

Rocky Mountain Outdoors

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

November - December 2022

Mark your calendar for Conference 2023!

Tuesday - Friday, October 3-6 in Los Alamos, New Mexico

Most workshops & meals will take place at the historic Sherriff's Posse Lodge in Los Alamos
(believe it or not!).

So why are we going to Los Alamos???

One of the things we like about Los Alamos is that it offers a delightful variety of attractions and activities, practically something for everyone. Details on organized field trips are being worked out, and we'll also be suggesting things you will want to do on your own. The 2023 conference is a group effort, with Don Laine and Linda Haehnle as conference co-chairs and Virginia Staat taking the lead on setting up workshops.

Top area attractions include **Bandelier National Monument**, with its 13th-century ancestral Puebloan ruins, including cliff dwellings, a large pueblo, and an abundance of rock art. The monument also has a variety of trails, including one that leads to two picturesque waterfalls. We're hoping to arrange a guided tour of the **Puye Cliff Dwellings**, ancestral home of today's Santa Clara Pueblo people, who lived along these cliffs from the 900s to about 1580 A.D. There are several levels of cave and cliff dwellings, as well as structures on top of the mesa, plus a Harvey House built by the Fred Harvey Company as a bed and breakfast in the early 20th century.

The mostly undeveloped **Valles Caldera National Preserve** is the result of a huge volcanic eruption over a million years ago, and boasts herds of elk and mule deer plus black bears and mountain lions. The preserve has miles of old logging roads - mostly closed to motorized vehicles - that provide easy access to the backcountry for hikers.

The **Los Alamos Nature Center** is the place to go to see area wildlife, over 3,000 species of local plants, and geology, or hike into a beautiful forested canyon. The area also has several scenic overlooks, including **White Rock Canyon Overlook**, which may be the perfect spot for a sunrise photo shoot.

Of course, Los Alamos is also known as the birthplace of the world's first atomic bombs, code-named the Manhattan Project. The **Manhattan Project National Historical Park** is a work in progress, and includes sites in Tennessee and Washington State in addition to Los Alamos, to tell the story of the development of the bomb.

Los Alamos National Laboratory operates the **Bradbury Science Museum**, which tells the story of the development of the bomb as well as other projects, including non-military uses for nuclear energy; and the **Los Alamos History Museum** highlights the human history of the area.

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Los Alamos, White Rock Vicinity

Pajarito Ski Hill - Lovely mountain drive up to ~9330 feet at bottom of ski-lifts. Great place to picnic in summer. Picnic tables are located beyond the ski hill.

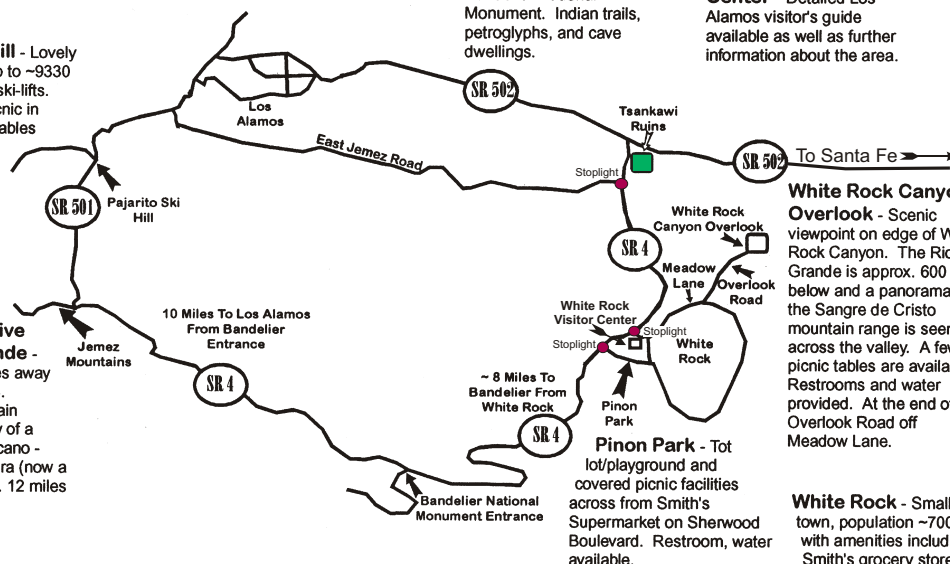
Jemez Mountain Drive to Valle Grande - About 30 minutes away on State Road 4. Beautiful mountain drive with a view of a large extinct volcano - the Valles Caldera (now a meadow approx. 12 miles in diameter).

Tsankawi Ruins - Separate portion of Bandelier National Monument. Indian trails, petroglyphs, and cave dwellings.

White Rock Visitor Center - Detailed Los Alamos visitor's guide available as well as further information about the area.

White Rock Canyon Overlook - Scenic viewpoint on edge of White Rock Canyon. The Rio Grande is approx. 600 feet below and a panorama of the Sangre de Cristo mountain range is seen across the valley. A few picnic tables are available. Restrooms and water provided. At the end of Overlook Road off Meadow Lane.

White Rock - Small town, population ~7000, with amenities including Smith's grocery store, gas stations, fast food, lodging, and post office.



For more area information see www.visitlosalamos.org.

Map courtesy of National Park Service

Member News

Dr. Beto Gutierrez, former RMOWP president and a member since 1985, was recently honored for his years of service at the Hope Clinic in McAllen, Texas. Organizers said the event was held to recognize Gutierrez for his years of medical service to the Rio Grande Valley, including 15 years as medical director of Hope Clinic, a nonprofit organization that provides medical services to area residents who can't afford it.



Clare & Beto Gutierrez with his award from Futuro RGV

"I don't know what to say," Gutierrez said to the crowd, according to a report in the McAllen newspaper, the Monitor. "I've never been honored like tonight. Yes, I've given a lot of myself to the community. I always have. My dad always said, 'Mijito, if you have two of anything, give one to somebody that's underprivileged – that doesn't have one. Whether it's work or a substance, share.'"

Gutierrez, who has been practicing medicine for more than 55 years, is also a passionate nature photographer who has won many awards in RMOWP's annual contest. He and his wife, Clare, own Santa Clara Ranch, a 300-acre wildlife conservatory where critters roam free, and blinds and waterholes offer visitors opportunities to photograph south Texas wildlife. For information and to see some photography from the ranch, see www.santaclararanch.com.

Clare Gutierrez tells us that her latest book, an intriguing historical tale set in 15th century England and titled *Symbol Maker's Daughter*, is on Amazon's best seller list. Well done, Clare.

Of Days Past

By Richard Holmes

I can still hear the crunching sound of tires on white gravel as the car slowly turned into the long driveway toward the stone farmhouse. But my preoccupation was with the tree. Was it still there? Was it the same?

The car came to a stop, and my dad opened the doors for our family to unload. I jumped out and ran across the front yard to the nearest of five cherry trees. Into that tree I climbed until I reached my familiar perch, a fork where three limbs joined together. It was comfortable, it was familiar, and most of all, it was mine. No one else could have that perch. They could unpack the car without my help—my place, after all, was in that tree. Besides, this wasn't just an ordinary farm, with only cows, horses, pigs and chickens—this was an apple orchard, where trees were important.

We made this trip to my grandparents' farm in Missouri several times a year, my parents sometimes picking me and my sister up from school on a Friday afternoon. Memories now reform, images become clearer, experiences revisited.

Apple picking season is the busiest time of the year, and my grandfather said that all other activities must take second place. I remember the excitement of the picking crews arriving at the apple shed in September with wagonloads of apples. We had to unload the bushel baskets quickly and begin culling the apples before another wagonload arrived.

Apples weren't just dumped into baskets and covered with lids—they were first rolled down an inclined trough where people standing on either side wiped them with rags. Then, the apples were diverted to different chutes according to condition—the ones with spots going one way and the better ones going another. Finally, the bad ones were culled out before reaching the bushel baskets at the end. I didn't just watch; I did important things, too, like polish the top row of a basket of apples before the lid went on.

The barn was always a special place to me because I could hide in it. This barn was strong, made from heavy oak, and leaned a little bit, like a barn should. The hayloft was mysterious, so I didn't go up there much. Besides, pitching hay into it was hard work. But down below were numerous sounds and smells. In the calm of early morning came the sound of milk splashing into a bucket as the milk cows were brought in one at a time. Later, the rich smell of oats and barley being dumped into a horse feeding trough permeated the barn. The clank of a gate swinging closed pierced the morning air. I found many old objects inside—things like old straps, harnesses, tools, buckets, tongs, pails, baling wire, yokes, nails, hooks, boards, and rusty old metal pieces. I wondered if there was ever anything new in a barn.

A plow stood in a corner, battered and rusty, with weathered oak handles. I had watched my grandfather plowing before and it didn't look all that difficult.

After putting on the bridle, a single harness is placed over the horse, the breast collar brought around in front and held

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in place by a girth. A trace, coming from either side of the breast collar, reaches back and gets attached to the plow. The reins pass alongside the girth and are held by the person behind the plow. It looked easy, and once I had asked if I could try it. I wanted to plow, and plow I did—unsteady, zigzagging forward, tripping, stumbling, and finally falling exhausted at the end of a crooked row. What was wrong? I had just watched my grandfather do it. The advice I received was terse and practical: “Instead of pushing forward on the plow, try letting the horse pull it.”

Can a farm really be complete without a tire swing? A good tire swing is like a security blanket. It is a consoling place of solitude for a ten year-old boy when nothing else will quite serve the purpose. My swing hung from a large oak tree, its sturdy limbs wide and protective. From this swing, with the ever so faint creak of rope against tree limb, distant sounds registered their imprint upon my ears. I heard the sound of an ax striking wood. I looked toward the sound, and saw, far away, a lone figure chopping. But the sound came late. It didn't come with the fall of the ax. It came as the ax was being raised to strike another blow. I would have to remember that.

Harsher sounds occurred more during the day, like the squawk of blue jays and crows, or the pitched whistles of bobwhites and meadowlarks. But toward evening, the more tranquil sounds prevailed, like the soft murmur of a turtle dove, or the song of a nightingale.

Nights are especially peaceful and pleasant on a farm—the city, with its cacophony of sound, being far away. The sky is alive with stars. A meteor screams through the blackness. The Big Dipper points boldly toward the North Star. At night, sounds seem to spring right out of the darkness. Can you hear the whippoorwill calling? The memories continue.

I laid in bed listening, and I thought of the warehouse. Added on to the rear of the house was a room my grandfather called the warehouse, a dusty old place filled with objects collected over the years. There, my grandfather kept old bottles, rifle shells with cracked cases, piles of ten-cent detective and western pulp magazines, the kind with the ragged, untrimmed edges. And there were books, too. Why, I even saw a copy of Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage*. Looking closer, there were mousetraps, empty dynamite boxes, broken scissors, a double barreled shotgun, knives, Prince Albert tobacco cans, and a whetstone worn from a thousand blades.

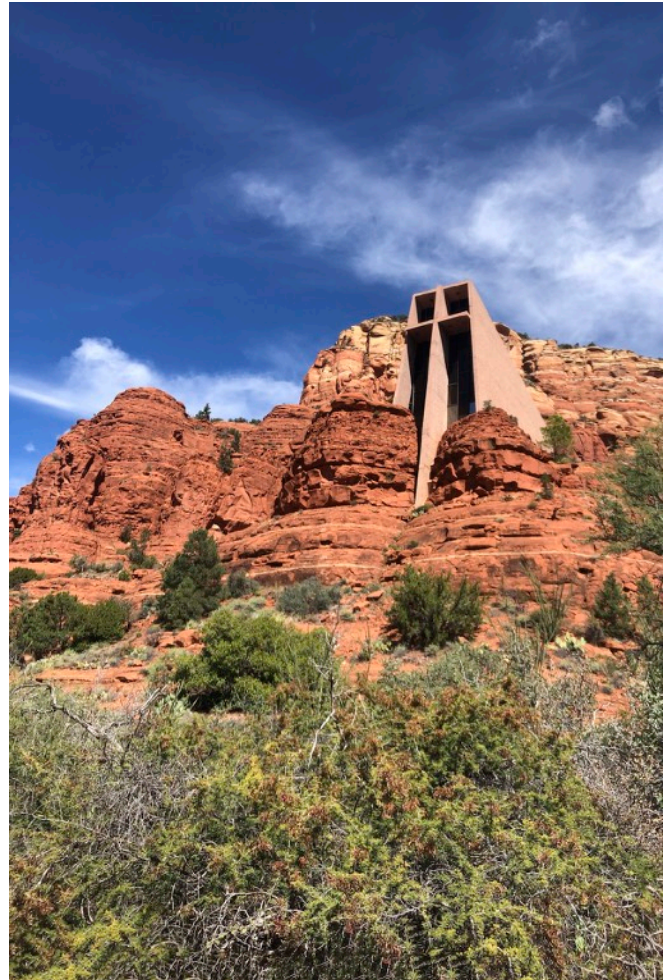
And there was food. Lining a wall were assorted jars of my grandmother's canned fruits and vegetables, their succulent contents gleaming inside the glass containers. There was a feeling of abundance, of plentiful food, ample materials, necessities of life stored away for winter.

And then, one day, it was no more. The orchard grew silent and bare, the last leaves washed away by autumn's windy exit. The apple shed was quiet, except for the fluttering of sparrows in the rafters. Small animals, tree frogs, and tiny creatures dug underground.

A soft snow covers the fields, cloaking the last vestiges of autumn in a mantle of white. Smoke curls from the chimney, while inside are visions of people gathered before a large stone fireplace, reading, as is their custom after an early winter supper. The lights come on sooner, as darkness falls earlier, and nights become cold.

Now the image is beginning to fade—time is receding, memories vivid, my eyes become moist. And the snow continues to fall, covering an era of days past.

Gone now are the orchards of fruit trees, the thump of apples rolling down a chute, the creak of a tire-swing rope against an oak limb. Gone are the sounds of tires on gravel, wagons loaded with apples, ax against wood, all replaced by silence. Gone, too, are the sights of harvest activity, the sweet smell of fresh grain, the aroma of a peach cobbler. But somewhere, someplace, high in a cherry tree, there is a boy sitting in a comfortable and familiar perch, a worn spot where three limbs join together.



*"Chapel of the Holy Cross, Sedona, AZ" © Richard Youngblood
Hon. Men. - Historical Category, RMOWP 2022 Contest*

Writer's Corner

The Mission Continues

By Virginia Parker Staat

"The reason it's worth standing up for punctuation is not that it's an arbitrary system of notation known only to an over-sensitive elite who have attacks of the vapours when they see it misapplied. The reason to stand up for punctuation is that without it there is no reliable way of communicating meaning." ~ Lynn Truss, Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation

Many of you may not even have noticed. Over the past several years, I have written about National Punctuation Day for each of my September *Rocky Mountain Outdoor* writing articles. I did not this year. I was mourning the demise of one of my favorite organizations, The Apostrophe Protection Society. In 2001, the Apostrophe Protection Society (APS) began with "a mission to preserve the correct use of this important, though much misused, item of punctuation."

The APS was founded by England's own John Richards, who reached semi-celebrity status after he was featured as Mr. October in a calendar purported to highlight the most boring men in Britain. Working diligently to save the apostrophe, Richard's first success was when a local library changed from writing "CD's" to "CDs." After years of dedication, however, in 2019 (and at the age of 96), Richards felt it was time to dissolve the Apostrophe Protection Society. He lamented, "We, and our many supporters worldwide, have done our best, but the ignorance and laziness present in modern times have won!"

I was heartbroken. I was one of the organization's most ardent supporters. Lynn Truss best explained how many of us feel about the apostrophe in her book *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*. She said, "The rule is: the word 'it's' (with apostrophe) stands for 'it is' or 'it has'. If the word does not stand for 'it is' or 'it has' then what you require is 'its'. This is extremely easy to grasp. Getting your itses mixed up is the greatest solecism in the world of punctuation. No matter that you have a PhD and have read all of Henry James twice. If you still persist in writing, 'Good food at it's best', you deserve to be struck by lightning, hacked up on the spot and buried in an unmarked grave."

Truss went on to say, "Why did the Apostrophe Protection Society not have a militant wing? Could I start one? Where do you get balaclavas?" I admit that in a wild fit of emotion I once considered joining her.

With the APS gone, however, all — especially the apostrophe — seemed lost. I bravely tried to continue celebrating National Punctuation Day, but as each September passed, my efforts felt more and more hollow.

So I decided I must move on and wrote an entirely different kind of article for this past September's newsletter. A few weeks after I had sent the article off to editor Don Laine, I was once-again mourning the loss of the APS. It was September 24, National Punctuation Day. I decided to

go to the APS website (apostrophe.org.uk) one last time... for old time's sake. This time, however, my heart skipped a beat. Could it be true? The APS had a new leader! As of January 2022, Chairman Bob McCalden had revived the Apostrophe Protection Society in order "to continue its mission to champion the use of the apostrophe."

I lovingly checked each of the website's pages. Once again we aficionados can find validation for the appropriate



Bob McCalden — the new torch bearer for the apostrophe.

(Photo provided by Mr. McCalden and the Apostrophe Protection Society)

uses of the apostrophe. We can chuckle at examples of horrific apostrophe blunders. We can follow links to other sites with punctuation tips and follow the APS Facebook

page. And under the guidance of the new chairman, we can expect expanded material including how to use apostrophes in brand names.

I immediately contacted APS to ask if they might be able to provide a photo of their new chairman. Bob McCalden, himself, wrote me back. It's an email I will treasure for many years.

I can sleep peacefully now, knowing that the Apostrophe Protection Society is back at its post. All is right with the world... at least in the world of punctuation. Happy belated National Punctuation Day.



"Tree Inspector Maryann Gaug on Mount Evans" © Dan Bernskoetter

Peter K's Survival Tips

The Hook and Bullet Press Has Got It All Wrong!

By Peter Kummerfeldt



While reviewing the most recent edition of a popular outdoor magazine I was reminded once again that the magazines and TV shows have got it all wrong.

Surviving a wilderness emergency should be proactive, not reactive! The emphasis should be on what you should do to stay out of a crisis, and then on what you need

to do in the event that, despite your best efforts, you find yourself in one. The focus should be on preparing for the event, having the right clothing and emergency gear, not on how to improvise what you need from the environment you find yourself in. As I have said so often in many of my programs *"It's a hell of a lot easier to prevent bad things from happening than it is to deal with them after the fact!"* Unfortunately we only read or hear about the people who had a terrible experience. We don't read about those who were prepared to spend the night out, did so, and then came out the next day with little or no fanfare.

The media skews reality and assumes that people will never have the clothing and equipment they need to survive the night out. They assume that the victims are going to have to use extreme measures to maintain life in the face of inclement weather, isolation, darkness, and injury! The point of departure for most of the survival articles presented in magazines and other media is that people will not be equipped, or adequately clothed, and since this is the case, it is up to the magazines to provide information on how to survive using the procedures and techniques that aboriginal people around the world used, and in some cases, still use, to live under austere conditions.

And another thing that gripes me - the articles never address how all the survival skills and procedures shown and talked about in the magazines can be accomplished by an injured person? A person with a dislocated elbow for example... or a broken finger? When bad things happen people get hurt and very often it is our arms and legs that are injured. Simple tasks become vastly more complicated when only one hand is functional.

It is also my experience that most people are unwilling to accept the reality that they are in trouble until the sun's setting at the end of the day, the rain is already falling, they are already slightly hypothermic, probably dehydrated and are about to panic. To ask a person in this condition to go out and find or build a weatherproof shelter from natural resources is ludicrous!

As I have said before *"There are no new accidents, just new people having the same old accidents."* The "new people" referenced are today less able to cope with their circumstances than those who have found themselves in

similar circumstances in earlier times. So where does this leave us?

Well to begin with, the media, in all of its forms, must do a better job of providing practical advice and recommendations. The survival techniques that are advocated must be techniques that are easy to learn and easy for the average person to utilize under difficult conditions - techniques that work!

Secondly, those people who teach survival and outdoor safety skills must ensure that the skills, techniques, and methods they teach are practical, skills that have been tested and found to be "doable" in situations where lives are on the line.

Thirdly, each of us must accept that we might find ourselves in trouble at some point in the future and if this is the case we must prepare for the very event we hope will never happen. We must select the very best clothing and equipment we can afford and test it before our lives are in jeopardy. It is only through thorough practice that we can develop the confidence in our clothing and equipment needed to protect us.

It serves no useful purpose to advocate the use of survival skills, techniques, methods or procedures that the average man or woman would not be able to utilize when faced with spending a night out.

President's Column

Thank You

By Virginia Parker Staat



Virginia with her beloved Roxanne.

It's hard to believe that Thanksgiving is less than three weeks away. In honor of this special day, I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to each of you for your continued commitment to RMOWP, its stewardship of the great outdoors, and your quest to improve your craft. From our executive director to board members to committee members to

conference participants and to each and every one of you, I would like to thank you for your generosity, dedication, time, and willingness to continue to share your gifts, talents, and friendship.

As 2022 draws to a close, we also look forward to the future. In 2023, RMOWP will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. Our next conference will be held in Los Alamos, New Mexico, October 3-6. And you will elect a new president. It has been my great honor to serve you, and I look forward to seeing what the future holds for RMOWP.

In this season of gratitude, David and I extend our warmest Thanksgiving greetings to you, your family, friends, and loved ones. We wish each of you a joyous celebration full of love, good food, and many blessings.

RMOWP Zooms!

When: Tuesday, November 15, from 7 to 8 pm (MT)

RMOWP member Ron Belak will deliver a Zoom presentation on the wildlife and birds of the Galapagos and mainland Ecuador. He and Peg Linn spent 18 days in Ecuador in 2017, touring along the spine of the Andes from Quito south to Cuenca, visiting the famous hummingbird location at Bella Vista and cruising the islands of the Galapagos. Although they did not check off all 131 species of Ecuadoran hummingbirds, they will share photos of the beautiful ones they did see, as well as other species in the cloud forest and on the paramo—Ecuador's term for the tundra. They will also share photos of beautiful landscapes, featuring 19,000-foot volcanoes, alpine lakes, and desert islands, and offer tips on photographing the birds and wildlife.

Their Galapagos tour was shared with 13 other guests on a small boat that traveled between the islands of San Cristobal, Santa Cruz, Santiago, Isabela, Fernandina and several smaller islets. Bird diversity is not as high on the islands as on mainland Ecuador, but the birds are often larger and more easily approached by photographers. For many species, nesting is year-round, so colorful plumage is strikingly apparent. They will share images of the male frigatebird displaying like our sage grouse and photos of gulls, pelicans, herons, finches, boobies, noddies, sandpipers and flamingos. The islands are also noted for land and sea iguanas, sea lions, and tortoises. In the water, there are angelfish, surgeonfish, cardinal fish, parrotfish, and sea turtles. Learn about the flightless cormorants, whose wings have atrophied because there are no predators to fly away from, and penguins who have headed north permanently for the balmy weather (snowbirds?).

Ron Belak is a freelance writer and photographer whose work appears regularly in *Colorado Outdoors* magazine—the official publication of Colorado Parks and Wildlife. He has written about 90 magazine articles and supplied hundreds of photos for these articles over the past 30 years. He is also the author of two books on fly fishing: *Fly Fishing Colorado's Backcountry* and *The Fishing Guide to 800 High Lakes in Colorado*.

Member Steve Cochrane will be our zoom host, and will send out the invitational email with link and necessary log-in info.

A couple of samples of the critters Ron will be showing during his zoom presentation:



Violet-tailed Sylph



Sea Turtle

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