

THE ZEPHYR CHRONICLES

PART 3 CONTINUED

IT'S THE NUMBERS STUPID...Jim Stiles

As the U.S. Population Approaches 300 Million, Guidebooks & TourGuides Have the Potential to Turn the Backcountry Into a Nightmare. And It's Only the Beginning

<http://www.canyoncountryzephyr.com/oldzephyr/april-may2001/numbers-stupid.htm>

NOT ALL PIMPS WEAR PLATFORM SHOES...Dirk Vaughan

How does a recreation-based company honor its commitment to environmental values?

<http://www.canyoncountryzephyr.com/oldzephyr/april-may2001/pimps.htm>

In the next issue, the response to the "Mirror" edition was phenomenal. I'd never received so many intelligent, thoughtful, self-scrutinizing letters from readers. They weren't all supportive but they were all constructive. Missing however was any comment from the mainstream environmental community. Nothing at all. It was my last gasp at opening a discussion

Here is a link the 'FEEDBACK' from the June/July 2001 issue:

<http://www.canyoncountryzephyr.com/oldzephyr/june-july2001/feedback.htm>

A year later, SUWA produced a special "Wilderness and the Economy" issue. The feature story was called "The Local Economic Impacts of Protected Wildlands: Enhanced Economic Vitality." It was written by Thomas Michael Power, a Professor of Economics at the University of Montana. Power and his data asserted that protecting the rural West's wildlands did not damage local economies; on the contrary he believed that "protected landscapes are often associated with enhanced economic vitality." But he followed that declaration with a curious caveat, considering the intent of the article, that was all but ignored by environmentalists. Power warned:

"This does not mean that those seeking to preserve natural areas should base their case for preservation on the economic expansion it will stimulate. That could be a dangerous strategy in the long run and one that may not be very convincing besides. In fact, in the long run, ongoing economic growth may well threaten the ecological integrity of wildlands as growing population, human settlement, and commercial activities and their accompanying

Power concluded, despite his early warning, "It is not clear why wildlands advocates would not want to meet the economic critics of wildland protection on their own ground, while also continuing to make the ethical, cultural, and environmental arguments.

pollutants isolate and disrupt natural areas. Even though wildlands may be good for local economic vitality, local economic vitality may not be good for the ecological integrity of those wildlands. (Emphasis added)"

The remainder of Power's essay moves away from that warning. Using the data he had gathered, Power struck several blows in support of the amenities economy. He noted that "higher percentages of county land protected by national park, national monument, and federal wilderness status were associated with higher rates of employment." He discovered that population growth in areas near wilderness areas was higher than state averages. And Power observed that Wilderness "protection was associated with growth rates two to six times those for other non-metropolitan areas."

Power concluded, despite his early warning, "It is not clear why wildlands advocates would not want to meet the economic critics of wildland protection on their own ground, while also continuing to make the ethical, cultural, and environmental arguments. After all, if you can take away the only powerful argument the anti-environmentalists have, why would you not do so?"

I emailed then-executive director Larry Young to express my concern. I wrote, "...after reading the latest 'special edition' of the SUWA newsletter, it seemed to me that the environmental community embraces the kind of growth

we're seeing in rural Utah as a good thing. As a real plus instead of any kind of liability. The section on the economy said exactly that, and without hesitation or qualifications. It was citing the same sources to PRAISE the growth and changes in rural Utah that I used to express alarm."

Young's reply was quick and personal. "I think I sleep more peacefully as Executive Director of SUWA than I would as Publisher of the Zephyr. Why? ...the cumulative advertising within each issue of the Zephyr constitutes a far more aggressive call to intensive recreational use of southern Utah, a far more aggressive celebration of the yuppification of southern Utah, etc. That doesn't mean that the Zephyr lacks a conscience or the capacity to do good. But it is difficult for me to see how you can be more disappointed by SUWA than by yourself."

I was amazed. I pointed out that The Zephyr had, in fact, a paucity of recreation-based ads, about THREE, simply because I'd made most of my potential ad base mad with my "anti-development" editorials, that I didn't accept corporate ads at all, that I wasn't funded by billionaires, and I even proposed that I publish The Zephyr's and SUWA's IRS 1040 tax statements, so that readers could judge for themselves.

Young backpedaled, conceding that, "This is something many of us in the conservation community are aware of --and one of the reasons I have always had a great deal of respect for you."

He added, "I wasn't attacking the Zephyr or the folks who advertise in the Z (as I said in my last email, some of your advertisers are friends and I greatly value the support that many of them give SUWA). In fact, I love the Zephyr and I think it serves an absolutely critical function."

Young agreed that, "SUWA should engage in the kind of self-examination you are calling for. I will feel like I have failed if I don't help us do that in a newsletter within the year. We are already doing some of that in board and staff meetings. Still, we aren't doing enough."

It was a start, but it was just words; nothing came of it and a year later Young left SUWA. His replacement would be my old friend Groene.

Before he'd even returned to SUWA (Groene worked briefly for the Greater Yellowstone Coalition), I'd sought his advice. Frustrated with SUWA's refusal to deal with these kinds of growing recreational impacts and even the hostility that my persistence had caused, I turned to the one person I thought and assumed would see the bigger picture. I sent him a copy of a story I'd written about the canyoneering controversy and waited for his response.

But his reply was vague. "This is good," he said, "and something The Zephyr should be writing about." But when I pressed him about the canyoneering debacle and SUWA's lack of interest, he gave me an answer that I didn't see coming.

"I gave you a non-committal answer," he said, "because I could see you were just fishing for a chance to beat up on SUWA. Like a pitcher that licks his fingers with every curve ball, you tend to signal in advance upcoming anti-SUWA tirades. We've trod that ground, over and over, without satisfaction on either side- I like them as individuals and as an organization, and have no interest in trashing them."

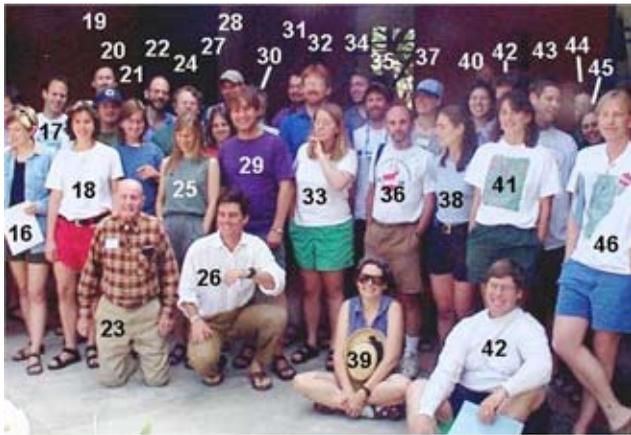
I explained that I wasn't on a "tirade," or trying to "trash" or "beat up" on anyone. I thought that I could disagree, without becoming an enemy. It made no sense.

But by 2003, when I wrote about the "24 Hours of Moab" race that sent 5000 bicyclists within inches of proposed wilderness, Groene's intractability was complete and he was now back at SUWA. While he offered, on one hand, an olive branch that proposed we simply stop talking about these issues, he wrote, "Let's be honest: this email you've sent is nothing but part of your effort to demonize SUWA... I would have never thought that I would get fairer treatment in the San Juan Record than the Zephyr, but sadly that's become the case."

Groene and others insisted that I had suddenly "changed," that I had awakened from a dark vision and decided my single goal in life was to "demonize" my old friends. But it just wasn't true. As I've re-read these old emails and Zephyr issues from the past 25 years, it's clear that somewhere in the early 2000s, a strategy emerged that shifted the quest for wilderness from a moral and ethical issue to an economic one. It required the almost total abandonment of recreation/tourist/amenities concerns that might hinder or restrict an unchecked recreation industry.

More than a decade later, I would accidentally stumble upon an ancient web site called, "The Wilderness Mentoring Conference of 1998." It filled in the missing blanks and explained finally why there had been such a sudden shift in strategy.

I learned that on Memorial Day Weekend in 1998, according to the document, "sixty-three people active in (or suffering a tenuous retirement from) wilderness advocacy met at the Rex Ranch in Amado, Arizona, for the first Wilderness Mentoring Conference."



Some of the participants at the 1998 Wilderness Mentoring Conference. A seminal moment...

It included participants from national and regional environmental organizations coast-to-coast, including The Sierra Club, Montana Wilderness Association, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, and National Audubon Society. And it included representatives of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA), including its then-Executive Director, Mike Matz. Matz would also preside over the conference as one of its mentors.

I wrote this about the conference:

‘It brought together, the introduction explained, “the last generation of ‘closers,’ those who know how to take an idea and run with it all the way to the president’s desk, with a new generation of eager, thoughtful wilderness advocates. The younger generation was encouraged to think critically and to identify strategies, tools, and tactics for developing and leading successful wilderness campaigns.”

‘A prominently displayed quote by Michael Carroll, now of The Wilderness Society, established the tone and direction of all that would come later:

“Car companies and makers of sports drinks use wilderness to sell their products. We have to market wilderness as a product people want to have.”

‘That, in its most succinct essence, was the theme of the conference. While the organizers of the event paid tribute to the wilderness activists who had come before, clearly the purpose of the meeting was to propose a new approach. “Although it is important to pioneer new wilderness strategies,” the

report explained almost as an afterthought, “we must do so with knowledge of what has come before.” With that token nod to the “importance of history” and to the “philosophical and political contexts” of the wilderness movement, the conference explored the new territories of salesmanship, marketing and media manipulation to win the legislative wilderness battle. One might think you were being taught how to sell a new Buick.’

Here is a link to the story I wrote about it:

“Thoughts on the Wilderness Mentoring Conference of 1998”

<http://www.canyoncountryzephyr.com/2013/06/02/take-it-or-leave-it-15-years-later-thoughts-on-the-wilderness-mentoring-conference-of-1998-by-jim-stiles/>

And excerpts:

<http://www.canyoncountryzephyr.com/2013/06/02/when-everything-changed-the-wilderness-mentoring-conference-1998/>

Almost 15 years later, I’d finally understand what happened, or at least what started the transformation. It might have been less painful if SUWA et al had just admitted the strategy shift and moved on. Instead they insisted that nothing had changed at all. It’s like the kid who gets caught with his hand in the cookie jar, evidence in hand, and insists, “I don’t know what you’re talking about!”

The Zephyr’s biggest sin was reporting the facts. We’d never called anyone names, never attacked them personally. Our quotes were accurate and so were our facts.

In the future I’d run into the same problem when I confronted mainstream environmentalism’s growing dependence on some of the wealthiest bankers and capitalists on the planet who support their conflicted causes. The money often gave these rich people undue power as well, via positions on boards of directors. The environmental groups insisted there was nothing wrong with their billionaire-funded largesse, but were furious that I’d reported it. It was the other ‘missing link’ in understanding why everything had changed so quickly.

It was clear to me, for better or worse, this little rag had chosen a road less traveled. One thing was certain—we weren’t doing this for the money.

NEXT ISSUE: “Money Matters—Grassroots Environmentalism goes ‘GREEN”

NEW BACKBONE MEMBERS for December 2013/January 2014

Michael Yates
Boulder, CO

Scott Grunder
Boise ID



Chris Carrier
Paonia, CO



Becky Morton
Oakland, CA



Sara Melnicoff
Moab, UT



ALSO..The Un-Tooned New Backboners...

Barbara Brown
Idaho Falls, ID

Keith Harger
Jackson, WY

Garrett Wilson
Sandy, UT

William Dunlap
Lake Oswego, OR

AND THANKS TO
THESE FRIENDS
AS WELL...

Lewis Downey
Salt Lake City, UT

Julie Zych
Milwaukee, WI

David Wegner
Alexandria, VA

Izzy Nelson
Moab UT

Michael Bloomberg
Fenton, MO

Lynn Curt
Salt Lake City, UT

Linda Jalbert
GRAND CANYON, AZ

Andrew McGregor
Glenwood Springs, CO

AmeriCandy Co, Inc
Louisville, KY

Catherine Lutz
Aspen, CO

Kelly Rowell
Flagstaff, AZ

Pamilla Bina
St. George, UT

Patrick Flynn
Paradox, CO

Rand Hirschi
Salt Lake City, UT