

Rocky Mountain Outdoors

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

July — August 2018

President's Column

The Joy of Poking Around

Article & photos by Kent Taylor

Summer is a good time for **poking around** (*to search for things by moving things around*). According to Webster, it's akin to **poking about** (*to look through things or make an investigation*) or my favorite, **poking along** (*to advance lazily or to waste time while moving about*). All are worthy pastimes—maybe even spiritual disciplines for the artist in each of us.

Writers and photographers have always poked around, stepping outside of time, outside of ourselves and into the experience of things: light, movement, moments, senses, action, behaviors, contexts, openings, closings, rhythms, patterns, textures. The list goes on. Tools of the trade for anyone who pokes around.

We've also known something else, though, something vital and tender. We've known that some of our most treasured moments occur when we're lost in the middle of exploration, present and alive to looking, noticing, being. Bringing those discoveries to expression through image or word, photo or phrase is part of the joy of poking around.



Kent's wife Laura "poking around" with their son Kyle.

In the left picture they are exploring the San Luis Obispo area of the West Coast, and Kyle is nine. In the two on the right Kyle is 21 and they're wading in the Pedernales River in Pedernales State Park in south central Texas. Just goes to show that we're never too old to poke around.

Want this newsletter e-delivered?

Let us know: info@rmowp.org

Subject: E-mail RMO

Thanks!

Outdoor Photos and Articles Wanted

Based in the Atlanta area, **Outdoor Sportsman Group** (www.outdoorsg.com) publishes numerous game and fish magazines each month, and needs photos and articles to fill them. According to Art Director Kate Brainerd, "Our needs are varied and constant; we produce 28 issues per month... (and) welcome photographic portfolios which represent all aspects of outdoor life and activities."

Ms. Brainerd can be contacted at Outdoor Sportsman Group, 3330 Chastain Meadows Parkway, Ste. 200, Kennesaw, GA 30144. Phone is 678-589-2057.

The company is also seeking articles. Bob Borgwat is editor for a number of game and fish magazine titles, including those covering the Rocky Mountains, California, Washington-Oregon, Great Plains, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa.

"I need writers before photographers, but I really need good writers who are good photographers, Borgwat tells RMOWP. "That's a valuable combination for me, and it means more value for the contributor when they can provide salable photography with an assigned storyline. Stories are, indeed, assigned per a blueprint that outlines the desired content."

Borgwat can be contacted at bborgwat@gmail.com, or by phone at 706-838-5259.

More Wild Horse Pics by Judy Barnes



Misty and baby



Relaxing by the lake

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All Aboard!

The Cumbres & Toltec ready to leave the station. © 1991 Don Laine

Writer's Corner

Feeling a Little Tense?

By Virginia Parker Staat

The suspense is terrible. I hope it will last. ~ Oscar Wilde

After watching a rather intense Disney movie with a very young friend of mine, I asked her what she thought about the wicked witch. She said, "If it weren't for the witch, there wouldn't be much of a story."

It was, indeed, a profound answer. Intuitively, my young friend knew that conflict, tension, and suspense are essential elements to our stories. In fact, without them, can we even say our story is a story? Author and journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones says, "There has to be tension. There has to be an adversary... It doesn't have to be a person—it could be yourself, like in a story about a person battling a drug addiction. Or the villain could be a town. I just think, a story where there isn't tension—something that someone is fighting against—isn't a very good story."

Editor Sara Chauncey agrees, "Even if you're writing about a world that's all unicorns and rainbows, with nary a resistant thought in the mind, conflict is still an essential part of your story." She defines conflict as wanting something other than what is. Chauncey concludes that while conflicts may include battles and confrontations, most often it is discord of action, antagonism, and opposition that add tension to our stories.

We create tension and suspense in our writing with strong characters wanting something different than what is. We create apprehension or anticipation for our readers by using literary devices such as foreshadowing, flashbacks, and rising action. We may begin our personal essays with a dramatic question centered on the central issue. We may compare and contrast different views before explaining why one is better than another. We end chapters with a cliffhanger or the start of a journey. We inform our readers of conflict early and reveal resolutions slowly.

Master of suspense Alfred Hitchcock compared two very different scenes to show how he builds suspense in his films. In the first scene, a bomb explodes in a football stadium. In the second, his viewers see the anarchist place the bomb and know it is going to go off at one o'clock. A clock shows it is a quarter to one. Innocuous conversations now become fascinating because viewers are part of the scene. Hitchcock concludes, "In the first case we have given the public fifteen seconds of surprise at the moment of the explosion. In the second we have provided them with fifteen minutes of suspense. The conclusion is that whenever possible the public must be informed. Except when the surprise is a twist, that is. When the unexpected ending is, in itself, the highlight of the story."

In Sol Stein's *Stein on Writing*, he includes a checklist for creating suspense and tension in our work. He suggests

asking the following questions:

- Does your story set up a question or controversy and not answer or resolve it immediately?
- Are you loading in facts that unnecessarily diminish suspense early?
- Have you described an action that may arouse curiosity but that isn't explained in the same paragraph?
- Can you convert any sentence to a question that will arouse curiosity rather than satisfy it?"

Tension is an essential story element critical to all genres. We build suspense and tension to help readers care about the outcome of our stories. Rising tension pulls our readers into our work. Anticipation keeps them reading. Just look at the success of Disney movies. Even my young friend knew that without the witch, there wouldn't be much of a story... and our readers deserve memorable stories.

This beautiful fellow—seen along the Lower Monument Canyon Trail, Colorado National Monument near Fruita—inspired many of us to capture his image.
© 2013 Richard Holmes



So, You Want to Write a Book?

University of New Mexico Press needs authors for its outdoor guidebook series.

Launched in fall 2017, the **Southwest Adventure Series** by UNM Press explores the great outdoors in the Southwest and Rocky Mountain states (New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Texas, Nevada, and California), with titles running the gamut from extreme adventure to arm-chair travel. The first two entries in the series are *Eco-Travel New Mexico* and *Skiing New Mexico*. Manuscripts currently being prepared include books on Arizona's state parks, Arizona's scenic drives, and family adventure travel in Colorado and New Mexico.

UNM Press is actively seeking authors to develop book proposals for the series. Authors should be seasoned travel and adventure writers with expertise in their fields; photographers are also welcome to propose titles. For information about University of New Mexico Press see www.unmpress.com, and to learn more about the series, contact lead editor Ashley M. Biggers at ashley@ashleymbiggers.com.

RMOWP Conferences—the Later Years, Part X

By Jack Olson

It was 2010 and, for the first time, we held our conference in **Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming**. And not just any part of the park, but we headquartered at the Old Faithful complex. Where the action is. Of course,



"Old Faithful & Big Dipper at Night" © Ryan Weishalla

1st Place, Images from Last Conference, 2011 RMOWP Photo Contest

we took the obligatory photos of Old Faithful but we traveled far afield to witness many other geysers, springs, thermal features and the lovely Firehole River.

The sunrise photo shoot was one of the most memorable in our history. We were staying in a variety of lodging places so were instructed to meet at the site of Old Faithful. We gathered alone in the dark and were getting ready to climb up the path to Geyser Hill when Old Faithful suddenly, unexpectedly, blew its top. We were running around, yelling, making slap-happy fools of ourselves.

Internationally-known member Tom Ulrich took another group out at sunrise to photograph wildlife in spitting snow. He also educated us in his indoor workshops.

For the first time, we introduced a program of the works of selected members' photography.



Attention Jack Wendleton — Look behind you — you're missing Lion Geyser spouting off! © Jack Olson

We went to a new location for us in 2011, **Torrey, Utah and Capitol Reef National Park**. Capitol Reef is little known to even some westerners, but we loved it.

A guided backroad tour of Cathedral Valley was the signature event at the conference. We explored majestic and spectacular landforms. We were out much of the day and were served a luscious lunch.



Lee Carr wanders a painted landscape in Cathedral Valley, Capitol Reef National Park © Jack Olson

On most of our sunrise photo shoots we are usually looking straight ahead but this time we were far below focusing upward as the sun brushed the tops of dramatic monoliths. Capitol Reef lent itself to individual exploring, something our intrepid group relishes.



Lee Carr captures the loooong view in Cathedral Valley, Capitol Reef National Park © Jack Olson



See anything in there, Don Laine? © Jack Olson

In 2012 RMOWP settled in the heart of historic culture and art, **Taos, New Mexico**. We visited galleries, the historic San Francisco de Asis Church in Ranchos de Taos, and took a tour of the famous Harwood Museum.

Several of us enrolled in something that has become a feature of many conferences, the pre-conference activity. Prominent Colorado outdoor writer and member, Mary Taylor Young, put us through a fun and rigorous series of exercises to test our ability to observe and capture feelings into meaningful words.



Richard Holmes follows instructions from Mary Taylor Young to "imagine" during the pre-conference nature writing workshop in Taos, New Mexico © Jack Olson

Our major outdoor adventure was a guided hike down to the Rio Grande with a side trip to view some petroglyphs. We finished the day with a picnic at

the BLM Orilla Verde Recreation area at the river.

About a dozen thrill-seeking members shot the rapids during a raft trip on the Rio Grande.



The Rio Grande meanders its way toward the Gulf of Mexico through the steep walls of the gorge it has carved through the rock near Taos, New Mexico © Don Laine



The annual re-mudding—by volunteers, and mostly by hand—of the San Francisco de Asis Church in Ranchos de Taos, New Mexico © Barb Laine



Exploring Devil's Canyon, Fruita Paleontological Area © Don Laine

And in 2013, we visited another new location, **Fruita, Colorado and Colorado National Monument**. Most of



Ranger-guided hike on Lower Monument Canyon Trail, Colorado National Monument © Don Laine

our outdoor activity, including the sunrise photo shoot, took place in the national monument and nearby BLM

sites. We had dinner one night in a picturesque picnic ground atop the mesa.

The biggest, most strenuous activity, was a long trek into Monument Canyon to reach the base of the iconic geologic feature, Independence Monument. While on this hike, we encountered some of the park's bighorn sheep. Most of us, whether we hiked or not, were blown away by the views from Rim Rock Drive. Several of us share the belief that Colorado National Monument embodies the qualities of a national park.

[Editor's note: This is the tenth in the continuing conference retrospective by Jack Olson, 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, Jan-Feb, Jul-Aug, Nov-Dec 2017, and Mar-Apr 2018.]

RMOWP Conference 2018 -- Tentative Schedule as of 4 July 2018

Alamosa, Colorado

Meetings, workshops, and meals in Room 309 at Adams State University (ASU) **Except as Noted**

Saturday, September 22

8:00am Carpool from Alamosa Super 8 for Pre-Conference day-long *Wild Horse Photography Field Trip* (\$)

Sunday, September 23

8:00am Carpool from Alamosa Super 8 for Pre-Conference day-long *Wild Horse Photography Field Trip* (filled)

6:00pm Registration, Welcome, Announcements, Opening Reception, Happy Hour and Light Buffet – **Colorado Welcome Center**, 610 State Ave., Alamosa (included in registration fee)

Monday, September 24

8:30am Carpool from Alamosa Super 8 to *Great Sand Dunes National Park* area (Explore national park, see Zapata Falls (if it has water) and Nature Conservancy's bison – precise times to be determined)

12:30pm Lunch at Great Sand Dunes Group Picnic Area (included in registration fee)

1:30pm Guided Ranger Walk

5:30pm Dinner in the Dunes – BBQ (\$) – Great Sand Dunes Group Picnic Area; if lousy weather back to ASU

6:30pm Dunes Sunset & Full Moon Photography On Your Own (sunset 6:57pm; full moon 8:54pm)

Tuesday, September 25

7:30am Carpool from Super 8 to *Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center*

8:00am Guided walk and driving tour with National Wildlife Refuge Manager Suzanne Beauchaine

12:00pm Lunch (Soup & Salad Buffet, \$)

12:45pm Presentation of Contest Submissions

1:45pm Break

2:00pm *A Certain Slant of Light: The Poetry of the Postcard, a Writing Workshop* with Peter Anderson, Outdoor Writing Specialist at Adams State University

3:00pm Break

3:15pm Board of Directors Meeting (open to all members) or Free Time

5:30pm General Membership Meeting

6:00pm Dinner (Italian Buffet, \$)

7:00pm *Showcase of Selected Members Photography* with Jack Olson & Friends

8:00pm *Photo Critique* with Fred Lord and Dan Bernskoetter

Wednesday, September 26

6:15am *Sunrise Photo Shoot* (sunrise 6:53am)

8:30am *Anne Sullivan Writers Forum* with Kenita Gibbins & Virginia Staat

10:30am *Visual Fluency: Empower your Images with the Language of Graphics, a Photography Workshop* with Bill Horton

12:00pm Lunch (Soup & Deli Buffet, \$18)

12:45pm *Outdoor Survival for Photographers & Writers* with Peter Kummerfeldt

1:45pm Break

2:00-5:00pm Auction

6:30-9:30pm *Banquet* (Apricot Glazed Roasted Turkey & Braised Beef Sicilian, \$) and Awards Ceremony

Thursday, September 27

7:30am Post-Conference *Excursion on Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad* – Carpool to Antonito, Colorado Train Station (\$)

Members' Choice Contest Reminder

- Choose two favorite photos, print (maximum 8X12), and mat (maximum 12X16). Please no framing.
- On the back of each write "Members' Choice" & the title, but NOT your name. We will keep track of which is whose.
- Bring them to conference in Alamosa in September.
- Photos will be displayed at conference and voted on by members in attendance.
- Complete rules and guidelines are available on our website <https://rmowp.org/annual-contest/>.

Thanks!

Photography is Not a Group Sport True Writing can best be done Alone

Article & photo by Kenita Gibbins

If we as a rule don't like to shoot pictures with a bunch of people and we certainly can't concentrate getting pen to paper with talkers, why do we rush to get our reservation in the mail to come to the RMOWP yearly conference?

It is because we are a bunch of adventurers, learners who actually love seeing our friends. I'd like to tell you about my bonding with a few of you even though I've never met a member that isn't wonderful.

One day on a trail in Zion National park Al Perry and I found ourselves in a frustrating situation. We decided to let the riffraff get down the path. I asked "Al, who is your hero photographer?" I couldn't believe my ears. We have the same hero! I told Al, "I was at the Metropolitan Museum in New York City seeing Richard Avedon's show "In The American West" the day before he died. Al replied, "I worked on that book with HIM." I was impressed and ordered the book with Al's name in it.

Diane McKinley and I had a more glamorous meeting in Scotland. We took a gamble and hooked up as roommates. We bonded immediately. We spent a few days on our own in Edinburgh. Our National Geographic photographer told us we should go to the zoo.

We decided to heck with Edinburgh Castle. We marched into the zoo with our NG caps on and Diane says, "We are with National Geographic. Where should we sit to get the best pictures of the penguins?" We were guided to sit right outside the gate where the birds march out and parade around in front of the tourists. Yes, we took great pictures.

You must get to know Cecilia Travis. I hope you have been reading her essays.

Sometimes she is asked to find a body the police suspect has been buried in the mountains. Cecilia can spot a grave if the top soil has grown grass or weeds that don't look like the surrounding area. This takes observation skills beyond mine. Our heroine can also track a coyote or other animal that might have taken a bone from a hidden corpse. One day when husband George and I still had our cabin I spotted foot prints. I sent Cecilia a picture. She sent back an email that my prints were made by a bobcat.

We have Virginia Staat showing us how to write an interesting story. I've learned so much from her about starting an essay and then referring back to the start at the end.

Don't pass up her advice in the newsletter. Virginia writes the captions for our Angelo Sciulli Humorous Photo Contest. I know her husband David has input, too. Do you have any idea just how hard this is to do? In fact, the all important titles are difficult.

John Thornton and I met at RMOWP summer camp (a.k.a. photo workshop) in Estes Park in 2007, I think. Tom Ulrich, Jack Olson and Tom Cummings were our facilitators. George and I now visit John and his wife Beth most every time we go to Oklahoma. John, Beth, my daughter Marisa and I went on Tom Ulrich's trip to the Galapagos Islands. The four of us took a trip up into the Ecuador mountains. Marisa and I had two different kinds of credit cards and none would work. John actually floated us a loan and paid for three women to shop. What a man he is!

Jack Olson has ridden with me to several conferences. The 2018 conference trip will bond Jack, Diane, George and me. Not to be mean, just real, I tell my husband that Jack is more fun to travel with than he. Jack talks to me. I



have learned more along the way to conferences than I could ever learn from a map or Siri. He points out mountain ranges. We love to stop at San Luis, the oldest town in Colorado. Just ask Jack if you have a question about Colorado or flowers. Perhaps he is our most published photographer.

John, Beth, George and I went to Santa Clara Ranch. Beto and Clare Gutierrez, and

Hector Astorga (ranch director and photographer extra great), his wife and daughter visited us at the cabin. They brought supper and a gift. The gift was a Texas Tortoise in a large aquarium with a salad for his supper. We were told we could photograph him the next day and then we were to take him home. Beth isn't a photographer, but boy is she helpful on a photo shoot. She carried that creature out from the blinds where the three of us were set-up. Then one of us would say, "I didn't get a perfect shot, please carry him back. Slowly he would come toward us each time.

Please take the time to get to know Don and Barb Laine, our leaders, and our treasurer, Maryann Gaug. The three of them actually go out on their own and investigate the lay of the land before we arrive. The three of them are published guide book writers. The ideas they come up with are amazing. The committee planners are Virginia, Cecilia, Jack, Don, Barb and Maryann. We are already talking about our 2019 place.

I have more stories and I look forward to hearing yours.

Conference Creeps Closer

RMOWP's 2018 conference takes place in just over two months, **September 23-26**. With headquarters in **Alamosa, Colorado**, there will be guided field trips into **Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve** and **Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge**, plus workshops to help us perfect our writing and photography skills.

Pre-conference field trips to see and photograph **wild horses** are planned (the Sunday, September 23, Wild Horse Trip is full but at this time there are several spaces available for the Saturday, September 22, trip). There is also a post-conference all-day excursion on the historic **Cumbres and Toltec** narrow-gauge steam train on Thursday, September 27. Late September should have wonderful fall colors, especially along the steam train's route over 10,015-foot Cumbres Pass, but it may be chilly so dress warmly!

A photography workshop by RMOWP's own Bill Horton, titled "**Visual Fluency: Empower your Images with the Language of Graphics**," is an interactive program designed to help us escape the straitjacket of rules and clichés and boost our ability to use visual vocabulary, grammar, idiom, and metaphors to convey our photographic message.

Peter Anderson, a professor at Adams State University in Alamosa who specializes in outdoor writing, will present a program titled "**A Certain Slant of Light: The Poetry of the Postcard**," which, he tells us, will help outdoor writers approach the task of writing about a place in a different way.

Heading out into the wilds? "**Outdoor Survival**," by RMOWP member Peter Kummerfeldt, will show us how to live through the worst that nature throws at us and return to civilization relatively intact. An expert on outdoor survival and author of the book *Surviving a Wilderness Emergency*," Kummerfeldt is a former U.S. Air Force survival

school instructor and was director of survival training for 12 years at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs.

Conference lodging will be at the **Alamosa Super 8**, which has offered us a group rate of \$89 per night for one or two adults in rooms with either one king bed or one or two queens. A hot breakfast is included. Reservations should be made by calling the motel directly at **719-589-6447**. For lodging questions ask to speak to manager Jose Rodriguez. There are also several campgrounds in the area, including a KOA.

A **Registration form** was included with the March-April newsletter and is also available online (www.rmowp.org), where you can register and pay through PayPal, or mail your registration and a check to RMOWP's El Prado, New Mexico address.

Alamosa is about 235 miles southwest of Denver; 245 miles southeast of Grand Junction, Colorado; 200 miles north of Albuquerque, New Mexico; and 140 miles north of Santa Fe, New Mexico, all of which have airports, some bigger than others.



Evening light on the dunes © Don Laine

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