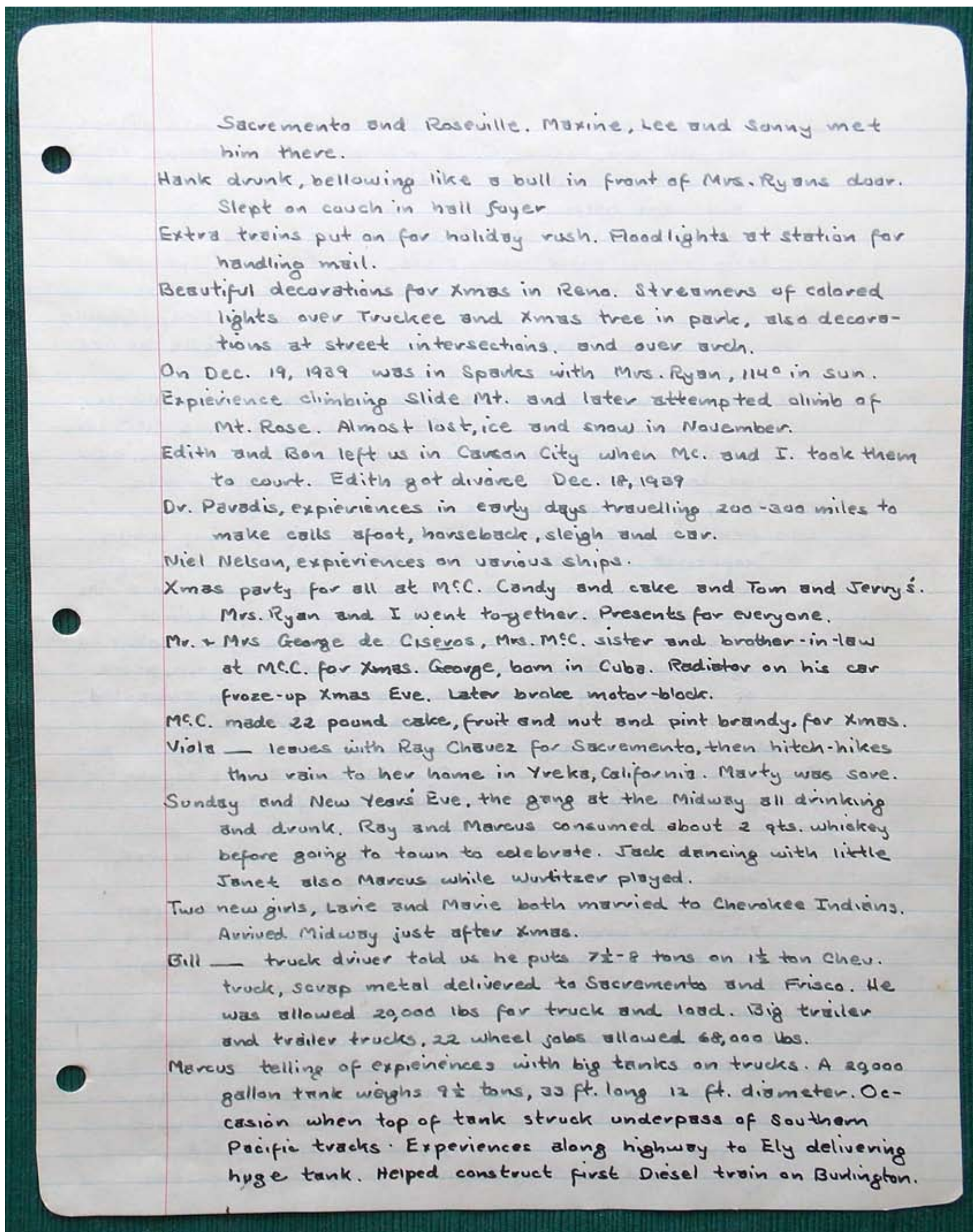
**'Hobo jungle southwest of hotel along the Truckee River. Saw hobos camp out here all winter. Girls too.'**

**'Girl from New York and fellow from laundry in Reno, in room 14 fighting drunk, from 5 p.m. to 12 noon the next day.'**



# “Notes on Reno” continued...

‘Hank drunk, bellowing like a bull  
in front of Mrs. Ryans door.  
Slept on couch in hall foyer.’



‘Bill---truck driver told us he puts  
7 1/2 - 8 tons on a 1 1/2 ton Chev. truck,  
scrap metal delivered to  
Sacramento and Frisco...’

‘Sunday and New Years’ Eve, the gang  
at the Midway all drinking and drunk.  
Ray and Marcus consumed about 2 qts  
whiskey before going to town  
to celebrate. Jack dancing  
with little Janet.’

**'Sam Keyes stole \$85.00 worth of goods from J.P Penny's and while working there for a few weeks, Xmas rush. Lucille helped carry merchandise away for him.'**

Line. Hoboed when young for three years, saw man pushed between cars, another killed in couplers. One evening, he helped sew initials on bedding in Mrs. Ryan's room. Marie and Larie helping.

Jack Kausman gambling. Won \$40. then lost it and more.

Joe Levin arrives from Boston, Mass., now divorcee. Spent some time with him. Wrote contract agreement for him.

Sam Keyes stole \$85.00 worth of goods from J.P. Penny's, while working there for few weeks, Xmas rush. Lucille helped carry merchandise away for him.

M.C. drove to Lovelock on case. Took Jack Boyce with him, here for divorce from Alberta, Canada. On way home M.C. turned around 3 times on ice and skidded into ditch, but no damage. Boyce helped push car out, fell in mud.

Mr. Wells, re-married his wife!

Don Armstrong, Jack Kausman and Joe Levin talking about robberies and poisonings from lead and points. All in Mrs. Ryan's room. Don bought half-pint whiskey and Coca Colas. Men all had highballs, Mrs. Ryan and I, soft drinks.

M.C. operated on for fistula by noted Reno surgeon. Battered again, went to second doctor, operated on again, piece of broken knife blade from former operation extracted. Recently he underwent a third operation.

Don Armstrong explaining about lumbering.

Mrs. Ryan and I took a trip to Pyramid Lake. Saw a coyote cross the highway on the way. Beautiful trip.

Went to movie "Beau Geste" with Jack Kausman. "Pohgekin" Indian word for "white death"; a shrub covered with frost or tiny balls of snow.

Mrs. Motakin's uncle purchased Bowers Mansion in 1905 for \$1200. Her brother now operates a resort place there and clears seven to eight thousand dollars a year.

Wrote letters for Joe Levin, to parole officer!

M.C. had over 100 divorce cases in Carson City in 1939 & in Reno and some in Virginia City. Had 15¢ all together. Contacts all over.

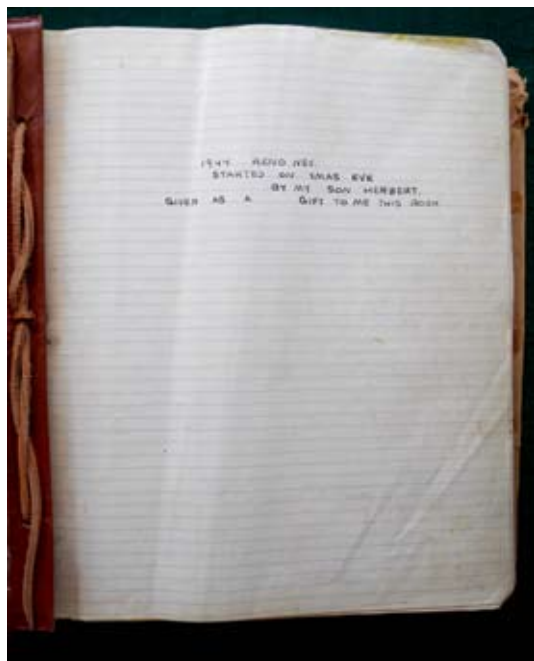
Went to show with Mrs. Ryan. Then to Big Grant for sandwich and coca cola. Visited Mary in Verdome Apartments. Met strip-tease gypsy girl there. Said she was injured by Cory Grant in "Gunga Din" as she

**'Mr. Wells, re-married his wife!'**

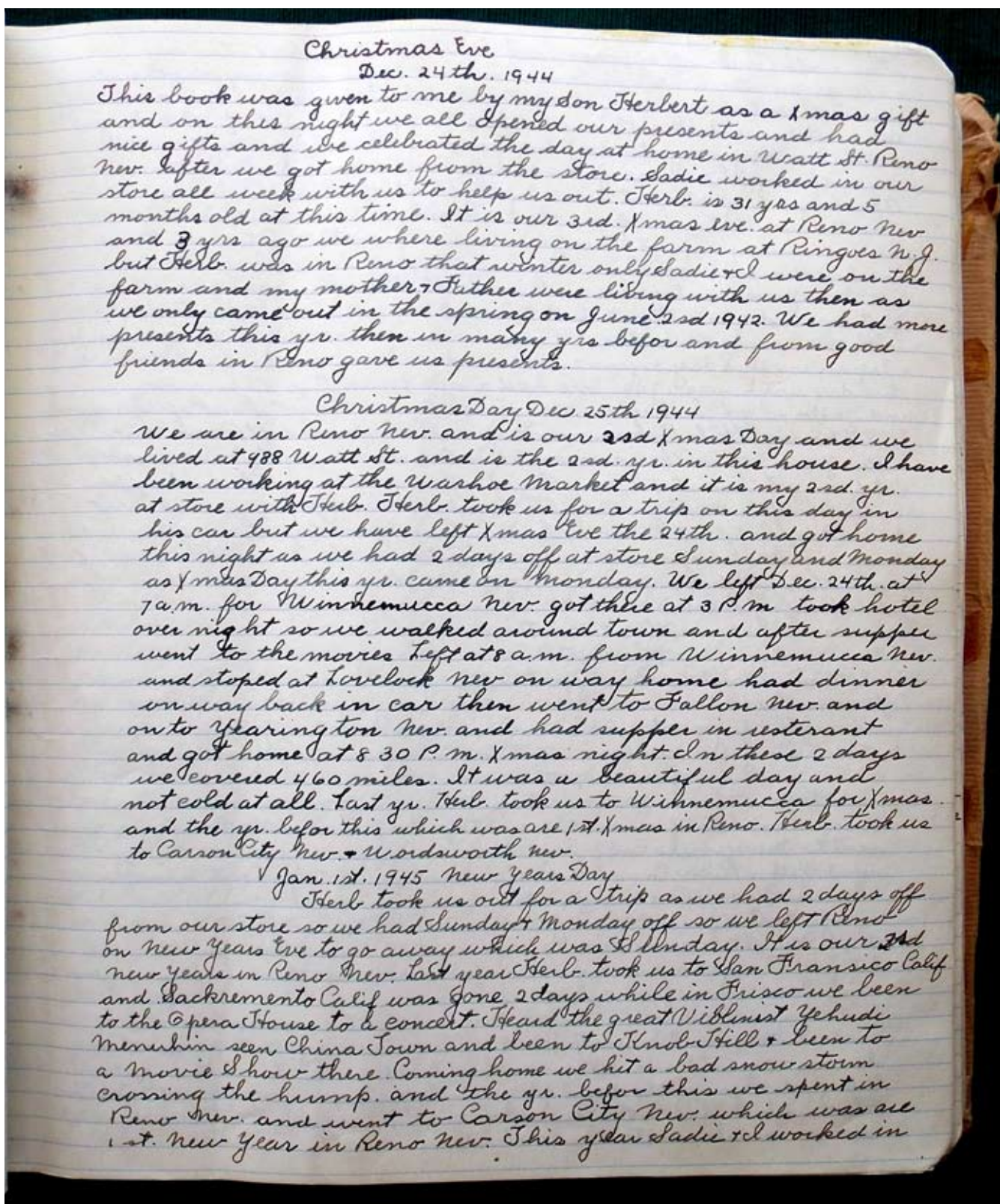
To read "Notes" in its entirety, visit the [WordPress version of this issue...](#)

# THE JOURNAL OF JOSEPH RINGER

1944-1963

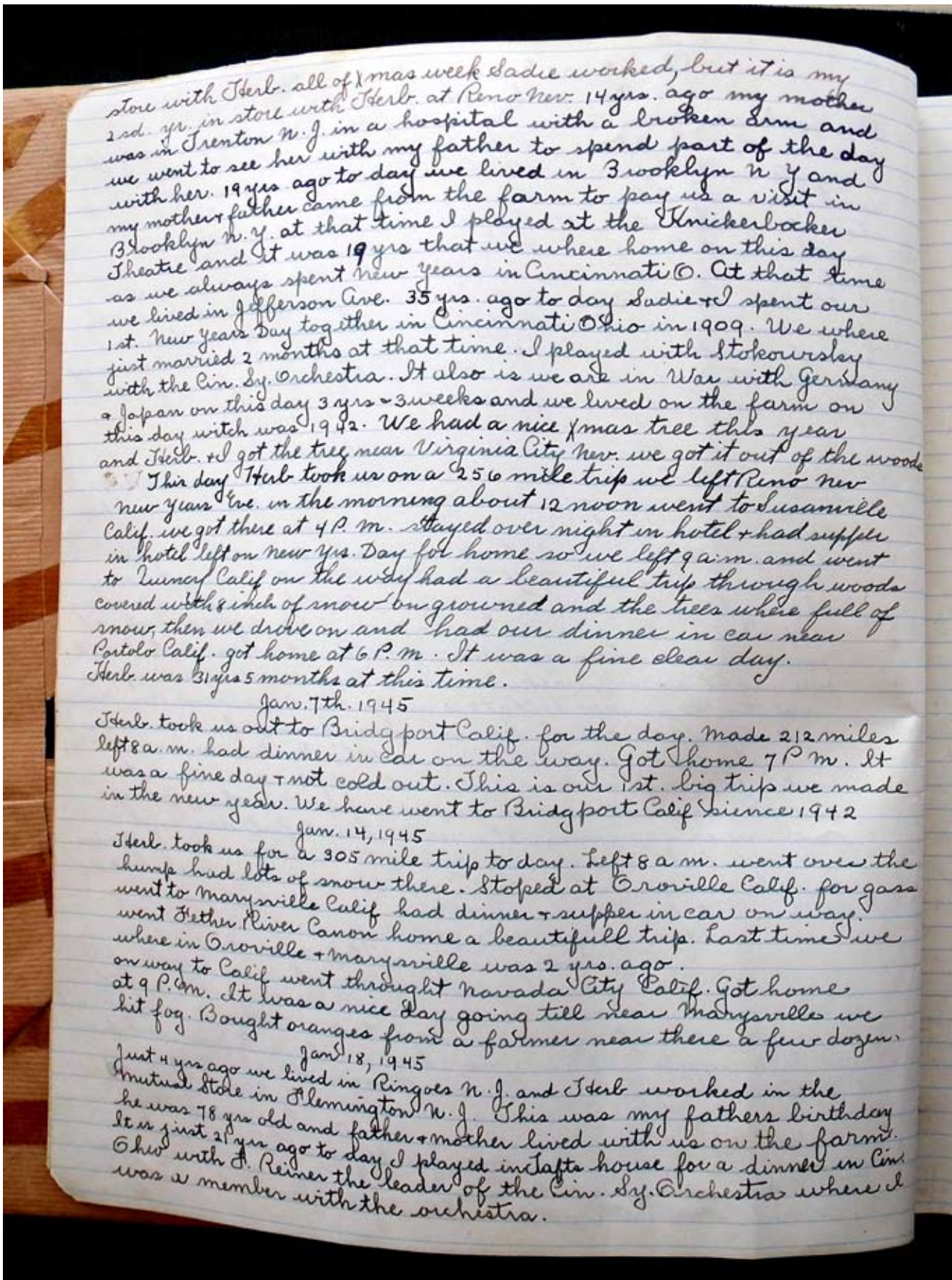


**‘This book was given to me by my son Herbert as a xmas gift and on this night we all opened our presents and had nice gifts and we celebrated the day at home in Watt St Reno, Nev. after we got home from the store. Sadie worked in our store all week with us to help us out. Herb is 31 years and 5 months old at this time. It is our third Xmas eve. at Reno Nev and 3 yrs ago we where living on the farm at Ringoes N.J. but herb was in Reno that winter only Sadie & I were on the farm and my mother & father were living with us then as we only came out in the spring on June 2nd 1942. We had more presents this yr. then in many yrs. befor and from good friends in Reno gave us presents.’**



**Jan. 1st 1945 New Years Day**

**Herb took us out for a trip as we had 2 days off from our store so we had Sunday & Monday off so we left Reno to go away which was Sunday...Last year Herb took us to San Francisco Calif and Sackremento Calif was gone 2 days while in Frisco we been to the Opera House to a concert. Heard the great Violinist Yehudi Menuhin seen China Town and been to Knob Hill & been to movie show there. Coming home we hit a bad snow storm crossing the hump and the yr. before we spent in Reno Nev. and went to Carson City, Nev.**



35 yrs. ago to day Sadie & I spent our 1st New Years Day together in Cincinnati Ohio in 1909. We where just married 2 months at that time. I played the Stokowsky with the Cin. Sy. Orchestra. It is also we are in War with Germany & Japan on this day 3 yrs & 3 weeks and we lived on the farm on this day which was 1942. We had a nice Xmas tree this year and Herb & I got the tree near Virginia City Nev. we got it out of the woods.

Jan. 7th 1945

Herb took us out to Bridgeport Calif. for the day. Made 212 miles. left 8 a.m. had dinner in car on the way. Got home 7 Pm. It was a fine day & not cold out. This is our first big trip we made in the new year.

Jan 18, 1945

Just 4 yrs ago we lived in Ringoes N.J. and Herb worked in the Mutual Store in Flemington N.J. This was my father's birthday he was 78 yrs old and father and mother lived with us on the farm. It is just 21 yrs ago to day I played in Taft's house for a dinner in Cin. Ohio with F. Reiner the leader of the Cin Sy. Orchestra where I was a member with the orchestra.

June 5, 1950

We are off the main road, left (US) 50 and after 30 miles riding on it to get to Moab. Seen snow in distance on a big mtn. top. We are on 160 Route going towards Red Rock

Country. very beautiful country here. Took motel here at Moab Utha at 2 P.M. took are bath & had supper in motel. Had a real kitchen in motel & kitchen stove to cook on. Took a walk in town for the eve.

It was a very hot night out. Herb went to the movies in the eve. We sat outside of motel as it was so hot in the rooms, This is all for today.

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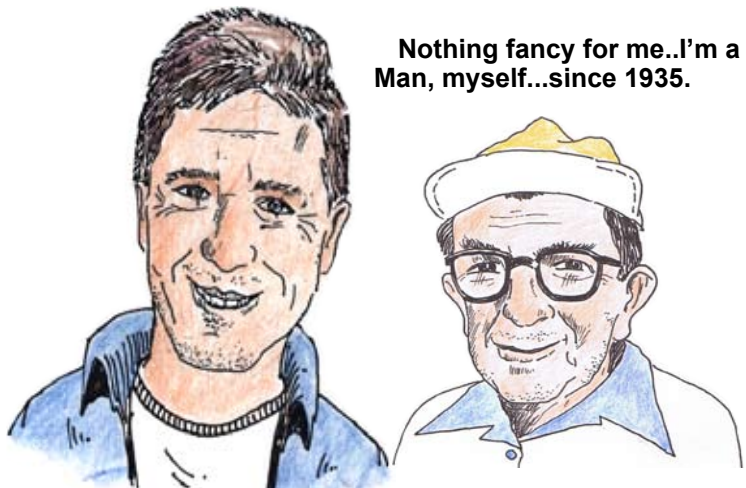
To see more lists from Joe Ringer visit the WordPress version of this issue.

# JOSEPH RINGER'S 'LISTS'...

Cities we have seen...by state and year



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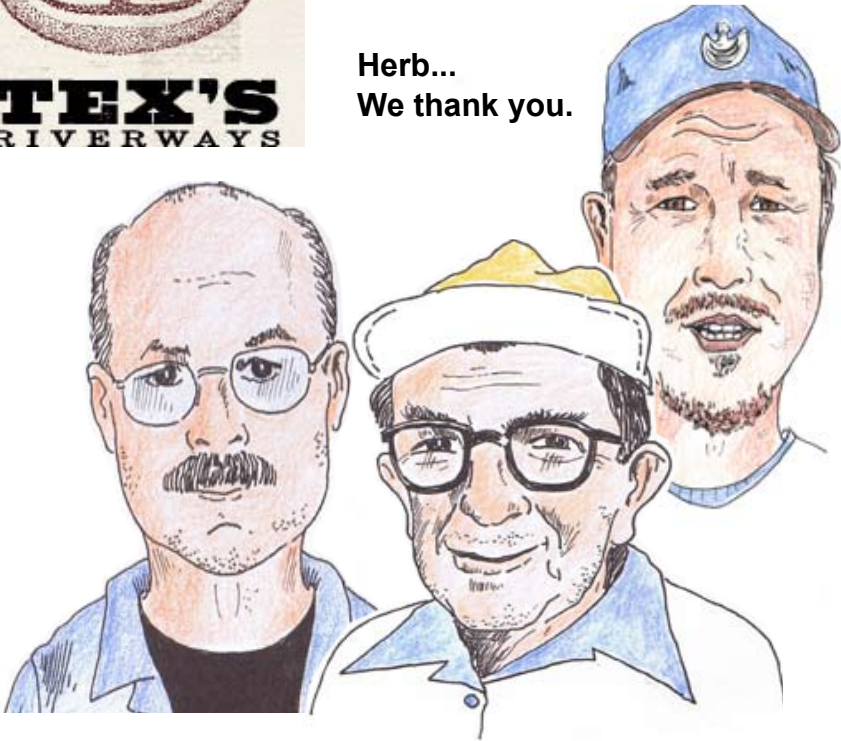
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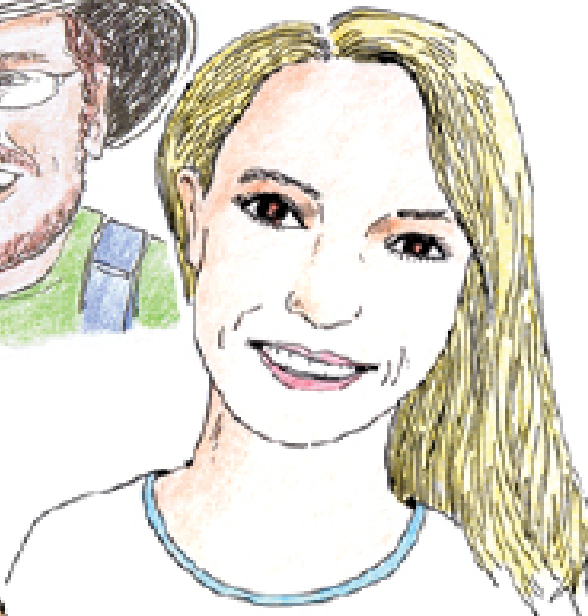
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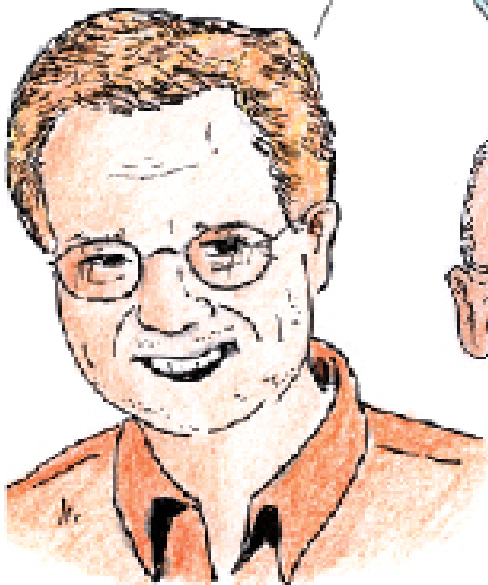


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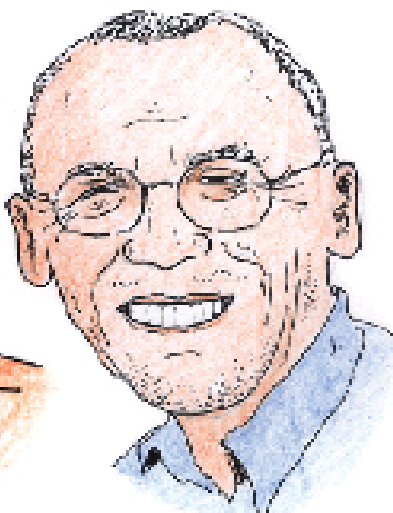
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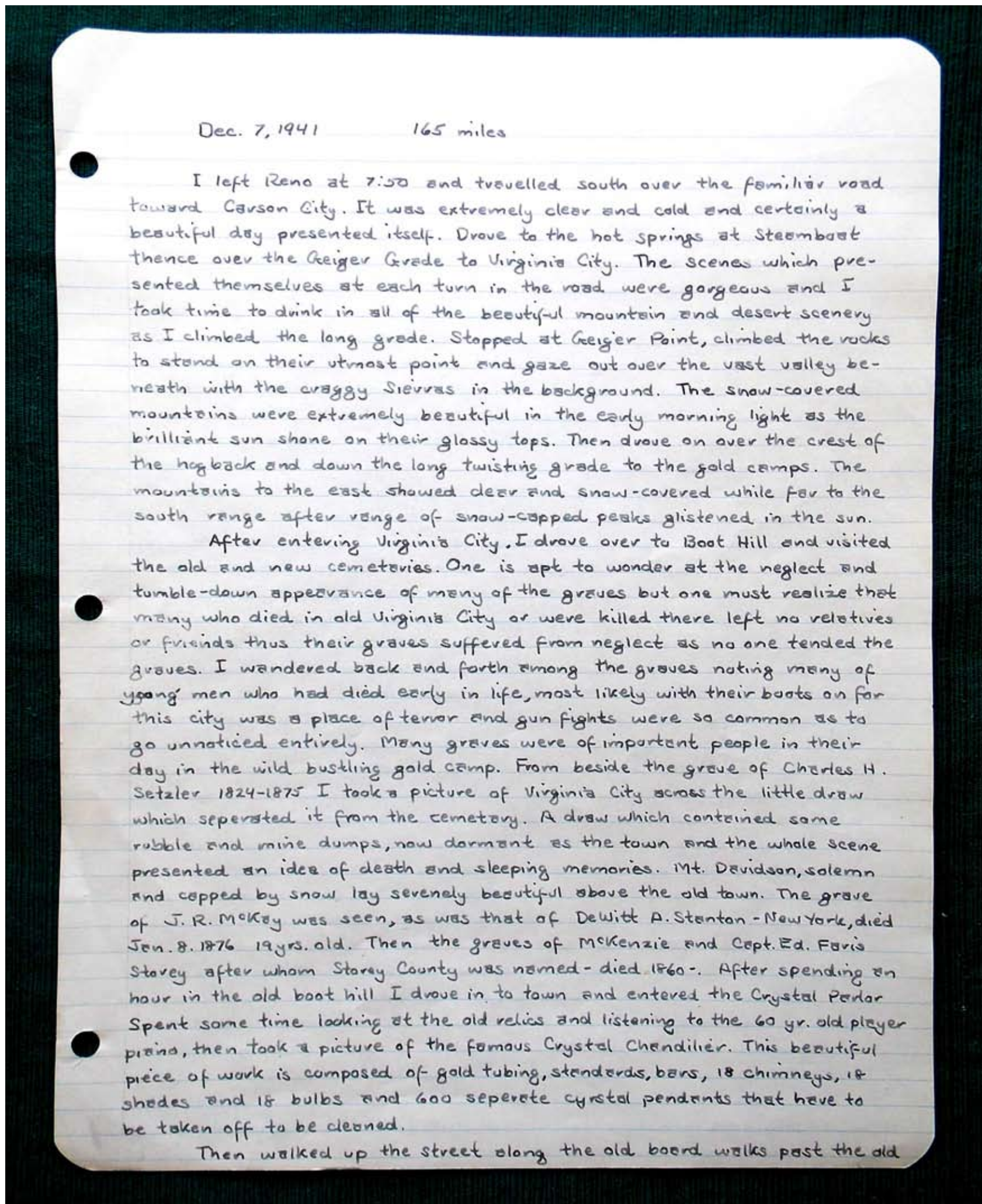
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from Herb Ringer's Journals  
**DECEMBER 7, 1941**

Wandering through ghost towns, away from the 'real world. Herb's "Day of Infamy" was very peaceful



To read the rest of Herb's December 7, 1941 entry,  
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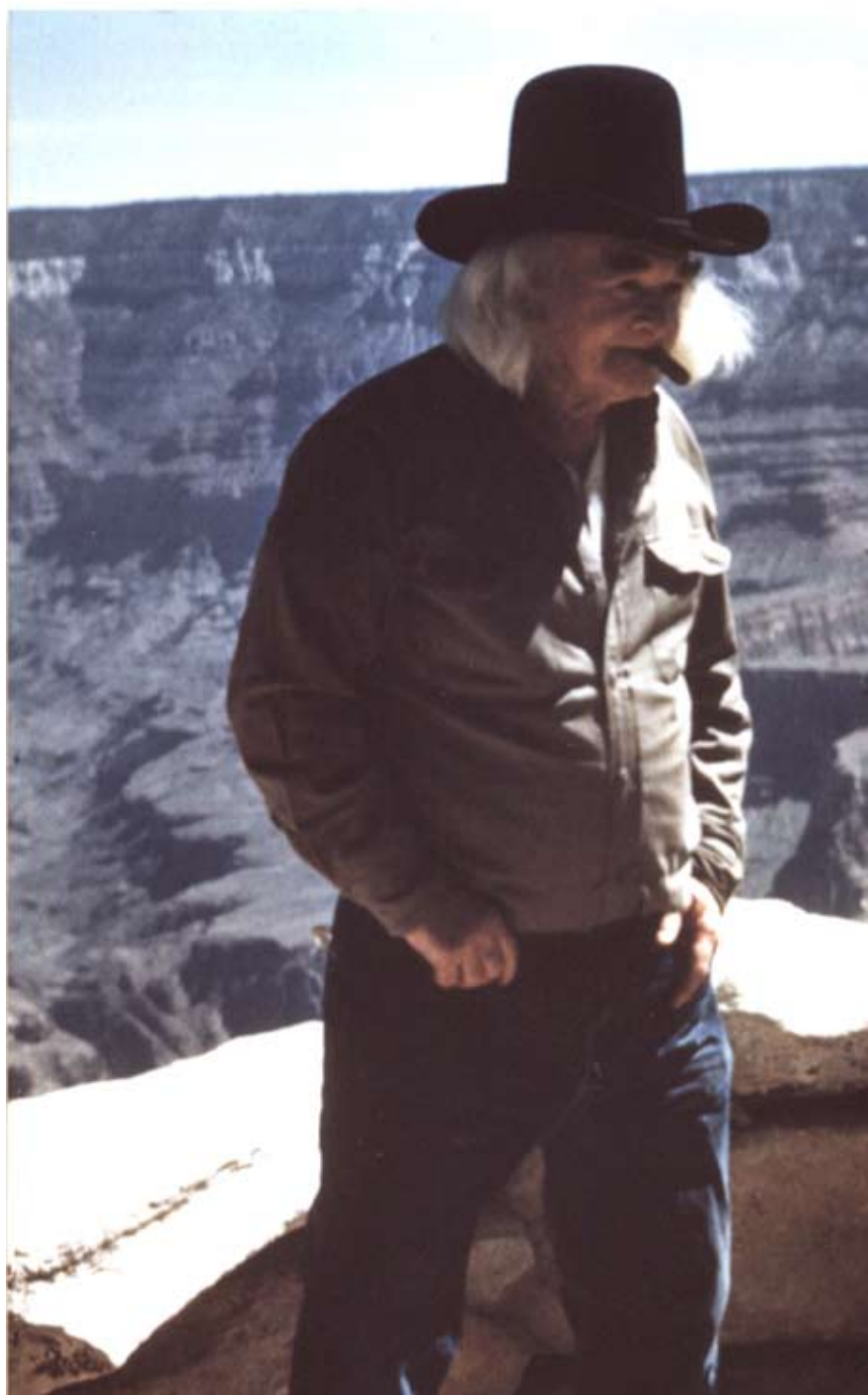
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*Herb Remembers...*

# SHORTY YARBERRY of the GRAND CANYON



SHORTY YARBERRY, about 1950

PHANTON RANCH at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. Shorty planted the cottonwoods there.



One of the great characters of the Grand Canyon was Shorty Yarberry. His whole name was George Armstrong Custer 'Shorty' Yarberry. He was born on the day of the Battle of the Little Big Horn when Custer was killed. He is buried at the Grand Canyon, right next to the Kolb Brothers, who ran the photographic studio there.

Shorty had been in Texas and he was incarcerated for stealing cattle and then horse stealing. So he spent some time in a steel and concrete apartment, if you know what I mean. He came out to the South Rim and the Fred Harvey people gave him a job, down in the canyon, to erect a fence to lay some rip wrap on Bright Angel Creek. He worked with a pair of big, grey horses, and a Fresno Scraper, which is sort of a glorified wheel barrel without a wheel. Anyway he hauled all these rocks and built up the creek sides. He also planted all the cottonwood trees at Phantom Ranch.

But the years passed and he started getting old and putting on weight. So they brought him out of the canyon...that was a task for a mule...and put him in a semi-retirement building near the corrals. I saw Shorty sitting in front of the corral many times. He was a nice fellow to talk with but he had the smallest feet on a man you can ever imagine. They say he wore a size 4. In addition he always wore Mexican rowels on his boots, so he always jingled when he walked.

He finally died, I guess in his eighties by then, and was laid to rest in the Grand Canyon cemetery.

HR



“COL. CUSTER (SHORTY) YARBERRY”

BORN 81 YEARS AGO DIED MARCH 1957

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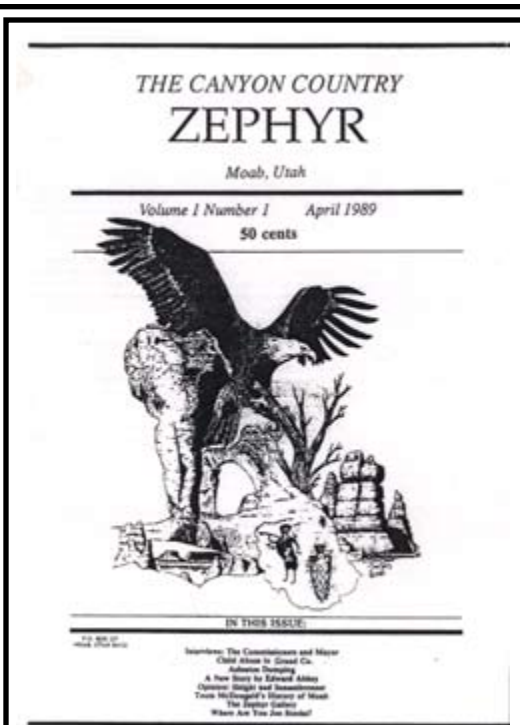
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*who, each issue,  
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The Zephyr into  
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causing the editor  
to have a  
nervous breakdown.*



# Renewable Energy:

## *Shredding the Magic of Nevada's Great Basin*

Scott Thompson

Experiencing the Great Basin Desert in Nevada seems to involve an inner war of perceptions. Here's how it went for me.

Just after Gail and I turned our rental car due south on Alternate U.S. Highway 93 from the fortress of casinos lining the border town of West Wendover, Nevada – servicing the good Mormon sinners of Salt Lake City - into the empty salt flats, it felt like we were sliding into another world.

And a forbidding one, even to a lover of other Western deserts. I think one of the reasons is the odd, whitish hue of the low-lying salt flats, whether they're vast white playas or episodic alkaline lowlands. In large part they're remnants of land-locked lakes and pools during the last ice age. As the Holocene warmed the atmosphere they dried up; today salt-whitened playas in the Great Basin are partially filled by water from snow melts and episodic thunder boomers.

The low-down desert here is a land of saltbushes and great spreading stands of greasewood.

But the salt-flat at the southern edge of Wendover was a modest one. Within 20 miles the highway led up into the sagebrush steppe that carpets the level, wide valleys all across the Great Basin. Sagebrush runs from 4,500 feet up to 10,000 feet; once you pull up from a playa or an alkaline flat, the sagebrush is ubiquitous. The changing of the seasons makes no difference to the gray-blue hue of the landscape; the dominant sagebrush retains its leaves all year. And nothing on the desert floor towers above it. The Great Basin does not harbor the exotic, taller plants of the southern deserts, such as ocotillo, soap-tree yucca, paloverde, or Joshua-trees. The humble plants that can survive along with the sagebrush in this cold desert, such as rabbit brush, run low to the ground, leaving the landscape and the horizons long and empty.

And barren.



sagebrush-coated valley, maybe including a playa or an alkaline lowland, and then briefly thread a mountain pass stippled with pinion pines and junipers, because you're going above 6,000 feet, and then wind down into another empty sagebrush-coated valley, and then through another thin, pinyon-juniper pass, and so on, for over 300 miles.

As we cruised along that first day, surrounded by the relentless landscape, thoughts that there is nothing here slithered through my mind. I didn't give said thoughts any credence, but they were there. It was the inner war of perceptions working its way through me.

Fortunately those thoughts didn't last too long. Because a shift, completely in the background at first, happened sometime before we reached Ely or maybe just after. Hard to say when. And it involved a feeling I couldn't name: it wasn't either relaxation or relief; maybe something between or around them that was more gentle.

The difficulty with this desert, what makes it elusive, is that the inner silence that can come to you here does not involve perceiving any specific features within it or attributes of it. I'm going to repeat that: it does not involve perceiving ANY specific features within it or attributes of it. What this desert does instead is mirror any space and light that it finds within you into a world of space and light around you.

If it finds that within you.

More than any other American desert, although it's true of them all, the Great Basin is a subtle place. As long as you're searching for anything out there that excites your interest its featurelessness will rebuff you. And when that happens it will seem an alien place to you and a lonely one. And you will be tempted to

**As we cruised along that first day, surrounded by the relentless landscape, thoughts that there is nothing here slithered through my mind. I didn't give said thoughts any credence, but they were there. It was the inner war of perceptions working its way through me.**

In Ely, Nevada, 120 miles south, we turned onto U.S. Highway 50, justly named "The Loneliest Road in America," stretching east and west. Good biker territory. We explored it eastward that afternoon before checking into our eccentric hotel (hints: (1) historic firearms and a motorcycle are displayed in the lobby abutting the casino, and (2) the management states that it's more impressed with the behavior of the dogs who have stayed there than some of its human guests. We found this refreshing – but that's another story).

The Great Basin Desert is traversed north and south by a series of long, slender, mountain ranges, peaking at 10-12,000 feet. And visually splendid, as desert mountains always are. Nevertheless, it's an exceedingly redundant process to drive east or west across them on U.S. 50. You cross a wide, uninhabited

conclude, as so many have, that there is nothing here.

Meaning that there is nothing of value here, that it is a wasteland.

This is the conclusion that travelers from the mainstream American society have on the whole drawn, going back to the 19th century: "[John] Fremont wrote of its 'dreary and savage character,' its burnt appearance, and the sense of dread he felt upon entering it; Edwin Bryant, who traversed the Great Basin on mule-back in 1846, found it 'sufficiently cheerless and desolate to depress the most buoyant temperament' – with 'sable and utterly sterile mountains' and arid plains 'incapable of sustaining either insect or animal;' James H. Simpson, exploring in 1859 for the Army Corps of Engineers, reported in the

same vein on 'dark and dreary' mountains – 'fit monuments of the desolation which reigns over the whole desert' – 'wretchedly sandy and barren' country and vistas 'exceedingly forbidding in appearance.'" (Sally Zanjani, 2001, Sarah Winemucca, p. 42.)

By contrast, the diffuse bands of Paiute Indians, who were nurtured by the Great Basin Desert as hunter-gatherers for thousands of years, cherished it. For Paiute Sarah Winemucca, born in 1844, "the desert was her 'dear country,' re-entered not with horror but with joy, its secrets of sustaining life well known to her people." (p.42.)

They knew its spiritual properties well.

\*\*\*

About 50 miles east of Ely Gail and I saw the wind farm on the far side of Spring Valley, after we crested Connors pass. Not far from the Utah line. Sixty-six gargantuan white wind turbines stood in a neat pattern on a 7,673 acre site administered by the Bureau of Land Management. Operated by a private contractor, providing the power equivalent of 45,000 homes. Commercial operation started in August, 2012. (See [www.patternenergy.com](http://www.patternenergy.com).)



Now encountering one wind farm in over 300 miles along "The Loneliest Highway in America" didn't annihilate the solitude and serenity for us. But it wouldn't have taken many more. In this vein note the following from President Obama's speech about climate change on June 25 of this year: "So the plan I'm announcing today will help us double again our energy from wind and sun. Today, I'm directing the Interior Department to green light enough private, renewable energy capacity on public lands to power more than 6 million homes by 2020." In a follow-up article a few days later he wrote, "We'll encourage our businesses to deploy more clean energy, which will mean...more jobs for American workers building wind turbines and installing solar panels." ("Obama: Climate Change in the World We Leave Our Children," Charleston Gazette, 6/30/13, p. 3C.)

Let's look at a few numbers:

It would take another 133 wind farms like the one we saw in Spring Valley to power six million more homes. Not sure how many massive solar plants it would take, but you get the point. All of these are to be situated on public lands.

Just over 2/3 of Nevada's land is held by the BLM. A greater percentage than any other state. (See "Western States Data Public Land Acreage (FS & BLM), Percentage of Land Base, and Population November 13, 2007".)

The vast majority of Nevada is in the Great Basin Desert, and nearly all of the rest of it is in the Mohave Desert.

Does that give you an idea where these public lands President Obama has in mind are located, and what will become of them?

It sure gave me one, which I'll share. But first let's at least glimpse at how the larger society has treated this magnificent and subtle desert country.

\*\*\*

You can tell a lot about a culture by examining its garbage dumps. That's how you get the complete picture.

Ask any archaeologist.

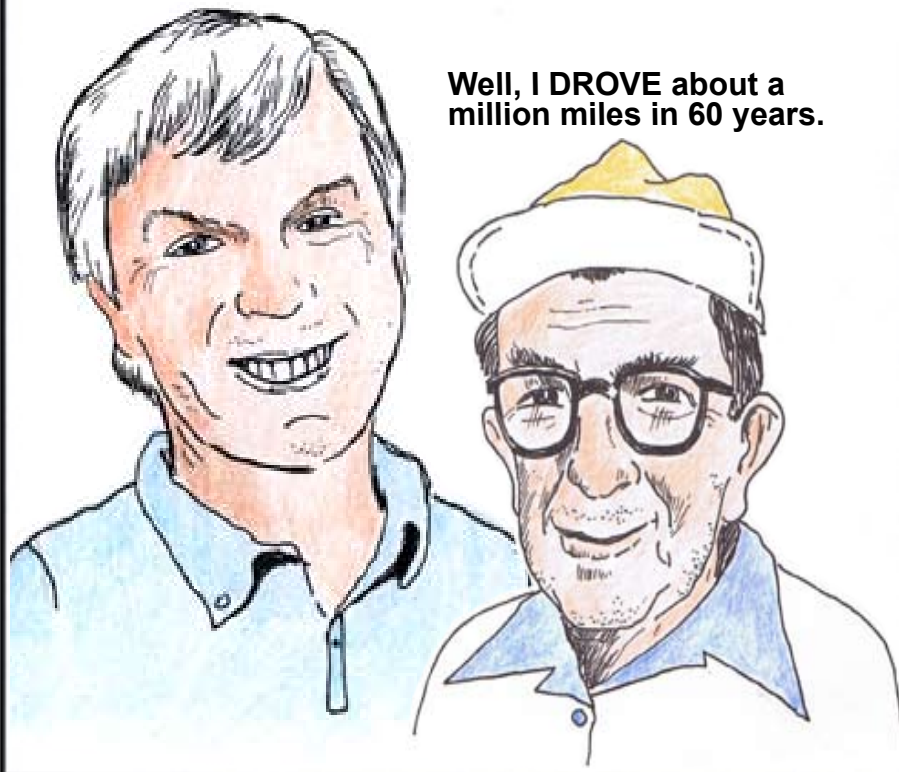
From the outset we Americans have on the whole seen the Nevada deserts as wastelands. The fruition of this is that in the last six decades these precious deserts have become designated dumping grounds both for the greater society's toxic wastes and toxic behaviors. A dumping ground for what we thought must be banished from the America we wanted to think about and wanted the world to see.

NEXT PAGE...

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# Scott Thompson

## CONTINUED....

Some examples which I regret to say are real:

From 1951 to 1962 on the Nevada Test Site, which straddles the Great Basin Desert and the Mohave Desert, our government exploded roughly 100 nuclear bombs above ground. Including all the underground nuclear tests, there were over 1,000 explosions ending in 1992. The key question is: why did they pick the Nevada Test Site? I don't accept the argument that it was solely for pragmatic safety reasons. Consider: Las Vegas was a mere 65 miles to the southeast and even by 1950 its population was over 24,000 and had grown to over 64,000 by 1960. In addition, there were other towns in the vicinity, such as Beatty, Nevada, as well as the Moapa River Indian Reservation. Not to speak of towns in Utah and California. So again: why there? I think a key reason, among others, was that our military well knew that the American public perceived the Nevada desert as a remote wasteland, infinitely far away from them, and therefore safe. I also suspect that subconsciously the honchos already had that mindset themselves. In other words, the selection was as much about psychological perception, if not more so, than safety. (For generic background see "Nevada National Security Site" in Wikipedia.)

**Now encountering one wind farm in over 300 miles along "The Loneliest Highway in America" didn't annihilate the solitude and serenity for us. But it wouldn't have taken many more.**

A proposed nuclear waste repository within Yucca Mountain, which abuts the western edge of the Nevada Test Site, has been grinding through the system for decades. It would be a massive pit toilet for nuclear turds emitted all across America. A hole of horrors. At this time the project is on hold, but all it may take to push it back on its diabolical track is another spiritually obtuse right-wing Republican administration. That Yucca Mountain has been the site of Paiute and Shoshone religious ceremonies and is therefore a sacred site will not save it from desecration by nuclear waste, given the time and money invested in it thus far by the mainstream (sorry to say, but if it's not clear to you that money is what's REALLY sacred and that time is money you're walking around with a bag over your head). For the psychological aspects of writing this site off as a wasteland, see the Nevada Test Site above. (Cf. "GAO: Death of Yucca Mountain Caused by Political Maneuvering," New York Times, 5/10/11, and "Quarrels Continue Over Repository for Nuclear Waste," New York Times, 6/27/13.)

For decades the gambling casinos we would not permit within the standard society were allowed in Nevada. In Las Vegas over half a century ago they were often financially nurtured by gangsters. Now they have become grandiose, psychologically sophisticated enterprises, appealing to aspects of our nature that we still haven't become honest enough to openly acknowledge. The marketing hook today is that while you can gamble in a lot of places, you can't get as crazy anywhere else as you can in Vegas. Hence the motto, "What happens in Vegas

**Hence the motto, "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." In other words, you can go there, act like a shithole, and then leave your behaviors behind. That's the motto of a designated wasteland.**

stays in Vegas." In other words, you can go there, act like a shithole, and then leave your behaviors behind. That's the motto of a designated wasteland.

\*\*\*

Back to mass renewable energy. President Obama knows he won't get people with serious money to help him deal with climate change unless (1) he continues to promote ongoing economic growth, which he's doing, and (2) he can find a way to keep them (or make them) fat-ass wealthy. Therefore he plans to confiscate – er, sorry, privatize – swaths of BLM land in order to fill them with privately operated, highly profitable wind farms and solar plants.

Given that Nevada has a greater percentage of BLM land than any other state, the vast majority of which is Great Basin Desert, it's altogether possible that a solar plant or wind farm, perhaps a multitude of them, will be erected in virtually every sagebrush valley across the state.

People who have spent real time in desert landscapes know how fragile they are, even the tough-looking sagebrush steppes. They know it will take these desert ecologies hundreds of years or longer to heal from the disruption and damage they will incur from these massive renewable energy projects. Unfortunately, given the mainstream's history of indifference to the Great Basin Desert, it's a safe bet that few people outside Nevada will know or care that it's being put through a shredder.

Nor is there a reason to expect that the major green groups, even though they know what's at stake ecologically, will join forces to fight off privatizing Nevada's BLM land. Most of them are likely to see this as the only pragmatic way to significantly reduce fossil fuel emissions. For them sloughing off the Great Basin may well be an acceptable political trade-off.

Nor are Nevadans themselves, given the jobs and state tax revenues that will be at stake, likely to be in a viable position to defend the Great Basin Desert that many of them love.

It's certainly possible, however, that for one reason or another the Great Basin Desert will luck out – dodge this bullet. Or that humanity's better nature will suddenly make an appearance and stave the thing off. It does happen.

Or perversely the Great Basin Desert might be saved, at least temporarily, by the machinations of the fossil fuel industry. If those black-hearted knaves can continue hanging onto their subsidies and thwart EPA regulation of CO2 emissions by power plants, they may continue to lure enough investors away from renewable energy to keep it flat-lined.

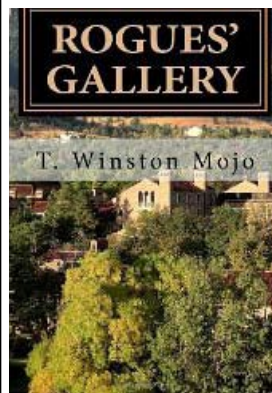
Meanwhile the question isn't whether the Great Basin Desert is worthy of our attention, but whether we're worthy of its austere magnificence.

The answer remains very much in doubt.

*Note: valued resources were Ann Zwinger's The Mysterious Lands, 1989, pp. 229-297, and Gretchen M. Baker's Great Basin National Park, 2012.*



SCOTT THOMPSON is a regular contributor to *The Zephyr*. He lives in Beckley, WV



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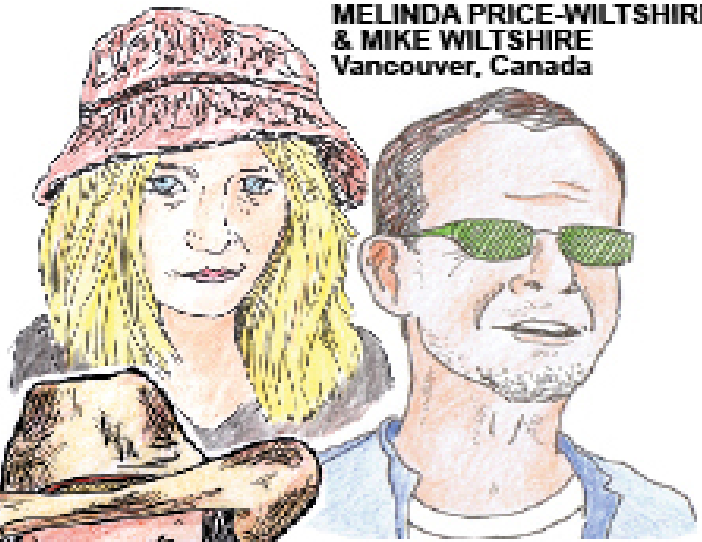
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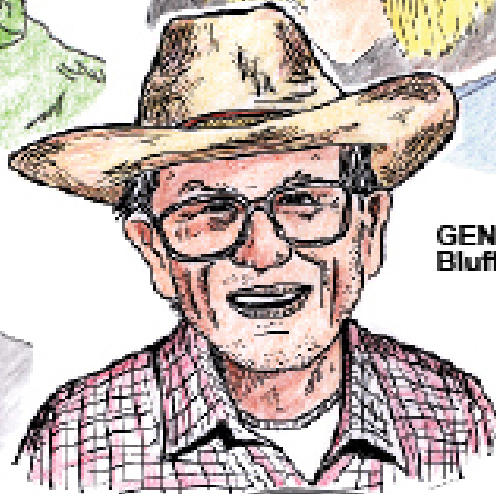
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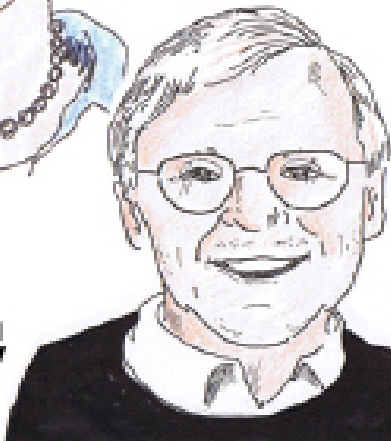
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A LETTER from HERB about...

# RHYOLITE GHOST TOWN, EATING ANTS & COURTEOUS HOOKERS.



Dear Jim,

Just a little explanation on these old prints. Wes Moreland, standing in the doorway of the railroad station at Rhyolite with his red setter. Both lived quite well on steak every day. I believe he remarked that Wes had a local Indian that supplied him with beef. "A long rope, a fast horse and a runnin' iron were the necessary tools of the trade."

In a land even now remarkably free of human occupation, one can ride horseback great distances without being encountered with the meeting of other humans.

Wes, for some reason, took a liking to me, and I in turn found him one of the most fascinating desert people I had the privilege of meeting. During the second world war years he was one of a few inhabitants at Rhyolite. He kept a well-stocked bar but, as a diabetic, refrained from indulging. It was Wes, you will recall, who ate live ants, prescribed by a Shoshone woman living in an old box car as treatment for his tuberculosis.

He expired at least 40 years ago.

Regarding the two "ladies of the night." These gals picked me up as I walked across the desert between Beatty and Rhyolite. They formerly lived and entertained in the upper rooms of Wes' depot. They were utterly polite and I had not seriously contemplated their occupation nor their desire to visit Rhyolite. When we arrived, they embraced Wes and it appeared a familiar gathering of kindred spirits.

As for the interior of the Rhyolite bar. Wes was infamously famous for his collection of photos of nudes and near-nudes. The walls were covered with a glamorous array of these women.

Above the bar, toward the left and amid all the coyote skins is a large framed nude of particular interest. This was the daughter of Harri-man, money-bag of great repute and president of the New York Central railroad. The gal had a flare for crashing elite parties in Hollywood clad only in a mink coat.

When Wes expired, the Depot and accoutrements all reverted to two maiden aunts in Georgia. When they arrived at Rhyolite and were ushered into the precincts of Wes' bar and beheld his girls, they promptly fell dead.



Your friend,  
Herb



**WES MORELAND and friend**



*These gals picked me up as I walked across the desert between Beatty and Rhyolite. They formerly lived and entertained in the upper rooms of Wes' depot. They were utterly polite...*



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# TOM TILL

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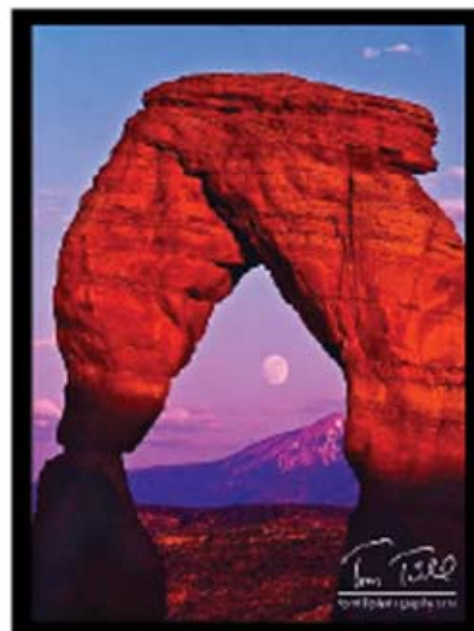


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# A CLOSE ENCOUNTER in a GHOST TOWN

Herb in Ludwig, Nevada...1942



One morning I took off from Reno to explore an old ghost town called Ludwig, near Yerington. While hunting through an old station, I heard a car motor wheezing over the rough steep hill, and hitching my gun forward, I scanned the hillside for sign of the car.

It proved to be an old Model T Ford and two men were in it. One, a man of about 50, was dressed shabbily, while the younger man was more neatly attired. We spoke for about 15 minutes and found that the more elderly of the two was the caretaker of the abandoned mines and he asked my business.

Somehow I felt uneasy in his presence and I was glad I packed my gun. While we talked, the younger man edged to my other side as if looking me over. I presumed he could see my holster against my thigh.

Later I learned that the older man had shot and killed a man who was hunting through the old buildings without having gained permission. The local authorities asked a few questions but he never was held for the killing...

HR, 1942.



# HOPE VALLEY

## A Place of Refuge & Solitude for the Ringers...

*Herb often spoke of a place in the High Sierras, west of Carson City, called Hope Valley. He and his parents often traveled there on weekends, to get away from the hustle and bustle of Reno.*

*By Herb's account, they made the 150 mile round trip 259 times. When his father died of cancer in 1963, he and his mother could not bear to return.*

*But in 1997, with his eyesight failing, I drove Herb back to Hope Valley for one last look.*

*These are just a few of the pictures he shot of Hope Valley and his parents over the years.*

*The last one, taken by me, is from that last pilgrimage to a place he loved so much... JS*

*Family and friends. 1945*



*Last photograph of his father. Christmas Day. 1962*

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*Herb. 1997.  
Trip #260.*



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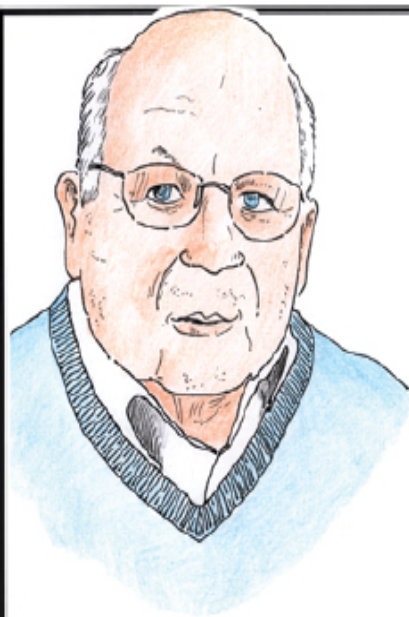
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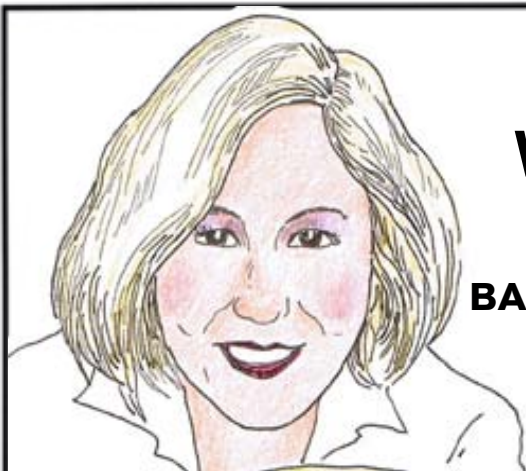
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**ANNE  
SNOWDEN  
CROSMAN**



# THE GOAT MAN of MOAB

Photograph by HERB RINGER Story by JEAN EARDLEY (from a 1990 Zephyr article)



Jack W. Holley was born on May 7, 1872 in Crawford County, Arkansas. He served in the Spanish-American War, World War I, and spent many years at sea as a Merchant Marine and fisherman. He reportedly sailed around the world at least three times (and was shipwrecked at least once each time.) He studied philosophy in India and from this shaped his view of life. He was also respectful of the Aztec civilization. His rather austere existence in Moab was often likened to the spiritual sojourn of great Eastern philosophers. (Although other moab residents said he was a typical hermit—no different from the “mule and miner” prospectors who lived in the hills—someone who wore old clothes to encourage hand-outs and hoarded what few belongings he had.)

Holley's world travels were also accompanied with several bouts of malaria, which left him in poor health and dependent on his brother as a means of support. He and his brother came to Moab in the early 1930s in search of a mining prospect. When his brother died, Holley was left “stranded” in Moab. At first he lived in a mud and thatch dugout by the river northwest of Moab. Later, when the new highway river bridge was built, he acquired the shed that was used by the construction workers. He lived in the shed by the river with two goats and five dogs until a fatal fire (in the early 60s?) which was probably started by a cigarette. A local who cleaned out the shack after Mr. Holley died claims that it was full of food “commodities” and new clothing, which locals had passed on to him through the years. Several coins were also found, which supported the theory that Mr. Holley was a coin collector—and also fueled the legend that Mr. Holley was actually very wealthy and had hidden a fortune in coin near his shack by the river.

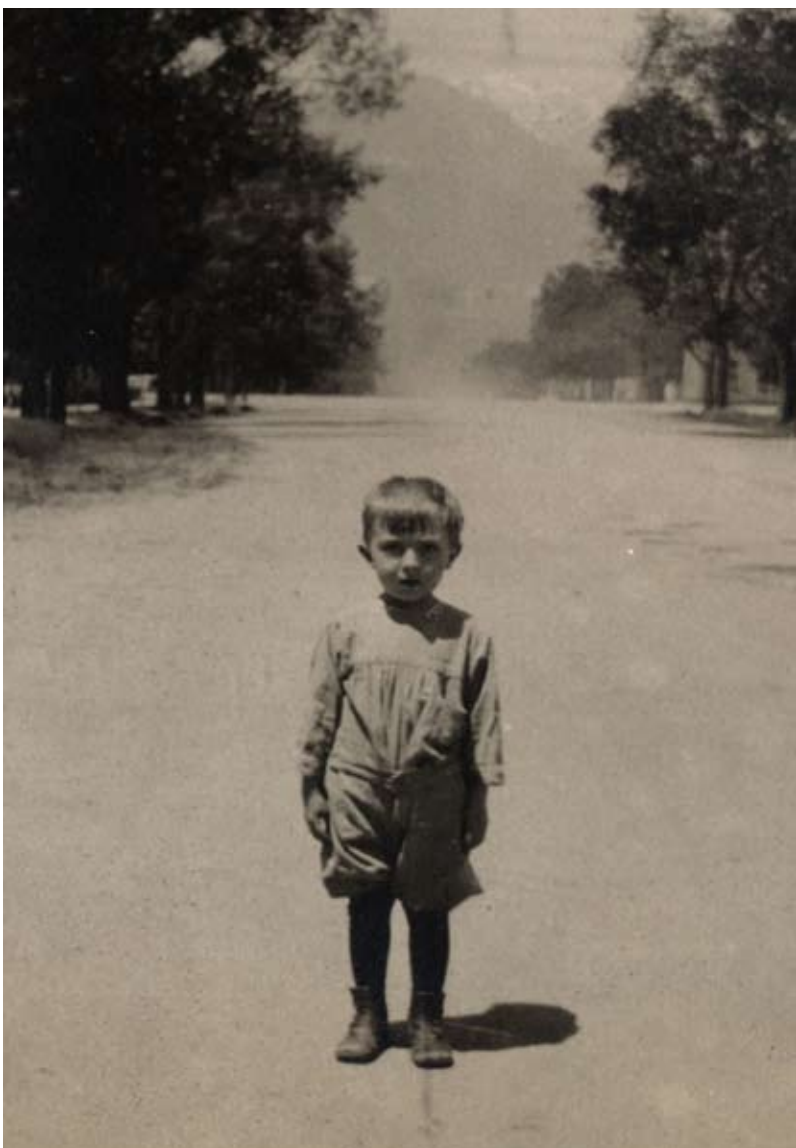
Holley acquired the name of “The Goat Man” because of the goats with whom he shared his bed, and because of his reported reliance on goat's milk as one of his principle forms of nourishment. One of his goats, named Nanny, was referred to as “my housekeeper.” Holley's five shepherd dogs were also constant companions and probably consumed much of the food that members of the local community shared with him.

Everyone agrees that “The Goat Man” was humble, friendly, literate, and at peace with the world--“different from most.” Once a month he walked to town (goats and shepherds at his side) for the mysterious pension check which came “from the East.” He was full of stories and philosophy, and, more than 30 years after his death, he is still one of Moab's legends. The cache of gold has never been found, but his old shack still stands on a local farm where it was moved after his death—and local papers still find pictures of him and ask--“What do you know about The Goat Man?”

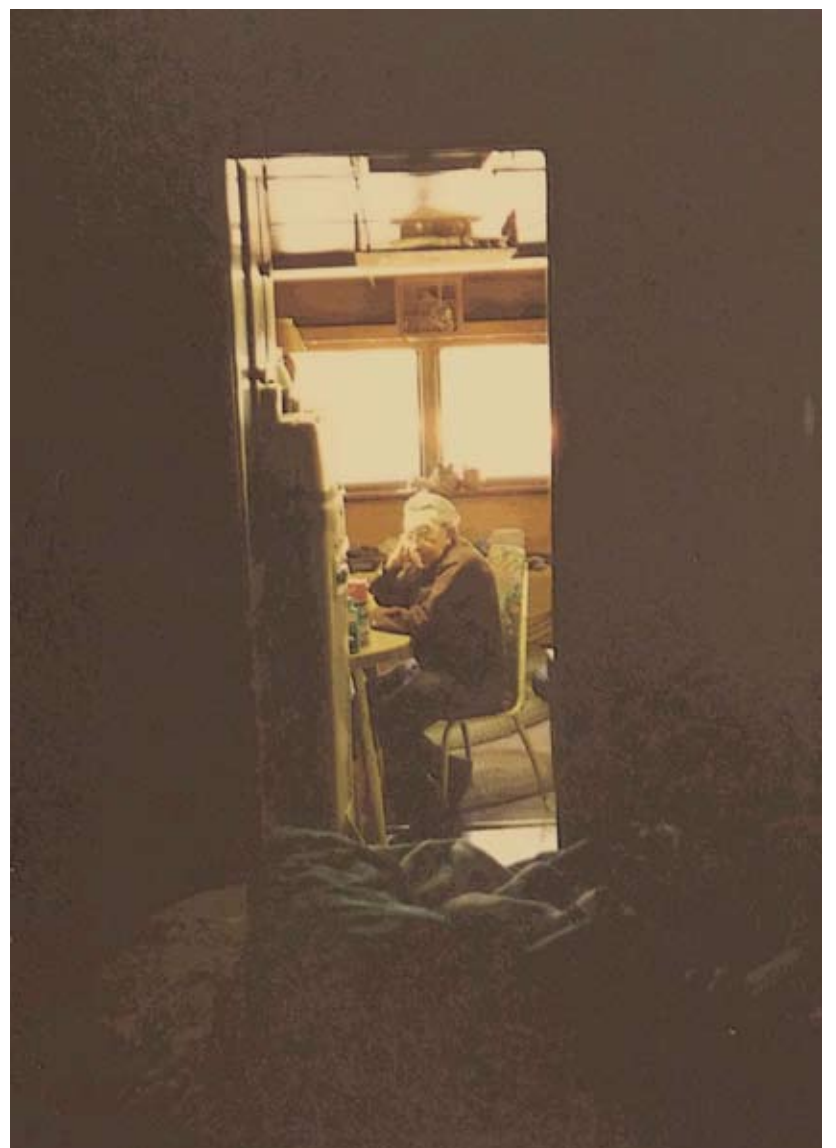
Sources: Pete Byrd, Elaine Peterson, Duane Wimmer, Ted Tibbetts, Essie White, Melba Balley (via article in Tribune, unknown date.)



# A WONDERFUL LIFE



*Colorado Springs, 1917*



*At his 'Smoker' trailer in Fallon, Nevada. 1998*

from 'THE NEW IMMIGRANTS' by ANNE SNOWDEN CROSMAN

# ANTONIO ZAPIEN

**NOTE: This is an excerpt from ANNE SNOWDEN CROSMAN'S new book, "The New Immigrants--American Success Stories."**

Antonio tells me such an unusual and poignant story of his journey to America that I ask him to write it in his own words. Throughout this book, other people with a flair with words will write their love letters to America.

## MY LOVE LETTER TO AMERICA

For some people, number thirteen is a bad luck number. Not for me. At that age, I met an American couple who changed my life forever.

I was born in a Mexican rural town, the second son of a young campesino couple; my sister died a few months after being born. My mother was seventeen years old when I was born.

My father was a migrant agricultural worker, every year coming to the US, looking for work, and after a few months, with some savings, going back home. I remember walking with him to the outside of the small town, waiting for a bus to come. He left, going again to the US. That was the last time I saw him. I was almost six years old.

The situation for my mother and me was not unique. Her father and several of my uncles also were seasonal migrant workers, so back home many families were made up

of women and children, helping each other, surviving. At some point, some men, but mostly women, began moving to the big city, Mexico City, looking for work. My mother was one of them. She followed some family members, and I stayed in the country with my grandmother, several aunts, and cousins. Food was scarce, but we shared whatever we got. I began helping every day during church service, and from the nuns, I got some food. They got busy teaching me to read and write. At some point, my mother came home and took me with her to Mexico City.

She was cooking for a middle-class family, and as part of her work compensation, she had a bedroom and a bathroom at the back of the

house. She had negotiated for me to be able to stay with her. She had to find some other family to work for once in a while, so we kept moving; no way for me to attend school. But often, during the afternoons, some families allowed me to be present when their own children were doing homework. The rest of the time, I was free to roam downtown Mexico City.

At some point, a family friend talked my mom into taking me to the Internado Nacional Infantil (INI), a huge place for young male children, twelve hundred of them, different ages, some of them street children, many of them orphans, and some others like me, not quite street children and not orphans. I got accepted, took a placement test, and it was decided that I would be able to start third grade. I was twelve years old, and for the first time in my life, I had three meals a day, my own bed, clothes, and uniform. I was able to attend school every single day. It was early 1954.

One year later, I met Susan (Sus) and Hugh Hardyman. The director of the INI and a social worker representing the Hardyman family came to our classroom to announce that an American couple was looking for six young children who wanted live with them in a farm outside Guadalajara. As several others, I raised my hand. They took our names and gave us permission to go home and bring back our father or mother, to have a special meeting and go through a legal paperwork process. With my mother's permission, I became part of the group of six boys. The following day, together with a couple of teachers and a husband and wife hired by the Hardyman family, we boarded a bus that took us to meet them and the place that became my new family and home. That was my first contact with American people and the beginning of a never-ending learning process.

Life with Sus and Hugh was like a big family. The house was, and still is, a big, very old beautiful hacienda. We learned that, yes, the farm had chickens, rabbits, cows, fruit trees, and more. The first few days, we did everything together, adults and young people, on the farm, in the dorms, the bathrooms, kitchen, and dining room. We began learning how to use and take care of everything.

It was a hands-on teaching and learning process. Meal times or other collective meetings were used as a way of communicating about everything. I had to pay really good attention because both Sus and Hugh were not exactly bilingual, and I was just getting familiar with American people and the sound of English. They tried to communicate in Spanish with us, especially Sus. In English or Spanish, Hugh was a very calm, soft, direct speaker.

We became busy with school work in a very intensive way. I was thirteen and considered too old to be in fourth grade. I began paying attention. Somehow I knew it was true when they told me, "Try your best, always. We are here to help you." We watched and participated with them in the life of the village and got involved in several projects, like advocating at the state level for a new elementary school, medical services, introduction of electricity, and building a road to connect the village to the main highway.

By watching them, I became familiar with books. They were always reading, especially in the afternoon and late at night. Suddenly I noticed books everywhere, in English and Spanish, and began reading all kinds of books in Spanish. I asked the Hardyman

about the content and topics of the ones in English. Step by step, I began reading some books in English.

We began getting visitors, many of Sus and Hugh's old friends from the US, and new Mexican friends: writers, musicians, painters, carpenters, and many social activists. I learned about social and political issues in the US and Mexico--segregation, racism, poverty, inequalities, and human rights.

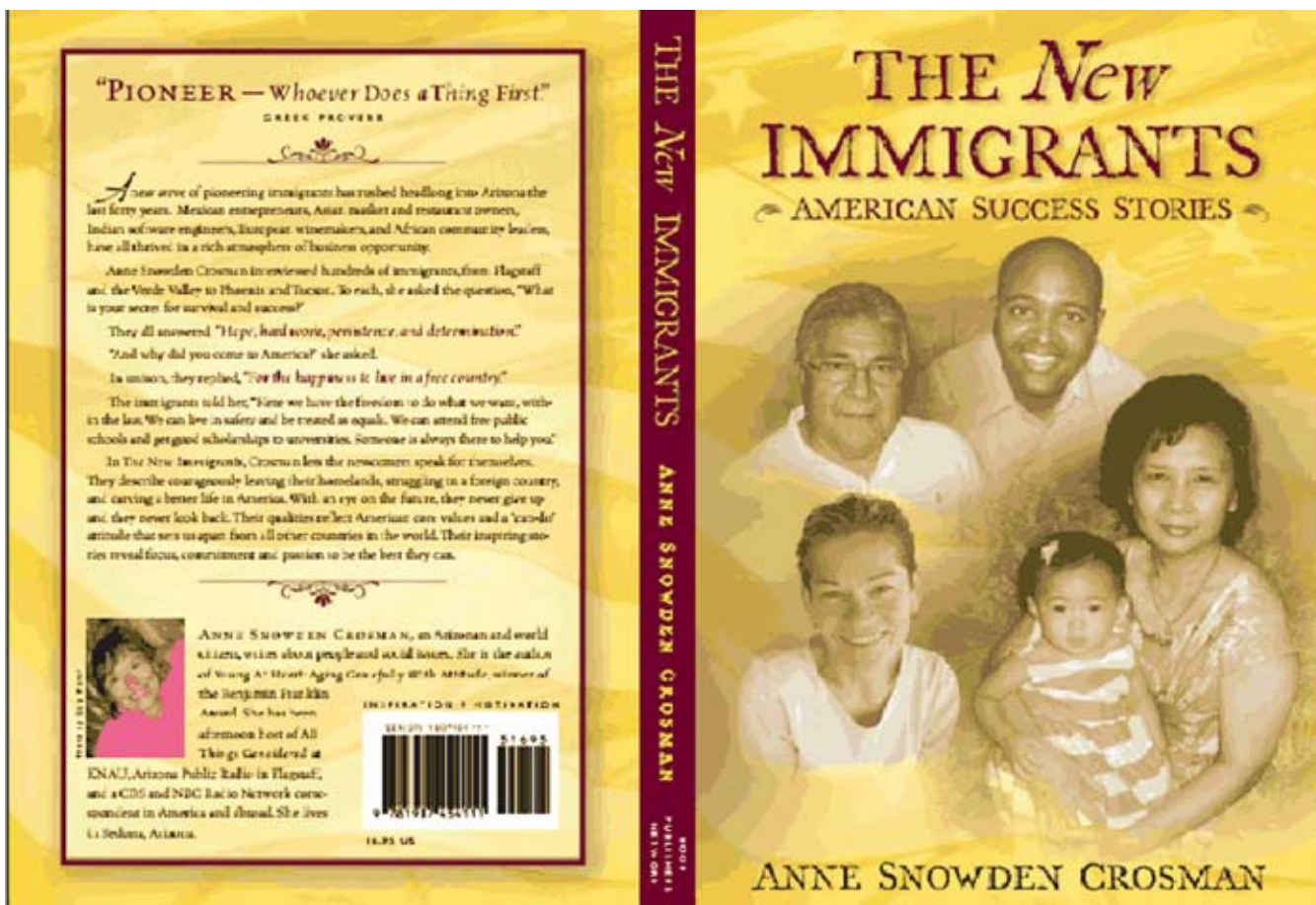
At some point, it was time to go somewhere else to continue my education. I got a scholarship to attend a junior high school, with the idea of becoming an agricultural engineer. With Sus, during the summer, I began visiting the US and got

to know some of her old friends. During my high school years, some young American students came to start a kindergarten in the village. As a result, I met my future wife. Two or three years later, during my university years, we got married.

With the support of the Hardyman family, I, and many others, went to the University of Guadalajara. I became a veterinarian, doing research on cattle production. After graduation, the three of us--I, my wife, and our son, who was born one year before my university graduation--moved to the tropical region of Mexico to start my professional life.

Over the next thirty-five years, from 1971 to 2006, we were in and out of Mexico. We came to the US, first to get my Master's degree, and few years after that, a PhD. In between, we came to visit Sus Hardyman and my wife's family. Our daughter was born in the US during my Master's program. During my Doctoral program, I applied for and became a US resident. Now I'm a US citizen and, like our two children, have dual citizenship.

Looking back, I find it difficult to say how fortunate I was to become a foster son of that American couple, Susan and Hugh Hardyman. Because of them and their friends, the family they created for me with many brothers and sisters, along with my wife and my wife's family, I had the chance to get to know the very good side of the US. At the same time, I became a critical thinker, recognizing America's problems. Their support, guidance, and protection gave me the opportunity to become a useful citizen of both the United States and Mexico, and in the process to build my own family, a true binational, bicultural family.



I journey to Tucson to talk more with Antonio. We sit at his dining room table in a modest home filled with Mexican art and comfortable furniture. Large rear windows reveal a patio and garden filled with colorful tropical plants.

Antonio is a short, powerfully-built man with salt-and-pepper hair and a gentle expression. He serves on the board of directors of La Hacienda, the group home where he lived near Guadalajara, and attends several meetings a year. He recently returned from helping with the children's summer activities. "They have twenty-nine kids from second grade to university level," he tells me proudly. "The Hardymans have died, but another family is keeping the house going."

In 2006 he sold his house in Hermosillo and moved permanently to Tucson. Now he serves as adjunct professor at the University of Arizona and helps old friends, graduate students, and professors. His wife, Jill, is associate dean of the university's College of Public Health. "Jill really held the family together throughout our life," he says with admiration.

He ticks off his current activities with precision.

"I volunteer at the university.

"I'm designated driver for my two grandchildren, Camilla, who's six and-a-half, and Benito, three and-a-half. They're Rebecca's children and live in Tucson. In the summer, I take them to day care and summer camp. The rest of the year, three or four days a week, I pick Camilla up from school and Benito from day care. We all try to get together every week for dinner here or at a restaurant.

"Jill and I have talked," he continues, "and I've said I don't think I spent much time with my kids when I worked in Mexico. Jill says, 'Yes, you did, but not as good as now!'" He laughs ruefully. "We never talked about this with the kids; they just accepted my schedule. But they didn't like it when we were moving between Mexico and Tucson because they were losing friends. Three or four times a year and every other Christmas, we travel to see our son, Ivan, who lives in Washington, DC, with his American wife, Vicky, and their two children. On alternate years, they go to Vicky's parents.

"My last job," says Antonio, "is working with the migration groups Samaritans and No More Deaths." He's staked a small sign reading "No More Deaths" in his front yard.

"Once or twice a week, I go to the No More Deaths aid stations on the Mexican side of the border. When migrants are deported every day from the US, they come through, and we provide first aid, food, clothes, communication, whatever they need. We get about a hundred people a day. Five, six years ago, we got one thousand to two thousand a day."

Antonio also tries to find belongings that people have lost after being arrested by the border patrol. "These migrants go to jail, and many times, their backpacks and personal belongings, like identification, money, and pictures, are taken or get lost," he explains. "We get that information, and I go to the Mexican Consulate in Tucson



or the immigration lawyers. They help us move through the system, get to the border patrol, and return those missing belongings to the owner at the Mexican side."

I ask, "Do you see the same people going back and forth?"

"No, not very often," he replies.

***"My father was a migrant agricultural worker, every year coming to the US, looking for work, and after a few months, with some savings, going back home. I remember walking with him to the outside of the small town, waiting for a bus to come. He left, going again to the US. That was the last time I saw him. I was almost six years old."***

His work with Samaritans involves driving into the desert one day a week. "We leave early morning from Tucson and head west--two, three, four of us in one car," he tells me. "We know some places that migrants are walking, going north, so we park close by and hike all around, looking for them. We carry food, water, clothes, and first aid.

"When we see them, we give them help, and talk with them. Some are OK, but if one has a medical emergency, we call 911 and ask for help. We stay with the migrants until the officials arrive." Generally, he says, the officials and Samaritans give each other wide berth.

"The one thing we don't do is transport any migrant," he says decisively.

I ask, "After thirty-five years of going back and forth across the border, being a privileged traveler, how did you come to realize the plight of illegal migrants?"

He answers slowly. "I never thought about migration the way I see it now until I came to Tucson this last time. Then I began paying attention to that. In Mexico, in my job, I saw the internal migration within Central America, thousands of people coming to northern Mexico, to work in agriculture in different seasons. I saw them, but I never thought about the conditions that forced them to come.

"When I came to Tucson in 2006, suddenly I made the connection. I'd lost my father, and my father was one of them, a migrant worker. Now when I saw so many people coming illegally into the US, I saw the same faces as those I'd seen in northern Mexico. And I saw the face of my father." He smiles gently. "I felt a mix of anger and frustration, thinking about how it's possible that millions of people are going through that process, and it's been happening all my life--forty, fifty, sixty years, the same thing, people coming but not changing the way of life for them."

He continues quietly. "I got angry with the Mexican government and the political system because they can't make the country economically viable for their people. The US government has a lot to do with that because it makes Mexico so dependent on it. The US government has allowed people in the US and Mexico to get rich. I believe the two countries must work together now. Otherwise Mexico can't solve the problem. The American companies that set up factories in northern Mexico pay really low wages, and the workers don't get enough money to live. It causes a lot of social problems." He frowns.

**Antonio is a short, powerfully-built man with salt-and-pepper hair and a gentle expression. He serves on the board of directors of La Hacienda, the group home where he lived near Guadalajara, and attends several meetings a year. He recently returned from helping with the children's summer activities.**

"Many people confuse us Samaritans with those people who give help just to feel good," he says emphatically. "We do it because people all over the world have a right to migrate, to eat, to have a place to live. It's a basic human right. When you don't think about the human rights, you have some limitations. Humanitarian aid is never a crime."

I ask, "Do you feel Mexican or American?"

Quickly he answers, "I feel Mexican. It's my culture. I don't feel American. I got dual American-Mexican citizenship in 2006. I waited a long time, and I did it only because it made it easier for us as a family to do all the legal things: taxes and paperwork. My children are bilingual and bicultural. My wife speaks and writes Spanish better than I do. When we're together, we speak more Spanish than English. It's the same with my daughter."

Antonio also speaks Spanish to his grandchildren. Their parents don't mind. "They just don't want me to require the grandchildren to speak back in Spanish," he explains, with a smile.

"Seven-year-old Pilar, who lives in Washington, DC, is bilingual. Her brother, Marco Antonio, is getting to be bilingual. Their parents are very much into learning, and they speak some Spanish at home. Pilar had a Bolivian nanny who taught her Spanish. A new nanny is teaching Marco. She's the driving force for speaking Spanish in that household."

In Tucson, Antonio keeps the Spanish going. He talks to Camilla and Benito in Spanish. "They're learning," he says brightly "We're teaching them Spanish, but without a lot of effort. Their mother, Rebecca, is OK with this, and so is her husband, Duncan, who's African-American.

"Our family is binational, and we like that," he says resolutely. "We don't have to choose. We share both cultures." He opens both hands expansively and beams.

*Anne Crosman is an author and free lance journalist in Sedona, AZ. She teaches memoir writing and edits books.*

*Her earlier book Young At Heart: Aging Gracefully With Attitude (2003, 2004, 2005) won a national Benjamin Franklin Award and a Washington Irving Book Award in Westchester County, NY.*

*She has been afternoon host for "All Things Considered" on KNAU, Arizona Public Radio, Flagstaff, AZ.*

*She was a CBS and NBC Radio Network News Correspondent in NY, Washington, and Geneva, Switzerland. She freelanced for The Christian Science Monitor, The Washington Post, and Newsweek.*

*She is working on a new book about organ-transplant recipients and welcomes ideas from any CCZ readers.*

*Anne has been a member of the Sierra Club since 1955, when her parents took her down the Green River on a SC trip.*

*Her new book, "The New Immigrants," is available on Amazon.*

# Vlachos' Views

Paul Vlachos is a New Yorker who understands The West. He also understands New York. His work celebrates the differences and the similarities.

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*Cape Charles, Virginia. A really, really old, but fairly well-preserved gas station. The kind of place Hopper might have painted at night. I have always been fascinated with gas station design. Even now, when you could make a strong argument that there is no more imaginative or whimsical modern gas station design aesthetic, there is a certain glory in the way people build these places. For the record, I think there's a lot more to gas station design now than the simple functional box that most new ones seem to be on the surface. That's for another caption, though. For now, take a moment to glory in the little emotional hiccup that brought this one about. It has weathered the years well, too. The pumps are gone, but it still sits, guarding that tiny crossroads. It's for sale, too. A shame it's zoned commercial only.*



*It's the fence and the field that are the border. From where I took this, on the Maryland side, there's a really low-rent, discount cigarette place. Kind of rough-and-ready, "maybe they'll cash your paycheck, maybe not" type of place. Get some gas, use the porta-pottie, buy some smokes and get out. Nothing here. Move right along. Take a few steps into the corn rows, though, and you're in Virginia. Not that a whole lot changes – state borders are always limbo zones, places where you can get something cheaper on one side of the line, something legal that's not legal on the other side. Places where legal jurisdiction ends for one person and begins for another. Anyway, I like the colors here.*

**To see more images and commentary, check out the WordPress version of *The Zephyr***

*Eastern Mojave Desert – 2004. It's actually at the site of Vidal Junction, a busy, but lonely crossroads in the Mojave on the California/Arizona border. Stuff changes here, but very slowly. Every time I pass through, it's a little different. I don't know how long this truck camper was here, but it's long gone now.*



*Somewhere on the southern tip of the Delmarva Peninsula. The typeface, the colors, the inverted airplane wing shape. It's all there. What the hell would that typeface be, anyway? I see it so often on these ancient sign remnants. "Mid-century American Motel?" I'd love to get a hold of it. Any font people out there who can recommend an analog? I used to be a font person, back in the days of Prestype and Letraset...*

*Lordsburg, New Mexico*

*They were not open, Don Juan Burritos. It didn't look like it would take much to get the place going again, though. Perhaps they went away for the season? Probably not. This shot caused me to meditate on why I shoot some places. I think it starts with the light, whether it's daylight or artificial. Either way, it's got to be good. It's not about strict documentation, otherwise you could use any kind of crappy light and not care, just so long as you get the subject. Then it's the colors and the composition. Possibly the weirdness factor. Yes, I have to be honest. Very quickly, though, follows the "what's the deal here?" What's the story? What happened here? If it's really run down, a torrent of false memories, otherwise known as fantasies or fictions or daydreams, will swamp me in a millisecond, a romance of countless encounters and meetings from long ago, things that happened at this one spot. That's probably not the case here, but the longer I look at it, the more I see.*

