

JACK HOLLEY

The Goat Man

continued

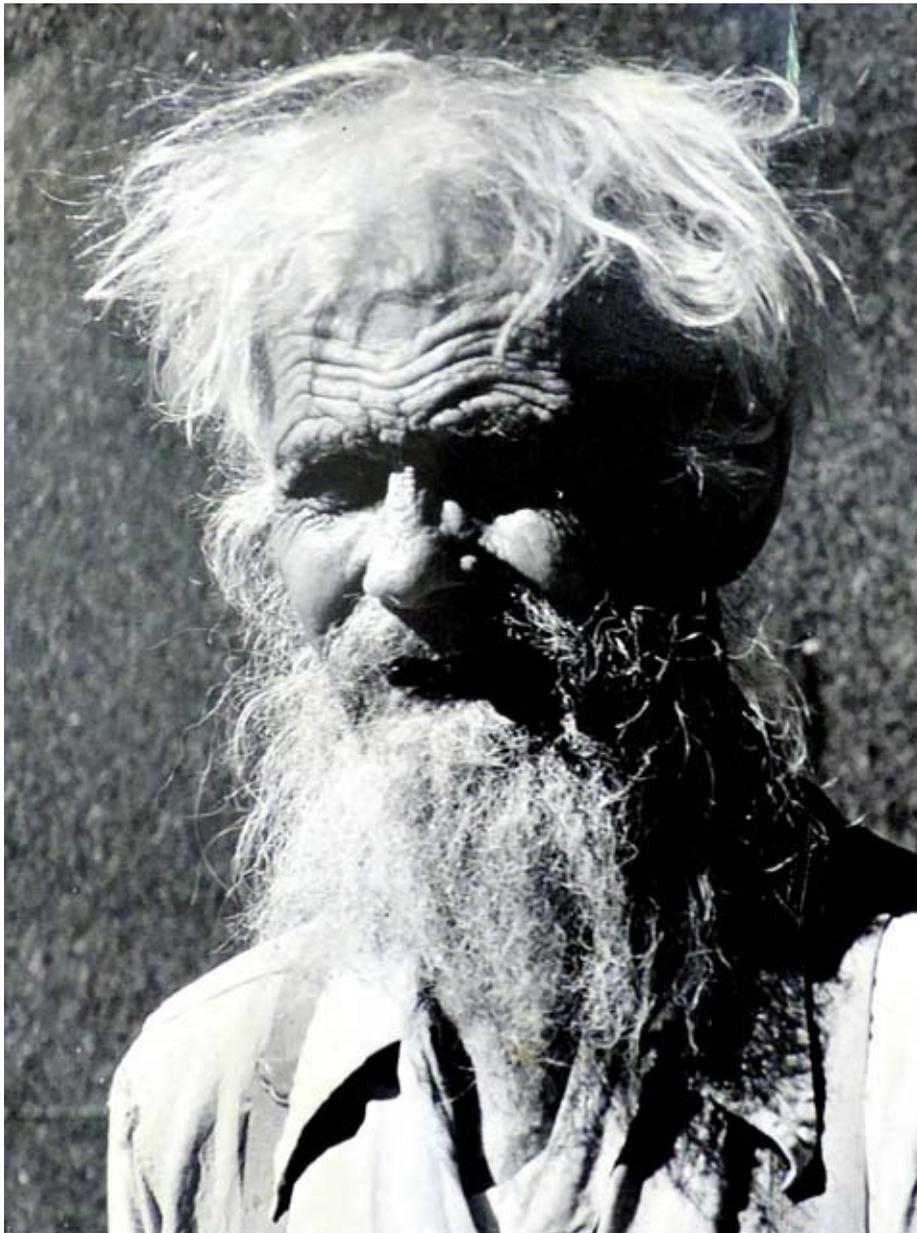
Jack Holley's dilemma.

The Utah Department of Transportation had constructed a shed to store tools and other equipment during the bridge construction; once the work was done, they had no further use for it, so they gave it to Holley. UDOT relocated the shed to the west side of the new highway, just south of the new bridge. Eventually, even a power line was strung to the front of his new home. Though it was never wired inside for electricity, at least, after twenty-five years, Jack Holley had a porch light.

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Lillie Keener, who was raised by her "Moab Mom and Dad," Jaunita and Troy, has many fond memories of the Goat Man's last decade in Moab. By now he was in his early 80s, but still surrounded by his goats and his dogs. Someone gave Jack a transistor radio and he played it often. Lillie remembered that "he loved coffee and smoked Camel cigarettes all his life." Though he had electricity outside, he still used coal oil for his lanterns and mostly burned wood in his old cast iron cook stove. Her dad would bring him coal in the winter.

And, according to Lillie, once a year her family was able to persuade Jack to come into town for a home-cooked meal. This dinner also marked the occasion of the Goat Man's annual bath! It was a condition Jaunita insisted on, if they were to gather together at their dining room table. There are several stories about Jack's personal hygiene habits, or the lack of them. It's said that he often invited passersby into his little shack for a cup of coffee, but the interior of his shanty was a bit...overwhelming. Those same people



rarely accepted the invitation twice, choosing instead to drink their coffee outside..

But despite his 'ripeness,' he was visited frequently. One Moab resident of the late 50s remembers that Jack offered some of his goat milk for her newborn, when the baby kept rejecting the formula.

LaRita Lemon McFarland and her family used to visit his cabin on holidays and bring him presents. Others simply remember waving as they passed by--he always waved back.

Robert Buckingham of Moab recalls, "I used to run into him in the morning run to the post-office with my Grandma Nellie. He was always very congenial and liked to talk. The

thing I remember most was his appetite for wild ragweed! He said his goats liked it as well!...He never said how he fixed it (raw I guessed) but he would talk about all of the things that grew wild that were edible. I suppose the first vegetarian that I ever met! A man ahead of his time."

Lillie thinks he ate meat occasionally, but since he had no way of refrigerating it and little money to buy it, he lived mostly off the land. Jaunita brought him pies but he never bought meats when he made his annual trip to the grocery. For 35 years, Jack Holley stuck to his routine.

In late July 1965, Holley was 89 years old and still 'living the hermit's life.' But one night a fire broke out in his shack--most likely set by one of his smoldering Camel cigarettes--and the Goat Man was badly burned. The Moab Fire Department responded, put the fire out before it destroyed his home, and transported Jack to Allen Memorial Hospital. The Andersons soon learned of the fire and Jack's injuries and visited him often, but about two weeks after the fire, he developed pneumonia and on August 8, 1965, Jack Holley died.

Of course, he died penniless, but Jaunita Anderson was determined that Jack be remembered. According to Lillie Keener, "He would have been buried in an unmarked grave so mom took charge and had a viewing and funeral for him and buried him in our family plot. She felt he was important to the history of the community so she got his headstone with his picture and had it engraved with 'Goat Man of Moab.'

Jack didn't leave a will and didn't even own the land where he'd lived for 35 years, but nobody seemed to mind. Lillie recalled, "Mom and Dad went through his belongings when he died...collected a few mementos like some of his watches. But he really didn't have anything of value. We took one of his dogs to our house and dad gave the goats.. chickens etc to someone in Spanish Valley."

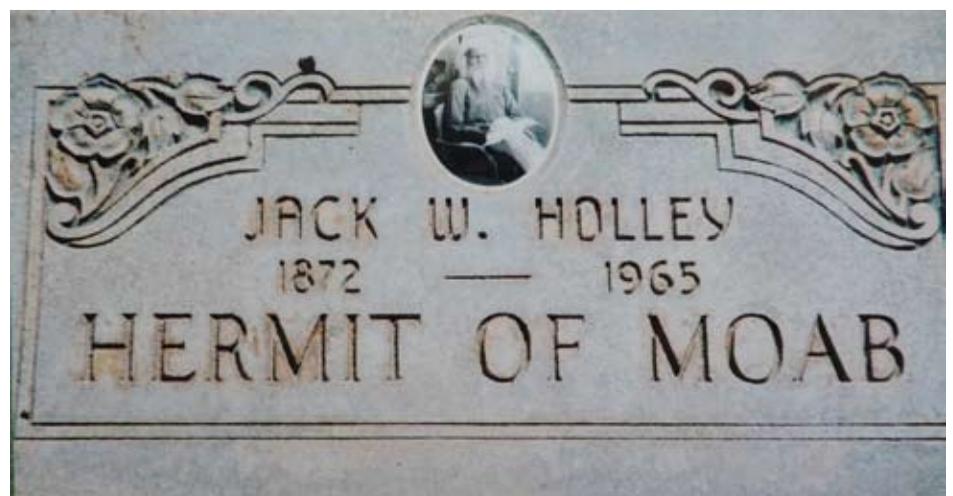
Her dad recovered a couple packs of his Camels. "That's how I know he smoked camels, because Dad kept a couple packs for years in his desk...I remember him telling me they were Mr. Holley's." And finally, they saved a photograph of Jack that somehow survived the fire. It must have been a favorite of the Goat Man's and was pinned to the wall near his bed.

EPILOGUE...

I arrived in Moab more than a decade after The Goat Man's passing. He was a topic of conversation even then. There were stories that Jack had left behind a small fortune in gold coins and had buried his secret stash nearby. Treasure hunters scoured the area for years, hoping to strike it rich, but found nothing. The original stone cabin, the one he called home from 1930 to 1955, disappeared decades ago, though some of the original stones could still be seen. In the 1990s an aerial tram was constructed, just south of the cabin site, but never opened for business. Today it's still there, rusting and abandoned. And in 2013, construction of the Moab Transit Hub began in earnest and the rock outcropping that was, in fact, the north wall of his home, was completely removed and the entire site leveled to make way for a parking lot. No trace of Jack Holley's life by the river survives, not even the topography.

As Moab of 2016 sprints recklessly, almost uncontrollably toward an uncertain future, characterized by never ending change, constant growth, and in many cases, shameless greed, remembering people like Jack Holley and the simple life he chose to lead gives me some comfort.

Perhaps just as comforting is this--- Jack Holley was a unique character with a very alternative lifestyle. Jack was 'different,' to be sure. But those Moabites who encountered him over the span of three and a half decades not only tolerated those differences, but embraced them. And eventually even celebrated them. Today, eighty-five years after The Goat Man came to Moab, he is still remembered and loved. And missed.



For many more images of Jack Holley, check out other pages in this PDF version and even more in the web page version.