

IN REPLY TO:

DARCEY BROWN

continued

“Brown also helped form Colorado Ski Country USA and the National Ski Areas Association. *He was perceived as the most powerful man in Aspen, and he enjoyed the role, acquaintances said — even if that often meant the hostility of locals. Indeed, he seemed to take a perverse pleasure in their antagonism.* (emphasis added)

“For example, Aspen for many years gave away season passes to all teachers and other locals. Bill Coors, 92, of the brewing family, was on the board of directors of Aspen then, and told Brown that he didn’t give away beer to all people in Golden just because they lived there. Coors told the *Rocky Mountain News* that he remembers Brown being burned in effigy in Aspen after the free skiing ended.

“In 1976, in an effort to get local skiers to ski less on an increasingly crowded Aspen Mountain, Brown started requiring an \$8 daily surcharge, on top of the \$200 season pass. That led to a Congressional investigation and a demand from the Forest Service that Brown change his pricing policies. Brown refused — and won.”

“Brown blocked the Teamsters Union when it attempted to organize the ski patrol.”

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The Denver Post confirmed Darcey Brown’s assertion that she grew up on a ranch. But there’s more to the story: According to the *Post*, Brown owned several ranches, “including ones in Carbondale, Creede, Utah and Australia.”

You can never have too many ranches.

The Post reported that, “Brown, whose full name was David Robinson Crocker Brown Jr., and a handful of other men started the skiing corporation, which they expanded into Snowmass, Buttermilk, Breckenridge, a slope in Spain and two in Canada.”

And Brown was involved in other activities as well. He served on the State Legislature and, “Brown was chairman of the Denver Branch of the Federal Reserve Board, on the board of the Boettcher Family holding companies and was in both the Colorado Ski Hall of Fame and the Colorado Business Hall of Fame.”

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The Aspen Times reported that, “Brown went to one of the most prestigious boarding schools in America, traveled extensively in Europe and graduated from Yale in 1935... In his 22 years as president of the Ski Corp., he transformed the somewhat anemic company into one of the busiest and best-known ski resorts in North America. He supervised 25 employees when he assumed command. There were 1,200 by the time he left. During Brown’s tenure the Ski Corp. fully developed Aspen Mountain, bought and expanded Buttermilk and developed Snowmass Ski Area from scratch. The company more than quadrupled its volume, from 259,000 skier visits during winter 1964-65 to 1.23 million in 1978-79.”

And the *Times* reported that, Brown “also had his differences with former *Aspen Times* publisher Bil Dunaway and his crew over the newspaper’s probes into his company’s business.

“He didn’t think it was any of your business,” Sue Smedstad, a Ski Corp veep told the *Times*.

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I don’t offer these well-documented facts and figures to embarrass Ms. Brown, though she seems to think the mere mention of them is an attack on her privacy and an insult to her integrity. And while she insists my previous revelations about her Aspen past are “wrong and warped,” this is simply information that has been available for years.

And here’s why these facts are relevant. When Rural Westerners talk about the transformation of small Western communities into what’s become a significant economic and cultural powerhouse—the New West—what remote rural community came first? What former mining town was transformed and became a symbol of the New West? What was indeed the first New West town?

It was Aspen, Colorado and I don’t think many Westerners would dispute that, whether their politics run to the Right or the Left. Aspen is where it all started. Today it’s the ultimate New West town where “the billionaires chased the millionaires out of the valley.” The fact is, the Brown family helped create that startling transformation and D.R.C. Brown played a major role. To recall *Colorado Central Magazine’s* account, Brown was “the most powerful man in Aspen, and he enjoyed the role...even if that often meant the hostility of locals. Indeed, he seemed to take a perverse pleasure in their antagonism.” So it’s fair to note that today, the Brown tradition continues in Moab.

NON-PROFIT FOUNDATIONS AND SALARIES

Darcey Brown also took exception to my comments about her “foundation” and the salaries of the larger environmental non-profits. My comments about her foundation contained two sentences:

“Darcey Brown manages a non-profit foundation herself, with assets of \$4,998,884. She distributes those funds to organizations she deems worthy.”

That’s it. That’s all I wrote...but Ms. Brown angrily replied, “As far as the family foundation, it has been in existence for years and has grown over time to be sizable by Moab standards, but is still one of the smallest foundations in the country.” And she took issue with the idea that she could distribute funds to whoever she “found worthy.” She insisted her foundation has a board of directors who make those decisions. And

that’s true—she does indeed have a board and it’s composed entirely of family members. I don’t see any possibility of rogue votes on that board.

Darcey Brown revealed more than she meant to when she said her foundation was “sizable by Moab standards.” You see, most of us don’t have foundations at all. Most of us work just to pay the bills. And so the idea that someone has a “small foundation” to begin with, is beyond the reach and imagination of most working class people, not just in Moab but everywhere else for that matter. To downplay the significance of a foundation that ONLY has \$5 million in assets is revealing.

In her reply, she also lists some of the non-profit groups in Moab her foundation supports. Had Ms. Brown taken the time to read another article by me in the same issue, she might have toned down her own comments. In “The Rich Green Benefactor” story, I noted that, “philanthropy by the very wealthy has greatly enriched and improved American Life. Colleges and universities, museums, art galleries, libraries, medical research—all of these institutions have flourished in part at least to the generosity of a limited few. Humanitarian aid by the wealthy to provide food and shelter and medical assistance to disaster victims around the world is universally praised.”

But I also warned that, “when it comes to social and political issues, where opinions vary and philosophies clash, the line between charitable giving and undue influence becomes a blur. Can a social activist accept money from an individual or company, whose goals and strategies stand in direct contradiction to those of the recipient?”

Brown trivialized the massive salaries of mainstream environmental organization executives like National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), by comparing their incomes to corporate CEOs. She wrote to Jackson, “While it makes good yellow journalism to rile people up about executive pay at environmental organizations, their salaries are well below the typical CEO pay, and they receive no lucrative stock bonuses. I think executive pay is obscene (the top CEO received \$156 MILLION last year and the top 100 all received more than \$20 MILLION) so Stiles having a problem with thousands seems a little strange.”

The EDF’s executive director salary was indeed in “the thousands,” \$545,000 to be precise. And again, Ms. Brown reveals the chasm that lies between her and the citizens she takes issue with. For most middle class people, even half a million dollars is beyond their reach and beyond their dreams. Wealth that exceeds that level barely computes. To most of us, \$545,000 sounds pretty flush.

What “seems a little strange” to me is that Brown would want to mention corporate wealth in the first place, since organizations like EDF and NRDC and the Nature Conservancy depend on the financial support of the same corporate giants and “the One Per Cent” she appears to attack.

Big Business loves these kinds of “green” organizations because they know they’ll do little or nothing to slow down the kind of insane growth that drives their profits and consumes the world. In fact, groups like NRDC embrace growth. In 2008, NRDC wrote, “We can stave off the biggest environmental and humanitarian crisis without disrupting economic growth...Business executives...are beginning to see significant economic opportunities in tackling global warming.”

It’s business as usual...Greed and materialism, even among the Green Elite, can continue, but in a more energy efficient manner.

Almost a decade ago, NEWSWEEK made this observation, “So where’s the money in climate change? Investors sense a tumultuous market in the making, if they can only hit it right. ‘Sometimes I feel like a fly on the wall, watching a new era unfold,’ says Rona Fried, editor and publisher of ‘Progressive Investor,’ a six year old newsletter that follows the field...Wall Street’s own change in climate is nothing less than astonishing. Save-the-planet investing has suddenly, well, heated up.”

In 2015, it’s about the money. If their contributions alleviate some problems in the short-term, their long range view simply doesn’t exist.

“BOTTOM LINES”

Darcey Brown’s voice has not “been silenced.” Not by me, not by “Old Moab,” not by anybody. All I did was respond, finally, to ten years of commentary that until now had mostly gone unchallenged. She was welcome to respond, and we posted her comments the same hour we received them. But she was incorrect if she thought she could, in turn, silence me with accusations of “yellow journalism” and “hatchet pieces” or descriptions like “warped and wrong,” or by claiming that the *Zephyr’s* ongoing commentary on Moab’s transformation was “polarizing and undermining.” This publication has been called worse in the past, and it hasn’t once stopped us from writing honestly.

If Darcey Brown wants to be a force for change in Moab and southeast Utah, then her fellow Moabites have the right to know how that ‘force’ was used in the past. She can’t shut down the debate when the talk turns to her credentials. She can rightfully call herself a local face, but she comes with a history that represents a much larger and more powerful kind of force, one which is altering the face and the future of the entire American West.

OTHER LINKS:

<http://www.aspentimes.com/article/20040826/ASPENWEEKLY/108260008>

<http://www.aspentimes.com/article/20080312/NEWS/259377536>

<http://cozine.com/2008-november/remembering-3-pioneers-of-the-ski-industry/>

http://www.denverpost.com/search/ci_8564454

<http://archive.earth.org/article/a-strong-economy-is-a-green-economy>