

ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOORS

THE NEWSLETTER OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOOR WRITERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS
NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2014

RMOWP Heads to Ouray, Colorado in 2015

by Don Laine

One of the most beautiful locations in one of America's most beautiful states is the site of RMOWP's 2015 conference, and if Mother Nature cooperates we'll be there just in time for the area's fantastic fall colors. The conference is **September 21-24** (that's Monday through Thursday), based in the southwestern Colorado community of Ouray.

Named for a chief of the southern Ute

tribe, Ouray got its start in the 1870s as a gold- and silver-mining camp. By 1886 it had over 1,000 residents, a school, a hospital, dozens of saloons and brothels, and even a few churches. Today, still with a population of about 1,000, Ouray retains much of its 19th-century flavor, with many of its original buildings still standing, and serves as the perfect home base for exploring the spectacular San Juan Mountains.

Workshops, meetings, and most meals during the conference will take place at the **Ouray Community Center**, 340 6th Avenue, and we'll also have field trips throughout the area, including nearby Ridgway, and of course into southwestern Colorado's spectacular high country.

Although we're still in the early planning stages, we have nailed down a full-day four-wheel-drive tour for Wednesday, September 23.

Switzerland of America, a well-respected Ouray tour and jeep rental company, has created a custom tour, "Ghost Towns in Fall Splendor," especially for RMOWP. Heading into the mountains south of Ouray,

it promises splendid views of both scenery and remnants of the area's mining days. Among other things we'll see all three Red Mountains, several mountain

passes, as well as the ruins of various mining camps, including Gladstone. A stop in Silverton is also planned.

The conference will also include photography and writing workshops, additional field trips, sunrise photo

shoot, Anne Sullivan writers forum, and lots of opportunities to see RMOWP members' photos.

You might want to bring your bathing suit for an hour or two in the soothing mineral waters of Ouray Hot Springs Pool, or leave the suit at home and drive the short distance to the community of Ridgway for a dip in the clothing optional areas at Orvis Hot Springs.

Prefer exploring on your own? Our 4X4 guide company, Switzerland of America, offers a number of half-and full-day tours to other area attractions and also rents four-wheel-drive vehicles. Tell them you are with Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers & Photographers and they will give you their group discount rate for individual tours and rentals. See soajeep.com or call 866-990-5337 or 970-325-4484.

For additional information on the area see the Ouray Chamber Resort Association's website, ouraycolorado.com, or call the Ouray Visitor Center at 800-228-1876 or 970-325-4746.

(See pg. 3 for conference lodging.)



Colorado Autumn in the San Juans
© William Horton

President's Column

Archiving and Sharing Film-Based Photos

Article & photo by Al Perry

Have you ever noticed the first item saved when home fire or disaster occurs? People usually value family photos above other possessions. Also, in family estate settlements, distribution of family photos can be a contested activity.

A few years ago, I finally developed the courage and energy to tackle a long-awaited job: scanning slides and negatives accumulated prior to introduction of digital cameras. The primary purpose of digitizing was to create a backup in the event of fire, flood or other disasters that might cause damage to old film, prints and delicate 8mm movie footage. The secondary benefit of digitizing was to more easily retrieve and share photos with family and friends.

I understood it would take a long time to collect, choose and scan the photos. Two weeks were used

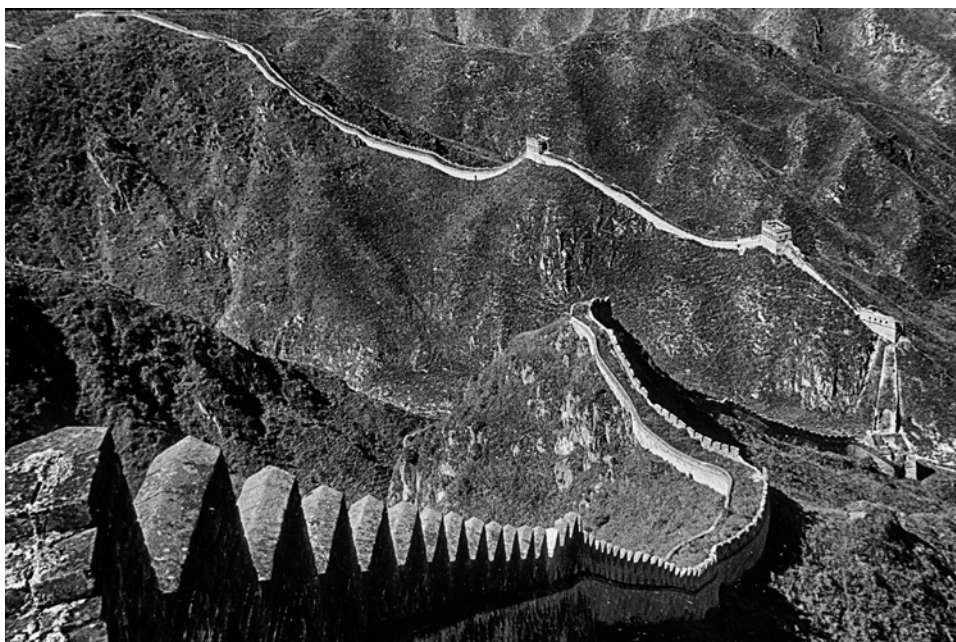
Table of Contents	
The Christmas Mink by Bob Good	3
Conference 2015 Ouray, Colorado.....	1
Conference Lodging in Ouray	3
Jack's Jaunts	5
Fond Food Memories from Glacier	8
President's Column	2
Writer's Corner.....	7

researching best techniques to achieve the best scan possible. Because scanning boxes of negatives, positives and prints is labor intensive, I wanted this to be a one time job done properly and not to be repeated.

After gathering up the photos in suitcases, I tagged each to be scanned and enlisted help to scan them. We used a Nikon CoolScan with 16 bit, 4,000 dpi resolution for the 35mm positive slides and negatives and an Epson flatbed scanner for prints and medium format film. We worked on this project for 12 months at which point my wife asked to have her family photos scanned. I then offered to scan my mom's photos. In all, we spent eighteen months working part time scanning and cataloging the photos.

After scanning the selected photos contained in 8 suitcases onto one hard drive, I placed a copy of the hard drive in our bank safe deposit and another copy in our office. I then made a reduced resolution jpeg of each scanned photo and shared with family and friends. Sharing these photos has been well received by all recipients.

In summary, achieving a backup of old photos provided me with peace of mind against loss, and the opportunity to share with others.



Great Wall of China, 1981

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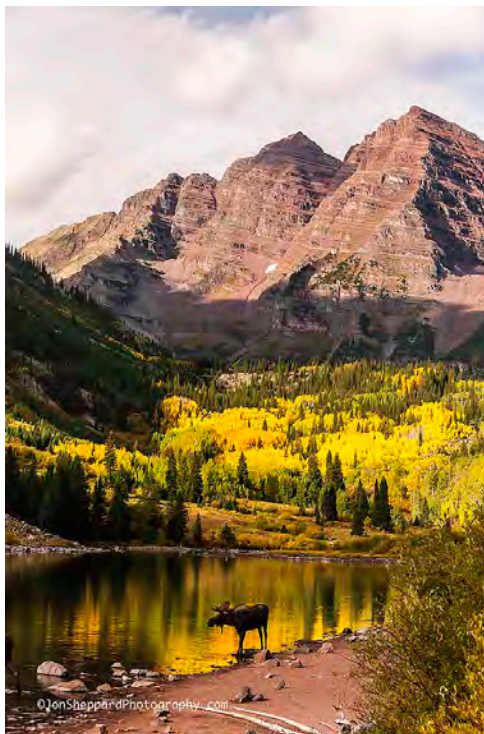
Where to Stay in Ouray

Nothing is very far away in Ouray, and you'll find several lodging opportunities within walking distance of the community center, our conference headquarters. However, be aware that Ouray fills up, especially on weekends, during September, so if you are going to want extra nights that include Friday and/or Saturday, you should start planning soon.

Our primary lodging facility will be the **Ouray Chalet Inn**, 510 Main Street. We've reserved 20 rooms from Sunday through Thursday, September 20-24, with a group rate of \$86 plus tax single or double. Pets are not accepted and rates do not include breakfast, but there are several restaurants nearby. Make your own reservations by calling 800-924-2538 or 970-325-4331, or going online to ouraychaletinn.com, and use promo code RMWP15.

Other lodging options include the **Matterhorn Inn Motel**, 201 6th Avenue (matterhorninn.ouray.com), which is giving us rates of \$89 single and \$99 double. These rates include breakfast, and pets are accepted with a fee. Phone 970/325-4938 and mention Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers & Photographers. Those looking for a reliable chain motel should check out the **Comfort Inn**, 191 5th Avenue. Pets are accepted with a fee and a full breakfast is included. To check rates see choicehotels.com, or call 800-438-5713 or 970/325-7203.

If you don't mind a steep uphill walk (or drive) to the community center, there are very nice facilities at **The Rivers Edge Motel**, 110 7th Avenue, which (surprise!) sits along the bank of the Uncompahgre River at the edge of town. Pets are accepted, with a fee, and a hot breakfast is included. You'll get the best rates, starting at about \$86 per night plus tax, by booking online (riversedgeouray.com). Phone is 866-739-4987 or 970-325-4621.



The early moose catches the view.
© Jon Sheppard

Looking for a close place to camp? Next to The Rivers Edge - well, actually on the other side of the river - is a very convenient and well-run campground, the **4J+1+1 RV Park & Campgrounds**, at 790 Oak Street. Sites are a bit close, but the campground is very pleasant for an in-town facility. In 2014 RV sites ranged from \$30 to \$36. Phone number is 970-325-4418; online see colorado-directory.com/4j11rvpark.

CONFERENCE 2015 Ouray, Colorado September 21-24

*RMOWP 2014 Contest Winner ~
Best of Show, Writing*

The Christmas Mink

by Bob Good
Reprinted with permission from
The Chaffee County Times
December 19, 2013 edition.

A time for memories - and magic moments for making more. This year will mark 75 years of acquiring Christmas memories, so presented the opportunity to write an article about the most memorable of those involving the outdoors. The task wasn't too difficult. I have a deep storage bin.

It was 1947. I was 10 that year. My brother and I had been taken in for a spell by our aunt and uncle, along with our maternal grandmother who normally looked after us.

When there are 11 kids in a family and money is short, or better expressed, shorter than usual, it was fortunate to have understanding relatives who always seemed to have an extra mattress and a couple more seats at the table in spite of their own limited resources.

My brother and I actually looked forward to those stays at the old Pennsylvania farmhouse, even if the candles would flicker in the house when the winds of winter would whistle down the Pine Creek Valley bringing bone-chilling cold.

Available work in town had been sparse for my uncle that fall, so we had already been advised that presents under the tree would be even more limited than usual. That didn't bother my younger brother, Tommy, and I.

Just being on the farm to run loose in the hills instead of housed in some run-down rental in what

see Mink... page 4

seemed a continually revolving number of cities a state away, was Christmas enough for young explorers and adventurers.

In contrast to the city, on the farm there was never a shortage of great food, from home-cured hams to rows of burlap bags of potatoes, canned sweet corn, bushels of winter apples and endless rows of jelly jars in the root cellar, those paraffin-topped Mason jars filled with wild-berry jams of every sort of taste and color.

Then there was the bread, that wonderful, wonderful bread; hot, steaming loaves of home-made breads and rolls popping out of the oven in the wood-stove at mid-morning every day, filling the kitchen with mouth-watering aromas haunting me still.

The tiny tree had already been cut from the stand of evergreens out back and relegated to its honored corner in the living room.

There was no electricity to brighten a string of lights had we even had any, but there were a few cherished bulbs of many colors to adorn the sparse branches as were well-wrinkled strands of tinsel collected lovingly each year only to re-emerge the next.

Charlie Brown would have been proud of our work, but he hadn't been invented yet.

Even though Christmas dinner was still almost two weeks off, the menu was already set and partially gathered.

There would be baked butternut squash, rich brown gravy to fill hollows made in rounded mounds of mashed potatoes, endless creamed corn and green snap beans from quart jars in the cellar, medallions of venison backstraps simmered to perfection in the massive cast-iron skillet always dominating the stove top, and of course, the meal's center piece, a giant salt-cured ham wrapped in a crinkled crust of brown sugar and honey, the honey having been gathered in the fall from a bee tree up the hollow at the risk of life and limb.

Dessert would be generous portions of warm mincemeat tarts and hot apple pies, altogether, a meal fit for a king.

If we were lucky, "And the creeks don't rise," as my uncle would always offer in admonishment, there would be a side of succulent slices of corn-breaded breast of ruffed grouse, the gathering of the latter being left to me as everyone else was "buried under in chores."

To this day, I picture all that as the perfect Christmas, with one nagging exception. My brother and I had no access to funds to buy gifts for anyone, not our grandmother, not our aunt or uncle, nor our one cousin just home from the service (which had included dropping in behind enemy lines the day before D-Day in Normandy).

The lack of gift funds weighed heavily on my brother and I. We spent many an hour worrying about it on our shared mattress in the attic while watching the dancing of the flickering flames of candlelight bouncing off dark pine knots on the ceiling. Endlessly we discussed the possibility of making something, but when you have limited creative talents and with no funds to supplement even those, we kept coming up blank.

And so it came to pass, that 10 days before Christmas we were still giftless and clueless.

"Take the .22 and these shells and go over to the old apple orchard by the creek and see if any grouse are still around." That came from my aunt as she handed me the few cartridges like each was plated in gold, which in her post-Depression-era world, they may just as well have been.

I clutched the precious rounds, slipping them securely into a pocket of my winter coat, a cotton jacket which also served for both spring and fall, being the only one I had that hadn't already been handed down to Tommy, if not farther down the line. Then I picked up the single-shot Winchester from the corner by the kitchen door where it always rested in the event a chicken hawk might be seen circling about our white leghorns. Heading for the creek, I shooed off Tommy as I left, knowing grouse in the orchard were always on full-alert status, and like all little brothers, Tommy was not yet the stealthiest of hunters.

The daunting December day was cold and gray - the flat, dull, lifeless gray that comes to the leafless Alleghenies in November and doesn't depart until mid-March. Low clouds hanging heavy above the valley hollows shifted in silent shrouds against the black of stands of hemlocks already old when the first Quakers arrived in Penn's Woods.

Hoar frost dislodged and dropping from willow shafts along the creek clung to the thread-worn wool of my pants and cotton jacket until I was as ghostlike as the fretful fog lifting from the black waters of the creek.

The first grouse never saw it coming. It was distracted, examining the frozen fruit still aloft; the few remaining apples already having shriveled, fermented and frozen weeks earlier.

Fanning its tail at the sudden impact, then slumping over the branch, bouncing its way limb to limb, settling with a soft thump to the snow below. The second bird sat tight, finally unnerved, exploding in a rush of wings and feathers, catching air, sailing into a giant first-growth pine along the creek bank where backwater had been dammed by a band of beavers.

Slipping through soft snow like a specter of Seneca warriors past, my eyes went searching - searching - searching for that telltale bit of brindle brown

against the gray green. I was so intent I almost missed the ripple of water on the edge of the ice near the beaver workings. But I did catch it, my eyes drifting down, taking a minute until reality overcame belief.

Stretching out there on a weather-washed oak-tree root extending from the frozen bank, shaking water off its slick dark pelt was a mink. Not just any mink, but a mink of incredulous length and girth with the darkest, richest, most lustrous pelt I had ever seen at any fur buyers ever. No, bigger!

I still recall shaking so badly that the Winchester's sights which I could normally shoot off hand without even checking, were bouncing all over the place, on the roots, on the water, on the snow - everywhere but on the mink's ear.

The .22 seemed to crack on its own - and the mink was gone, kicking its way from its perch, disappearing into the dark water just past the edge of the ice. I plunged across the frigid almost-knee-high water way over my low leather shoes, plunging my arm deep into the black where a trail of crimson was spiraling upward.

Mink are mean, vicious way beyond their size, blessed with wicked eye teeth that could easily bite through a hand. I didn't care. I searched, nothing; went deeper, felt movement, then grabbed. I had him! Ripped from the deep water, he slumped in my hand.

I was so excited I was almost at our neighbor's house a quarter-mile away before I remembered my grouse and had to race back to the old orchard, shoes, pants and socks now coated with ice cracking and popping with every footfall.

Actually, I think by then I was running, my heart hammering until I thought my chest would crack open and it would flop out onto the snow. Fritz saw me running up his drive and was at his cabin door before I hit the steps. I couldn't even speak. I just thrust the giant mink at him, the perfectly placed .22 right through the ear holes dripping crimson lines across his porch.

He stared at the mink, then at me, then back to the already frost-coated mink in my out-stretched hand.

"That's the most incredible mink ever. Look. He has three missing toes where he's been trapped but escaped. It's totally healed. He's really, really old, teeth worn to nubs. I've seen his tracks several times along the creek but was never able to fool him."

That from the best trapper in our parts. I was so proud I was hopping up and down with excitement, forgetting I no longer had any feeling from the knees down.

We cut a deal, a secret, spit-on-your-palms-and-shake pact, so help me. He would take it to the

buyer, then go to Devling's hardware and Martin's general store and buy the presents on my list until the money ran out.

Christmas morning he would bring the presents to our house just down the road, no wrapping required. That prize mink, after meticulous skinning and fleshing by Fritz, fetched the grand sum of \$80, a small fortune in 1947. It meant a work shirt for uncle Bob, a new set of dinner dishes for aunt Verda, crystal salt and pepper shakers for Grandma who collected them, a hat for cousin Bud and woolen mittens for brother Tommy.

When Fritz knocked on our door Christmas morning with his arms overloaded with presents, Santa himself would not have looked as good. Nor has he looked as good since.

Jack's Jaunts

Valle Vidal ~ Graveyard of a Fascinating Culture

Article & photos by Jack Olson

Back in 1989, Don and Barb Laine, along with the late Augie Schmuhl of Santa Fe, hosted a RMOWP conference in Red River, New Mexico. Among our many activities was a bus field trip to a relatively new addition to the Carson National Forest. Valle Vidal (The Valley of Life), unoccupied for decades, was donated to the government by the Pennzoil Company. The forest archeologist gave us a tour and introduction to the ranches and logging operations



Cabin ruin in Valle Vidal

which had existed in this sparsely populated area. He even had photographs of many of the settlers who had lived there.

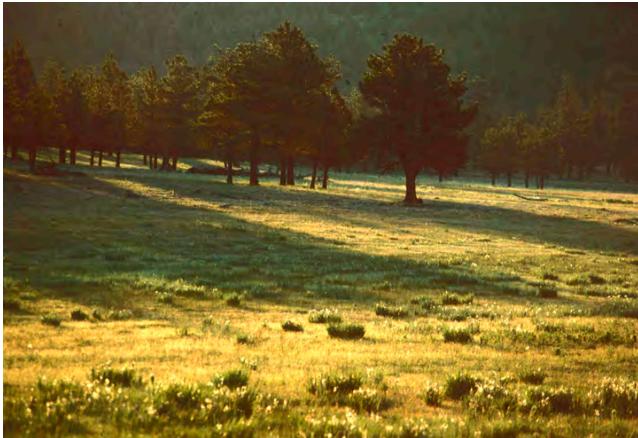
Our bus trip was necessarily short so some of us came back in the fall to explore more extensively, again with the archeologist. He took us into rancher's homes, to sites of logging businesses, all at a time when the aspen were gold and quaking. This convinced me that a full-fledged backpack trip into Valle Vidal had to be undertaken, and soon. My usual backpacking friends didn't need further convincing.

The next summer we zipped down Interstate 25 to New Mexico and then drove west into the mountains.

see Jaunts... page 6

We parked along the gravel road near the area we had explored in the fall. We wanted to see more of this intriguing area. A trail led into a wide meadow and we started out. Their dog, Scruffy, was beside herself rollicking all over like dogs do. At one point I noticed a coyote was trailing us at a distance and Scruffy went to the leash from then on.

We made camp above a stream near an old cemetery. Funny no one else camped there. The date on



Meadow in late day sun

one of the few tombstones was 1880 and I imagine the settlement in that area didn't go back much earlier. Other than ranching the main activity had been logging and a sawmill. This area of Valle Vidal is called Ponil Park. We also came across the remnants of a railroad trestle and an Apache hunting blind from an earlier time. Wildlife in Valle Vidal is abundant.

There are memorable hikes, we've all had them. But then there are those hikes which are enshrined in the Hiking Hall of Fame. One of those occurred in Valle Vidal. It was a blistering hot day, and that was at breakfast time. Fires in the forest high in the mountains to the west blended gray with the otherwise deep blue sky. After oatmeal, banana and hot chocolate we shouldered our day packs and headed off to explore a new area of Valle Vidal. We and the dog could not contain our excitement. Within a half hour we were beginning to contain it.

Eight thousand feet elevation sounds high if you're in the Midwest or East Coast but it's foothill country in the Rockies. The heat began to wilt us. Our previously jaunty steps became a sole-scraping slog. We wanted to forge ahead but it really wasn't much fun. Then, totally unforeseen, we came upon an



Fire in the Sky

unexpected sight--the road. We glanced at each other and sneaky smiles spread across our faces.

Picking up our pace we spied our car, strode purposefully to it, got in and drove back around the way we had come. In no time we were back in the town of Cimarron. We knew what we were looking for, the local café. That didn't take long and it took less for us to enter and order milk shakes of our choice. Mine was vanilla. Oh, that was soooo good and so cold. Reinvigorated, we got in the car, drove back to the original parking spot and completed our hike.

A couple of days later we met the archeologist and his wife and all camped out in a meadow near an old ranch house.

The Forest Service had erected signs at these various locations to interpret the culture and economic activity. We got the tour and learned the straight scoop. Can you just imagine how bright the stars shine, how totally uncountable they are, when you're in Northern New Mexico with not a single town anywhere nearby? Just plain jaw-dropping awesome.

You can camp wherever you want in Valle Vidal as long as you are at least two hundred feet from water. Higher slopes wouldn't make the best sites but we were camped in a broad meadow with trees nearby. Now, some people might not choose a graveyard for a campsite, but we found it quiet and peaceful. There is the excellent Cimarron Campground



Backpackers beginning their trek into Ponil Park



Doorway to...



Ponil Park graveyard -- the perfect place to camp

farther west with 36 sites for tents and trailers.

Valle Vidal is in northern New Mexico, right near the Colorado border. It's in the section of Carson National Forest which straddles the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. For further information on Valle Vidal, contact Carson National Forest, Questa Ranger District, P.O. Box 110, Questa, New Mexico 87556. Phone: (505) 586-0520. Or run a search online for Valle Vidal, Carson National Forest, New Mexico.

Writers' Corner

Ameliorate the Verbiage

by Virginia Parker Staat

*"I am a Bear of Very Little Brain, and long words
Bother me."*

~ A.A. Milne, *Winnie the Pooh*

Ameliorate. My young friend tells me it is his favorite word. To save you from spending time thumbing through the dictionary, it simply means to reform something bad to better.

I have been working with my friend on his new website and have been trying to dissuade him from using ameliorate. His most recent attempts to cling to his favorite word, including banging his head against the desk, have caused us both to laugh.

Ameliorate is not a bad word. It is what Ernest Hemmingway called a ten-dollar word. His exact quote targeted rival William Faulkner, "Poor Faulkner. Does he really think big emotions come from big words? He thinks I don't know the ten-dollar words. I know them all right. But there are older and simpler and better words, and those are the ones I use."

Are you a sesquipedalian (one who uses long words)? I certainly fall into the category. I love big words, particularly when I am able to say one word rather than three. Writing big words, however, is another subject matter. In writing, dangerous pitfalls lurk around big words. Overwriting can often occur, making our sentences cumbersome and tangled. Our writing can also easily become loftier and more dramatic than necessary. C.S. Lewis said, "Don't use words too big for the subject. Don't say 'infinitely' when you mean 'very'; otherwise you'll have no word left when you want to talk about something really infinite."

Using big words in our writing can make us sound pretentious... or uppity, as my grandmother would

say. Big words can make us sound artificial and insincere. Surprisingly, a recent Princeton study even suggests that using highfalutin words actually makes us look less intelligent (Daniel M. Oppenheimer, *Consequences of Erudite Vernacular Utilized Irrespective of Necessity: Problems with Using Long Words Needlessly*, 2006).

George Eliot reminds us, "The finest language is mostly made up of simple unimposing words." Please be assured, the simplicity Eliot is talking about does not mean "dumbing down" our work. As an example, some have told me they want to write for children because they believe it is easier than writing for adults. I find this line of thinking appalling. I would hope that we never write something because it is easy. We write because we want to communicate something important... whether our reader is a child or an adult. (And trust me, relaying a complex subject matter to someone with a reading vocabulary of 500 words or less can be substantially challenging!) Charles Mingus said, "making the simple complicated is commonplace; making the complicated simple, awesomely simple, that's creativity."

As writers, communication is our goal. The question we must always ask ourselves when choosing our words is who is our audience? We need to use words that we understand and, more importantly, words that our readers will understand. We must ask ourselves why we choose to use the words we use, particularly the big words. What will our readers gain from the word? Will using a ten-dollar word help the flow or clarity or readability of our work?

Perhaps Will Rogers said it best in his down-to-earth, vernacular way, "The minute you put in a word that everybody don't know, you have just muddled up that many readers. Running onto a word you can't read or understand is just like a detour in the road. You cuss it, and about a half dozen of 'em and you will take a different road next time. I love words but I don't like strange ones. You don't understand them and they don't understand you. Old words is like old friends, you know 'em the minute you see 'em."



Princely Daisy
3rd Place 2014, Flora category © Frank Zurey

KEEP UP WITH WHAT'S GOING
ON IN RMOWP.

VISIT RMOWP.ORG

- announcements
- member area with protected access to member directory (log-in information is being sent separately)
- links to member websites
- updates about the conference
- all 2014 contest winning images

Fond Food Memories from Glacier

by Barb Laine

Those of you who attended this year's conference in Glacier National Park I'm sure will remember with happy taste buds the delightful spread that Tom Ulrich and Linda Martin provided for the opening reception. Several of us expressed an interest in the recipes for two of the tasty dishes Linda prepared, and she has graciously consented to us publishing them here.

Many thanks, Linda.

Shoepeg Corn Dip

2 (11 oz.) cans white shoepeg corn, drained (This is a sweet corn with a small, white kernel.)

1/4 cup chopped onion

1/4 cup chopped green or red pepper

1 cup sour cream

1/2 cup mayonnaise

1 tablespoon dried parsley

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

salt to taste

1/4 cup grated or shredded parmesan cheese

1 cup Mexican shredded cheese (or cheese of your choice - Linda used 1 1/2 cups shredded cheddar.)

Pinch of cayenne or few drops of hot sauce OR 4-oz. can of green chile (drained and chopped)

Mix all ingredients together and refrigerate several hours or overnight before serving.

Serve with scoops, tortilla chips, crackers, etc.

Makes about 4 cups of dip and will keep in the refrigerator for several days.

Linda says "Thanks to Kitty Cromwell for introducing me to this dip at John and Beth Thornton's."

Calico Beans

1/2 pound bacon, diced

1/2 pound ground beef

1 cup chopped onion

1 (21 oz.) can pork and beans (undrained)

1 (16 oz.) can kidney beans, rinse & drain

1 (16 oz.) can baby butter beans, rinse & drain

1 (16 oz.) can green lima beans, rinse & drain

1 cup packed brown sugar

1/2 cup ketchup

2 teaspoons cider vinegar

1 teaspoon prepared mustard

1 teaspoon salt

In a large skillet, cook bacon over medium heat until crisp. Remove to paper towels to drain. Discard drippings.

In the same skillet, cook beef and onion over medium heat until the meat is no longer pink; drain. Combine remaining ingredients with bacon & beef mixture. Place in slow cooker. Simmer on low 4 hours.

Enjoy!



Happy munching was the order of the moment at this year's conference opening reception in West Glacier
© Linda Martin

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subject: E-mail RMO

Thanks!