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October 2011

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IDAHO magazine

OCTOBER 2011 | VOL. 11, NO. 1

10th anniversary ISSUE

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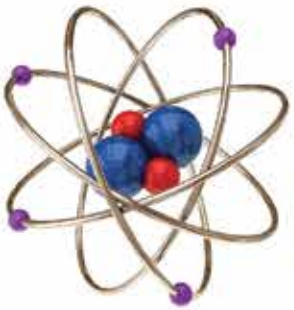

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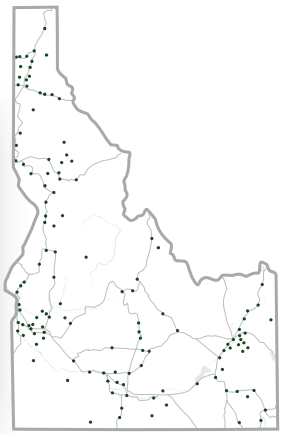

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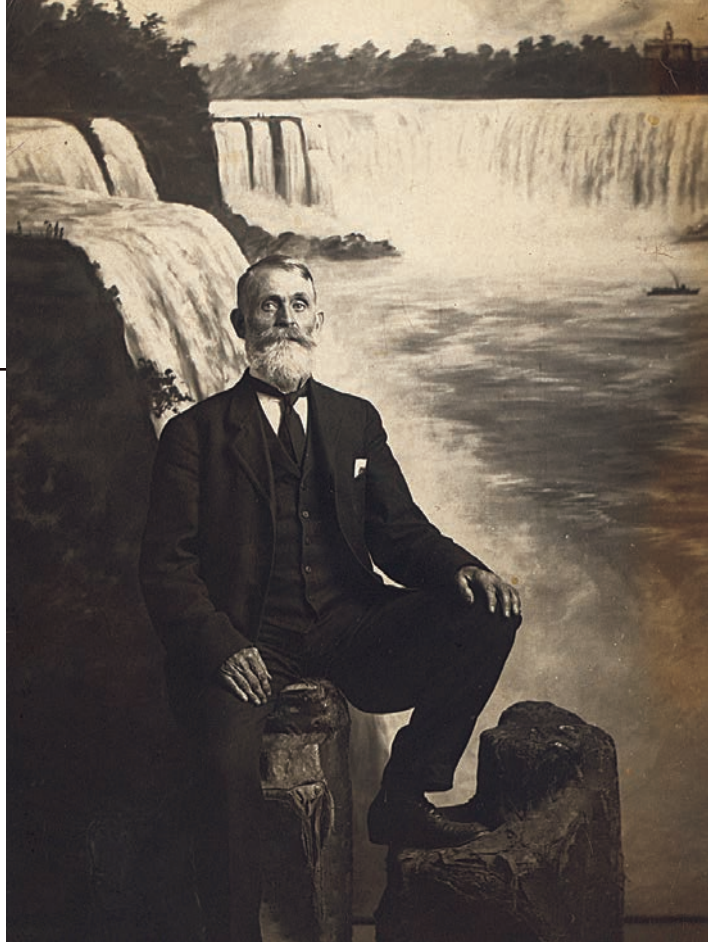
By Daniel Claar



32 • Teton City – SPOTLIGHT

The author's family moved around when she was little, but they came back to an Idaho town that always meant home. Here, she tells why.

By Alanah Muir

IDAHO magazine

LOCATIONS FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

cover photo

Shirley Moon at the ruins of Wickahoney, the homestead of her ancestors in Owyhee County.

Photograph by Carol Scribner

Announcing the Winners!

2011 Idaho Writers League *IDAHO magazine* Nonfiction Writing Contest

1st Place	Lenore Mobley	"The Gift of Heritage"
2nd Place	William Strange	"Mr. Fix It"

2011 *IDAHO magazine* William Studebaker Poetry Contest

1st Place	Ana Parker Goodwin	"The ABC of Poetry"
2nd Place	Amy McClellan	"You've Always Had Wings"

2011 *IDAHO magazine* Cover Photo Contest

1st Place	Adela Marlene Johnson	Handwoven color baskets
2nd Place	Adela Marlene Johnson	Local Rancher JoAnn Bonura
3rd Place	Julie Pendleton	Sweet Corn Taste Test
Honorable Mention	Lisa Dayley	Grandpa's Garden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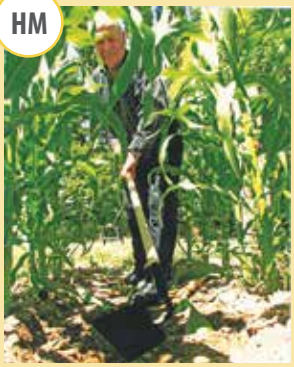
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Dear Editor

The following is a trip down Memory Main, or Main Street, Montpelier, in the mid-1940s. I hope you enjoy the journey.

There's a time and place worth remembering, a small town Main on the weekend, where folks would meet at friendly storefronts to exchange the week's events with friends. Men would wear their new bibs or Levis with suit coat, tie and hat, which they'd always tip to the ladies—you can't do that with a cap! The ladies put on their best print dresses, with hat, handbag, and heels. A touch of perfume, a spot of rouge and lipstick to top off the deal.

Some men met at the barbershop for a haircut, shave or a shine, but mostly just to shoot the bull and kill a little time. The women would shop and get hair done and gossip some, I suppose; then shop, and view the storefronts and all the latest clothes. Some folks just parked along the curb, in cars "all shades of black," to watch and listen, chat, or just wave back. Storeowners in aprons joined the groups outside, while boys on leave in uniform would stop and talk with pride. There was always a group at the billiard hall, and these sights and sounds remain: from clash of balls to shuffle of deck, where clouds of smoke did hang. Pipes, cigars, roll-your-own or bum a tailor-made—it was a time for catching up, when hard times were delayed.

Policemen actually walked the streets, mingling with the groups. They were friends and neighbors then—not military troops. The kids lined up for the matinee, with excitement you could see. A feeling you can't understand, unless raised before TV. They had coins tied up in handkerchiefs, for safekeeping on the way, as boys' pockets had too many holes for such small coins to stay. The usual was nine cents for ticket and, if lucky, six cents for candy. The Kozy Korner Soda Shoppe right next door was handy. Then, penny candy cost one cent—some even two-for-one. Same can't even be sold today, for fear of offending someone. After the movie was over, kids came squinting in the light, then were free to walk home alone. Back then it was all right.

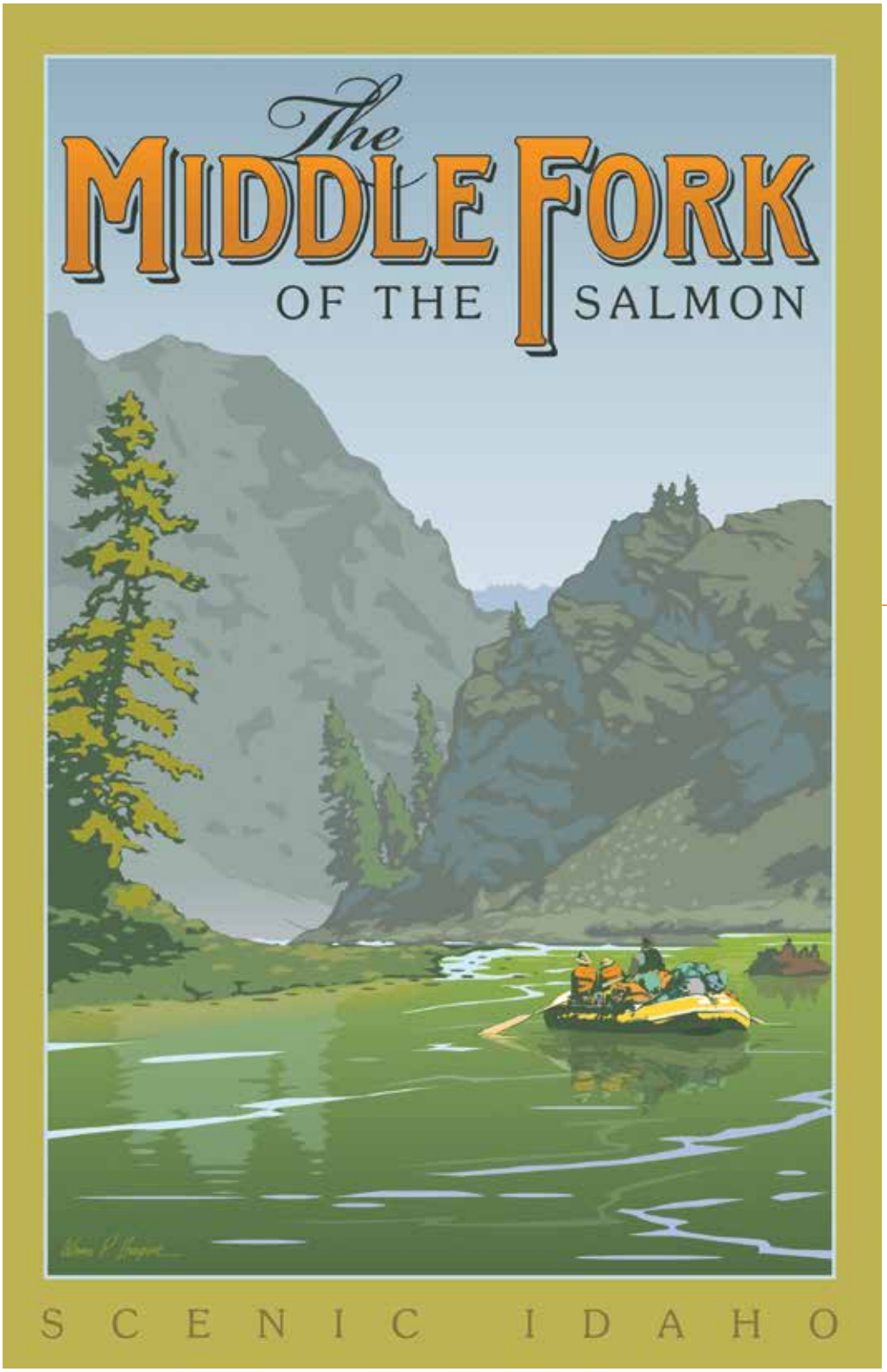
With today's empty main streets and folks rushing through the malls, taking time to reflect on memories makes progress seem so small.

Bob Swa
Soda Springs

I love the Rogerson article ("Rogerson, Spotlight City," July 2011). We don't live in Rogerson, but know folks who do. Rogerson had is annual party the first Saturday in August. My husband and I attend from time to time, and this year was special because of the 100-year celebration. Anita from the Rogerson Store invited me to bring my bus. I am the proud owner of an older, shuttle-type bus and Anita wanted to offer tours of Rogerson as part of their celebration. Too funny, if you know the town at all. Very small . . . but huge in history. Two of the locals narrated the tours, and the bus was filled with people who have lived in this tiny town all their lives. The stories that came from the memory of one resident led to another by a different resident. So much history and so much fun!

I am mailing copies of the issue to family who live out of state. Awesome job!

Shari Hart
Filer



"The Middle Fork of the Salmon"

Larger Than Life

Growing up in Grangeville Gave Ward Hooper the Stuff of His Romantic Art

By Lorie Palmer

The story of Idaho artist Ward Hooper's success is about hard work and determination, but it's also about the importance of dreams.

The son of Dick and Louise Hooper was raised in Grangeville and finished Grangeville High School in 1982. He and his wife, Rachel, now live outside Boise with their eleven-year-old son, Max, but Ward still has a brother who lives in Grangeville. He doesn't get "home" as often as he would like. "I think about Grangeville all the time," he says. "It was a wonderful place to grow up, and I'm obviously still inspired by Idaho County."

Ward participated in art projects through 4-H and school, working in a variety of media along the way. "I was always involved with art," he says. "Mrs. [Linda] Johns, my high school art teacher, really encouraged me to explore and to keep going."

"Rainbow Bridge"

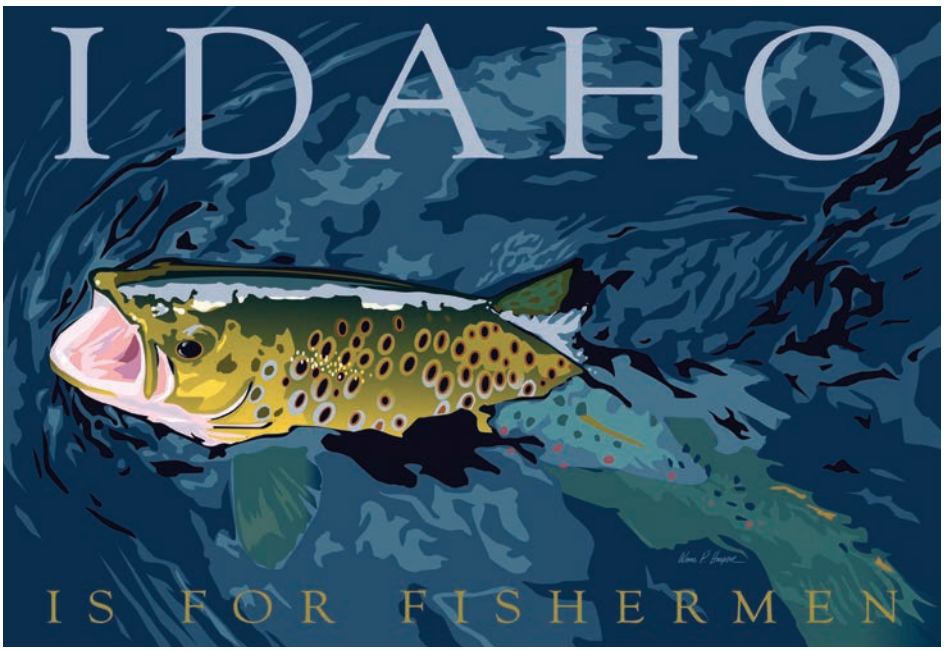
At Boise State University, Hooper chose a fine arts major with a minor in graphic design. "I had always been told you couldn't make a living as a fine artist, so I wanted to make sure I had that backup," he laughs. Hoping to be an illustrator, he worked as a graphic artist for twelve years. "I then went out on my own in the fine art field, using graphic art as well. Those lines have kind of been blurred nowadays; so many different types of media make up the fine arts."

Ward opened a gallery in Eagle, moving later to his current location in downtown Boise. He has been commissioned to create art of many types, including posters and promotional items for his alma mater, BSU, some of which have become iconic. "I would explain my style as a nostalgic, romanticized interpretation of what I experienced growing up," he says. "As children, we see things bigger-than-life, and that's what my work emphasizes."

"Rugged Idaho"

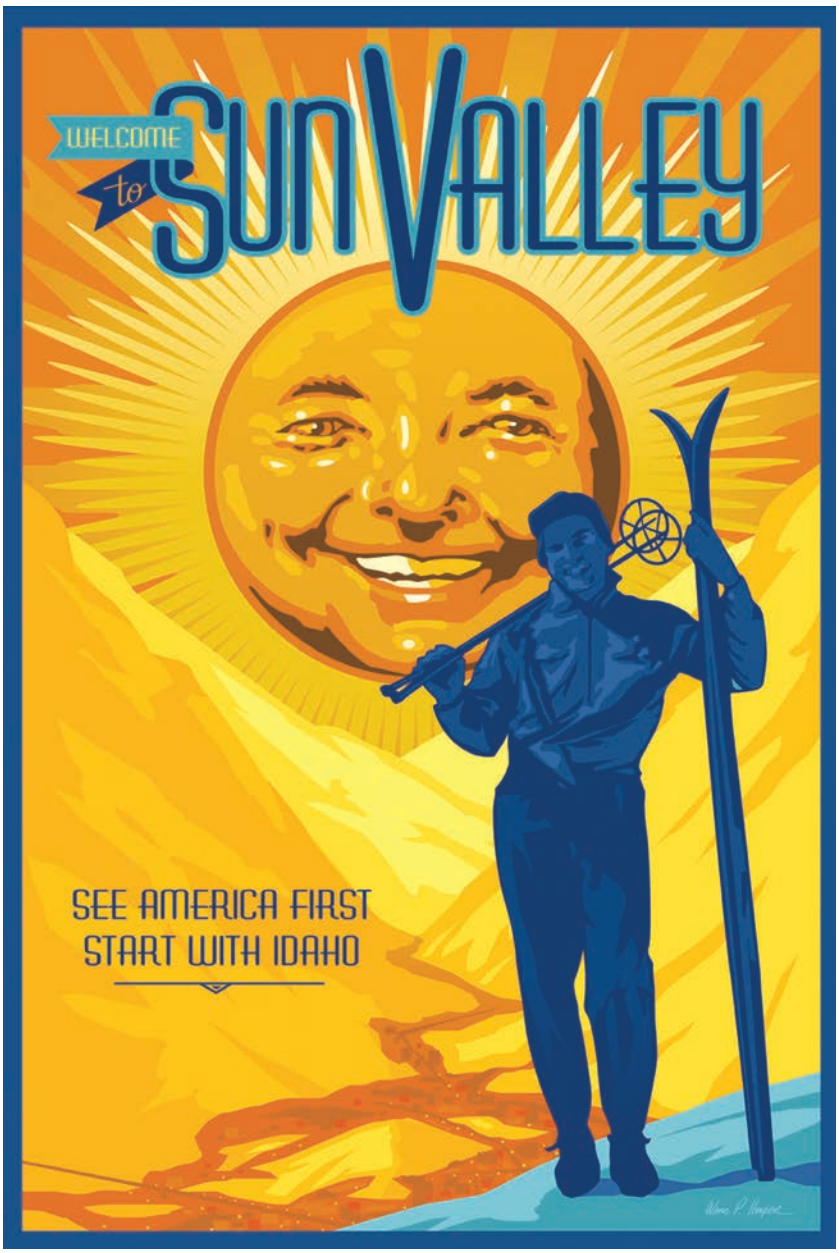
"Depot Landmark"

Ward needs to see what he is going to represent in art, to have an "emotional connection" with an area or thing before he works with it. "It's a stylized way I capture things, based not only on how it looks to me, but also on how it feels."



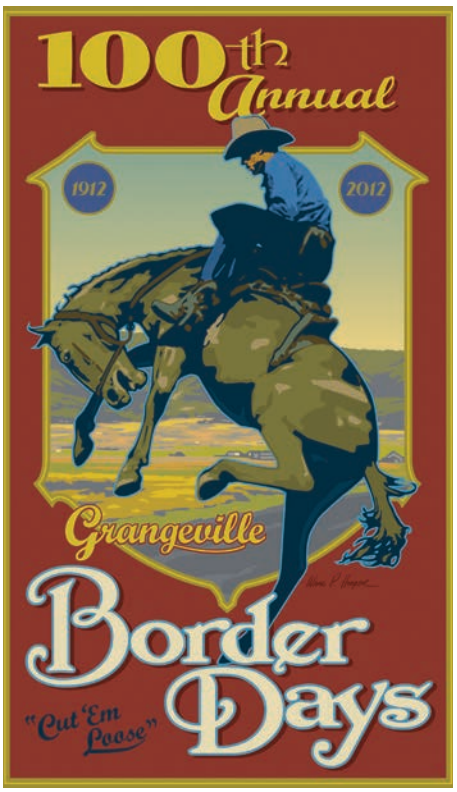
"Idaho Is for Fishermen"

The artist has "constant amazement and gratitude for where I am." He adds, "I know it's really something to be able to do what you love, to make a living at it, to be a working artist . . . It's a dream of mine to be able to do something on a scale that people could see my vision of the world."



"Smiling Sun Valley"

Hooper won't push his son into following in Dad's footsteps. "Max is very creative but I don't know where that will lead. We'll just take it a day at a time."



"Grangeville Border Days"

Hooper produced a piece of art for Grangeville's 100th Border Days last July. It was on the cover of the special historical section in the *Idaho County Free Press*, and also is available in a signed and numbered print on archival cotton rag paper. ■

The Sage of WICKAHONEY

By Shirley Moon

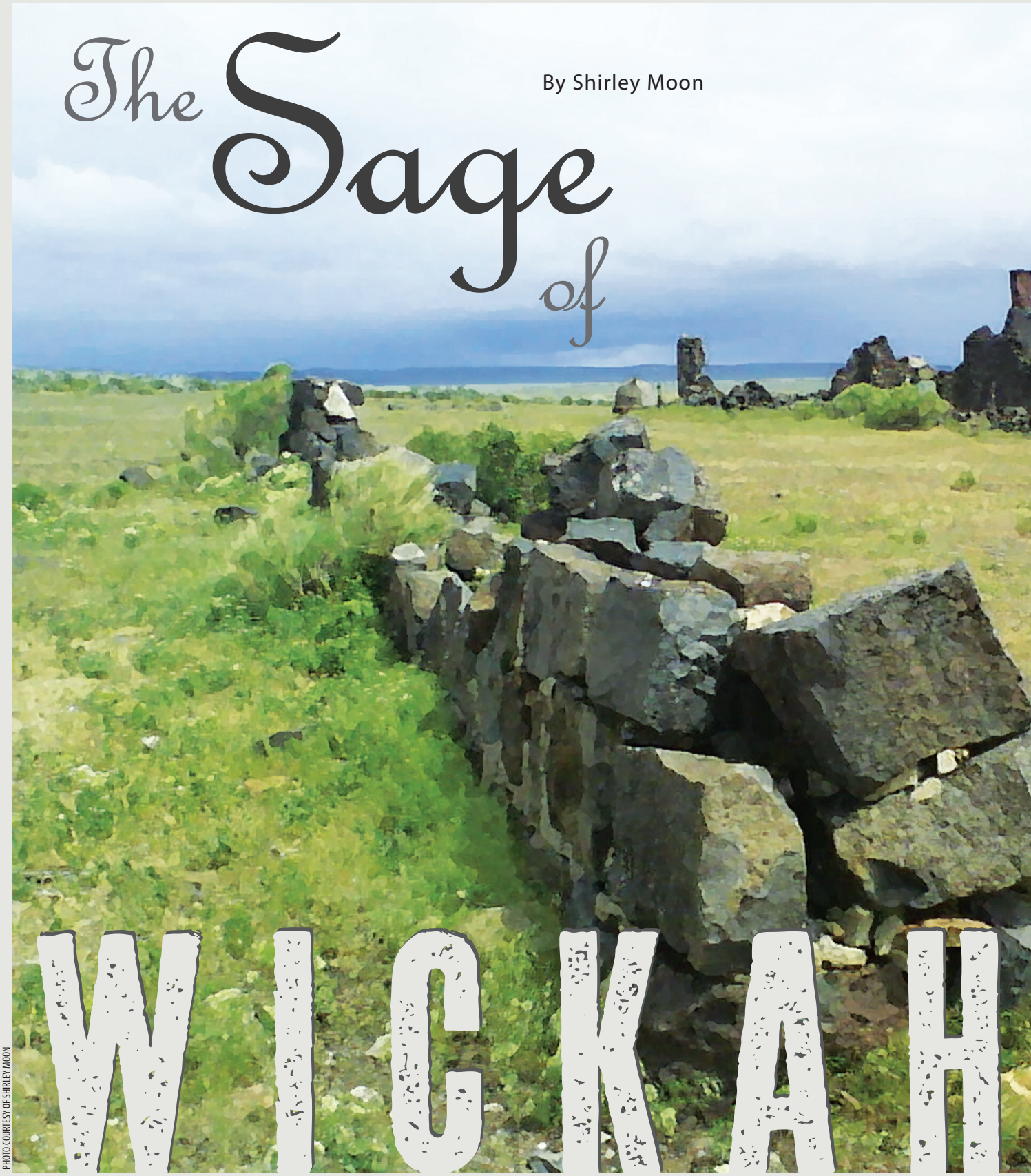


PHOTO COURTESY OF SHIRLEY MOON

Wickahoney [wik-uh-HOE-nee] — **Paiute:** "Plenty Water"; **Shoshone:** "Good Water."

PHOTO COURTESY OF DUNNING FAMILY COLLECTION

PHOTO COURTESY OF DUNNING FAMILY COLLECTION

O N E Y

Wickahoney is a very old, long-forgotten and hidden desert treasure, to be viewed with awe and wonder.

It was the home of my great-grandparents, Dow and Margaret Dunning, built from solid rock in the 1800s. This deteriorating home site, located miles from any logical location, with no physical roads to connect it to civilization, is currently a favored hiking destination for anyone with determination enough to challenge Idaho's desert landscape. The hike and the crumbling remains of the twelve-room home for a family of eleven provide an adventure and a link to the state's great historic record of stagecoach stops, school houses, post offices, and pioneer ranching.

All my life, I had heard stories about this mysterious wonder. After being away from Idaho for more than fifty years, I returned in November 2004. The following year, I became aware that a hike to Wickahoney was in its initial planning stages by the Idaho Conservation League. I knew it was a wonderful opportunity to discover my heritage,

SPREAD: A rock wall windbreak for the barn at the Wickahoney property in the Owyhee Desert, with the historic homestead in the background.

INSET: Portrait of Sen. Dow Dunning (D-Owyhee).

OVAL INSET: Margaret O'Keefe Dunning, 1881.

PHOTO BY SHIRLEY MOON

ABOVE: This grave marker at Wickahoney commemorates Dow's father, Dow's wife, one of their children who died at birth, and a miner later identified as Mike Plavic.

but even during the hike's planning stages, I was a bit apprehensive, because of the unknowns and the walking distance to the site.

We left Boise early in the morning, drove to Owyhee County and parked our cars in a serene desert landscape. We organized our gear and began the six-mile round trip to our destination. As we walked, I marveled at the tranquility and beauty of the desert surroundings, yet quickly discovered that each step required a cautious and judicious focus. The unforgiving terrain made of loose and jagged volcanic rock mixed with crusty sand: the crumbled remnants of time. It seemed to me like an endless domain of hardened, black-and-brown lava in every conceivable place, in all sizes and shapes. The ravines, the wind-swept bluffs, the steep, majestic canyons and larger-than-life volcanic boulders were all twisted and convoluted. I was thankful to have recently purchased a good pair of hiking boots, which lessened the physical impact on me of this rugged desert.

The sagebrush was in various states of growth and deterioration. There was a distinct absence of trees. Occasionally we saw patches of soft green hills with desert grasses gently waving like fluid velvet in the breeze. Wildflowers were profuse. Their aromas, their shades of delicate pastels, vibrant reds and oranges, and their many sizes and shapes all seemed like welcoming gifts. In some places, the flowers were so fragrant, they almost overwhelmed our senses.

Perhaps my anticipation of this day made me see the surroundings in a mood of wonderment, but now my thoughts were quite the opposite. Unlike the stories of early settlers or travelers along the Oregon Trail, I knew this part of Owyhee County had been described in the *Owyhee Outpost* in 1989 as "nothing else than a wild, rocky, barren wilderness of wrecked and ruined nature, a vast field of volcanic desolation."

After a couple hours of hiking, we arrived atop a high, windswept bluff, where I got my first glimpse of the homestead. I was barely able to distinguish the small speck of our destination on the floor of a distant valley, but the sight was the beginning of a link to my past. Looking down into the desolate, uninhabited valley, I discerned no other buildings as far as the eye could see. For me, that moment started a journey toward discovering my heritage that has become a greater adventure than I ever could have imagined. As I stood atop the bluff, I struggled to gather my emotions, hoping no one would notice or say anything that required an answer.

The other hikers quickly descended a steep angle of the hillside towards the remains of the home. Attention was needed to avoid the large rodent holes and watch for rattlesnakes amidst the tall desert grasses, loose volcanic rock and other unstable formations. How did any human survive here? How did any child manage to live safely in this unsympathetic, unforgiving environment?

After our group had lunch, I strolled quietly through the area, between the crumbling structure and a freshwater spring that flowed out of the hillside. "Why did Dow and Margaret choose this spot?" Suddenly, startling myself, I noticed the majestic but deteriorating shells of two poplar trees that towered like centurions over a section of the property. They had withstood the test of time, avoiding total destruction by fire or the harshness of nature. Polished by the elements to a shimmering glow, they reflected the summer's sun almost as if their trunks were made of pure silver. To me, it was as if these two trees represented the still-living spirits of my great-grandparents. Their limbs, shaped anatomically like hands and arms, stretched toward cumulus clouds in the cerulean sky.

Dow and Margaret Dunning's hard work was a heritage my own mother passed to her family. Referring to her grandparent's steadfastness, she often said, "You did not come from wimpy stock." In the half-dozen years since my first visit to Wickahoney, I've read many documents about my great-grandfather, which also silently began to reveal the fragrance, gentleness, and quiet grace of my great-grandmother's essence. Dow and Margaret had eight children. Dow was twenty-nine and Margaret twenty-four when their first child was born. In 1905, when the Dunnings' youngest child, Louise, was only three, Margaret had a stroke, at age forty-two. She was bedridden for months and couldn't speak for one year. Later, Louise wrote in a personal letter how

PHOTO BY SHIRLEY MOON

PHOTO BY SHIRLEY MOON

FAR ABOVE:In 2006, the last two trees at Wickahoney, named "Dow" and "Maggie" by the author.

ABOVE:Hikers descend the hill after Shirley gets her first glimpse of Wickahoney, 2006.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNE TURMES KOELLER

ABOVE: This shot of Wickahoney around the end of the 19th Century was passed down by Dow and Margaret Dunning's eldest chid, Mary.

RIGHT: Dow Dunning at age twenty-five, 1883.

she helped her mother during her recovery process, which lasted several years. Margaret died at age fifty.

From Louise, I learned that Dow, who was born and raised in Ovid, Michigan, attended the University of Michigan. Through my own email correspondence with the university, I discovered he was there for one school year, 1877-1878. The following year, he and his brother, George, moved West with their father, Dr. Joshua Willard Dunning. There is no record of the birth or death of the boys' mother and J.W.'s wife, Mary Weller Dunning. Eventually, Dow moved on to Idaho, settling at first on Reynolds Creek in Owyhee County, close to Silver City, although the dates are unknown.

Our family has a letter written by Dow on March 15, 1887 to his father, when Dow was living in Little Valley near Bruneau and J.W. was living in The Dalles, Oregon. Dow requested that his father come to Idaho to live. No records indicate when J. W. arrived in Idaho, but records show he was living on Jacks Creek in Owyhee County in 1883. Eventually, he settled at Wickahoney with Dow and his family, and he was buried there in 1909.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNE TURMES KOELLER

In late 1887, Dow settled the land that became known as Wickahoney Station. His branding iron, "87," commemorated that year. The Dunning homestead, finished in 1895, when Dow was thirty-seven, was built as part of the stage route. In its heyday, Wickahoney represented an exceptional accomplishment. Many of the blocks of rock in the structure were twenty-four inches thick. Each was dug out of the earth, lifted, cut, moved onto a wagon, hauled home by a team of horses, hoisted out of the wagon, chiseled to an exact size, and placed as high as two stories, and taller for the chimney. When I was on a later hike to Wickahoney, a knowledgeable companion estimated the weight of the stone blocks at 2,000 pounds, based on their length and width. Wickahoney's listing in the National Register of Historic Places confirms its significance.

The original house had eight rooms, and four more were added later. It had seven gables, two stories, a large cellar, two

PHOTO COURTESY OF WILLIAM TINDALL FAMILY

ABOVE: Wickahoney one day after a fire swept through the property in 1986.

fireplaces, and four-inch-thick wood floors. There was a beautifully designed bay window in the front of the house with a view of the prairie that almost negated the hostility of the volcanic surroundings. The bay window was encased in finely finished wood moldings. The walls were plastered and wallpapered. The parlor contained a beautiful rug, a piano, and a couch. Can you imagine transporting these pieces of furniture on a wagon, over a hostile environment of lava, for the betterment of the family home?

Near the house, a rock wall was built from the same stone as the house, which helped to act as a windbreak for the large barn. One Fourth of July, the boys in the family accidentally set fire to the barn. "Jake Bachman from Wilson later built another new barn," the *Owyhee Outpost* reported. "He told Andy Walker from Marsing that he put nails every two inches in the barn doors to keep the horses from kicking them out." Family records state that wild horses in the area were captured and tamed.

Many friendly Indians camped along the creek and purchased food items from the Dunnings. "At times, a hundred or more would camp for the night on the creek," according to a historical note written by Jack Dunning, the family's youngest son. "They would weave baskets out of the green willows that grew along the bank. The Indians were good, honest people."

Eventually, the home was used as a schoolhouse, and it boarded children from surrounding homesteads during the school year, because of the great distances between ranches and severe winters. Margaret and one of her daughters, Mary, were the school teachers. At least four children had to attend each school year for the school to be recognized within the district. As the Dunning children matured, some were sent away to be educated at a Catholic school in Vancouver, Washington.

The home also was used as a stage stop and a post office. As a stage stop, it often served as overnight accommodation for travelers. The Dunnings would charge a fee if the guests were able to pay; otherwise it was free. Sometimes the cost of the lodging was included in the price of the fare on the stage. Each bedroom had extra beds, and the home could accommodate multiple persons when the stage rolled in for the night. Wickahoney was the only stage stop between Riddle and Bruneau. Later, a road was built that bypassed the Wickahoney stage route.

Running water was piped into the house from the nearby spring, which still flows today. A reservoir was built near the spring, and after much research, I learned it was built much later, after Dow sold Wickahoney in 1913. Perhaps it was constructed by the J.R. Simplot Company, which bought the ranch in the 1950s and still owns the land, although the actual construction time is unconfirmed. Because of the spring, the Dunning family was able to irrigate a hundred acres for personal and agricultural use, Jack Dunning wrote. "They had a vegetable garden, fruit trees of all varieties, sheep, cattle, horses, chickens and cows. Sage hens were abundantly present."

Water rights were critical, then as now. In May 2006, Hugh Lovin, professor emeritus of history from Boise State University, sent an essay to the Owyhee County Historical Society. He wrote that Dow "exercised considerable power in his county's Democratic Party organization. . .

PHOTO COURTESY OF OWYHEE COUNTY MUSEUM

PHOTO BY SHIRLEY MOON

FAR ABOVE: Family photo circa 1917. Dow Dunning wears the white beard.

ABOVE: Dow's gravestone, in the pioneer section of Boise's Morris Hill Cemetery.

and functioned in a presidential role on the Gem Irrigation District's board of directors for much of the 1910s."

On Nov. 3, 1908, Dow was elected to the first of three terms in the Idaho Legislature. In 1911, Governor Hawley appointed him to represent Idaho at an International Conference on Taxation held in Richmond, Virginia. He then served a term as an Idaho State Senator beginning in 1913, and was vigorously opposed to the 16th Amendment to the Constitution, regarding income tax. An Idaho newspaper reported, "While Mr. Dunning is a pronounced progressive democrat, he is an ardent advocate of single tax as a panacea for economic evils. He is a man of sterling qualities, and had we more like him in the legislative bodies of the various states and Congress, the evils of class legislation and corruption would soon be a thing of the past. He is the acknowledged leader of his party in the Idaho Legislature and about the only Democrat in the State Senate." During his term as a state senator, Dow was being groomed for governor of Idaho.

After his term in the state senate, Dow ran for the U. S. Senate against the incumbent, William Borah. Dow lost the election and demanded a recount, which did not occur. After his three consecutive terms in Congress, Dow worked for the newly formed IRS for one year. He then started his own tax consulting business, and had many ranchers as his clients.

In 1935, he was a candidate for mayor of Boise, at age seventy-six. His public service philosophy had been well-expressed during his senatorial days in his statement, "The service a man receives from a community shall be determined by the services he renders to the community." As I researched and traveled, once getting temporarily lost in the desert as I searched for another source of information, I discovered that Dow was perceived by others as courageous, free-spirited, tenacious, bombastic and that he was even fearfully revered. But he lived by that public service philosophy. He lost the election for mayor, and died the following year. His picture is on display in both the Legislative and Senatorial sections at the Idaho State Capitol.

Dow Dunning, known by his colleagues in the legislature as "The Sage of Wickahoney," is buried in Boise's Morris Hill Cemetery, in the pioneer section. Prior to his death, he lived in Boise's historic Hyde Park district. In addition to eight children, he had sixteen grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren.

The author wishes to extend her sincere thanks to: Hugh Lovin, professor emeritus, Boise State University; Mary O'Malley of the Owyhee County Museum in Murphy, and all the staff there; Steve Barrett, Ph.D., of the Idaho State Historical Society; Bill and Margaret Tindall of Grasmere; Ada Rose Larios; Arsen Alzola; and Susan Anna Turmes Koeller, my favorite cheerleader and last remaining grandchild of her era. ■

Atomic Days

A Stricken Town Still Knows How to Party

Story and Photos by Stephen Henderson

Except for the 1970 sedan purring in front of the rec hall, Arco's main street is silent.

"That engine's a fresh-out-of-the-crate Corvette Triple-Z," says the owner, Jed Mitchell. His is one of those rides with a trunk big enough to fit anything—or for that matter, anybody—and it just gleams. He lights up a cigarette and gives me an easy, creased smile, one he's been working on for three-quarters of a century.

"When I met him he was my rough, hot biker," Jed's wife, Kathy, chimes in. "As the years went by and he lost his momentum, he had to have a hip replacement. So he went from motorcycles to old cars. I call 'em his chick cars. I mean, the girls just have a fit!"

I'm here in Arco partly because when I was growing up, *National Geographic* and I were best friends. I always wanted to mimic its style and subjects in my own writing: the people, their culture, struggles, and triumphs. Weeks of digging for information on Arco hadn't turned up very much material, so I decided to make my visit sooner than expected. The town's annual cancer awareness benefit would be happening the next Saturday, when I hoped locals would be milling and willing to talk to a

FAR ABOVE: Kathy Mitchell.

ABOVE: Businesses catering to travelers line Highway 26 heading east out of town.

LEFT: Jed Mitchell lifts the hood of his '70 sedan.

LEFT: Getting wet is part of the fun at Arco's Aware-A-Bration.

MIDDLE: During the annual celebration, residents let the wind carry away balloons lettered with the names of cancer victims and survivors.

RIGHT: A child gets a faster-than-expected ride down the giant water slide.

stranger like me. On the day, I grabbed my camera and a few lenses, packed the essentials in my car, and headed west.

The Mitchells tell me they retired recently from pipe-lining and gold-mining in faraway Alaska to Arco, a dot on the Idaho map that falls somewhere between Twin Falls and Idaho Falls. They've spent the last five of their forty-seven years together here, and they aren't planning on leaving.

"When we moved here, we thought we were gonna be two old folks with no family, no anything," says Kathy. "I swear we'd only been here two weeks and we started meeting people and it was like family."

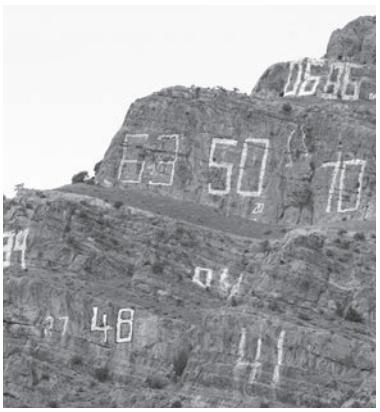
The family feeling here is palpable. At the end of each summer, Arco and her sister communities gather as one big family for the Atomic Days celebration, car shows included. It's clear why Jed and Kathy would want to end up in this dusty town, of all places.

Following the World War II, the federal government began pumping millions of dollars into the Idaho National Laboratory—then known as the National Reactor Testing Station—an 890 square-mile patch of desert and sagebrush located roughly ten miles from Arco. Engineers and their families relocated to this town of a few blocks as the feds' focus shifted from battle-proven nukes to more peaceful endeavors.

Fewer and fewer residents work out at INL or "the site" anymore, and the town is stricken. Most find employment working the land, bringing in alfalfa, barley, potatoes and corn. Walking off the main street into the Sawtooth Bar, you can feel a bygone era trying to cling to the present, old bottle caps creating word pictures on the yellow ceiling.

On July 17, 1955, Arco did have its day in the sun. The same day that Disneyland was inaugurated, the whole town was hooked up to the nuclear grid; it became the first city in the world to be lit entirely by nuclear

BELOW: Youngsters prepare for a potato sack race in the park.



FAR LEFT: Remains of the *USS Hawkbill* nuclear submarine, gifted to the Idaho Science Center in Arco.

MIDDLE: Graffiti on "Number Hill" commemorates each high school graduating class at Arco.

RIGHT: A hiker near one of many vents into underground chambers at Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve outside Arco.

power. The juice ran for about two hours. Luckily, those two hours have kept the tiny town on the map. But staying on the map is one thing; staying alive and on the map is quite another. In Arco, the population can't keep up a tax base strong enough to sustain the community.

As kids anxiously wait for the water to be turned on at the giant blow-up water slide, the rest of the population mingles among vendors and booths at the annual Lost Rivers Cancer Aware-A-Bration, in Bottolfsen Park. Three years ago, cancer survivor Barbara Andersen decided to start the event to celebrate life and promote cancer awareness, and the town has responded. No surprise at all for the community that helped raise more than $24,000 in one day for a local car crash victim a few years back.

"It's a nice thing to come play for free, eat for free, and get education on some health issues," says Andersen, her two kids standing in oversized Aware-A-Bration T-shirts, obviously losing patience with their mom and her new friends; all of kid-dom is waiting for her to turn on the water.

Andersen's husband, Trevor, who works as a heavy equipment operator at nearby INL, points to the giant white numbers on the mountain overlooking the town known as Number Hill. Each year, the senior class makes its way up the cliffs to dangle from tires, dip brooms in five-gallon buckets of paint, and mark their year on the rock, a tradition that began almost a century ago. Something about it is reminiscent of ancient Egypt; the mountain with its numbers looming over the town. "They've started using harnesses and safety equipment to get the job done, which is a good thing," chuckles Trevor.

Making acquaintances is easy in a place where it seems like everyone is raising everyone else's kids. After making my way through the line of heaping potato salad, dogs, and chips, I run into Michelle Holt, director of local economic development. Michelle understands what it's like to operate on a shoestring budget. Butte County is eighty-seven percent government-owned land, the bulk of that ownership by the Department of Energy. "We have a huge amount of land that doesn't generate any tax revenue, which affects the hospital, schools, everything," she says. "We just do what we can and we get lean and mean." It's an ironic situation for a place whose peak population fifty years ago was essentially fueled by the same department.

Sheriff Wes Collins, tall and goateed, is standing a few steps away over a grill of blackening hot dogs. He removes his plastic serving glove to give my hand a firm shake. "Our budget is hurting," he says. "We've taken a lot of different ideas from a lot of little counties who are going through some of the same things, trying to figure out ways to save money and still provide a service. It's getting tough." Despite the challenges—extracurriculars and other programs that are losing funding or being removed altogether—the young people, he says, are some of the best they've had in years.

We lift our eyes from the park to Number Hill. The sheriff says once they've hit a century, a date that's fast approaching, he hopes the painting tradition will come to an end. I secretly hope it never stops. ■

A Soldier's Story

His Idaho Life Before and After World War II

By Amy Carr

"I left a boy and came back a man," Leo Romer says quietly of his World War II experience. "We all did."

Speaking candidly about his time in the service, he gives a unique perspective of how a global war affected a young man from rural Idaho.

Leo graduated from Idaho Falls High School in 1941. "I was too small to play football, and I got tired of sitting on the bench in basketball," he says of his high school days, "so I went in for dramatics and public speaking. I also learned how to play the bass horn and was in the band. I wanted to go to college, but the money just wasn't available, so I was working at any job I could find and saving my pennies, so I could start in the fall of 1942."

Like many others, he distinctly remembers the day the war became part of his life: December 7, 1941. "My family had been out for [my father's] birthday dinner and I was driving home . . . when I turned the radio on. The announcer's voice came out loud and clear . . . I was 18 years old." From the moment Leo heard the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor, he knew there was no doubt he was going to spend the next few years of his life in the military. At the time, the U.S. was not drafting eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds, so he was able to attend one semester at the Southern Branch of the University of Idaho (now Idaho State University) in Pocatello before he was drafted at age nineteen.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MUSEUM OF IDAHO

RIGHT: Leo Romer in his military service days.

When Leo embarked on a journey that would eventually take him to the South Pacific as a paratrooper, the quiet life he had led as a student in southeast Idaho became a fond but distant memory. Once he arrived in Camp Mackall, North Carolina, for training, he remembers the recruits being told to memorize the title of their division, which was the "Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 188th Glider Infantry Regiment of the 11th Airborne Division." No one knew what this mouthful meant, but the purpose of the

A Grateful Nation: A Look Back at WWII

Leo Romer's story is highlighted as a part of the Museum of Idaho's exhibit, "A Grateful Nation: A Look Back at WWII," from Sept. 30 to Nov. 26, 2011. This exhibit pays tribute "to all who fought to preserve our freedoms, and to the commitment of those on the home front, who made many sacrifices to support our troops."

In addition to stories from veterans, the exhibit includes uniforms, equipment, and personal mementos from American, German, and Japanese soldiers, along with displays on the Holocaust, Japanese internment camps, and German and Italian prisoner of war camps in Idaho.

For more information, contact the Museum of Idaho, 200 N. Eastern Ave., Idaho Falls, ID 83402, 208-522-1400, or visit online at www.museumofidaho.org.

division became clear rather quickly. After rigorous physical training, Leo volunteered to be a parachutist, because it was safer than the gliders and meant an additional $50 a month, nearly doubling his pay.

Being thrown into the dense jungles and continuous rain of the Pacific Ocean theater came as quite a shock to someone accustomed to Idaho's arid, high deserts. "Staying completely dry was almost impossible," he recalls. "You knew you would be wet, so you tried to sleep all night without twisting or turning. You wanted only one side to be wet. As I look back, I don't know how anyone could be that miserable and still survive, but we did."

It is common for many Americans to assume that those in the military choose to serve for love of country, God, or in defense of freedom. However, Leo states , "You just did it. I can't even say you did it for love of country, you just did it because you were here." It was a sense of duty; one that ended up altering the lives of countless young men and women, including Leo's high school friend, a platoon member who never made it back from the Pacific.

After an extended stay in Japan, Leo returned to the United States in December 1945. "It was a lonesome trip home. We docked in Seattle on Christmas Eve. I remembered one of the fellows in my platoon lived in Seattle, so I called him on Christmas morning. He'd just gotten home and the family was celebrating that evening. He invited me to come over . . . and that evening I was greeted by Paul and his family." With a touch of sadness in his voice, Leo says he felt lost during those days in Seattle. Even though he was back in the U.S., surrounded by people who cared for him, he felt like he was not really home.

He was not the only one feeling this way; many soldiers had a difficult time readjusting to life in the United States after the war. But as Leo sat in his friend's home that Christmas night and heard his name called, something changed. "Santa had brought me a present. It

Being thrown into dense jungles and continuous rain came as quite a shock to someone accustomed to Idaho's arid, high deserts.

was a pair of socks, and I must confess, that pair of socks brought tears to my eyes. I was no longer a stranger," he recalls. "It was a very special time that lives forever in my memory."

While Leo did not have plans when he returned to Idaho in January of 1946, one of his pre-war college friends did. "He asked me what I planned on doing, and I said I wasn't sure. He said, 'I am. You're going back to college. I've reserved a spot for you.' So I went back to college." Leo believes that one of the greatest things to come from the war was the G.I. Bill. This bill made it possible for an entire generation of soldiers to go to school, many of whom would not have had the opportunity otherwise. He laughs as he remembers his wife saying that campus got a lot better-looking when the soldiers came home.

He asked me what I planned on doing, and I said I wasn't sure. He said, "I am. You're going back to college. I've reserved a spot for you."

After he finished his two years in Pocatello, Leo went on to complete his education at the University of Utah and, by 1949, he had a degree in geology. "Jobs were scarce when I graduated. I was offered a job in Borneo, but I turned it down, because I was madly in love with a girl from Idaho Falls and didn't want to leave." Returning to Idaho Falls, Leo married the girl of his dreams in 1949, and began a job measuring crops with the Production Marketing Administration. After working at various places over the years, including multinational corporations, he retired in 1989. He is grateful for his years of employment at the INL, as he still firmly believes that "the Site" made it possible for a lot of educated young men, including him, to come back to Idaho Falls.

Leo's wife passed away in 2010 and his three children are scattered, but he still remains active in the community he has always loved. "When I returned to Idaho Falls, that's when my life began again." ■

PHOTO BY SCOTT JOHNSON

PHOTO COURTESY OF RONALEE FLANSBURG

Romance Returns to Rexburg

A Returnee, Friends, and Donors Restore a Historic Beauty

By RonaLee Flansburg

For nearly a century in the heart of Rexburg, on the corner of Center and Main, the marquee lights of an old theater beckoned people to come inside and see a show.

From vaudeville to *Star Wars*, the theater saw many things come and go. When it opened in 1917, it was a vaudeville theater called "The Rex". In the 1930s, it was enlarged, remodeled, and renamed "The Romance." It filled with water when the Teton Dam broke in 1976. It was cleaned out and became a movie theater called "The Westwood." Movies were shown at the theater until 2001, when the lights went out, and the doors closed.

I moved to Rexburg as a teenager. I remember going into the theater during its Westwood days. I saw *E.T.* there. It seemed pretty run down by then. To make the place seem more contemporary, the décor was updated in full 1970s glory: purple walls, red seats, and crazy neon carpet. I was not impressed.

I didn't stay in Rexburg long after high school, because I was ready to leave the "burg" and go see the world. Twenty-five years later, I came back via Utah, France, Switzerland, Oregon, and Washington. My husband and I were looking for a good place to raise our two daughters.

ABOVE:Renovation of the stage was part of the Romance Theater's remake in Rexburg.

INSET: The Rex became the Romance in the 1930s.

PHOTO BY SCOTT JOHNSON

ABOVE: A new marquee is the *piece de resistance.*

BELOW LEFT: Plaster was repainted in authentic period colors.

BELOW RIGHT: New seating welcomes audiences.

Rexburg was more kid-friendly than the big city. I wanted to provide every opportunity possible for a high quality of life for my daughters, and I was looking to get involved in the community.

I noticed a "For Sale" sign on the theater and, for months, I would drive by to check if anyone had bought it yet. After the sign had been there for quite a while, I decided to call the realtor and look at it. The old stage was still there, behind the screen. I wondered if it would be possible to breathe some life back into the place, but I knew nothing about theater and had no idea where to start.

I started making calls, and soon found that I was not the only one who wanted to see the theater restored. Once the Rexburg City Council realized there was interest in preserving the building, it decided to buy the theater. The mayor appointed a group of us to restore it for use by the community. This group has now worked together for more than five years to preserve this piece of Rexburg history. In the meantime, the members of the committee have become dear friends.

At first, there was a lot of work to be done, and it was slow going. Not everyone in Rexburg was convinced the building was worth saving. Money was always tight. We struggled to get the equipment necessary to reopen the facility. It seemed we were working up until the last minute to get ready for every show.

Even so, help came from many sources. We were given some equipment from BYU Idaho. The Idaho Commission on the Arts gave us a grant to buy a digital projector and the CHC Foundation gave us grants for a roll-up screen and a new

PHOTO BY STEPHEN ZOLLINGER

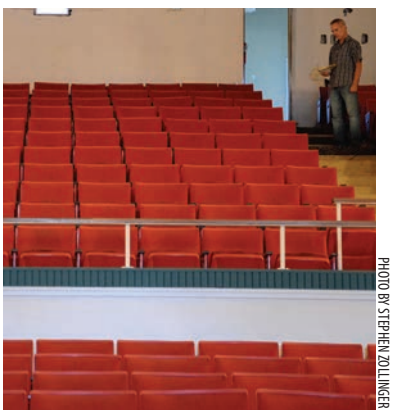


PHOTO BY STEPHEN ZOLLINGER

concessions counter. More and more people began to attend events in the theater.

We continued to work on the restoration. The red curtains, which had been nailed to the walls, were taken down to reveal Art Deco plaster motifs. The old stage was cleared and a new front added. The old splendor of the Romance Theater began to peek through. A group of artists researched the Art Deco period and began repainting the plaster in authentic period colors, and applying metal leafing. It was amazing to watch the collaborative effort.

The restoration got a big lift when the Save America's Treasures program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation announced we would be receiving a major grant through the National Parks Service. We were able to make much-needed repairs to the electrical system and the exterior brick to make the building more practical, as well as more safe. The yellow façade covering the original brick front was removed. We were relieved to find that all the brick was intact. When we took off the old Westwood marquee, we found some very pretty brickwork that had been covered up.

Many community groups have helped clean and paint. We won a grant from Hampton Inns, which also sent a crew of its employees to rip out carpet, clean, and plant trees and flowers. It is gratifying to see people come together, roll up their sleeves and give back to their community. I have found that there are a lot of good, generous people in the world, and it is a good feeling.

The *piece de resistance* is the new marquee. I will never forget the day it went up. I held my breath as the crane pulled it up off the sidewalk. For several days after the marquee was erected, whenever I drove by the building I drove around the block a few times, so I could keep looking at it. When it is lit at night, there is no doubt that the Romance is back in Rexburg.

When I am alone in the empty theater, I can almost hear the echo of applause, of music, of Shirley Temple's feet dancing across the silver screen. The stage is quiet now and the seats are vacant, but there is anticipation in the air, for soon people will arrive to hang new curtains, to repaint faded plaster, and to put in new carpet. Once again, there will be music, dancing, movies, and applause. The Romance Theater is not only a part of Rexburg history; it is a part of our future. ■

PHOTO BY FRANK ADEN, JR.

A Storm of Confetti

Remembering the Late Vern Moore, Idaho's First TV Anchorman

By Art Gregory

I worked with legendary Idaho broadcaster Vern Moore for only about a year, from November 1975 through December 1976 on a Boise AM radio station, so I was quite surprised and humbled when, in 2000, he turned over his photo archives to me.

Vern was selling his home in Boise and moving to Hayden to be close to his wife's family. Turns out, his realtor was my nephew, Andy Bender, who told Vern his uncle Art "was in radio." Vern remembered me and told Andy he had some things we wanted to give me. Needless to say, I was shocked when the box I received contained most of Vern's broadcasting histo-

ry—the compelling reason for me to start the History of Idaho Broadcasting Foundation.

I registered the foundation as an Idaho non-profit corporation in January 2004, and the following year met Frank Aden, Jr., who became the foundation's vice president and secretary. We held our first meeting in May 2006 and the rest, as they say, is history. After Vern moved to Hayden, we lost touch with him, and even working through Andy Bender, we couldn't locate him. We thought he had moved to Spokane or Coeur d'Alene, and we hadn't checked in Hayden. Through a series of extensive Internet searches we finally found his daughter, who provided Vern's address and phone number in Hayden. I called the number, held my breath . . . and got an answering machine with Vern's voice on

PHOTO COURTESY OF HISTORY OF IDAHO BROADCASTING FOUNDATION

PHOTO COURTESY OF HISTORY OF IDAHO BROADCASTING FOUNDATION

OPPOSITE: Over Lake Hayden, en route to a visit with broadcaster Vern Moore.

ABOVE: Vern Moore in the Boise Chamber of Commerce studio, circa 1949.

LEFT: Moore (right) interviews actor Robert Taylor.

PHOTO BY FRANK ADEN, JR.

RIGHT: Art Gregory and Vern Moore examine historic Idaho broadcasting materials.

it. I left a message, and he called back a few days later.

We arranged to interview Vern about his groundbreaking career. Foundation member Larry Taylor offered to fly us up to Hayden in his private airplane, and arrangements were made for June 13, 2010. As you'll read in Larry's account in these pages, we had a fabulous trip and learned a great deal about Vern's career and his current life. According to Vern's daughter-in-law, he was a well-known and well-loved fixture at the local coffee shops, restaurants, and the grocery store. Vern was a night-owl, who often took a catnap or two during the day.

While we recorded the interview on both audio and videotape, Vern looked over many of the pictures and documents in our archives, which of course brought back a lot of memories. Some of the photos came from his original collection, which he hadn't seen since he turned them over to me in 2000. We also looked through dozens of vintage photographs, some of which

Seeking Out the Mentor

By Larry Taylor

Standing outside Vern Moore's door in Hayden, I was full of anticipation. Art Gregory, Frank Aden, Jr., and I had flown from Boise to his home that morning. It was Sunday, June 13, 2010. We stood there in the spring sun, camera rolling, hoping to capture Vern's first look. I hadn't seen him in at least twenty-five years.

We had worked together at a Boise radio station in the late 1960s, but then I moved on to a career in TV news in Eugene, Oregon. When I returned to Boise in 1975 to start the noon news on a television station, Vern was transitioning from news to public relations. Our paths crossed occasionally during the next few years, usually on a busy Boise sidewalk, and then I lost track of him. I frequently wondered what had become of him. He was a big figure in my life, not only because of our time together at the radio station, but because of the impression he made on me in my youth.

Not many of us enjoy the legacy of being first at something significant. Vern Moore was the first face on Idaho television. I probably wasn't much interested in news then, at age ten, but I do have a keen memory of him as Idaho's first TV news anchorman. TV was magic, and I was glued to my grandparents' sixteen-inch Hoffman from the time KIDO signed on in the late afternoon to when it signed off in the evening. Vern Moore was the serious newsman and Jack Link the personable weather reporter. I was a loyal viewer and fan for two years, until my family moved overseas in 1955, but, as Jack Link might say, I managed to find them.

are "new-to-us" images Vern took, developed and printed in his darkroom.

Seeing some of the pictures taxed Vern's memory, as he could not remember all the people, but he was very clear in identifying many of them, even at age ninety-four. He recalled a trip from Portland to Boise in the Packard of Curt Phillips, after Curt hired him to work in Boise radio when he was eighteen. Vern had grown up in Portland, and attended Benson Polytechnic High School where he was befriended by an instructor who owned a radio station, where Vern first worked. After graduating from Benson, he enrolled at Oregon Institute of Technology, where he got all his FCC licenses. He was then hired to help run the radio station where he worked in high school, and he was on the air when Curt and Georgia Phillips just happened be in town. After hearing him on the air, Curt hired him instantly and moved him to Boise, where he worked in radio and television from 1934 until 1977.

Among the new information we learned during the interview was the subtle "falling out" Vern had with the boss, Georgia Davidson, when he opted to return to military service during the Korean War. Apparently Vern, along with many others on the station's staff, had already left Georgia once, in 1941, to serve in World War II. At the time, Georgia was left with virtually no staff, and things got even worse when her husband and the station's owner, Curt "Kiddo" Phillips, suddenly died of a heart attack on June 20, 1942. Vern says his first military stint during WWII went fine, but when he opted to serve in the Korean War,

During our five-year stay in the Philippines, I got my first taste of radio: a one-hour, Saturday night rock-and-roll show called "Teen Turntable" on Subic Bay's KCMB. When we returned to the states in 1960, we settled in Pendleton, Oregon, for my senior year of high school. My participation in a radio class led to a part-time, after-school DJ job on the radio. My mother worked traffic at a competitor station.

I left for Corvallis in the fall for what proved to be an unimpressive year at Oregon State, where my classes took a back seat to another radio DJ job. When I dropped out of school in the spring of 1962, I returned to Pendleton for a radio job, where I stayed until 1967. When I was offered a job in Boise, I jumped at the chance to return to my hometown. I don't think I knew when I accepted the job that Vern Moore was the news director, and Jack Link was the big boss out of Seattle. When I had first met them in our radio days, I had to restrain myself from asking for their autographs. They were my childhood broadcasting idols, and I fully intended to stay at that station the rest of my life.

But a year later, Fred Webb, another alumnus from the radio station, called from Eugene saying he wanted to make a television news anchorman out of me. Oh, the glamour of it all. I stayed in Eugene seven years, eventually becoming news director.

In 1975, I once again had a chance to return to my hometown, at the invitation of a television station news director, Sal Celeski. I worked as anchorman and managing news editor for five years before deciding to change careers.

Twenty-two years later, I retired from Idaho Power Company as manager of legislative affairs. Through it all, and especially during my time in TV news, I would think of Vern Moore. The images of him talking to me through the Hoffman set's tinted screen were indelibly planted. His no-

Georgia was cool to him upon his return. Even so, this didn't seem to affect his role in the operation, as he was tapped to be the station's first television news anchor. When the channel signed on the air July 12, 1953, Vern was master of ceremonies, becoming the first person to appear on television in Idaho.

A few memorable moments from the interview include Vern telling us how he and chief engineer Harold Toedtemeier (aka "Teddy") assembled most of the first equipment for the new television station studios. Vern says he climbed the new self-supporting tower that held the antenna to install the final lighting and connections a couple of weeks just prior to sign-on. It was more than three hundred feet tall. Once the station was on the air, Vern used to get on the catwalk inside the new studios and drop confetti on weatherman Jack Link to make it look like it was snowing. Vern thought it was funny, but neither Jack nor anyone else agreed.

Vern passed away February 17, 2011 in a Coeur d'Alene hospital after a brief illness. I had the honor of speaking at his funeral, after which attendees went to a military burial service at Coeur d'Alene Memorial Gardens that included a twenty-one gun salute.

While in Coeur d'Alene, I packed up more than130 pounds of Vern's reel-to-reel tapes—about 800 of them—and shipped them back to Boise. His original photos and newspaper clippings remain the core of our historical collection about the beginnings of broadcasting in Idaho. Thank you, Vern Moore. You will be missed, but never forgotten. ■

nonsense, professional approach to news gathering and reporting which I learned to respect were guideposts to my career. And here we were now, outside his door.

It was ninety-four years since his birth, fifty-seven years since I first had seen him on TV, forty-two years since we worked together in radio and at least a quarter-century since I saw him last. What would he look like? How would he act? Would he remember me? Those questions were quickly answered when the door swung open to Vern Moore, the legend. Older, obviously, but he had the same broad smile, erect stature, and warm greeting. It was almost as though no time had passed at all.

Vern's wife, Lorraine, has had some health issues now at age ninety but is doing fine. She worked in radio in Mountain Home but was best known for her on-air work in Nampa as "Lorraine from KAIN." After enjoying a snack of quiche, juice, and coffee prepared by Lorraine's daughter, we sat around the dining table for Art's two-hour interview with Vern about his long career in broadcasting. I ran one camera while Frank tended the other. Lorraine sat next to Vern, adding color to his stories along with information about her own career in radio.

The video and audio tapes we made that day are treasured additions to the library of the History of Idaho Broadcasting Foundation. We flew away that afternoon with a sense of reunion and accomplishment, and a promise from Vern that he would join us the next summer for a gathering Art was planning in Boise. "You might have to send somebody up here to get me, though," Vern said. "I'm not sure I want to drive that far."

"We'll come get you, Vern," we assured him. "We'll come get you."

Editor's Note: *These articles originally appeared, in a slightly different form, in the History of Idaho Broadcasting Foundation's newsletter, and are republished here with permission.*

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IDAHO magazine

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An Insider Describes Her Small-Town Connections

Of all the places in Idaho my family has lived, the one we call home is Teton City, in Fremont County ten miles north of Rexburg. We first moved there in 1994, when I was six years old, staying for three years, moving away for four years, and then returning. Three houses down from us was an abandoned building called the Teton Mercantile. As kids, my brother and sister and I would walk to the gas station near the old mercantile to buy penny candy. When we passed the empty store, we would stop to look in the dusty windows and wonder what the place once had held. At the time, we didn't know this was Teton City's first store and a historic landmark. Today, the downstairs is still empty but the windows are no longer dusty, because the upstairs has been remodeled into apartments. The building's basement, which once was used as a shooting range, is now filled with concrete. People who drive down Highway 33 see only a building, but for those of us to whom Teton is home, the old mercantile represents memories of simpler times and happy days.

TETON CITY

By Alanah Muir

SPREAD: Highway 33 going through the center of Teton City, 2011.

PHOTO BY ALANAH MUIR

LEFT:Teton Mercantile building, late 19th Century.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF TETON

PHOTO BY ALANAH MUIR

To me, our family home near the merc was just a house in those days. I didn't know how much history that little white building with the green roof held. In 1943, it belonged to the postmistress, Lena Butts, who lived in the back and converted the front into the post office. Butts served as the postmistress for thirty-three years, retiring in 1975. Three years earlier, Teton's postal business had been privatized, and in 1973 a new post office was built near the mercantile on Main Street, where it still serves a population of 634.

To me, our family home near the merc was just a house in those days. I didn't know how much history that little white building held.

Teton City's roots go back to the spring of 1883, when ten men traveled from Mendon, Utah, in search of a new place to settle. On April 25, they reached the spot where the city would be established. "The men were quite pleased with the town site because it was flat, fertile land, with water available for irrigation," according to the 1983 *History of Teton City, Idaho,* by James L. Downing. "There was also plenty of range for cattle. Little did they realize that this rangeland would soon be turned into farmland."

A few days after their arrival, the men decided to call the town Teton because it was close to the Teton River and had a wonderful view of the Teton Range. The men laid out the plans for the city, dividing 320 acres into ten-acre blocks. Each family was then sold two-and-a-half acres for $7.50. Of that sum, seven dollars helped to cover the cost of surveying and fifty cents went towards building the town square. The original town square was not there by the time our family

moved to Teton, but long ago it held a baseball field, a grandstand, and a racetrack.

In May of 1883, the men began working on the Teton Canal, which was completed in 1886. The families of the men began arriving in the spring of 1884, after which the town grew quickly. It soon became necessary to build stores and other means of achieving self-sufficiency. Up went the Teton Mercantile Company, owned by brothers Francis R. Siddoway and James W. Siddoway. In 1915, the business was moved to its current location, and the mercantile was combined with a hardware store.

Mutt Johnson was Teton Mercantile's manager, butcher, and baker, notes Diana S. Richman, an Idaho state representative for parts of Madison and Fremont counties, who was born and raised in the town. "Mutt was a mother's worst nightmare, because he would give the little children penny licorice and by the time the mother left the store, the child's face was covered in the black, sticky candy," Diana recalls. The mercantile was a two-

OPPOSITE: Teton Mercantile nowadays.

BELOW: The original Teton Mercantile, late 19th Century.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF TETON

PHOTO BY ALANAH MUIR

ABOVE: Teton Elementary School, also known as the Red Brick School, 2011.

story building with a basement. When Diana was a girl, a dance hall was upstairs, and a projector was available for screening movies. That was when the basement was a shooting range.

Karen Parker, a member of the Civic League and the first chairman of Teton City's Planning and Zoning Committee, also was born and raised in the town. She remembers hardware, dry goods, medicine, clothing, and the bank within the walls of Teton Mercantile. The upstairs dance hall was used as a roller skating rink when she was growing up.

When I was a student at Teton Elementary, the office secretary was my great-aunt, and the lunch ladies knew my name.

Rock School was built in 1899-1901 across the street from the location of the current elementary school. Rock School included all twelve grades until 1928, when students in grades nine through twelve were sent to Sugar City and Rexburg. Eventually, the south wall of Rock School began to pull away from the building. "One winter, the wind blew so hard they sent us home, because they were afraid that wall was going to collapse," Diana Richman remembers.

Safety concerns prompted the construction, through the Works Progress Administration, of the current red-brick school in 1936. It opened in January 1937 and today, that same red-brick school, now Teton Elementary, houses kindergartners through sixth-graders.

When I was a student at Teton Elementary, the office secretary was my great-aunt, and the lunch ladies knew my name. The great drama of my kindergarten year was the day my teacher kept me after

school, because I wouldn't eat my peanut butter and jelly sandwich during snack time. When I was in first grade, my classmates and I competed in reading contests and grew beans in plastic bags. I had no front teeth in second grade, and the other children made fun of the way the air whistled through the gaps when I talked. The summer after my second-grade year, our family moved away, but when we returned four years later, my little brother and sister attended Teton Elementary.

When school's out, the town offers plenty of things to do. For example, the Fourth of July Fun Day is sponsored annually by the Teton City Civic League. I always looked forward to the Fourth as a child, because it was a day filled with good food, friends, and family. There were games and prizes, and the fire truck would arrive to give us rides. The Fun Day celebration began in 1976, the same year the Teton Dam broke, flooding the surrounding areas. Until then, celebrations on the Fourth were held in Rexburg, but that year Teton City decided to have its own celebration to raise money for helping those most badly affected by the flooding. The civic league organized many other events, donating time and goods to help those whose homes had been destroyed.

Nowadays, money raised on the Fourth of July goes toward the annual Easter Egg Hunt and Santa's visit. Every year on the Saturday before Easter Sunday, kids of all ages come to the park in front of Teton Elementary School to search for Easter eggs filled with candy, money, and other prizes. Karen Parker declares that the hunt is held rain or shine. "Three or four years ago we had all the eggs hidden and it snowed."

During my first Christmas season in Teton, my brother and I heard a knock on the door and were astonished to see Santa on the steps: the real, jolly, red-suited, white-bearded Santa Claus. My mom invited him into the house. He sat on the couch, took us on his knee, and told us he was here to check on us, to make sure we were being nice. We assured him we were being very nice, and he asked what we wanted for Christmas. I have no idea now what I told him, but he reached for the bag he had brought in with him and pulled out a brown paper sack. Dumping the contents of the sack across the living room carpet, we found candy canes, peanuts, and chocolate. Santa Claus wished us a hearty Merry Christmas and went out the front door to the next kids' house. That happened every single Christmas we lived in Teton, and it still happens, with the help of the

During my first Christmas season in Teton, my brother and I heard a knock on the door and were astonished to see Santa on the steps.

BELOW: The old Rock School in Teton, 1922.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF TETON

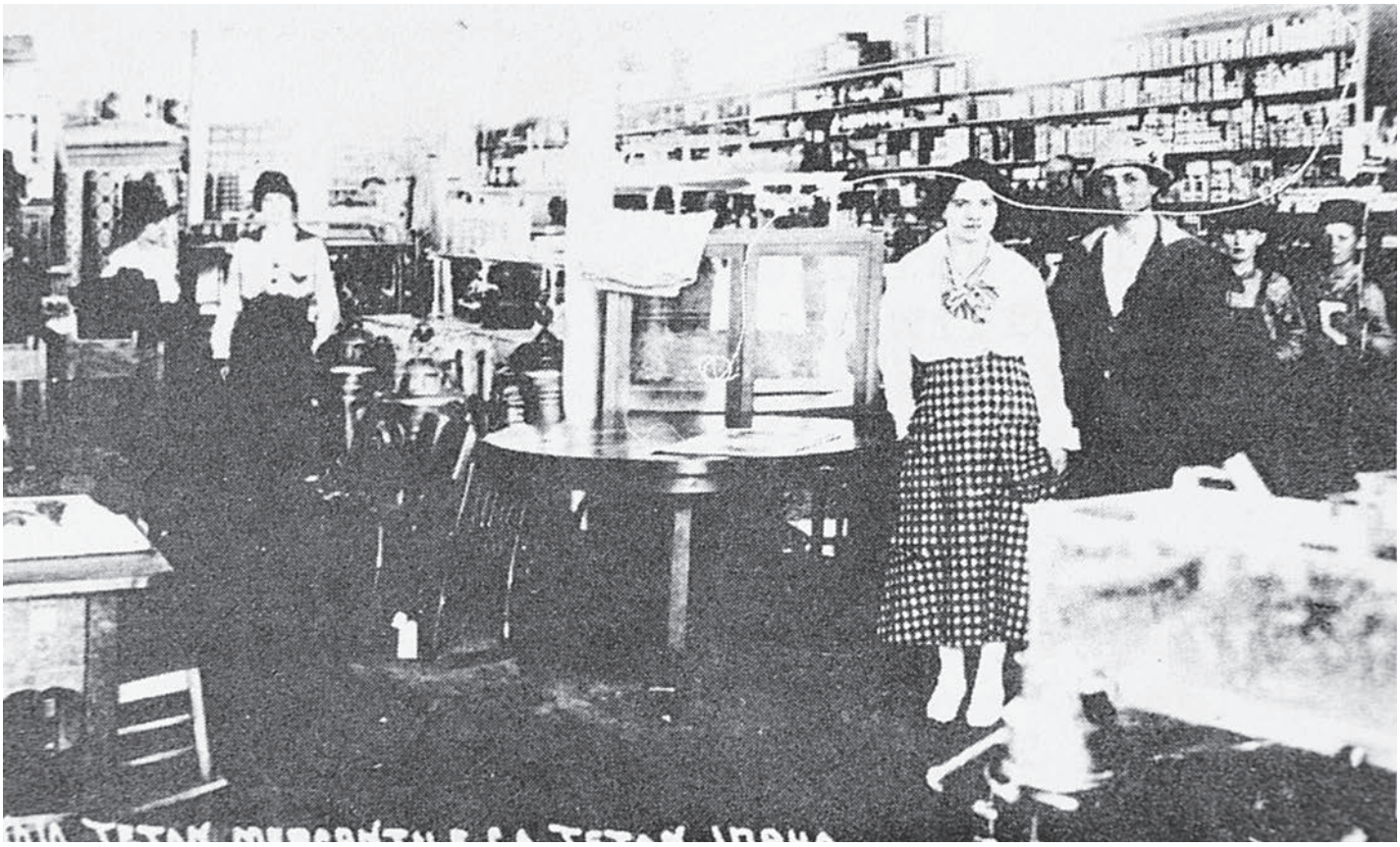

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF TETON

ABOVE: Inside the original Teton Mercantile.

OPPOSITE: A wooden water tower.

civic league's funding-raising efforts. I have no doubt Teton kids today feel just as special as I did when Santa came to our house. Not long ago, when I was talking to my parents about those visits, my mother smiled and said, "Did you know your dad dressed up as Santa one year?" Wonderingly, I asked my dad for confirmation. He said it was true, but looking back on it, I can't recall suspecting Santa looked anything like my dad. Perhaps that's part of the magic of Christmas to a youngster: the willingness to believe.

In the end, the main reason Teton is my home is the people's willingness to be there for you when you need them most.

To me, these sorts of things bring citizens close as a community, so that the people who live down the road are no longer simply among your neighbors, they're friends.

Another activity that brought the community together was baseball. "People who were busy farming would drop what they were doing to come and watch the baseball game," Diana remembers.

In 1959, Mary Hikida helped get the Teton baseball team into the Rexburg League. Mary and Diana were the only people in town who knew how to keep score, so they attended every baseball game. Later, Teton organized its own league and invited teams from Driggs and Rigby to play. The Teton team, which was full of talented players and well-coached, went to many tournaments, including one in Sun Valley. Baseball was part of my childhood in Teton, as well. When I was seven, my mother signed me up for the Pee Wee League. I couldn't hit or catch, and I still can't, but I learned about the game and felt I had the support of the entire community at every game.

In the end, the main reason Teton is my home is the people's willingness to be there

for you when you need them most. I've often been asked if coming from a rural place was a disadvantage, and my answer is always the same: "I'm so grateful to have grown up in a small town."

Even so, I can't help but feel that at one point in this town's history, there was much more to it than now exists. Whenever I pass an old, abandoned building there, I can't help but wonder, "What happened?" I asked Karen Parker and Diana Richman what they thought contributed to the town's decline. "The one thing that really cut us down was the railroad," Karen believes.

When the railroad proposed passing a short line through Teton in the early 1900s, the residents refused to let it go through the city. "We didn't want those ruffians in our town," Diana says, chuckling. This concern about what and whom the railroad might bring to town resulted in the tracks being routed to the north. That made goods and services such as milling more expensive. Eventually, when large companies in nearby cities began selling products for lower prices than the small Teton businesses could offer, Main Street became almost empty. "As a community, we're not as self-sufficient as we used to be," Karen acknowledges.

But even though Teton City is small and no longer very self-

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF TETON

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Civic League Easter Egg Hunt

April 7, 2012

Each year on the Saturday before Easter Sunday, the children of Teton and the surrounding area search the Teton Elementary School Park for hidden Easter eggs. This event, which happens rain or shine, starts around 10 a.m.

Fourth of July Fun Day

July 4, 2012

The Fun Day is held every year on Independence Day, unless July 4 falls on a Sunday, in which case the event takes place the previous Saturday. Starting in the afternoon, people gather at Teton Elementary School to buy food, play games, socialize, and ride the fire truck.

PHOTO BY ALANAH MUIR

ABOVE: The city's current water tower.

PHOTO BY ALANAH MUIR

LEFT: An old building still stands near the same location as the old Teton Merc.

sufficient, the community remains tightly knit. To me, home isn't simply about location. It's about those who watched you grow up; people who know your genealogy better than you do. Such connections to other human beings can hardly even be explained to someone raised in a big city. All these things and more are what I mean when I say this place is my home. ■

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First Date

Ask Her, and Then Learn to Dance

By Billy Jim Wilson

Most people remember that first date, but it likely wasn't as unusual as mine, because my father conned me into arranging it.

Around mid-February of 1952, while I was in my sophomore year of high school in Riggins, the date was announced for the Junior Prom, the big dance of the year. One evening at the supper table, Dad asked out of the blue if I was going. I said no.

"Oh, yes, you are," he said.

I could tell by the tone of his voice he would brook no argument; nonetheless, I tried. "But Dad, I don't even know how to dance."

I was still pretty shy, and much as I might have liked to go dancing, my inability seemed an insurmountable problem. He said there was plenty of time to learn. We had a large living room to use as a dance studio and a new cabinet radio-phonograph with lots of good dance music records, he pointed out. And Mom could teach me.

My parents had grown up on ranches in Hells Canyon. One of their major forms of entertainment and socialization was the Saturday

ILLUSTRATION BY DICK LEE

night dance in the small community of Imnaha on the Imnaha River, or out at Joseph or Enterprise, in Wallowa County, Oregon. My younger brothers and I had often heard stories of how Dad and Mom and Dad's siblings would ride horses out of Hells Canyon over Freezeout Saddle, leave their mounts at my dad's grandmother's ranch, dress in their dance clothes in the dark of the barn, and then drive a car down to where the dance was being held. They would dance most of the night, return to saddle up their horses, change into their riding clothes, and ride back over the mountain, arriving at my paternal grandparents' ranch on Saddle Creek in Oregon by mid-morning or even by noon, to sleep the Sunday afternoon away. And I thought I could say no to a dance just downtown?

After my parents moved us to Riggins in 1939, my folks often went to dances in and around Riggins. Many were held in the grade school, located where the bank and post office now are. On Friday afternoons when the teacher announced there would be a dance on Saturday, we kids would pack up our books in flour sacks, put the sacks in the library room, and then move our desks around the walls of the school room. Big doors that made up the wall between the two main rooms would be opened and, voila, a dance hall. Often the parents would save babysitter money by bringing us children along to those dances. We would play outside on the school grounds, or go to sleep in our desks against the wall, while watching our parents dance.

With a history and familiarity like that, how could a boy not yet sixteen resist the opportunity to go dancing? I suspect my dad may have been worried about my "orientation"—even if

PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHLEEN WOODWARD GLIDDEN

PHOTO COURTESY OF BILLY JIM WILSON

FAR LEFT: Kathleen Woodward, circa 1954.

LEFT: Billy Jim Wilson's high school graduation photograph.

only unconsciously—and figured I needed a little jump-start. One evening soon after my father commanded that I go to the prom, he got me alone and said the Woodwards would be coming to Riggins the weekend of the dance. "So, why don't you write a letter to Kathleen [the elder of their two daughters] and ask her to be your date?" I was pretty reluctant to do that—I still had to learn how to dance—but Dad persisted. "All you have to do is write a letter," he said. "We won't tell anyone, and it can be your secret date. And it'll be a big surprise to everyone at school when you show up with a date."

Reluctant as I was, Dad made it seem pretty easy, so I did what he wanted.

Felix and Leila Woodward were good friends of my parents. For quite a few years, Felix had worked with my father at the sawmill, and they had been our neighbors, living a couple houses down the street. They had moved away a few years earlier, and Felix started working at the sawmill in Kamiah. Kathleen was about a year younger than I. She was a pretty, vivacious young woman with strawberry blonde hair. Knowing this, Dad didn't have to twist my arm too much to get me to write to her for a date. A week or so later, a reply came back that she would be pleased to accept my request for a date for the prom. Since it was a secret, even my brothers didn't know. But I still had to secretly order a corsage, which would come from the flower shop in Grangeville on the Saturday mail truck.

At this point, no one in Riggins knew that shy Billy Jim Wilson had a date. Now I had to learn to dance. Every evening after supper, we'd move some of the chairs to the edge of the living room, put on some music, and Mom would teach me the two-step. She also began to teach my younger brothers, Pete and Phil. It was a fun two or three weeks before the dance, as I began to master the rhythms of ballroom dancing. Even though dancing with your mother isn't quite the same as dancing with a young and pretty girl, I was still a bit nervous.

I intended to drive my date to the prom in my car, an old 1936 coupe. I washed and swept it out, and placed a plaid blanket over the worn-out seat. But a day or two before the big day, we learned that several other people from Kamiah were coming to the prom. Another previous Riggins school chum, Donny Sowa, needed a ride for himself and his date, a girl from Kamiah, so I was volunteered. Dad said he and Mom would ride with the Woodwards and I could take the family car, a 1942 two-door sedan.

March 15th finally arrived. I got all spiffed up in my only suit, probably looking much like the young man on the Norman Rockwell painting on the cover of the *Saturday*

Evening Post. I was first to leave for the dance. Dad stood looking out the window in the front door as I tried to back the family car out of the sloping driveway. I kept killing the engine, as Dad watched. Boy, was I embarrassed, but I finally got it backed out and headed downtown to pick up Donny, and to go get our dates. I believe I let Kathleen pin on her corsage, and then we four went to the dance.

Nowadays, the dance is a blurred memory. I think Kathleen wore some sort of light blue gown, and she was very pretty. I seem to remember getting ribbed quite a bit about my "secret" date, and I danced quite a lot in straight lines: me forward, my date backwards; I still hadn't quite mastered dancing in circles. I was pleased to be at the prom, and I suspect my dad also was pleased that he had guided me to that point in my life. After the dance, Kathleen and I dropped Donny and his date off, and then went to our house and waited for our parents to show up a bit later. Kathleen's parents collected her, and I went off to bed, probably still dreaming of my first-ever dance, and perhaps thinking about another date with Kathleen some day, but the epilogue turned out be quite different.

I never saw Kathleen again. Of course, we knew they were in Kamiah, but we never went there as a family, and they didn't return to Riggins. Her mother and my mother corresponded, but somehow the families never reunited.

On October 23 last year, I went to Clarkston, Washington, to do a book signing at Judy Wutzke's newly relocated bookstore. The book, *A Hells Canyon Romance*, had been written by my mother, Murielle McGaffee Wilson. It was her story of growing up in Riggins and on a ranch in Hells Canyon. Never having done a book signing before, I was a bit nervous as I drove to Clarkston that Saturday morning from my brother's place in Riggins. But Judy made me very welcome, and placed me at a small table facing towards the front of the store.

Near the cash register, I noticed a blonde lady, who was the first to approach and ask me to sign a book. She began by saying, "You took me to the prom." I knew her immediately, even though I'd never have recognized her. We hadn't seen each other for fifty-eight years. ■

By Daniel Claar

The A City Sanctuary For Man and Beast

OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Bubbles 'n Squeak, Great Horned Owls; fox breaches the perimeter of the Veterans Cemetery in Boise; eagle monument outside the Division of Veterans Services.

From a ponderosa branch thirty feet in the air, a juvenile Great Horned Owl leans forward until its momentum is about to carry the predator off his perch. At the last second, the youngster changes his mind, and with a panicked flapping of still-developing wings, manages to regain his balance. The young owl has successfully flown a couple of times, but despite his natural instincts, remains far from comfortable with the idea. I don't blame him. Those first steps into thin air constitute a leap of faith most of us can barely imagine. Despite the aborted hunt, the owl's golden eyes remain riveted on two squirrels darting around my feet. Thinking I might have a peanut or a cracker, the rodents are oblivious to the fact that I am actually trying to get one of them eaten.

"C'mon, Bubbles," I say. "You can do it. Mom isn't gonna help anymore, and Squeak is tired of you mooching her kills."

I hear footsteps on the sidewalk and turn to see a middle-aged, blond lady escorting an older gentleman holding a cane. The gaunt, white-bearded man is dressed in a black leather jacket adorned with faded military patches, and the elbow of his free hand is hooked around the woman's arm for support. They step off the sidewalk, giving me a wide berth, possibly wondering why I am staring at the sky and talking to myself. Not surprising. Some of the regulars on this campus no longer possess thought processes as well-groomed or manicured as the perfectly-maintained lawns and flowerbeds. Some folks here are visibly damaged, while others suffer from demons unseen. I hear her say something about "aggressive squirrels" and realize it is actually the free-loading rodents they are trying to circumvent.

"I'm trying to thin out their numbers," I offer, "but my great horned attack owl is still in training."

Refuge

PHOTO BY STEVEN ALLEN

PHOTO BY TRENT HANSEN

PHOTO BY DARIN SORENSEN

PHOTO BY STEVEN ALLEN

As I have come to expect over the last two months, the woman's face brightens with curiosity. "A Great Horned Owl?" she asks, forgetting about the squirrels. Stepping shoulder-to-shoulder with me, she peers into the branches overhead. "Where?"

Some folks here are visibly damaged, while others suffer from demons unseen.

Although the young owl is sitting in plain sight, almost nobody can spot it right away. Even when I point out one of the owls, people often struggle to see it. Most of us are no longer programmed to take note of our natural surroundings. It isn't like we need to worry about sabre-toothed cats anymore. Because of our gradual separation from the outdoors over the last ten thousand years, our environmentally-regulated homes, and a former worldwide wilderness now almost entirely subjugated to mankind's indomitable will, we are rarely required to notice Nature's subtle cycles, account for the changing seasons, or even wonder what marvelous wildlife might be sitting directly overhead. However, once I point out one of my owls, the reaction from strangers is quite predictable.

"Oh my, would you look at that? It's just a baby. Dad, do you see the owl?" she asks. The man's eyes light up as he locates the raptor, barely visible against the identically colored tree bark.

"Now that's some camouflage," he says. "Those squirrels don't stand a chance."

"Bubbles has a larger sister around here somewhere," I tell them. "This one is the more cautious of the two. He can barely fly and lets Squeak handle the actual hunting."

"Bubbles?" the lady laughs. "And Squeak?"

"Yeah," I say, and can't resist tacking on my usual joke, "Bubbles is the serious one."

I have been watching the owls since early spring when they were small football-shaped mounds of down bouncing around in their nest just outside the Veterans Affairs Hospital. Working for the State Veterans' Home on the same property allows me the opportunity to check

on them during my morning and afternoon breaks. However, now that the kids are flying and the trees have filled out with plush greenery, the young owls are much harder to find. Between the two kids and mated parents, I am fortunate to spot one of the four owls during any given walk.

In addition to serving military vets, one of the reasons I chose to work for the Division of Veterans Services is the quiet, expansive grounds nestled in at the very edge of the foothills in Boise. Years ago, I lived a few blocks away and would jog here as morning broke over the city. At the time, the entire complex was overrun with wild rabbits. I would see people feeding the bunnies during those tranquil dawns and remember thinking it somehow odd that an area built for military personnel could radiate such an overwhelming sense of peace. Although barely separated from a major city's downtown madness, the towering old trees and lush, expansive lawns feel like an outdoor cathedral for the wounded warriors and their dedicated healers.

Although not a military veteran, I too feel the need for this quiet removal from the chaos of everyday life. When it comes to crowds, traffic, and noise, I am the proverbial long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs. Without regular retreats into the isolated Idaho backcountry, I would lose my mind altogether, and the results wouldn't be pretty. That's no exaggeration. I have struggled with mental illness most my life, fighting an enemy I barely understand. I don't know if there is a technical diagnosis for the dark thoughts rolling around this head, but because I refuse mind- and mood-altering medication, the only cure I have found is seeking solace in the wild.

I detect similar upheaval in some of the veterans walking these grounds. As a testament to their training, intestinal fortitude, and inherent character, the majority have somehow weathered their individual storms with good humor and laughing eyes. They nod at passersby, are quick to smile, and oftentimes, despite some readily apparent disability, look like they are quite willing to stare the world square in the face and ask, "What else you got?"

Other veterans shuffle by staring at their feet, trapped in their own nightmares and looking as though a stiff wind could topple them over. A few remind me of the skittish mule deer who work their way down from the foothills and spend the spring raising their spotted fawns on our sea of lush grass. And who can blame them? I've never seen combat but, depending on the day, my thought processes are loaded with anxiety, violence, and paranoia. Despite this imbalance, I can't begin

PHOTO BY TRENT HANSEN

PHOTO BY DARIN SORENSEN

OPPOSITE: An adult Great Horned Owl.

FAR ABOVE: Dan Claar practices his wildlife whispering skills outside the Division of Veterans Services.

ABOVE: Badger at the Veterans Cemetery.

to imagine the sights, sounds, and smells some of these soldiers have been subjected to, or what might have happened with my own mental state had I ever experienced anything remotely similar.

There are all sorts of hell out there, trauma that can reduce the strongest man to a shadow of his former self, and sometimes, that is just the inescapable reality of war. All we can do is help pick up the pieces, honor their sacrifices, and do our best to make their lives as free from the anger, pain, and fear as we can. By working here, volunteering, or just visiting, one can't help but adopt the mission statement of, "Caring for America's Heroes."

As the blond woman and her father move on, I continue my walk around the V.A. Hospital, wondering whatever happened to all those rabbits. I haven't seen one in years. I suspect there was human intervention at some point, as breeding bunnies can quickly spiral out of control, but I bet prior to that they were making regular meals for the fox and coyote who patrol these grounds. I have seen these wild predators dispatch our quails and squirrels with brutal, bloody efficiency.

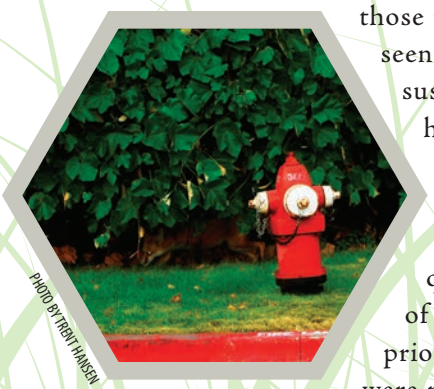

PHOTO BY TRENT HANSEN

Hunters like them, the local osprey, and my owls, create a peculiar dichotomy on these grounds designed for healing. I have even heard a nurse wonder aloud why predator and prey populations can't get along. Of course, she said this after I showed her the severed head of a squirrel, its brain eaten out, as an example of the damage my raptors can inflict. The vets I have taught to locate owls by searching the base of trees for the pellets of half-digested victims find the carnage fascinating.

Rounding the northwest corner of the V.A. grounds, I confront the inevitability of a hospital and long-term care facility: an older man lies on the sun-baked asphalt between a strip of parking spots and the outpatient entrance. He has collapsed in the street and there is a nurse at his side, cradling the man's head and whispering in his ear. Cars are piling up behind them, some drivers impatiently inching their vehicles to one side to see if they can slip around. A couple of police officers, standing still as statues, serve as living hazard cones behind unblinking sunglasses, but do nothing to physically assist the man.

As I draw near the almost surreal scene, I hear the man whispering an apology for the traffic jam. Showing his true veteran colors, he is more concerned about momentarily interfering with the lives of others than whatever ailment dropped him straight to the ground. Meanwhile, the auburn-haired nurse tries to assure him the cars can wait and that everything will be okay. Feeling some-

what useless, I continue past the group without breaking stride.

Approaching me on the sidewalk is another oldtimer dressed in a weathered, unbuttoned camouflage jacket about two sizes too small and a black, Harley-Davidson T-shirt. With expressionless eyes he surveys the situation, and just as we pass, I hear him break into song beneath his breath. In a flat monotone, he quietly chants the chorus to Queen's classic, "Another One Bites the Dust."

My initial reaction is take offense at the man's callous assessment of what is clearly another human being's suffering, and not only that, a fellow veteran. However, I then realize that the fact they are both vets might be what triggered such a response. Veterans tend to have a more realistic, familiar relationship with pain and death. Many have seen it up close and have long abandoned the foolish notion that any of us are getting out of this mission alive. Be you rich, poor, white, black, man, woman, animal, plant, civilian, or soldier, death is the great equalizer. The very nature of the vet's occupation ensures preparation to deal with that reality. There is no glee, or twisted humor in the singing man's eyes, but rather a sense of resignation, knowing a similar fate awaits us all.

The man's response reminds me of my own when I recently discovered the mangled body of one of my baby owls. The nest was once occupied by three young, but as it often happens, one fell from the sanctuary, sealing its fate. A midnight marauder, most likely fox or coyote, sniffing around tree trunks for the feathered fruit of early spring, found the helpless infant and tore it to pieces. An exposed rib cage and some bare legs ending in budding black talons were all I found. A sad, grisly scene to be certain, but one I was prepared for after a lifetime of experiencing the raw Idaho wilderness. The natural order of things teaches that every miracle of birth guarantees an impending death.

PHOTO BY DAWN SORENSEN

OPPOSITE: Spot the fox, just to the left of the fire hydrant.

ABOVE: Coyote, an agent of chaos, at the tranquil Veterans Cemetery pond.

Hunters like them, the local osprey, and my owls, create a peculiar dichotomy on these grounds designed for healing.

It was as if this incident occurred to remind me that the wheel of life is always in motion, because not long afterward, my owls abandoned their nest. Walking by the old tree, I noticed new inhabitants. Using the birds' bowl of branches for a crash pad before resuming their nocturnal activities were a mother raccoon and three adorable babies. I pointed out

PHOTO BY TRENT HANSEN

the bashful brood to an equally shy vet before wishing the young mom the best of luck and continuing on my way. Sometimes the lines here between veterans and wildlife blur a little too much. Some of our tenants, trying to sneak food to the animals, have had their fingers bitten by foxes and squirrels, and one resident experienced the ultimate surprise when a young deer, possibly provoked by its own reflection, jumped through a window, showering the old vet with broken glass and flailing hooves. The panicked animal immediately fled the scene and our battle-hardened vet escaped with a couple of bruises and one last tale of combat for the grandkids.

Sometimes the lines here between veterans and wildlife blur a little too much.

ABOVE:Sleepy raccoons in an owls' nest.

RIGHT: Squeak, Great Horned Owl.

PHOTO BY TRENT HANSEN

I like to believe that despite my obvious differences from these old soldiers, I have something in common with them. In the absence of backcountry wilderness, the tranquil aura radiating from the V.A. campus and Vet Home is one I need. When strolling these grounds, I experience a calming effect that is more precious to me than I can possibly quantify or explain. The vets, their families, the nurses, and other employees feel this sensation as well. We may come from different backgrounds, we may have walked vastly different paths, we may have differing opinions on politics and war, but when I see the eyes of a stranger open wide to experience the simple joy of an owl infiltrating the edge of civilization, I know on some basic level there are times we all need a little assistance to ease our minds of turmoil and keep our lives in perspective. ■

Ten Mile's Gem

When They Talk about Skills, They Must Mean Eva Sorensen

By Wanda Sorensen

"How about a piece of warm apple pie with ice cream?" The lady's dancing eyes offer a hint of the sweet, spicy pleasure to come.

At the kitchen door, the mechanic grins. He's not the only one who schedules visits near dinnertime to this Ten Mile Pass farm north of Soda Springs. Nor is he the only one to marvel at the expertise and zip of Eva Sorensen, who this year celebrated her ninety-second birthday. She can drive a stick shift through a muddy field of stubble, repair a dead toaster, eliminate overgrown shrubs with a handsaw, and design and sew elegant window drapes, or a four-wheeler seat cover, or wrench folders for the shop, all without recourse to a pattern. I'm proud to say Eva is my mom.

On foot, last spring, she picked rocks a couple afternoons in the barley fields. Lately, the wheels of our farm sprayer's booms have been encircled by heavy agricultural hose, which was Eva's

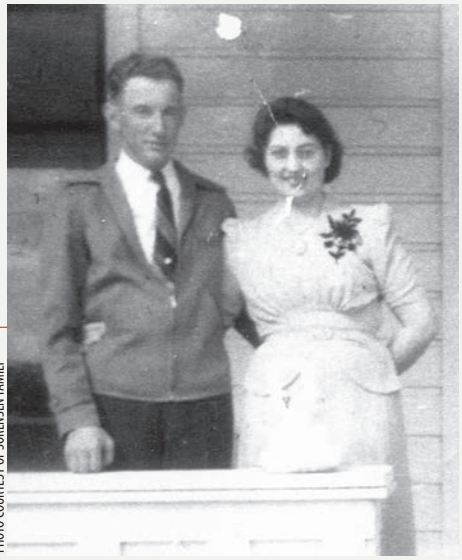

PHOTO COURTESY OF SORENSEN FAMILY

ABOVE: Elton and Eva Sorensen soon after their wedding, 1943.

BELOW: The farm that the Sorensens built from scratch, pictured in 2000.

PHOTO BY PETER CLEGG

PHOTO COURTESY OF SORENSEN FAMILY

ABOVE: Rod Sorensen examines the family farm's spring barley crop, 2011.

OPPOSITE: Sandy pulls Elton and Eva on a Sunday afternoon jaunt, circa 1970.

innovation in response to repeated fraying of the tires from hard use. In the middle of her kitchen, she quickly half-twirls, her signature move, like a ballerina atop a music box, to retrieve the ice cream. She smiles. This is her favorite time: providing a tasty surprise for someone.

Eva and Idaho have weathered and matured together in the gorgeous, highland setting she loves. Just days after she was born, the state legislature formed her Caribou County. I know my mother's story by heart, but love to hear it again and again. At only four years old, she stood in November snow trying to sort out the sight of her family's farm home—and everything inside—burning to the ground. At age seventeen, she felt the greatest hurt of all with the sudden loss of her beloved Daddy, a farmer and sheriff's deputy, when a ruptured appendix caused a deadly infection.

The sixth of nine children, she grew up being the family cook. She also drove the horses and wagon during haying, dressed chickens, and sewed quilts and feather pillows by hand in miniature stitches. She worked at the dry goods store to contribute to family finances. One of her brothers, a gifted musician, took Eva as a singing partner for local performances. Most of all, she loved to dance.

Eva married a Danish bachelor farmer, quite a handsome catch. "We eloped to Paris," she coolly states, and then adds, eyes twinkling, "Paris, Idaho. Just before, Elt had moved an old house which earlier served as a granary, gutted it, and fixed it all up nice for us."

Also before the marriage, Elton had participated in some of the worst chivarees in the area, which was an unsettling thought for him and his new bride as they watched a sleigh packed with friends progress up the drifted road toward their place, intent on a raucous welcome. Payback time was on its way! Unbelievably, when the sleigh was only a quarter mile away, a blizzard began to build, causing the rowdy gang of well-wishers to turn around. "So, our marriage started out with good fortune," Eva says.

She joined Elton Sorensen to build a successful dry-land farm at 6,200 feet elevation, where sunset splendor filled the skies, snowdrifts touched the eaves, and frost and hail often stole the grain from their hard-worked fields. The short growing season dictated that only rain, with no help from irrigation, watered their thirsty plants. Eva leveled her yard by carrying soil in a dishpan on countless trips from the barnyard, and she and Elton cut sod from the barrow pits for lawn. From mountain springs ten miles away, they hauled water in a thousand-gallon tank. A generator supplied power. Eva raised a huge dry-land garden and surrounded herself with flowers.

They toiled together and laughed together and lived a life of treasured adventures. Elton and Eva Sorensen were true, family-first stewards of the land. Today, she still proudly lives in that honeymoon home, fixed up even more. "But," she says, shaking her head, "once we got married, I couldn't get Elt to dance."

When I was a baby, she and I were at home both times lightning struck. Mom's voice tells more than mere words when she recalls her fear. "The first time, a ball of fire came right through that window, across the stove's griddle, and went out the window on the other side. The next time, lightning hit above the back door, took off the door casing, and broke the Cellotex into little bits that flew all the way through the back porch, kitchen, and into the front room." When a lightning rod salesman came around, he made an easy sale.

Dry highland farming is high-stakes gambling, and Elton and Eva had the grit necessary to stay in the game. Win or lose, they looked on the lighter side of life. They usually shortened the work day on Saturday to go out on the town, or to camp and fish with neighbors and friends, or to drive through the pretty countryside with a picnic basket. Repeatedly, Eva watched hail swipe a wide path through the pass, shattering hopes and long heads of grain to the ground. Once, an outside entrepreneur brought thousands of turkeys to graze farmers' wasted fields. "We weren't supposed to have any, but we did," laughs Eva. "Barbed wire doesn't keep turkeys in place. They were all over us: on the steps, inside the generator hut, even on top of the roofs."

She stayed up oh, so many nights to create treasures for us. For my sister, Karen, and me, she designed and built playhouse furniture from scratch, intricate doll clothes, and wonderful dresses from memory, after seeing them in stores. For my brother, Rod, she sewed a backpack for college books before backpacks had even made the scene. Every day, all day, Dad was the focus of her life.

Driving trucks during the harvest of 1988, Eva pulled into a wheat field far from any road, with an empty truck to exchange for a loaded one. As always, before leaving the truck, she checked underneath to be sure that the exhaust had not sparked the straw on the ground. To her horror, the stubble had begun to flame, "Boy, that fire took off in a hurry," Eva recalls. Before she could grab the extinguisher, flames raced along the wiring to lick the cab's side.

Elton and Rod, each on a combine and unable to see her plight, were far away, as they focused on cutting grain. She furiously threw dirt onto the flames, but the wind chased them ahead of her and flung their heat, giving birth to new fire spots. "All I could think about was the full tank of gas I had just put into that truck and the neighbor's uncut field at the bottom of the canyon," she says. "Probably, I was a little rattled."

PHOTO COURTESY OF SORENSEN FAMILY

PHOTO COURTESY OF SORENSEN FAMILY

ABOVE: Elton and Eva lunching during one of many snow machine excursions with friends, circa 1969.

Luckily, Rod soon saw the smoke through his rearview mirror and signaled his dad.

"Rod ran to get the tractor and disk a mile away, and Elt jumped into that burning truck, something he had always schooled the rest of us never to do. Then I was scared even more! He somehow got it moved to summer fallow ground without it blowing up."

The fire took the skin from Rod's hand and most of seventy acres of ripe, waist-high wheat that morning. It also burned a memory—a smell, a terror, a helplessness-—the same that Eva had first known as a little girl standing in front of the family's burning home, and now cannot forget.

Her memory in all matters is remarkable today. Want to know the price of gas locally in 1939? That would be twenty cents a gallon; diesel, a dime. How about the year she and Elton bought their first truck? That's 1943, and its shiny deep green doors were taped shut, as it sat on the showroom's floor waiting for official wartime release. Her spunk and strong will have served her well. Both knee joints were replaced during a single surgery when she was eighty-four. When a tremor overtook her right hand, she learned to write her detailed daily farm journal entries with her left.

Growing up in a frugal household during extremely hard times, Eva still mends nylon hose—that's garden hose and her own pantyhose—back to looking like new. She bargain shops. When she's on vacation, with time to spare, Eva's idea of a fun time is to walk the aisles of a grocery store.

For seven decades, she has opened her oven door every week to five domed bread loaves, brown as the rich soil that produces our wheat, from which she grinds the flour. The bread is sure to be blue-ribbon quality. "If a job's worth doing," she shrugs, "it's worth doing well. But my last batch wasn't the best." That's her opinion.

"I taught 4-H," she explains, "and worked and judged at the fairs, but not anymore." Maybe that's why folks continue to phone her with questions: how to care for a sick lamb; the recipe for her to-die-for glazed doughnuts, which are famous at fund-raising events; the treatment for a child's croup. She still cooks full-course meals daily for the farm crew, Rod and us two sisters who help, and she cans fruit by the bushel.

Plus, this lady knows her sports. She misses only a few of the Utah Jazz NBA games on TV, is a major fan of the player Andre Kirilenko, and does not hide her disgust when her team fails to rebound at their end of the court. After three Jazz players were traded to the Chicago Bulls, however, her team loyalty was split. "I don't think the Jazz guy who hires players knows anything about basketball," she laments.

Good-hearted and sentimental, feisty and determined, Eva is all hard work and devotion. She is one of those true characters who still dares to live life the right, rather than the easy, way. And her baking just might be the best assurance anyone could have that a mechanic will come quickly when called.

Eva Makes a Speech

When Elton Sorensen received notification that he should prepare a speech for his 2003 induction into the Eastern Idaho Agricultural Hall of Fame, he began to dread the evening. "Oh, you'll do a good job," Eva encouraged him. "A little speech shouldn't be too tough." Then she opened her letter from the selection committee, informing her that inductees' spouses, too, were expected to present a short talk. That changed her tune.

Even so, when the big night arrived, both Sorensens were well-prepared to speak. Eva's polished, touching presentation of the following speech hurled her into immediate audience stardom, and is still remembered by some today:

I almost decided not to speak tonight. Then Elt teased me, by saying, "It's often best if a wife keeps quiet anyway." So here I am.

My sixty years with Elt on the farm have changed my life from what it might have been.

For me, a Sunday drive means we're going to check the grain fields. A Sunday night video means we'll see information on the new rotary harrow. I know the names of far more hard-red winter wheat varieties than I do names of ladies' perfumes. And I've been trained to always be quiet immediately when the weather forecast comes on the radio. I've learned that a suggestion to visit a relative fifty miles away will likely be vetoed, but the mention of a three-hundred-mile trip to check out a new combine will prompt Elt to be in the car in fifteen minutes.

Here's how I see Elt through my eyes:

I see him through the grain truck side window, as he stands on the combine's ladder to warn me to remember the touchy brakes. I see him, in greasy coveralls, from the doorway as he adds one more instruction regarding the part I'm heading to town to find. I see Elt smiling from the tractor cab, writing pencil calculations on the side of a cardboard box in the shed, making business deals on the backdoor phone, and sitting against a truck's tire in the stubble field while eating huckleberry pie.

I see part of him through the bolt hole of a new metal shed we're building, while I wait for him to wiggle another bolt into place. I look through the rearview mirror and struggle to translate his hand, head, and arm signals, which he thinks anybody should easily understand. And I see him from the window above the kitchen sink as he and his dog, Duke, raise the American flag every morning and lower it when he comes home from the field too late each night.

I sure do agree with the selection committee that Elt is a special person. Thank you very much for honoring him and treating us so well tonight. ■

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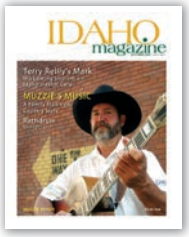

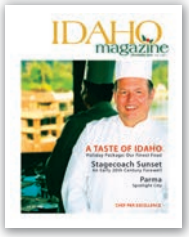

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The Journey

By Steve Carr

A poet, a historian and a novelist walked into a bar. Actually, it was the Pioneer Saloon in Ketchum.

A memoirist, a columnist, and a humorist followed them a few minutes later. No one left, at least not for a long time. How many people were crowded into that bar?

The punch line? Well, let's see if you find one at the end of this column.

Each summer folks like Dave Barry, E.L. Doctorow, and Frank McCourt journey to Sun Valley. Many more writers, with names perhaps less recognizable, yet with the shared ability to capture the word and simultaneously make it free, join them. They eat, they play, they share ideas with each other and with a whole bunch of us readers, the ones with unrecognizable names.

Some, like Frank McCourt, have been lost to us, having moved on to that Great Best Seller Ground in the sky. Many return, again and again, joined by first-timers, all literary giants.

We, the unrecognizable names, spend four days with poets laureate, Pulitzer Prize winners, and best-selling authors. National Book Award winner, Colum McCann, and I became best friends; well, we shook hands.

McCann spoke of being lost, over and over again, intentionally, just to rediscover home. He advised a less directed life. How do we know who we are, or what we may be if we don't explore beyond the comfortable?

U.S. poet laureate, Kay Ryan, spoke of journeys and shared her poetry, "We're Building the Ship as We Sail It."

Kathryn Stockett was born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi, left home and returned to the South much later, with broadened perspectives, to write the breakaway bestseller, *The Help*.

Pulitzer Prize winners, best-selling writers, Academy Award recipients—some really bright, but mostly extraordinarily interested people—journeyed to Sun Valley, as they do each summer, to find themselves in the company of writers and readers, and to simply find themselves.

I made the journey.

Afterwards, as I drove home over familiar roads, no GPS directions needed, I observed the signs along the way. I read the journey through the eyes of my new "friends." I imagined what the southern girl, Kathryn, or the Irish transplant to New York City, Colum, or Israeli author David Grossman may have seen, may have interpreted. What did the Craters of the Moon and the Sawtooths say to them? And our signs: "Frost Heaves, Chain Up Area, Game Crossing," and "No Hunting in City Limits." Did our guests get lost in the unfamiliar, and then find a home in their imaginations? I suspect so, for that is the mind of a writer, and the willing reader.

My journey to the Sun Valley Writer's Conference took me to an old and comfortable place, my home in the majesty that is Idaho, where I lost myself in the company of books and the books' parents. My journey home from the conference took me to new places, places familiar yet somehow brand new.

Punch line? You, the reader, get to make your own. For we live through the countless lives, remembered and invented, simultaneously captured and freed, lost and found, for us, by those who write. It's a way to get lost with new friends and rediscover home. It's a journey taken right here, in these pages. ■

The hopelessly lost Steve Carr can be found at scarr@prodigy.net

Elk Sausage with Bleu Cheese, Caramelized Apples and Onions

Recipe courtesy of the Idaho Department of Agriculture
idahopreferred.com

INGREDIENTS

4 elk sausages
1 yellow onion sliced into thin strips
1 apple peeled, cored and diced
3/4 Tbsp oil
3/4 Tbsp stoneground mustard
Pinch of sugar
Salt and pepper to taste
½ cup crumbled bleu cheese
4 sandwich rolls

PREPARATION

> Put sausages in oven at 325 degrees. Heat oil in sauté pan. Add onions and cook until very soft, stirring occasionally.

> Add apple and sugar and cook until browning occurs. Add mustard and finish with salt and pepper to taste.

> Remove sausages from oven. Put 1/4 of bleu cheese on one side of each roll, put in oven until cheese is melted. Remove rolls from oven, top with sausage and apple mixture.

Serves 4.

ATTENTION READERS. *Send us your "vintage" recipes, and we'll send you a vintage issue of* IDAHO magazine.

Pumpkin or Squash Soup

Recipe courtesy of the Idaho Department of Agriculture
idahopreferred.com

INGREDIENTS

1 small (5 pound) pumpkin or ½ of a medium banana squash
1 tablespoon canola oil
2 medium stalks celery (chopped)
1 medium onion (chopped)
1 teaspoon ground cumin
¼ teaspoon chili powder
Salt and pepper
3 ½ cups chicken or turkey broth
½ cup water

PREPARATION

> Cut pumpkin or squash in quarters and remove seeds. Place pumpkin/squash cut side down on jelly roll pan that has been coated with cooking spray. Cover with aluminum foil and bake in 400° oven for about 45 minutes or until very tender when pierced with a knife. Cool. Remove skin and place pumpkin/squash in large bowl.

> In large saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. Add celery and onion and cook approximately 10 minutes. Stir in cumin, chili, salt and pepper. Add broth, water and pumpkin/squash to sauce pan; heat to boiling. Reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes.

> Pour half of soup mixture into a food processor and blend until pureed. Repeat with remaining soup mixture. Pour all soup into tureen and keep warm. Garnish with roasted pumpkin seeds or fresh chives if desired.

Serves 6.

13-16 Treasure Valley Dog Show, Boise

PHOTO COURTESY OF AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB

Beautiful dogs will be competing for Champion and Grand Champion titles.

This show, which will be held at Expo Idaho, will bring in dogs and exhibitors from across the United States. Come out and see many of the 160 different breeds of dogs registered by the American Kennel Club in our Conformation show. All of those breeds, plus listed mixed-breeds, will also compete in Obedience, Rally, and Agility events. Events will start at 8:30 AM each day, and will conclude by 5:00 PM or so. Agility will take place only Friday - Sunday. The public is always invited to the shows. Spectator admission: $5/person, $10/family. Come watch your favorite breed of dog compete in all of those events (but please leave un-entered dogs at home.)

Information: www.treasurevalleydogshows.org; or (208)850.9172

1	Birds of Prey Flight Demonstrations, Boise
1	Oktoberfest, Harrison
1	Mud Drag Races, Weiser
1-2	Harvest Festival, Kellogg
1-5	BODIES, exhibit, Idaho Falls
1-8	Watercolor Traveling Exhibit, Meridian
1-15	Mini Bazaar, Idaho Falls
1-31	Scarywood, Athol
5	Sarah McQuaid, folk music, Boise
5	Chili Cook-Off, Hagerman

7 Astronaut Presentation for Students, Nampa

PHOTO COURTESY OF NASA

Meet José Hernández, an American engineer of Mexican descent and former NASA astronaut. Listen to the journey that led him from the California fields to the moon. Seating is first come, first served. Nampa Civic Center, 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM; free to students.

Information: communitycouncilofidaho.org; or (208)453.3002

7	Discover Boise River Inhabitants, Boise
7-8	All Bonner County Bazaar, Sandpoint
7-8	Harvest Festival Street Fair, Emmett
7-9	Canyon County Fall Show, Nampa
7-9	Trailing of the Sheep, Hailey/Ketchum

8-9 Idaho Renaissance Faire, Emmett

Two days of "Medieval Revelry and Entertainment," held at the Gem Island sports complex in Emmett. There'll be music, dancing, kids' games, sword fighting, stage performances, food, fun and more. The mission of the Faire is to promote public interest in the living history of the Renaissance era, and to provide local and regional craftsman, artisans, and performers a venue for the public display of their talents. FREE TO ALL.

PHOTO BY JASON CONNOR

Information: idahorenfaire.org

8	Oktoberfest, Sandpoint
8	Upper Bridal Fair, Idaho Falls
8	Potato Loop Trail Run, Pocatello

8 Harvest Fest, Idaho Falls
8 Fall Family Day-Art Museum, Idaho Falls
8 Health & Wellness Fair, Idaho Falls
8 HarvestFest, Sandpoint
8-9 Fall Harvest Celebration, Botanical Gardens, Boise
8-9 Crafts in the Country, Filer
8-9 Treasure Valley Flea Market, Boise
8-9 Fall Art Show & Sale, Riggins
8-9 Idaho Health, Beauty & Fitness Fair, Boise
8-29 "Fear Factory"-play, Rigby
10-16 Jazz Festival Jamboree, Sun Valley
12 Birds of Prey Wildlife Photo Shows, Boise
12-16 Jazz Festival Jamboree, Sun Valley
13-16 AKC Dog Show, Boise
14-15 Magic Valley Flea Market, Filer
14-16 Karcher Mall Antique Show, Nampa
15 Health & Safety Fair, Sandpoint
15 Wish Walk Run, Idaho Falls
15 Fall Craft Bazaar, Middleton
15 Health & Wellness Fair, Sandpoint
15 Fall Bazaar, Ammon
15 Magichords in Concert, Twin Falls
15 Piccadilly Circus, Caldwell
15 Pumpkin Palooza, Lewiston
18-30 "Velveteen Rabbit"-play, Hailey
20 Holiday Arts & Crafts Bazaar, Pierce
20 Harvest & Dinner/Cattle Drive, Ashton
21 Legends of the Celtic Harp, Sandpoint
21 Boise Philharmonic, Heroic Beethoven, Nampa

22 "ZooBoo", Pocatello

PHOTO COURTESY POCATELLO ZOO

Scare up a costume for a contest, haunted tree house, games, and more. There's so much to do at this "spook"tacular event, which runs from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. The "ZooBoo" party is free but general admission to the zoo is required (under 3, free; 3-11, $2.75; 60+, $3.50; all others $4.75).

Information: (208)234.6264; or kate.oconnor144@gmail.com

22 Empowering Your Life: Tools for Healthy Living, Idaho Falls
22 5K Zombie Chase, Rigby
22 Valve House Trail Run, Pocatello
22 Poetry Slam, Idaho Falls
23 Baby & Maternity Fair, Moscow

28 "Animals of the Night", Moscow

Bring the whole family to the PCEI Nature Center (1040 Rodeo Drive) for this "merry, not scary" Halloween event. Walk the trails and learn about nocturnal creatures like owls, skunks, bats, and more from local animal experts. Storytelling, live animals, costumed characters, and games complete your evening of Halloween fun! Fee is $4/$3 (adult/child) for PCEI members and $6/$4 for the public. The event runs from 5:00 to 8:00 PM.

Information: (208)882.1444; jenica@pcei.org; or www.pcei.org/calendar.htm

28 FREE IHOP Scary Face Pancakes for Kids, Idaho Falls
28-30 Mix it Up, Ballet Idaho, Boise
29 Boo at the Zoo, Boise
29 Mini-Cassia Craft Fair, Rupert
29 The Raptor Run/Walk, benefit for blind/deaf, Boise
31 Halloween Night Carnival, Mackay

Attention Event Coordinators and C of Cs:

Want an event announcement in *IDAHO magazine*? No cost or obligation – but the event must be family-oriented and "family-affordable". All events get a line (date, event, location), and each month we choose 5 to highlight.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS:

The first of the month two months prior to the month of the event.

Example: deadline for a March event would be January 1.

Send details to:

ruby@idahomagazine.com

SNEAK PEEK NOVEMBER 2011

1 Ballroom/Latin Social Dancing, Pocatello
3 Riders in the Sky, cowboy group, Twin Falls
3 Halloween Candy Buy Back, Idaho Falls
4-5 Beaux Cadeaux Shopping Extravaganza, Idaho Falls
5 Just Cuz Half Marathon, Pocatello
5-6 Holiday Bazaar, Eagle
5-12 Snake-Clearwater Steelhead Derby, Lewiston
6-7 Holiday Fair, Eagle
7-12/17 Mini Bazaar, Idaho Falls
7-15 Beaux Arts for Christmas Sale, Boise
10-12 Treasure Valley Flea Market, Boise

Amy Carr
was born and raised in Idaho Falls and currently attends the University of Oregon. This summer she was an intern in the marketing and exhibit departments at the Museum of Idaho, in Idaho Falls.

Daniel Allan Claar
is an outdoor writer and backcountry adventurer. An Idaho native with an English degree from Boise State University, his writing can be found at writing-wild.com.

RonaLee Flansburg
is originally from Thayne, Wyoming, but has lived in the Rexburg area for ten years. She is married to Jame Flansburg, and they have two talented daughters. RonaLee currently works for the City of Rexburg as the arts and culture director.

Art Gregory
is founder and president of the History of Idaho Broadcasting Foundation, Inc. Art's career in broadcasting led eventually to his current position as manager of Synergy Marketing Communications in Nampa.

Stephen Henderson
is an aspiring writer and communications student at BYU-Idaho. A native of the tidal region of Leonardtown, Maryland, he grew up with a love of the outdoors, music, and photography. He enjoys reading a good book, writing, and going on adventures with his wife, Sarah. Follow him @sphenhen.

Shirley Moon
was born in Bruneau and lived in Idaho until age fourteen, when she moved with her family and obtained a professional degree. After her husband's death, she moved back to Idaho in 2004, and began to reclaim her family connections to Owyhee County. She says each time she visits there, she feels overwhelmed by the beauty and endless serenity of this "forgotten corner of the West."

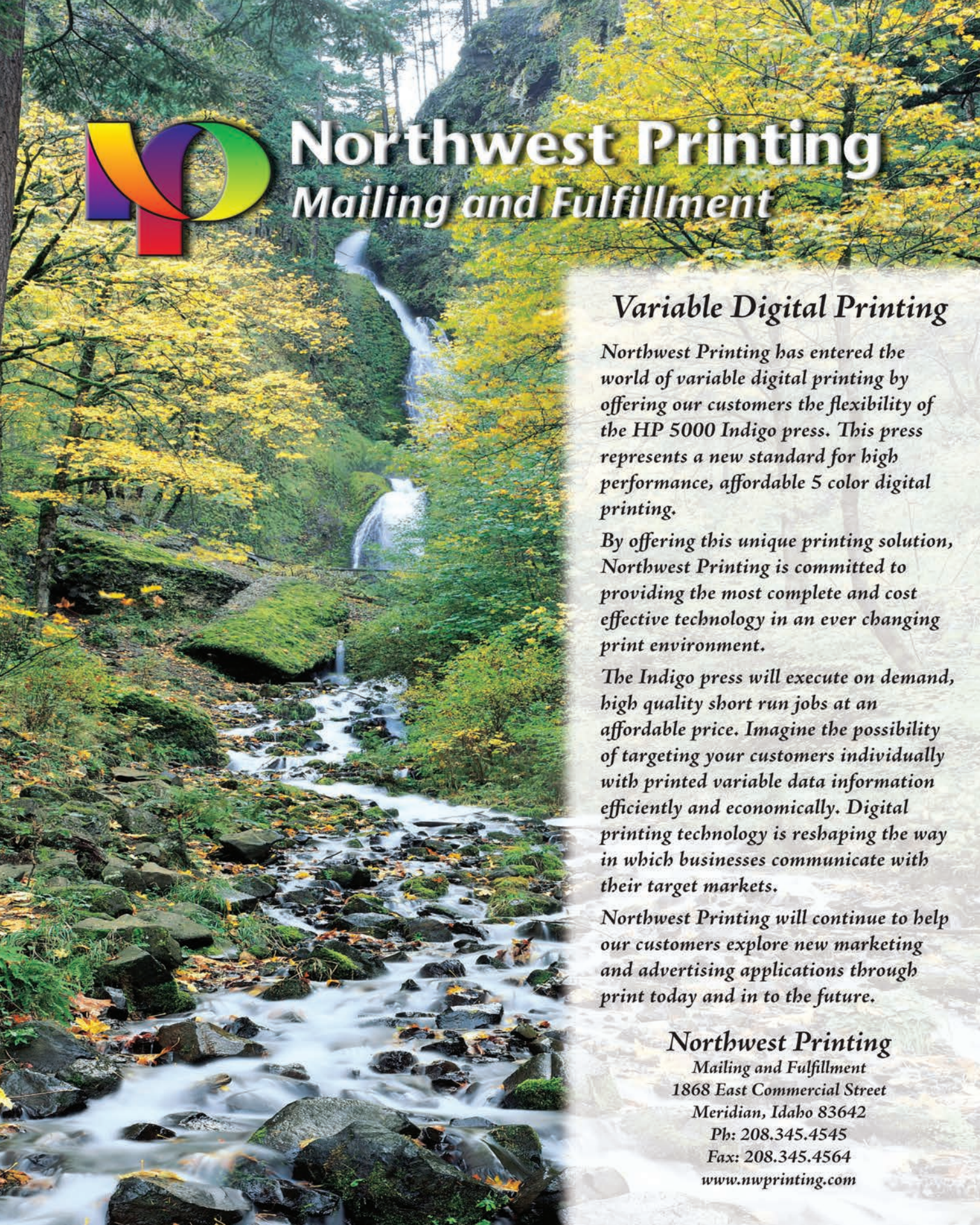
Alanah L. Muir
earned her bachelor's degree in English from Brigham Young University-Idaho, with an emphasis on creative writing and a journalism minor. She lives in Shelley with her family and is currently working for a newspaper as a graphic designer. Whenever she can steal a minute, Alanah is writing.

Lorie Palmer
is the community editor for Idaho's oldest weekly newspaper, the *Idaho County Free Press* in Grangeville. She and her husband have three daughters, two Pomeranian dogs, and a tabby cat.

Wanda Sorensen
is a past awardee in *IDAHO magazine*'s fiction writing contest. As a long-time teacher, she has co-authored a reading text and has awakened the love of writing in many children. Born, raised, and educated in Idaho, she lives and works on her family's farm near Soda Springs.

Larry Taylor
worked in radio and as a television news anchor in Boise, and is retired from Idaho Power Company as manager of legislative affairs. He piloted the airplane on the visit to broadcaster Vern Moore described in this issue.

Billy Jim Wilson
was born in Oregon in 1936, and moved with his family to Riggins in 1939. He went to high school in Riggins, attended the University of Idaho, and graduated from Idaho State University in 1969. He earned a Master of Library Science degree in 1970, and was director of the Coeur d'Alene Public Library from 1970 through 1978. He then worked at Boise Public Library as a reference librarian until retiring in 1998. His wife of forty-six years is Mary Alice Wilson.



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