

Rocky Mountain Outdoors

the newsletter of Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers & Photographers, Inc.

July — August 2017

Everything You Know is Wrong

By Don Laine

Well, maybe not everything you know is wrong, but if you read and believed RMOWP's May-June newsletter you have the wrong dates for the 2018 RMOWP conference.

After doing additional research, which included fighting crowds and being eaten alive by no-see-ums and mosquitoes in June at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, your conference committee has changed the dates for **RMOWP's next conference to September 23 to 26, 2018** (that's Sunday afternoon through Wednesday evening), with a post-conference all-day trip on the Cumbres and Toltec narrow-gauge steam train (www.cumbrestoltec.com) tentatively set for Thursday, September 27.

Details are still being worked out, but conference headquarters are expected to be in Alamosa, Colorado (www.alamosa.org), about 235 miles southwest of Denver, 200 miles north of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

This conference will involve some driving – Great Sand Dunes (www.nps.gov/grsa) is about 35 miles from Alamosa – but we think it will be worth the effort. Late September should have wonderful fall colors, especially along the steam train's route over 10,015-foot Cumbres Pass, and the weather should be cool (downright chilly in the evenings). And, a big plus, the no-see-ums and mosquitoes will be gone!

Other area attractions include several national wildlife refuges (www.fws.gov/refuge/alamosa) and the Nature Conservancy's Zapata Ranch (www.zranch.org), which offers tours to see its herd of some 2,000 bison. There are also a few too many historic museums, numerous hot springs including at least one that's clothing-optional, and of course southern Colorado's famous alligator farm (www.coloradogators.com) and UFO Watchtower (www.ufowatchtower.com).

Hope to see you next year.



Hikers returning from the dunefield at Great Sand Dunes National Park © Don Laine



Blooming yucca at Great Sand Dunes © Don Laine



Cumbres & Toltec train in the Chama, NM station © 2010 Barb Laine

President's Column

Getting Lost at Bean Hollow



Article & photo by Kent Taylor

The place is Bean Hollow State Beach on the California coast, close to Pescadero, a few miles south of Half Moon Bay. The picture shows me and our two grown children, engrossed in a tidal pool of tiny crabs that bubbled just below the surface, tightly tucked away in niche and crevice. There is some sentiment to the picture taken a couple of days after Father's Day. The fact that both kids still seem to like us and want to be with us is a bonus. Seeing us lost in a moment of exploration, wonder, and discovery is, for me, "worth a thousand words", as they say.



In his book, *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*, writer Edward Abbey asserts that "wilderness is not a luxury but a necessity of the human spirit and as vital to our lives as water and good bread." At some level, RMOWP has always stayed close to that vitality in its long history of gathering to explore and experience wilderness places; expanding the craft of communicating the natural world as well. If you haven't already, we hope you'll join us.

As the summer unfolds, I wish you well and safe travels. And maybe, if you're lucky, you'll get lost somewhere along the way.



Talk about a cold nose! © Bill Horton
TOAK (Two of a Kind) Humorous Award 2017

2017 Photo Workshop Participants Join RMOWP Family

Seven photographers from across the United States joined Nic Showalter, Jared Gricoskie, and Fred Lord for the annual RMOWP Photo Workshop at Rocky Mountain National Park, held June 20 to 24. There were five days of intense photography instruction, including plenty of photographic time in the field.

This year's photo workshop participants, who received membership in RMOWP, were Judy Clees of Milford, Michigan; Claudia Courtney of Longmont, Colorado; Joel Levine of Tucson, Arizona; Tracey Maras of Dawson, Illinois; Avinash Nangia of Ft. Collins, Colorado; Ward Ransdell of Lexington, Kentucky; and Jan Waterhouse of Iowa City, Iowa.

Welcome! And we hope to see you at future photo workshops and RMOWP conferences.

Planning is underway for the 2018 photo workshop, and details will be available soon at www.rmowp.org and www.rockyphotoworkshop.com.



Pink Hibiscus
© Diane Deming
2nd place Flora
Category, 2017
RMOWP Contest

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Writer's Corner

Earworms and Other Things

By Virginia Parker Staat

Don't you see, these words are an earworm. A song you can't stop humming even after you die.

~Toby Whithouse, *Doctor Who: Under the Lake*

It was a silly conversation at best... I was in a checkout line at Trader Joe's. One of the clerks opened her station, grabbed my cart, and said, "You can follow me." It was the way she said it. I laughed and told her it sounded like an old song. She took my cue and began singing. And although it was totally out of character for me, I joined her for the line, "I will follow you, follow you wherever you may go..."

"Now that song is stuck in my head," she said. "An earworm."

Bless the earworms... those quirky melodies that stick in our head. We spent the rest of our time together talking about earworms. Our worst list included the song *Sisters* from the movie *White Christmas*, *Who Let the Dogs Out*, and Disney's *It's a Small World* ride (which literally makes you want to strafe the little characters by ride's end). Later I discovered songs topping the "greatest ever" earworm list include Bobby McFerrin's *Be Happy*; the Village People's *YMCA*; the witch doctor song *Ooh Ee Oo Ah Ah, Ting Tang, Walla Walla Bing Bang; We Will Rock You*; and even Handel's *Hallelujah* chorus from *Messiah*.

Any earworms out there yet?

I learned the power of music after my grandmother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's... that insidious disease that robs our loved ones of memories of even those they love best. Each time I visited her, I tried desperately to connect or stir her heart. One visit, I pushed her wheel chair to a Gospel group sing-along at the nursing home. They began with *Amazing Grace*. My grandmother joined in, singing each and every verse. On that day, seeing the sparkle return to her eyes for those fleeting moments, music became our connection point.

For writers, music can also be a great tool. Music can inspire us and help funnel our creativity. Music can affect the writing process much like a musical score helps a movie build emotional intensity. When we use music to match the mood we are trying to create in our writing, we can often write more powerfully. For example, if you're writing something dramatic, listen to dramatic music like Mozart's *Requiem*.

Author A.J. Humpage says, "Writing with certain types of music can increase writing productivity because it helps the writer focus the tension, the atmosphere, emotions or conflict into the writing." Humpage suggests listening to well chosen soundtrack music from movies, matching the mood of the movie score to the scene you are writing.

I prefer listening to instrumental music when I write because songs with words tend to distract me. Occasionally, however, when I am trying to write a particular emotion that I felt deeply in the past, I go back to a favorite

tune that matches the time and place. The earworm alone helps me relive the intensity of the moment I am trying to portray in my writing. The lyrics from the Trisha Yearwood's song say it best, "The song remembers when."

Music triggers our memories, rekindling emotions of events and places in time. Writers can use music to harness those emotions to improve our writing and increase our creativity. Bless those quirky earworms and use them to draw from your own creative well... and write.

(NOTE: If you have a friend or loved one affected by dementia, I encourage you to watch the 2014 award-winning documentary *Alive Inside* (or visit www.aliveinside.org). This inspiring film documents the power of music for those trapped inside their dementia and how music memories can literally bring them back to life again.)

RMOWP Conferences — The Middle Years, Part VII

Article & photos by Jack Olson

1998 was an important milestone for RMOWP. It was our 25th anniversary so we chose **Glenwood Springs, Colorado**, for our location. That's where our fledgling organization met for the first time in 1974. We hoped, but didn't know, that we'd be around, and flourish, by this time. One of our main excursions was to Aspen and the iconic Maroon Bells. We toured the old mining camp of Ashcroft, south of Aspen, founded in the 1880s. Interpreters from the Aspen Historical Society helped us as we wandered the streets. RMOWP has become known for getting very special treats. We were able to go inside the "guts" of the operations of the I-70 tunnels along the Colorado River. The first buzzings about digital photography began at this conference.



Kay Lamb exiting a ghostly structure in Ashcroft.



Getting the low-down on the 'guts' of the I-70 tunnel.

In **1999** we set up camp in **Tucson, Arizona**. We started out with a leisurely social luncheon at the Tohono Chul Bistro. From then on, leisurely was left behind. The extraordinary Tohono Chul botanic garden was right next door for wandering and photography. A long trip took us

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RMOWP conferences... cont. from pg. 3



Lunch at Tohono Chul Bistro kicks off the 1999 conference.

to the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (where we went at our just concluded 2017 conference). We filled that day with jaunts to the towns of Bisbee and Tombstone.

There's always at least one special conference highlight and that was a wagon ride into the Arizona desert wilderness for a chuck wagon dinner, with everyone crowded around a fire on a cold evening.



Gathered about the campfire for a memorable desert cookout.

(Does this group do anything but eat?!)

We felt that we needed a bang-up conference location for the memorable year, **2000**. We could not have chosen a better spot than **Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah**. Our conference organizers were Don and Barb Laine. Little did they know what was in store for them in years to come. There were many highlights of this conference but, in



Awaiting the arrival of the sun at the rim of Bryce Canyon.

Bryce, it's hard to beat a hike down into the "hoodoos" below. We couldn't get enough of it. We also began the annual feature of a sunrise photo shoot. I've already written about that enough but let's just say if the sun hadn't finally broken through the clouds I would have been in real trouble and the sunrise photo shoot would have died right there. We began talking about digital and some digi-

tal prints were entered in a contest category.

Back down south for the **2001** conference in **Alamogordo, New Mexico**. The nearby White Sands National Monument was the site for two activities.

First, we held a big late day picnic and then enjoyed a ranger talk. Members scattered to take photos at sunset. The next day some hardy members ventured back out to White Sands for the second sunrise photo shoot. I've mentioned that RMOWP often receives special treats and this time we were given entry into the White Sands Missile Range. Among wildlife viewed were wild oryx and the rare pupfish. Probably the highlight of the day was an exclusive tour of the Trinity Site, where the first atomic bomb was tested. Can you say ominous? Although digital buzzing



An evening ranger talk at White Sands National Monument.



Stalking the wild yucca at White Sands National Monument.

went on, again all contest photo categories were for slides. It won't be long.

[Editor's note: This is the seventh in the continuing conference retrospective by Jack Olson, an RMOWP member since 1978. Previous ones appeared in the following newsletters and are available for perusal and download at our website www.rmowp.org: Mar-April, May-Jun & Sep-Oct 2015, Mar-Apr & Sep-Oct 2016, and Jan-Feb 2017.]



A proud moment: Dottie Carr and Barb Laine made it to the end of the trail! (Bryce Canyon National Park, 2000)

The Rival from Buck Knives

Longtime RMOWP corporate friend Buck Knives claims bragging rights to its immensely popular Rival I and Rival II everyday knives.

“The USA-made folders are helping to increase our customer base and demographics,” said CJ Buck, CEO and chairman of Buck Knives, who added, “The Rival has attracted our customers for its affordable, durable, and lightweight qualities.”

The Rival series features durable knives in two sizes, and are made of 420HC steel with injection-molded nylon handles and removeable stainless steel pocket clips. Covered by Buck’s Forever Warranty, list price is \$26 to \$36. See www.buckknives.com.



Sunset over Great Sand Dunes National Park © Don Laine

A Hiking Guide Dream

By Maryann Gaug © 2016

Driving down the dirt road to the parking lot, something didn’t feel quite right. After I parked my truck, I checked the tires. Sure enough the rear one was flat as a pancake. I pulled out the tarp, jack, and wimpy tire wrench and loosened the lug nuts. Well, four of the five loosened but the last one wouldn’t budge. I felt stuck in the middle of nowhere on the eastern plains of Colorado, 17 miles from La Junta. My dream of writing a hiking guide to Colorado had not included flat tires.

So I put on a belt pack with plenty of water, hoofed the 1.7 miles back to the “main” dirt road, and headed toward the highway, another 1.4 miles away. Finally a Jeep ap-

proached and I flagged it down. The young man inside agreed to help. A few twists later, the nut came off and he changed the tire. I never learned his name.

That was the second flat tire I dealt with while hiking various trails. Neither happened close to civilization and both times a helpful stranger loosened the last lug nut for me.

Over the years I had spent weekends hiking, backpacking, bagging peaks, and backcountry skiing to escape from a mind-intensive job as a computer programmer, later as a manager. My thoughts would wander to hiking around Colorado collecting data to write a guide, one of those dreams that of course could never happen from my perspective.

Yet my dream started to come true in the unlikely place of Tucson, Arizona. I had quit my job as a computer manager and attempted to follow my writing dream. After joining a regional outdoor writer/photographer group, I attended the annual conference in Tucson. The executive director waved an email in front of us announcing Beachway Press needed guidebook authors. I grabbed a copy and sent an inquiry email when I got home.

To make a long story short, after seeing several photos and articles I had written for www.cyberwest.com, Beachway invited me to submit a proposal for a hiking guide to Colorado. Two months later, after researching trails on maps and writing the proposal, I landed the job.

With over fifty trails to hike in ten months, finding friends to accompany me on week long forays around the state proved difficult. Off I went, hiking and camping by myself. When unfamiliar with a location, I asked local knowledgeable people what to be aware of (for example, bears or snakes). Learning about the environment, from weather to animals, snakes to foliage, helped me be prepared and at ease while hiking. I left my itinerary with a friend and checked in each night.

Hiking opportunities sometimes appeared unexpectedly. As I entered the Rocky Mountain National Park Visitor Center to inform an official person that I planned to include some park trails in the hiking guide, I realized that the woman behind the desk had helped teach classes I had taken from Rocky Mountain Nature Association. As Cherry and I chatted, another woman walked up. A travel writer, she wanted to hike the Ute Trail. Cherry volunteered to hike it with her and I jumped into the group. I discovered that I had met Joanne and her husband many years earlier while folkdancing in Boulder. Small world.

While we hiked along the alpine tundra I recorded Cherry’s fascinating and enthusiastic explanations of



A very flat tire. © Maryann Gaug

See Hiking... pg. 6

Hiking... cont. from pg. 5

plants and animals along the way. Recording notes while hiking proved much easier than stopping and fumbling with pencil and pad. Many miles and notes later, I discovered I hadn't recorded a thing because I had accidentally pressed the pause button on the microcassette recorder!

After hiking the trail of the day, I camped in the back of my truck. The topper-covered bed became a comfortable home away from home. By the light of a battery-powered lantern, I faithfully transcribed my recorded notes each night. I typically camped in public campgrounds, not for safety, but because I liked having an outhouse (too many people digging and using catholes can cause health problems) and a picnic table. Hot chocolate and cookies became favorite bedtime treats.

Camping generated some exciting moments. At Gates of Lodore

campground, I met a group of rafters who would float down the Green River the next morning. As we talked, I discovered Annie lived down the block from me and the others lived in my home town or nearby. The next year when I went for my annual mammogram, Annie took the xrays. Small world.

That night, while snug in my truck and my new-found friends asleep in their rainfly-less tents, a thunderstorm moved in. What a storm! The wind howled while the rain poured down. The truck shook. The campers madly scrambled to pitch rainflies to keep dry. The next morning under sunny skies they launched their rafts, damp but happy to be on the river.

Later that year one hike involved an overnight backpack in the Flat Tops Wilderness. Foiled by rain in August, I returned in October right before rifle (hunting) season started. A lone female with a huge 48-pound pack on my back and hiking poles in hands, I must have looked a little strange. Several groups of horses with riders decked out in dayglo orange passed me by—all men. They were scouting for deer and elk. One asked me why I used ski poles. I told them the poles were made for hiking and promptly gave him a demo of their shock-absorbing feature. He seemed impressed.

Backpacking by oneself can be a tad lonely, sitting in camp eating a simple meal. Yet there was something about being away from all signs of civilization, with only what I

carried on my back. Sure, the thought of a bear strolling by crossed my mind, but my worst encounters have been with chipmunks and pine martens who wanted to share my dinner. I felt quite happy that I had the skills and ability to camp alone in the mountains.

While transcribing my notes that night, the batteries in my headlamp died. I never realized how dark it gets in the middle of the wilderness on a partly cloudy night. Long ago on camping trips I learned to remember where I put everything before I went to bed. After finding the new batteries I discovered a trick to changing them in the dark. I felt each one as I pulled it out and inserted the new one in the same direction. In a few moments, the little lamp again brightened my tent.

Traveling solo really helped hone my skills. I learned to be more observant, not only of the terrain and any animals, but also of the weather and my own body. Knowing when to drink and eat or even when to turn around and try again another day became important. Observation also provided valuable information for each chapter in the guide.

I looked for new and different hikes and a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recreation planner suggested Thompson Mountain northwest of Cañon City. She kindly gave me a copy of a topographical map with the new trail sketched on it. Off I went, enjoying a hike through ponderosa forest—until I hiked through a fence gate and discovered the trail disappeared in the meadow. Undaunted, I headed downhill. Then the fun really began. The trail appeared and disappeared frequently. I found it by looking for surveyor's tape on tree branches and frequently checking the map. Eating lunch by an old ranch road, I counted how many gullies I had to cross before finding the trail that would loop back.

Later, sitting in a grassy field, madly comparing the topo map to the landscape before me, I realized I wasn't where I thought I was, much less where I was supposed to



The author leads a hike on the Queen's Garden Trail in Bryce Canyon National Park, June 2016
© David Staat



Goats on Buffalo Mountain. © Maryann Gaug
(The author's home is in the valley at the top of the picture.)

be. I had hiked a little too far. So much for my gully counting skills. Then I remembered that a GPS was recording the trail while I hiked. I could find my location on the map

with some certainty—until I realized I needed a plastic scale (a special ruler) to plot the GPS coordinates on the map. Using my calculator watch, I luckily managed to plot my whereabouts. Returning to where the trail should have looped, I found no sign of it. I tried to follow the map, but ended up bushwacking through oakbrush over my head. If you haven't tried that, I don't recommend it.

Eventually I crossed a fence (no light bulb went off in my brain) and headed downhill. Concern set in because the sinking sun signaled the approach of evening and I needed to head uphill. So I climbed back over the fence (still no light bulb) and suddenly found the area where the trail first disappeared beyond the fence. If I had only thought a little harder, I would have recognized that barbed-wire fence! Getting "lost" did not appeal to me, but I felt great when I "found" myself again. Eventually I located and finished the loop. As darkness encroached I arrived at my truck only to discover a herd of cattle encircling it.

The many adventures I experienced while writing a hiking guide helped me find strength within myself, discover the beauty of Colorado, meet wonderful people, and develop an understanding of nature and its interconnections. Dreams do come true!

[Editor's note: This article won second place in Unpublished Written Works category for 2017. Judge Mary Taylor Young commented: "Straightforward account of how the author transformed a love of outdoor recreation into success as a guide book author, a story that inspires others who want to take that trail (pun intended)."]



*Opposite Twins © Dan Bernskoetter
3rd place tie Fauna Category
2017 RMOWP Contest*



*Blooming saguaro
© Barb Laine*

Saguaro Life Cycle

By Mary Lou Griggs © 2017

Little Spike

Just a sprout
off his mum.
Needles sharp.

Takes awhile,
years, we're told,
to branch out.

Slow... To... Grow...
Oh! To be
big as mum.

Present Arms

Teenager
saguaro,
still unarmed.

Standing tall.
Wants to wave,
yet cannot.

Just waiting
for the time
to bear arms.

Oldtimer

Years of sun?
Two-forty.
Day is done.

These old bones
sound eerie
in the wind.

Time to rest.
Return to
Mother Earth.

New Dates for the 2018 RMOWP Conference September 23 - 26 Alamosa, Colorado

(See page 1.) Check www.rmowp.org frequently for details.



© Jack Olson

RMOWPers gather at Trinity Site on White Sands Missile Range at the 2001 conference (see pages 3-4).

Left to right, front row: Don Boone, Maryann Gaug, Betty Parker, Betty Minor, Georgia Colao, Bob Minor, Phil Springer, Barb Laine, Jon Sheppard, Craig Springer, and Kelly Gatlin.

Back row: Jack Olson, Jim Baker, Don Laine, Russ Bromby, Jeff Pederson, Joan Johnson, Lee Carr, Mary Beth Shymkus, Dottie Carr, Al Marlowe, Becky Minor, Hal Shymkus, Sherryl Brandes, Lee Allen, John Catsis.

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