

Political Explorations of Land

Teton Valley, ID



By: Luke Gannon

Part I

A personal reckoning of Teton Valley, Idaho, my home, through short anectodes and photographs.

TETON VALLEY, IDAHO

Teton Valley is comprised of three towns: Teton, Driggs, and Victor from north to south respectively.

The estimated total population of Teton Valley is 10,170.

Elevation: 6,200 feet

Geology: Mountainous

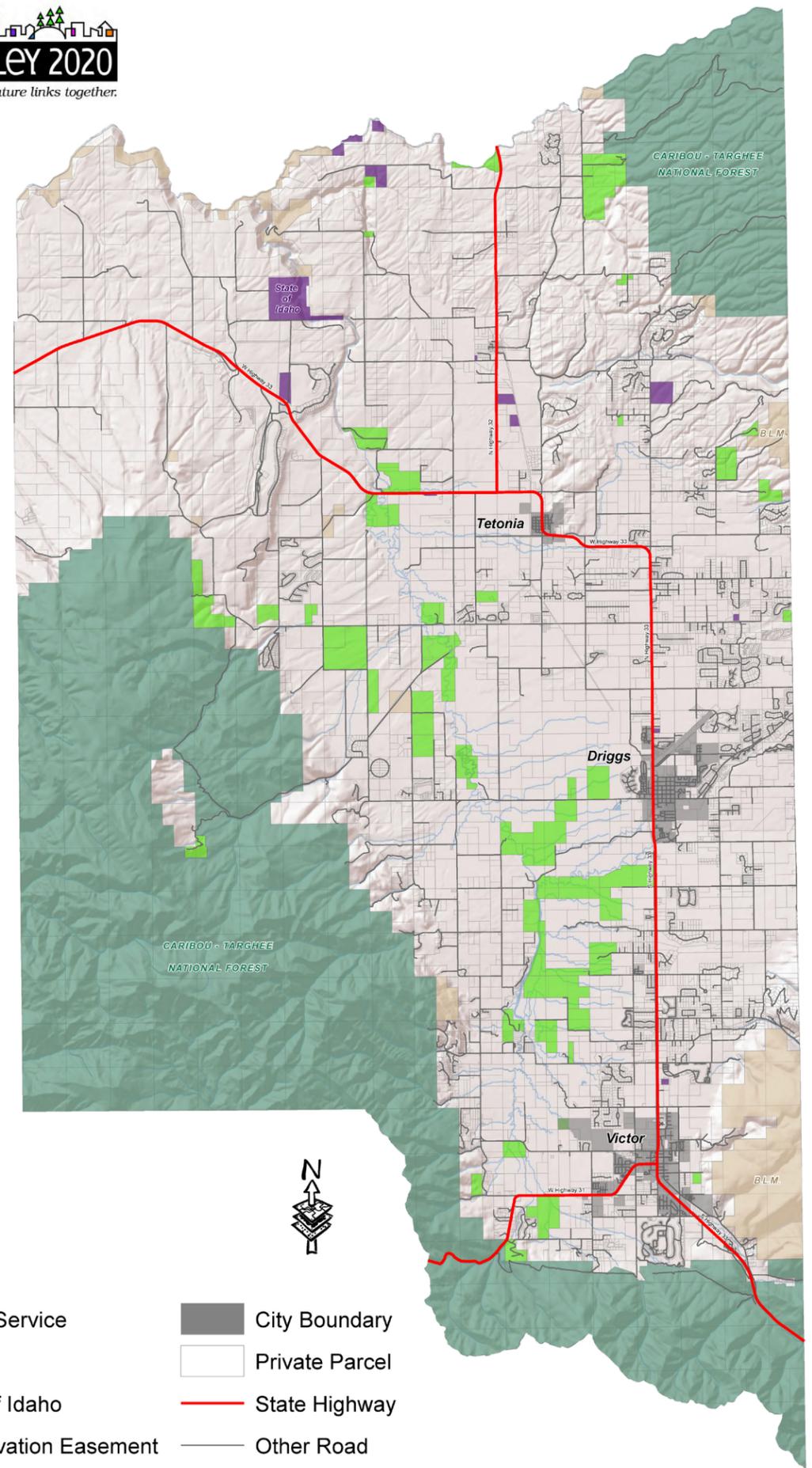


Highway 33 traverses through Teton Valley, looking towards the West one sees the Teton Mountain Range, part of the Rocky Mountains. Looking East one sees the Big Holes, another mountain range. The following six pages are panoramas of these mountain ranges photographed from Route 33 on a bicycle. They offer someone unfamiliar with Teton Valley a quick glance into the western atmosphere and isolation of the region as a whole.

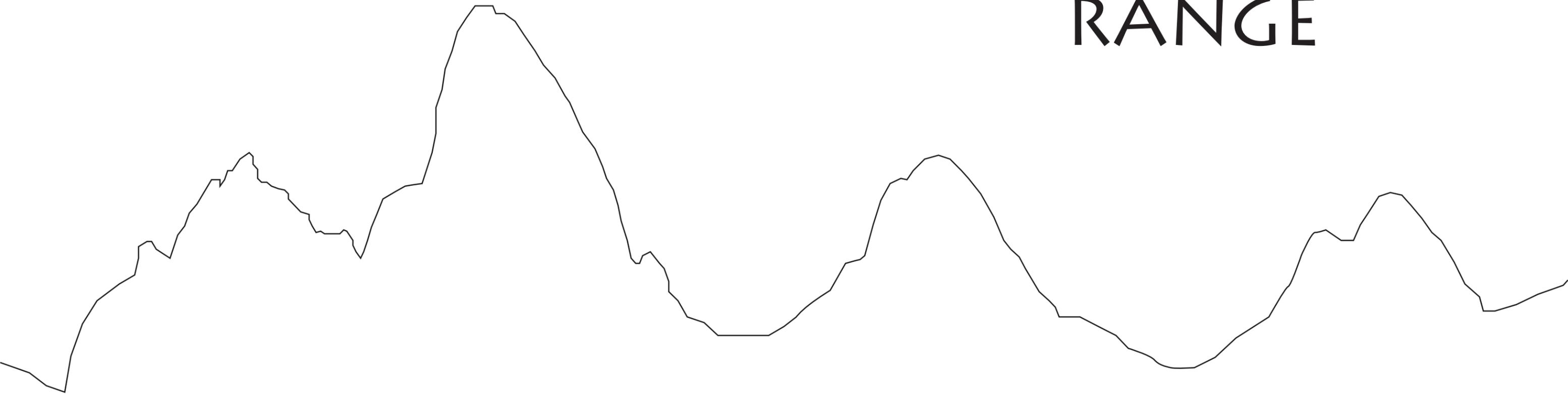


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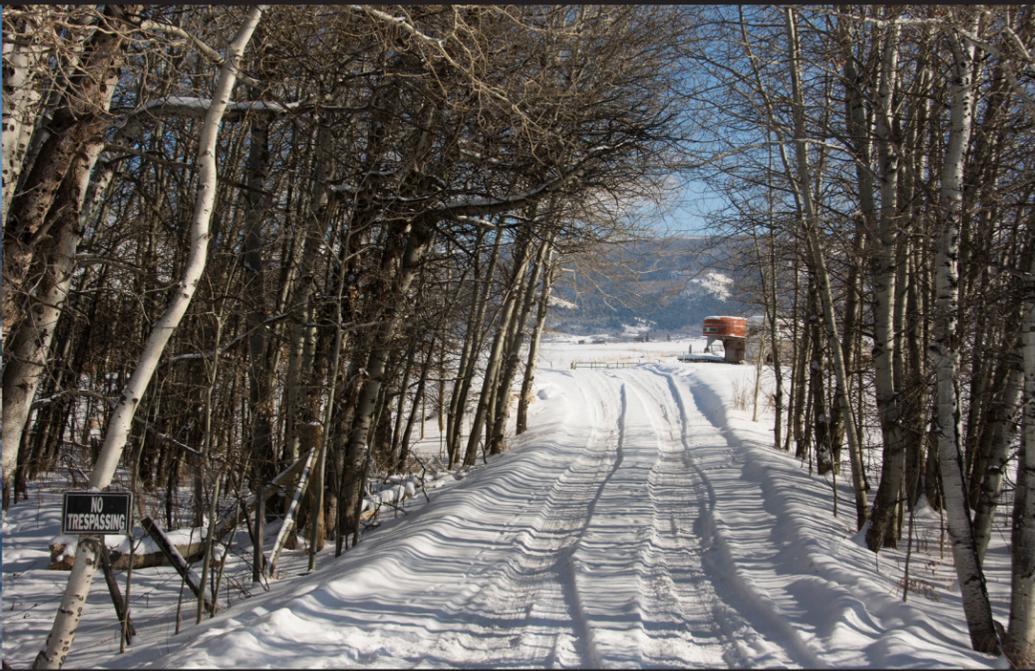
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| Forest Service | City Boundary |
| B.L.M. | Private Parcel |
| State of Idaho | State Highway |
| Conservation Easement | Other Road |



TETON MOUNTAIN RANGE

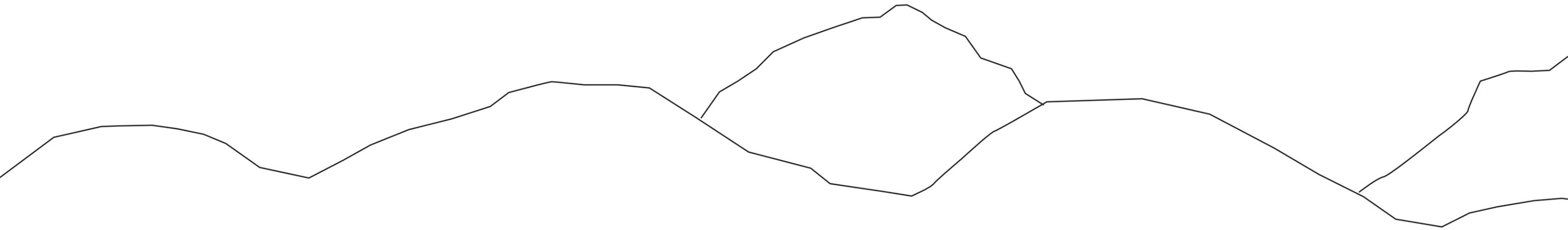








BIG HOLE MOUNTAIN RANGE









The Cattle Roper



Cattle Roping is a tradition in Teton Valley. A horse who is trained to run cattle is like a vulture finding its prey. They tilt their heads down and dig their hooves into the ground. The roper atop the horse is just as resolute as their counterpart. They have practiced the act since they could hold a rope in their hands. They swing it in circles over their head to prepare the release. Meanwhile, the cow is running in fear of its struggle. It has been chased and roped many times, 'maybe this is the last' it thinks. It runs faster but is bound by the perimeter of the fence. As I watch the chase, I feel for the calf as it falls to the ground, legs tied together and the human smiles with success plastered to their face.



**Remainings of the Old
West**

Photographed right outside of Darby Canyon, a now populated site for cross country skiers, broken buildings and mementos from a past life still exist. These are memories.

JACK WOOD

My partner and I went and visited the Wood's home up Horseshoe Canyon just north-west of Driggs, ID. The Wood's have lived in Teton Valley since the early 1900's. The path to the Wood's home is lined with windmills of all colors, shapes, sizes, and design. As I walked it, I felt like I was entering a holy world. The only noise I could hear was the wind spinning the windmills. I met Brenda, Jack Wood's daughter, who I had the pleasure of speaking to at the end of this path. She talked about her recently passed father with tenderness and love. Jack Wood, was a jack of all trades. He could fix anything but what he loved most in life was making windmills. He salvaged scrap metal from the dump and spent days on end outside creating his art. Every windmill is unique. There are some that have two blades that run backwards of each other and others made of bike wheels. Brenda says "he was a Godly man, he knew the hawks of the canyon, he could tell you how many there were and which ones had missing feathers, he was constantly outside. He pushed the boundaries of what was possible."





ON THE RUN

Photo By Daniel Schmidt

The Mule Deer can thrive in almost any place. In Teton Valley they survive through the harsh winter climates that last nine months. They eat low hanging branches or the willows that dangle over rivers. Sometimes they will dig for weeds and grass through the deep snow. Some winters the climate has proved to be too strenuous and many deer have died but every spring since I remember, I see deer everywhere I drive, even in town to eat some of the first showing grass. Mule deer are capable of reaching speeds of 45 miles per hour and can change directions in a single bound. This photo was taken from the window of our car while driving up Horseshoe Canyon. The sound of our car spooked the 30-40 deer and they dashed off into the forest.

ONCE USED

Walking around Teton Valley I happen upon forgotten objects. Mostly I find forsaken cabins that are left for the Earth to envelop. Typically, these cabins are empty. People are protective of their belongings. The ones I peeked into in January of 2021 were full of objects: bread maker, tools, shoes, and plastic orange chairs. These objects electrify my imagination. Who once sat here? Were they reading? Sewing? Cooking? I build stories about what I cannot know. This provides me with some kind of solitude, some sense of empathy to something that I will never know.



WHAT DOES AN EMPTY ORANGE CHAIR SITTING IN A FORSAKEN CABIN MEAN?



LEFT BEHIND



When I lived on the north side of Driggs with my father he would wake me and my sister up most mornings to make bread. According to some, bread is the second most important possession after the Bible. I have never been religious but when I cut into the newly baked bread and take the first bite, I thank God. I wonder if other people do the same.





WRECKERBOYZ TOWING

I walked by this house throughout my growing up and thought it was a 'junk yard.' I assumed without ever asking. When I returned home, I walked my regular route and knocked on the door of the home that this pile is near. "Hi, what do you do?" I mumbled awkwardly. The person at the door greeted my partner and I with a welcoming tone. Wreckerboyz Towing tows cars in the Valley. They sit in this lot for a year but during that time many people come by and replace parts for their working cars. Most often they will receive this for free. The world is cyclical.

01.21 Driggs, ID

Calling the
Future

A CAT tractor sits on the outskirts of Teton Valley. This is one of the few remaining undeveloped parts of Teton Valley near the Teton River. However, the tractor acts as foresight to the inevitable expansion.

The Teton River which meanders behind where this photo was taken is the last major free-flowing river in eastern Idaho. On this river is was one of the most catastrophic dam failures in US history.

It killed 20,000 head of livestock and eleven lives. Additionally, it caused 2\$ million dollars in property damage. It took a toll on fish and wildlife who took decades to replenish themselves.





Part II

From September - December I conducted a series of interviews with residents of Teton Valley. I asked a wide variety of questions pertaining to the politics of land from an environmental, economic, and cultural lens. From these interviews, I took sentences, phrases, paragraphs that I had a particular affinity towards and wrote an essay surrounding those ideas. Some of these pieces are fiction others are opinion and many are analytical.

An Introduction

10,170 people. 451 square miles. Elevation 6,100 feet above sea level. Grand Teton 13,775 feet. In these numbers there are souls. In these miles there are mountains. In this elevation there are ridges, water, snow, melting sun, life, and death. The life of these mountains reaches further back in history than the humans who now inhabit this Valley.

When did we harness the power to decide what goes on and what doesn't on these mountains and in them? Albert Schweitzer once said "compassion, in which all ethics must take root, can only attain its full breadth and depth if it embraces all living creatures and does not limit itself to mankind." This is a study of the co-existence of the natural world and human kind. Of listening to not one but both.

Roughly ten million years ago, Earth's crust began to stretch thin, forming faults and causing earthquakes. Over time, unknown to scientists but known in the rocks of these mountains, a block of earth west of the Teton shot upward forming part of the Rocky Mountain Range. The block of earth to the east of the fault dropped more than 20,000 feet forming the Valley.

As years moved on, uncounted, defaulting to the rise and fall of the sun, sagebrush dominated the Valley floor. It scented the air. The wind ripened and pushed its way through the Valley leaving life to only the ones that could fare. Closer to Teton River, willows drooped, licking the water when the snow melted. When the wind whipped them they shook in terror, perhaps scared of the inevitability of death. The

cottonwoods did not waver. They stood straight, their bark protecting them from the wind, the snow, the weather that scarred some and snatched others. Mountain walls formed to the east and west of the Valley.

Life doesn't die. It changes. We walk on our ancestors. The mountains are a complicated metamorphosis of geologic formations from igneous granite, sedimentary sandstone, and limestone. The Rocky Mountains are made up of gneiss, a rock that has existed for 2.7 billion years. These rocks hold tales, mythologies, that humans discovered long ago but haven't listened to. Native Americans believed that land possesses memory. This is an ancient concept over-run by colonizers.

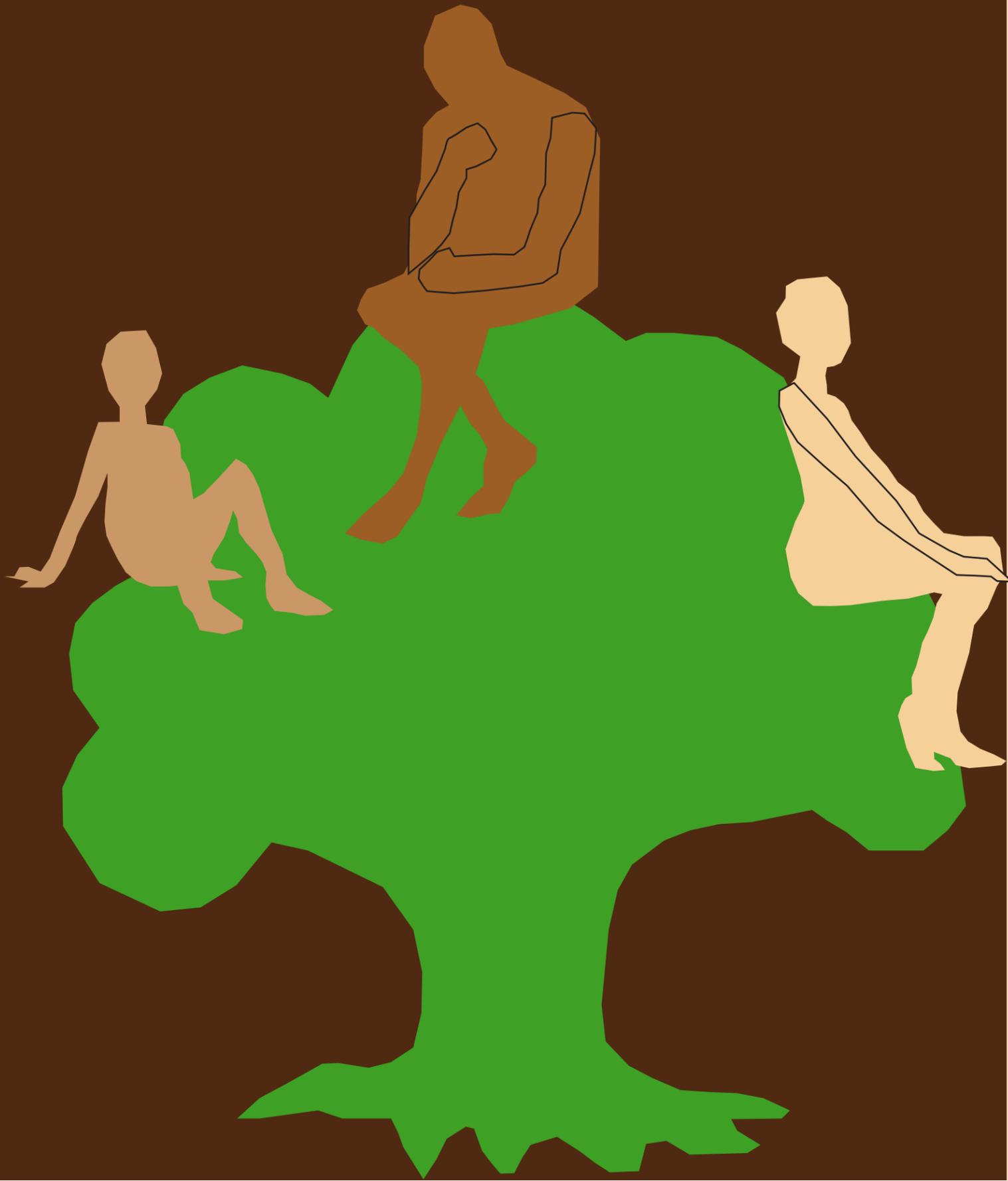
It's hard to track history as tales are told from different mouths and turned and twisted through time. White settlers have written over their history - the history of Native Americans who were the first people to inhabit Teton Valley. The Shoshone-Bannock tribe were nomadic hunters and gatherers. They didn't practice agriculture or live in permanent villages but they had an intimate relationship with the land. They weren't trying to tame the environment - they learned with it as one. They subsisted on natural resources from the Valley floor. In the late 1800's several mysterious diseases caused untold grief and reduced the number of Shoshone-Bannocks and neighboring tribes. But what decreased their numbers at a greater rate were the white pioneers who destroyed, displaced and murdered many Native American people.

Teton Valley's history

continues with the trappers who named the Valley Pierre's Hole. It became a strategic center for fur trading. The trappers and Native Americans had a long interactive history throughout the 1800's that included trading, living, and ultimately, killing. In the late 1800's and early 1900's Mormon's migrated from the Great Salt Lake in search of more land. They settled in Teton Valley and never left. Their community still flourishes to this day.

Humans have a complicated history with one another all over the world. Many battles have been fought over land. There could be hundreds of books written about the politics of this history, of a small rural town in the West. There could also be hundreds of books written about the land that makes up Teton Valley. Politics and land are inseparable, linked since the beginning of time. This story follows how Teton Valley looks at the relationship of land and people. This is only the beginning.

This magazine considers land through a personal, fictional, analytical, and ethnographic standpoint. I interviewed people living in Teton Valley and asked questions ranging from 'what is the importance of public land' to 'how does land affect your understanding of love?' Each interview was full of information, heart, passion. All of my essays are derived from quotes, words, or phrases in these interviews. With immense gratitude, thank you to all who participated and helped.



Home.



I was always blessed with the privilege of having horses. I was four when my mother sat me on a horse for the first time. From then on, horses and I became intimate companions, the kind that seek adrenaline and confirmation from galloping alongside the cottonwoods. At eight, I registered for Horse 4-H. Jane Chambers, my instructor, taught me that ease and gentleness equal control. Taught me how to be a star, even if just to myself. I learned horse skills - loping on the correct lead, spinning, opening gates by sidestepping, and halting to a stop. I presented myself in horse shows and learned that confidence could beat fear. I practiced patience and attention.

In the summers, my mom and I rode into the great Tetons. In the winter, we patterned hearts into the snow on our horses. At horse shows, other riders came out lavishly dressed, thanks to parents who taught them that materialism was more important than heart. I put on some fake jewelry and whispered to my horse that the dress is not what matters. My cowgirl boots were decorated with manure.

We lived on the outskirts of Victor, Idaho, a family of three with five horses, two goats, two cows, two dogs, three cats, and 17 chickens depending on the month. The chickens and horses alone, were a summer full of work - repairing fence, collecting eggs, haying, and shoveling poop. My

sister and I were in charge of cleaning the horse stalls. This meant taking the wheelbarrow and the pitch fork and going into each stall and shoveling the poop into the wheelbarrow. Then we would dump the wheelbarrow into an old horse trailer. Eventually, the horse trailer filled. Other farmers in the Valley built large piles of manure on their property. My mom sought different opportunities. The field across the road from our house was full of lush grass and sagebrush. In the day time we galloped our horses across it. And in the night we dumped our horse poop all over the ground. It is illegal to dump any substance in property that isn't yours. But when Teton Valley was undeveloped, no one took mind of our suspicious activity.

This excursion started when I was eight years old. I still remember the first time, right at the stroke of midnight. My sister, mom, and I walked outside to the jam packed horse trailer, slammed the door shut, threw shovels into the back and piled into our 99' pick-up truck. We turned out of our driveway, looked for cars and, spotting none, headed into the empty field. To not kill the grass in the field we made sure to spread out the manure. To ensure of this, mom drove the truck moving at 4 mph, while my sister and I shoveled the manure out of the trailer. In years to come, we took turns driving the truck and whoever was driving

was on the lookout for other cars that might come down the main gravel road. If we saw a car we'd immediately turn our truck off and wait for it to pass. That first night, my sister and I were designated shovelers. We were strong from shoveling the manure that was weighted by the moisture that had densified it from sitting in a trailer for a month. At eight years old I found thrill in the act – like I was keeping untold secrets from the rest of the world. This chore eventually ended – not because we didn't have the manure but because the field was sold and became the site of three story homes with four car garages.

In my teens, I remember looking outside of my house toward the field and was visited by memories. They made me feel older than 15.

Teton Valley is full of these moments.

In the winter, my uncle Reed used to pile my cousins, sister, and me into his Toyota Corolla and ride up to Grand Targhee, our local ski resort. Our days at the mountain were infused with blizzards, humming on chairlifts, and playful, hurtling competition. Sometimes we started at the top of the mountain, aimed our skis straight down, and went as fast we could go. Other times, we skied off cliffs and Reed instructed us on how to make swifter turns. Mostly, we laughed. The lush powder swallowed

us up. Grand Targhee remains a permanent home to many memories, buried beneath a blanket of white time.

By 2009, the price of ski lift tickets rose and our families could afford neither the cost of season passes nor the gear that it took to go skiing. Grand Targhee had always been considerate of local family ski pass prices, but they needed to increase prices to stay open. I may not have known what commercialization and development meant, but I sure knew what they felt like.

My family found other outdoor activities that that were priced at a reasonable level such as ice skating and cross country skiing. My mom was nothing but resourceful – and Teton Valley offered a stunning array of natural possibilities. I spent my days in the wild. Even at school, I ate in the forest, I hiked for science, I wrote for nature, and when I returned home, I did much of the same. My vision was saturated within the binoculars I held. My scope was narrow, even if it felt big at the time. The horses I rode, the manure I shoveled, and the mountains I skied - those were the extent of my knowledge.

My mother taught me how to speak to the trees. I learned about the flora of the Valley and how they prosper in our climate. After learning about language, I tried my hand at writing what I saw. I can tell you

about the language of nature but I am just now learning about its social dimensions, and how politics and nature intertwine. Every fundamental aspect of my being has derived from Teton Valley, Idaho, but I had to leave in order to return and see it for what it was, what it is, and what it will be. I want to bring back more than what originally existed in me. At first, I wanted to know why it was illegal to dump horse manure into a field that was not mine, to comprehend why prices rose at Grand Targhee, and to love atop a horse. These days, I want to understand its complexity.

The experience of riding horses on rigid cliffs and stony hills with my mother continues to bring me back to Teton Valley. It is a part of the culture of Teton Valley that I never see disappearing. The small peculiarities that contribute to that culture already have. People moving in at record speeds to ski at Grand Targhee is what commenced the housing developments. Across the street from my old home is now a road that winds through the field and giant modern houses – another being built every year, even if my memory will always be flooded by thick manure and vacant fields.





EXPANSION OF GRAND TARGHEE

There are people in the world who dedicate their lives to writing. Some to banking. Others to environmentalism. Many people in Teton Valley, Idaho, devote their lives to skiing. Grand Targhee, our local ski resort, is their church.

What thoughts does the humming of the chairlift drone into your mind? What do you see when you look at the sharp peaks? Do the trees speak your language?

Each time I visit my home in Teton Valley, I am outwardly adamant and critical of the lifestyle of a 'ski bum.' Perhaps, I am too grave, comparing lifestyles with no perception of my influence. Perhaps I have been moved to believe that lives should be dedicated to the collective being.

What is the difference between a person who makes pottery and a person who skies every day?

At some level, none. Any community is full of individuals who are passionate about var-

ious subjects and that is part of the beauty of life. The point lies in the idea of cumulative impact. So, what then is the difference between a potter and a skier? It is the purpose behind skiing or making pottery. To me, living means creating a just, sustainable, and better planet. We each have the capability and opportunity to do this through our different passions.

Grand Targhee is the ski resort situated on the western slope of the Tetons in Wyoming. However, it can only be accessed by car through Highway 33 in Teton Valley, Idaho. The resort located in Caribou-Targhee National Forest, sits on 2,602 acres and is home to deer, big horn sheep, fox, wolves, bears, moose, marmots, coyotes, a wide variety of birds and more. The mountain's flora includes the serviceberry, purple lilacs, aspens, blue spruce, chokecherry's and more. The resort consists of two main mountains: Fred's Moun-

tain and Peaked Mountain. Fred's Mountain currently runs three chairlifts to a summit elevation of 9,800 feet. Peaked mountain has one chairlift along with 602 acres of reserved land exclusively for snowcat adventures. Snowcat adventures are private guided tours for people who pay an additional fee to ski parts of the mountain that are not accessible by lift.

The hill began as a "local" ski resort. It employed people living in Alta, WY, Driggs and Victor, ID. Over the years it has increased its tourist draw and is essential to the economy of the area. The base camp of Grand Targhee offers lodging, a couple of restaurants, snack bars, a small sports store, and minimal employee housing.

Development is now the new religion. Grand Targhee has proposed a Master Expansion



Proposal that will change the climate of Teton Valley and the ski resort forever.

But, let's start at the beginning.

Grand Targhee was named after the Shoshone-Bannock Native American, Chief Targhee (with lost information on the correct spelling of his name). He lived in the mid-19th century and was known as a great leader of the Native American people and led his people as they were forced from their lifestyle and nomadic ways. He was admired by Native Americans and white colonizers alike. Caribou-Targhee National Forest and the mountain pass, Grand Targhee, were named after him to commemorate his contribution to the area. He is unique in that respect. Otherwise, there is no sign and no recorded memo-

ry of the Native Americans who once inhabited Teton Valley and the mark they left on the region.

Grand Targhee resort opened in 1966, with 900+ members dedicated to sustaining the community and the economy of the region. But ironically the minimal impact was an accident. The original master plan was to make Grand Targhee into one of the most developed resorts America has ever seen. That meant 6,000 skiers per day, a trailer park, golf courses, and snowmobiling trails. That plan never succeeded.

For the next twenty years these 900 members in eastern Idaho and in the Teton Valley Region along with new employees dedicated their time to the tourism industry in attempt to make Targhee an inviting location. In

1987 Mory and Carol Bergmeyer, who now live in Jackson, WY, bought the resort and aimed to maintain a balance between people and the great outdoors. That meant practicing sustainable development of a resort that not only aided the local economy but was not detrimental to the ecosystem at large. To preserve a balance between the economy and the ecosystem economists, biologists, conservationists, and investors need to collaborate. The surrounding community and Targhee employees have collaborated to create a balanced environment up until this point.

Thirty four years later in 2021, the resort is aiming to expand exponentially which is threatening to suffocate natural resources and enrich the rich. The memory of Teton Valley pop-

ulated by Native Americans and their cohabitation with the land is fading.

For many it has already faded.

The most recent proposal, projected by Geordie Gillett, owner of Grand Targhee, aims to build new lodging and commercial development at the base camp of Grand Targhee, add six new lifts, build two mountain restaurants, and new trail grading and service roads. Two expansions within the Master Expansion were proposed. One is South Bowl on Peaked Mountain that would punch east toward the Jedediah Smith wilderness toward Grand Targhee National Park. The second development is the Mono Trees, or Lighting Tree Expansion which moves into Millcreek Canyon, currently

not a part of Grand Targhee. This proposal will be granted or declined in March of 2022 and will affect wildlife, night sky, traffic, and housing in Teton Valley.

The South Bowl Expansion would spread into Teton Canyon, our local hiking canyon, and would involve three new lifts, new ski runs, a road, and a warming hut. Due to the vastness of this proposal it would lead to the transformation of the entire ecosystem. Specifically, it will affect Big Horn Sheep habitat who are very sensitive to development and already dwindling in numbers. Additionally, it will impact the habitat of other native fauna living in the area. Building new lifts and roads requires deforesting, excavation, and ultimately changing an ecosystem forever.

The Mono Trees expansion will develop into a more forested area which will affect a number of other critters including goshawks, grizzly bears, and mule deer. Rob Marin, the Geographic Information System Manager for the county, notes that while not opposed to the expansion of Grand Targhee, he advocates for people to study the ripple effects of the full proposal. "This is considered incremental but you cannot ignore the cumulative impact," Marin told me in an interview. "Another big one is just scenery. Targhee is proposing a mountain top restaurant on Fred's mountain, the idea would be giving people views of the Grand on top of their main chairlift so in turn that restaurant would be visible from the wilderness area, Table Mountain... even

the national park, potentially. It depends on how they mitigate it, what design features they use, and how much of it is on the sky line and that sort of thing.” In other words, the proposal doesn’t take into account the secondary and tertiary effects of what expansion means.

In addition, the developers aim to build more facilities at the base to draw in more tourists. This includes 250,000 plus square feet of commercial and lodging development at the privately owned base area of Targhee. These developments would produce a significant amount of light pollution that the region has never seen before. If you’ve ever visited the area, you know there are no buildings larger than three stories, and really, hardly any buildings at all. Therefore the light pollution is minimal. The national forests that surround Grand Targhee that are noted for their rurality and clear skies will begin to disappear.

As a general consensus, locals are concerned about the colossal effect that such a vast expansion might cause. They are concerned that a restaurant, located at 10,000 feet, will result in light pollution and affect the night skies. Brian McDermott, econom-

ic manager for Teton Valley has mixed feelings on the proposal. “Elements of the current proposal – some new lifts, some new trails, mountain top restaurant, I’m lukewarm on that, I don’t like that, but those elements are okay. Then when they are looking at developing the south side, south side of Peaked to Teton Canyon that personally and professionally is, I think, a little bit of over-reach.” When discussing the expansion with locals in the Valley, the consternation comes through their voice, that Grand Targhee will turn into a densely populated, expensive, tourist zone that holds none of the small town ardor that it does now. This expansion will impact Grand Targhee for the next five, ten, and twenty years.

If the full expansion is granted, Grand Targhee would be one of the biggest, and best equipped ski resorts in the West, driving up tourism and possibly doubling the number of people who come to Teton Valley every winter. There are already countless road issues. The main access point to the resort is Highway 33, a two-lane, road that is typically jammed with traffic during ski season. To avoid the traffic, drivers use back roads which are

gravel, many of which were not built for high traffic volume. In 2020, Driggs, ID and Alta, WY estimated that the cost of renovating these older roads to allow for increased traffic will amount to \$6 million. The city has not planned to fund this massive investment and Grand Targhee hasn’t mentioned the exponential costs in their plan. The difficulty of having Grand Targhee be in a different state than the main access point causes numerous problems that need to be addressed in the proposal.

The Targhee Expansion will produce more jobs. However, it doesn’t fix the problem we are currently facing in Teton Valley and many small towns in the United States – the housing crisis. An additional 300 employees at Grand Targhee would mean the necessity for available and affordable apartments and homes. Targhee has very little employee housing and already employees struggle to make a living – the wage at Targhee does not come close to amounting to the cost of living. The hourly rate depends on the field (activity center representative, instructor, public area attendant, liftee) that you are in at Grand Targhee. Hourly rates

for liftee’s and jobs of ‘lower status’ range from 10-15 dollars an hour. Many employees who work at Grand Targhee have to work service jobs when they aren’t at the resort. The median home cost for Teton Valley is 400,000 and that has only been rising in the past year. To rent an apartment and have a job at Targhee means sharing with four other roommates or knowing people in the Valley. All of the struggles that locals already face would be worsened by the expansion of Grand Targhee and

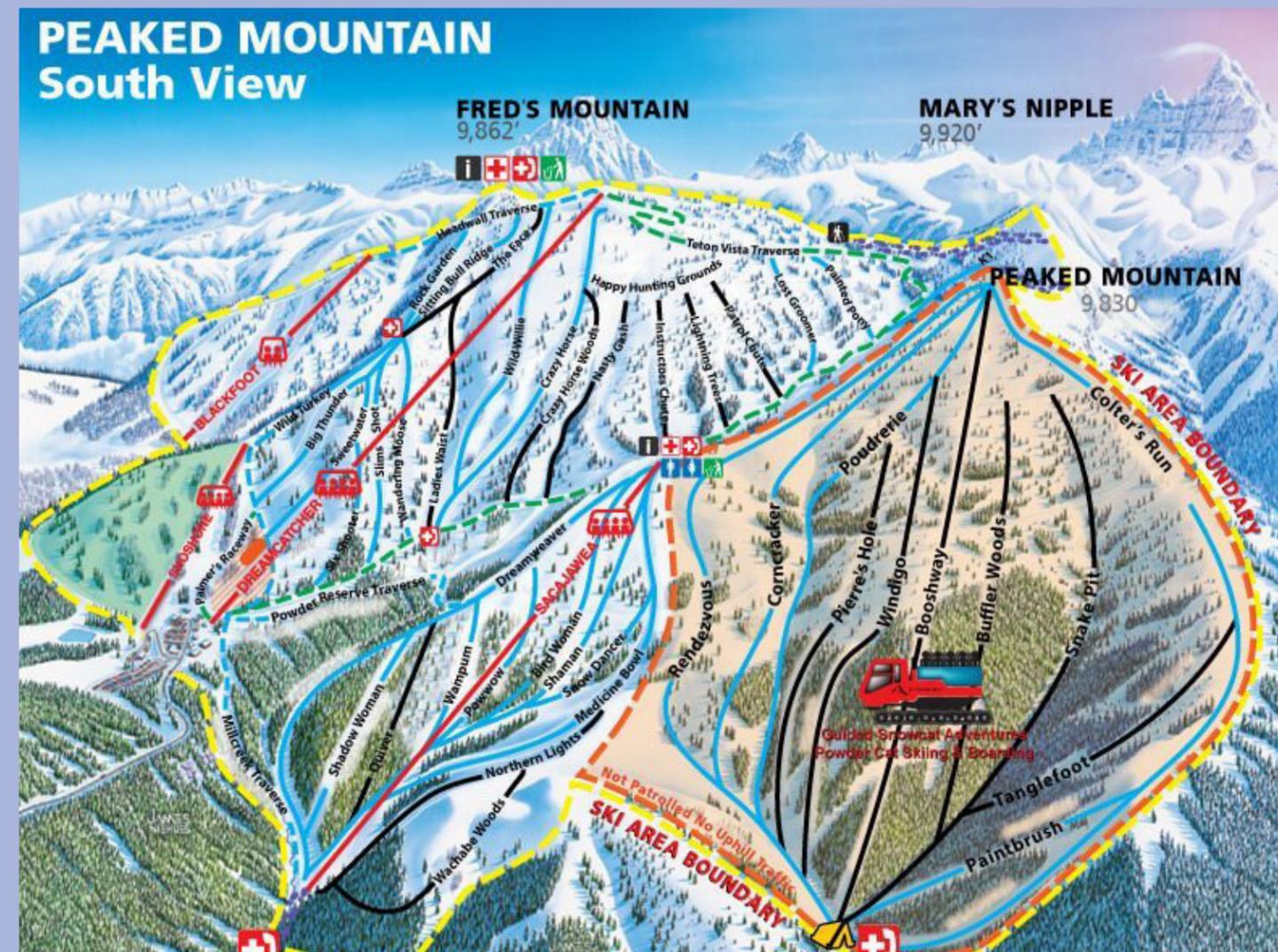
would change the social, cultural, and environmental factors of Teton Valley forever.

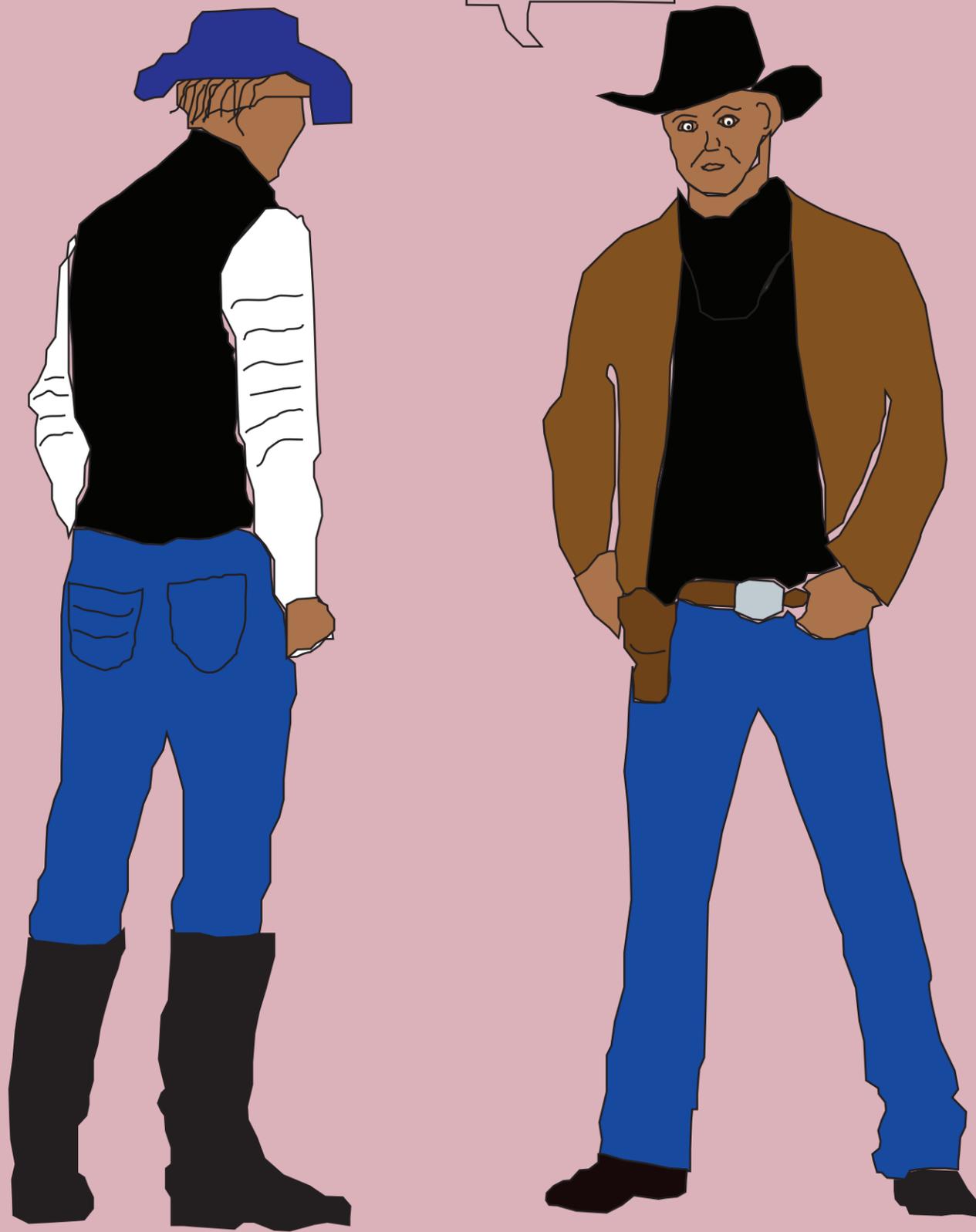
To consider the Grand Targhee Master Expansion plan we must look at the larger picture – our history, the land we rest on, the mountains we use, the animals that inhabit these places. Our speculations must be responsible.

It doesn’t much matter to me if you are an artist, a chemist, a mechanic, or a ski bum. What does matter is that while doing each of these careers and

passions respectively there is motive, purpose, intention to collectively by individual participation contribute to a wider goal, a larger drive.

What thoughts does the humming of the chairlift drone into your mind? What do you see when you look at the sharp peaks? Do you imagine this mountain living forever?





"Wes, there's something I oughtta tell you."

The Dying Cowboy

Fiction

For many years after, Wes spoke only to God and Pertha. He would wake up, already dressed in jeans and a button down shirt that was ripped at the seams. His cowboy hat rested on the chair by his bed. The leather was fragile, haunted by the dryness the air had held for many years. He placed his cowboy hat into the creases on his head and his belt buckle into the hole that was blackened by overuse. On the table in the kitchen sat a vase full of daisies and a blank pad of paper.

Wes lived with his father, Gus, into his adulthood even when people thought it was strange. It wasn't work nor money that brought them together. People in town talked. "That Wes oughta go out and find himself a woman." Another man muttered "They got some kinda funny stuff goin' on up there on that ranch." Wes and Gus paid no mind. They went to the supermarket, gambled in the bars, and rode through town with their hats tipped to the sky.

It has been said that men

of the land know how to love best. They learn first from their horse. Horses kiss the ground morning and night. Their language is intention. Cowboys fall in love quickly. And never live long enough to share the romance. The land fills in the spaces. Wood teaches hard work and ground builds a livelihood. Grass feeds and flowers are an indication of beauty. The sun directs them and they follow the moon. A cowboy must learn the rest on his own.

Gus first taught Wes how to pray. At four years old, he brought him to the town Baptist Church and said that when he has nothing else, he must come here. Otherwise, "Leave it up to God." At five, Gus taught Wes to draw. He uncrumpled some paper, found a pencil buried in the shoeing tools and said "Son, son, drawing teaches ya ta look inside." Wes nodded and began drawing the prairie. At six, Gus told Wes to go find all the things he loved. Wes searched and searched and ended up with a coin, some orange leaf, and two

pairs of shoes: one of his and one of his horses. Gus looked at Wes's belongings and said "Love ain't all that small." And they buried the items in a box three feet under the soil and marked the coordinates. They taped the numbers in Wes's room and titled it 'all the things I love.'

Gus was not all glory.

Wes woke up one morning and heard violent screaming coming from outside. At seven, he understood what anger was but had never witnessed it. Jumping in his boots he ran outside to find his father digging obsessively. Gus turned towards his son. No apprehension was necessary. His face deemed a hatred so bold a monster could have escaped the vessels of his eyes at any moment. Wes halted in fear of the devil that so instantaneously manifested inside of his father.

"Do you know what I'm diggin' for?"

Wes shook his head, as if to respond 'no' and began backing up to build space between his father and him. The space expanded in feet. What they

did not know was that a greater space was distancing them in their hearts. Air is not easily replaced. As Wes attempted to widen the gap, Gus reduced it. He picked up the shovel and held it over his shoulder. Each step rattled the earth.

This time, his voice shattered. Like bone. One million pieces. His pace picked up.

“Do you know what I’m digging for?”

He threw the shovel, aimed directly at Wes. The force wasn’t adequate to reach his son. The blade struck the ground. Dirt flew. For a moment, space was obscured. The distance between Wes and Gus was indefinable. A kind of fog conceived by the human and produced by the environment. Gus collapsed space and grabbed his son’s shoulders.

“Did ya hear me? I said, do you know what I’m digging for?” Just as his fingers began digging deeper and deeper into Wes’s shoulders like they were soil he fell to the ground. His next words were solemn, defeated, saddened by the depressible solitude of his own mind, rejected by his own

unreclaimable actions.

“Do you know what I’m... digging for?”

By seven, Wes learned that his father’s heart was corroded. He didn’t know much about his father’s past. He didn’t know anything about his grandparents nor about his mother. So he made his own way to the Baptist Church and requested a Bible to take home. On his hike home, Wes flipped through the pages and felt God shine over him. Upon arrival, he held the book out to his father who was sitting on a hay bale, seemingly unmoved since he had sat down after the incident.

“I brought the Lord to you papa. Maybe he knows what you’re digging for.” Gus did not reach for the book. ‘What came over me?’ Gus thought to himself. Wes stood, keeping God’s hands open. Gus sat, layering his emotions until they were too convoluted to understand. Son and father both looked at each other while the crisp Idaho sun toasted their skin.

Wes thought that maybe Gus had forgotten what was inside of him. He rummaged and

found some paper in the junk drawer of his father’s bedside. He pulled a piece out and found a pencil. That evening over pheasant, Wes took the paper out of his back pocket and said “I found the roots of my heart.” Gus made a half smile, speechless by the mind of a seven year old. A wisdom found only in the roots of the ground beneath them.

Gus never thought he’d become a father. But when Wes came into the world he promised himself that he would turn streams into rivers. Rivers into oceans. Oceans into the world. He wanted his son to look at a daisy and see himself. He read books on love and learned the names of each flower and tree in his thirty mile radius. He bought a horse and named it Perth after his wife. He imagined his son riding Perth and feeling the spontaneity of his mother.

But Gus had been so destroyed by the death of his wife during childbirth that it subdued him into reticence. He wanted to teach Wes, how to open up his heart, how to bloom, how to live life to the fullest – but he had

not yet taught himself this. He had tried to hide his grief, he had prayed, he had sat on the prairie and let the big sky envelop him. As Wes grew into adulthood, it seemed as if he inhabited the very same atoms of his mother. He walked just to listen to the wind. He yelled so the world knew he was alive. This is all and more that Gus had hoped for. For Gus, watching his son reflect his dead wife tore him like paper. Paper filled with words of virtue. Each word, passion, one, devotion, by one, stripped away.

The years became a decade. And then two.

Wes held a kind of love for his father that was overwhelming at times. In days of anger, Wes’s love grew fonder. Gus’s weakened.

Wes, 27, and his father, 61, rode their horses, loping across the prairie, hands clasped, mouths drinking the wind, and moving to the rhythm of the world. In the evenings they sharpened knives or mixed pudding for a late night sweet. They laughed and in each ripple of the laughter felt the vibration.

It moved them. Some mornings they awoke at sunrise, not for the sun, but for the air. At other times they rode into town to buy groceries and make a fool of themselves. Gus pretended he didn’t know how to ride a horse and chuckled as he rocked off the saddle. Wes mocked him.

On Gus’s 62nd birthday, Wes found his father dead in the barn.

The day before Gus died, something overtook him. “Wes, there’s something I oughtta tell you.” They sat down in the two wooden chairs and licked the pudding off of their spoons. Wes listened to the story of his mother. There was heel clicking and burnt toast. There was antler hunting and soaking in ice cold rivers. There was birding not for the sight but for the song. There was finger lacing and falling deeply in love. They marked the streets with their charm and defined glory.

For hours Gus weaved through the story of his life and Wes entered it.

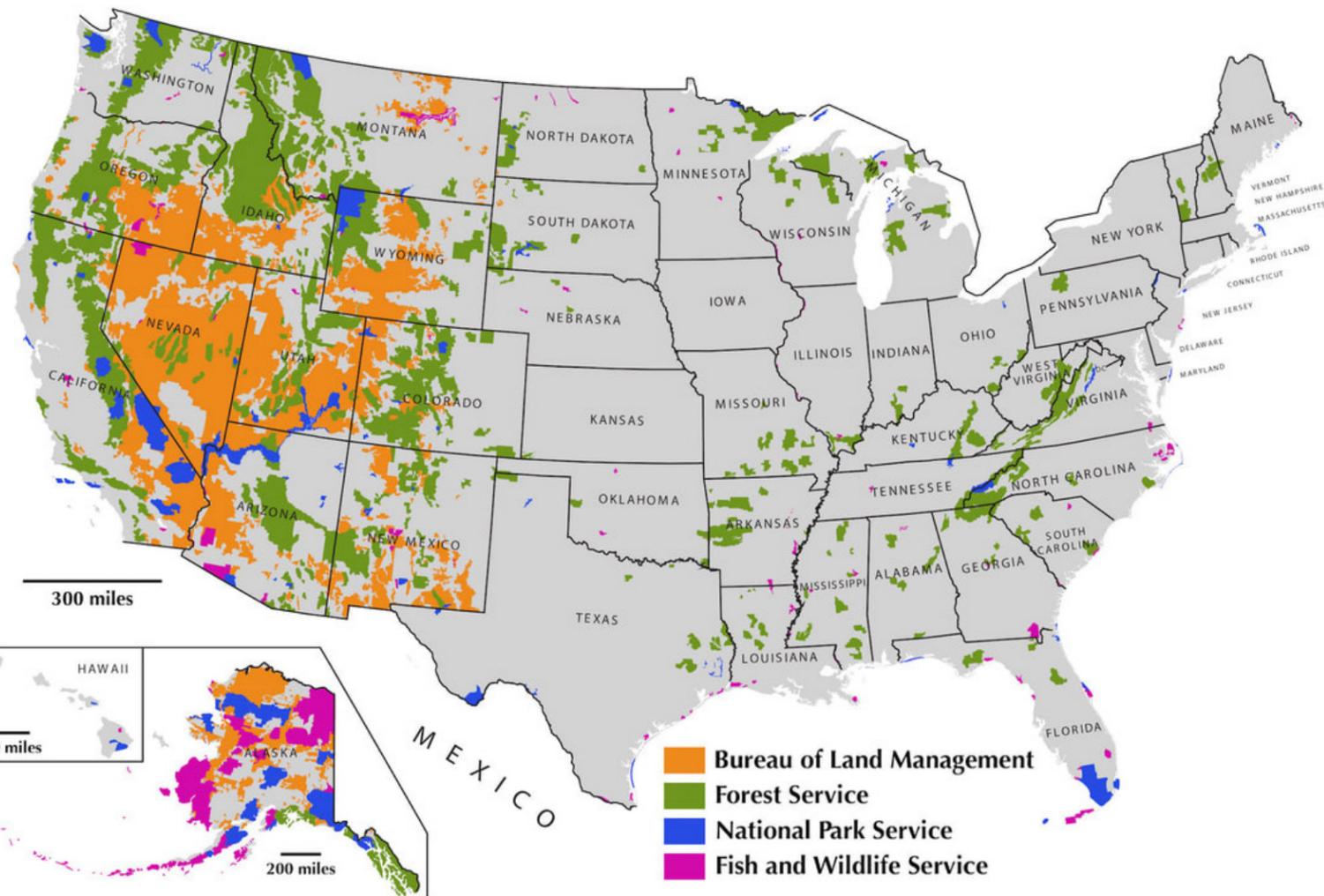
When he had finished recalling the memories of his wife,

Gus sat in silence and didn’t speak again.

Wes picked up his limp father. The blood streaming from his head marked his life. The gun lay next to him. He brought him to the hole that his father had already dug and placed his body in it. He gathered some paper, the Bible, a daisy, and stood above his father for many minutes. With each shovel his tears poured down like rain. By the time his father was completely covered, the soil was wet. He looked up into the nebulous clouds as the water of the earth came pouring down onto him and his father.

‘I know what you were diggin’ for papa.’ Wes thought.

God poured that day and was dry for many years after.



Idaho is dreamlike: open spaces, free camping, vast mountain ranges, and all on public land. You can start biking and find yourself 100 miles later sleeping on the side of the road in a tent on public land. Or, drive into the mountain ranges that make up both the East and the West borders of the Valley, pull over onto the side of the dirt road, hike in, and, in minutes find a camping spot.

My own childhood consisted of horseback riding through canyons -- Darby, Teton, South Leigh -- stopping for the evening, setting up camp and starting again in the morning. I was lucky enough to live by two of our most famous National Parks: Grand Teton and Yellowstone. I spent days swimming in these National Parks' lakes, hunting for antlers, and backpacking. I considered these National Parks on public land a privilege that everyone in the US must also be enjoying.

The conversations I had this past semester did not differ greatly from the ones I recall growing up. At the beginning of 2021 I asked people living in Teton

Valley what public land meant to them. Kieron Callahan, 29, said "I think that public land is the great equalizer in a lot of ways. It really is. You don't need really good gear to go hike up Teton canyon. Not in the summer. There are ways -- even like the boat shop -- there are ways for all sorts of different backgrounds to get on the river and stuff. Again, a bit of a price gate. But, as far as just walking out in the woods goes, I think that public land is the great equalizer." This sentence struck me. What a beautiful concept, I thought 'the great equalizer.'

Further interviews revealed that Mr. Callahan was not the only one who believed this. Brian McDermott, economic manager for Teton Valley in an interview noted "there is no equal access to ownership, that is an economic deal. With regard to the recreation well, that is the great thing about public land. You have probably seen the meme 'I am a public land owner.' We all are. When we go cross country skiing in the canyon you could be flat broke and still do it. It doesn't cost you a nickel." When

revisiting conversations with citizens of Teton Valley I was reminded of the isolative mindset I too had when I lived in the region.

When I moved to the East and realized not all people had that experience with public land, I began to wonder why is there so much public land in the West?

The United States government owns 47% of land West of the Mississippi. This ownership originated with the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, which established the Federal Government as the direct administrator of non-state land. Land in the West was seen as a "public resource" that required federal regulation. White people moved across the United States and, in conjunction with army and government, decimated Native American populations. In 1851 Congress passed the Indian Appropriations Act that put into place the first of many policies designed to relocate Native Americans in the West to reservations. Native Americans were not allowed to leave the reservations unless

given permission by the Federal Government. In addition to initiating “battles” and massacres, whites dismantled their communities, separated families, and relocated them to reservations where rival tribes were forced together. In these reservations Native Americans were required to adopt colonized farming practices that were contradictory to their hunting and gathering lifestyle. Missionaries attempted to convert them to Christianity and Native American culture and traditions were lost.

These parcels of land that Native Americans once inhabited were redistributed to white settlers. Native American tribes including but not limited to the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chicasaw, Creeks, and Navajo populations were compressed, giving white settlers the opportunity to inhabit land. Settlers moved further West arriving in territory in Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, the Dakota’s, and Idaho to pursue their livelihoods.

My educational experience in Teton Valley did not consider

the breadth of the Native American experience, if considering it at all. We learned of the white settlement of land and about the spread of white populations to the West at the expense of Native peoples. What we did not learn about was the history of Native populations and how land theft affected them. My upbringing was packed with the privilege I failed to recognize at the time. During my younger years, I was unable to connect the fact that livelihood does not exist without land.

In college, I realized that land and livelihood are intrinsically inseparable. If these two are inseparable, then public land must be a right all people are granted. Public land seemed like the ‘great equalizer’ as many people designated it to be. Through reading, conversations, and traveling I realized my wishful thinking was simply not reality. For many people of color in the United States, there is no such thing as equal access to land that is classified as ‘public.’ To understand this, one first has to understand the climate of the West, specifically Idaho.

Much of Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, and Montana have similar arduous climates which is why one will see a ton of public land while driving through these states. Much of the West is mountainous and arid. Teton Valley, Idaho, has brutal winters that last nine months out of the year. Winds whip structures to the ground, snow into piles higher than roofs; temperatures can lead to fatalities. In the summer, the high elevation means that the sun often scorches skin and crops.

As a result of the severe climate, Native Americans, trappers, and Mormons, didn’t stay in Teton Valley year round. The Homestead Act of 1862 was enacted while people were transitioning in and out of the Valley. Abraham Lincoln who was president when the act was passed wrote that any “adult citizen born in the US could claim 160 acres of surveyed government land.” The claimants were required to ‘improve’ the plot by cultivating the land. After five years the claimant was entitled to the property except for a small registration fee.

This act was applied to the entirety of the West but many parcels of land that the government was subdividing had few resources. For example, starting in 1862 in Teton Valley there were plots of land sectioned off in some of most difficult climates to cultivate. Some of these plots of land did not have easy access to water, the soil was not adept for crops, and shelter by trees proved impossible to find. During this time period, conflict quickly arose over the few resources that did exist. People learned rather quickly that on one parcel of land, there might be easy access to water, and on another, a plentiful supply of wood. Therefore, if people settled this land the tenants must use one another to sustain themselves. Instead of privatizing land the government realized that if everyone had equal access to land, the necessary resources would be met.

The term “equal access” has been warped throughout history – and is inextricably tied to the concept of ‘land rights.’ Defined by the Food and Agricul-

ture Organization of the United Nations, land rights are “the allocation of rights in land; the delimitation of boundaries of parcels for which the rights are allocated; the transfer from one party to another through sale, loan, gift, or inheritance, the registration of land rights; and the adjudication of doubts and disputes regarding rights and parcel boundaries.” Through the context of land rights, equal access means that each individual would have the right to use the land, control the land, and transfer the rights to another person. Equal access and public land are not synonymous, however. Public lands are not accessible to everyone. As Bonnie Honig, author of Public Things: Democracy in Disrepair, writes, “The public things that constitute the democracies exclude some and privilege others.” By this, she means that what makes up the world around us - highways, streetlights, sidewalks - are technically ‘public’ but “exclude some and privilege others.” She points to the idea of streets, which are supposed to

be public, but why then can some people walk on streets without a bat of an eye and when others walk on that same street they turn into “sights of surveillance and control.”

Under the umbrella of public land are National Parks that make up 84.6 million acres of the United States. The Bureau of Land Management, that administers federal lands makes up 240 million acres. Public land covers the US far and wide, however all people still do not have access to these vast spaces.

Teton Valley is at the base of Grand Teton National Park and Yellowstone National Park. National Parks are remote with no public transportation to access them. Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Park, for example, are only accessible by car. The closest airport is expensive to fly into. The same could be said about other National Parks in western states: Glacier, Death Valley, Yosemite, Joshua Tree, Channel Island, among others. This presents significant obstacles to lower income class Americans who

don't have the means to travel there and certainly don't have the means to live in the area. Apart from hiking, outdoor recreation can require expensive equipment; camping equipment, fishing necessitates a license, rod, and gear, water sports can mean renting or buying a boat, climbing requires various gear and most National Parks require an entrance fee. Yet – this is public land. Public which is supposed to be accessible or shared by all members, in fact, is only shared by middle and upper class citizens who can afford these activities.

In many State and National Parks, only white people are featured in informational sessions and signs. According to the National Park Service, white people make up 79% of full time, permanent employees. Black employees comprise only 7% of the National Park full time employees. Visiting a National Park as a person of color or Native American results in a multitude of entrenched societal issues. Parks were created as a white space that celebrate white history. The white, male, conquis-

tador representation in parks portrays itself through media and popular culture and makes it a space that is hostile to people of color.

Although there are reservations (Shoshone-Bannock and the Wind River) relatively near Yellowstone National Park and Grand Teton National Park, Native Americans make up only 2.5 percent of the National Park workforce. There are cruel memories of Native Americans being stripped from their land in these public spaces that we call National Parks. President Biden's recent nomination of the Department of Interior, Deb Haaland, a Native American woman, is certainly a start to changing these spaces. The federal government must continue to radicalize the inequities of these public spaces.

If we want public things to be truly public, where people of all ethnicities, classes, and abilities could experience the public space with the same access, each individual must work towards the goal of making public spaces public. To make the forty percent

of public land in Teton Valley truly public, its accessibility needs to be reimagined and reconfigured. We need to address the systemic maltreatment, domination, and cruelty of people of color. Our duty is to devote our time to the shifting of culture, mindsets, perspective and true social change. We must look beyond the surface. People have assumed that public lands equalize people when in fact they assert the inequities that define land and land access.

Returning to Teton Valley every year, I skate ski up one of the most popular canyons, Teton Canyon, or hike in Grand Teton National Park. And I feel blessed. My privilege, along with many other Teton Valley citizens, is rarely addressed to its full extent. To think about land differently, people need to learn and recognize the histories of another. Many American's are not granted the pleasure of so-called public land. My goal now, is to reimagine how we can make these National Parks and spaces public. *



WHAT DOES 'PUBLIC' MEAN?

COVID-19



I arrived home March 17th, 2020 in the midst of trying to understand the pandemic that was about to sweep across our nation. I had been reading article after article about the progression of the pandemic in China and then its spread, eventually, over the world. If you lived in Teton Valley in at the beginning of the pandemic, you'd never know the magnitude of the virus that was sweeping the world.

Home is Teton Valley, located in eastern Idaho in the Middle Rocky Mountains and noted for its "western" atmosphere. Walking through the grocery store parking lot one finds people of all ages dressed in O'Lathy cowboy boots and worn cowgirl hats. I emphasize this because I believe there is a relationship to the traditional "western culture" of Teton Valley and COVID-19. This traditionalism is rooted so deep that it isolates Teton Valley citizens from the rest of the world. When I returned home I was shocked by the general apathetic mentality towards a virus that would haunt the United States and the rest of the world for one year and counting...

The first few weeks home I spent my days continuing classes, reading New York Times ar-

ticles and skate skiing up Teton Canyon, with my mother and our dogs. I had never seen the canyon as packed as in those first few months. Because of small town dynamics, local stores allowed their employees to work random hours from home; later others were laid off completely. Basically, the community went skiing.

My cousin, Liam, who worked at the ski resort, Grand Targhee, said he was making more from unemployment than he would be if he was working. Teenagers and students recently graduated from college who found themselves working in service jobs likewise "collected," government money and were pleased with its substantiveness.

Meanwhile, essential employees went to work in fear that they might contract COVID. Their work intensified and their pay remained the same. Medics, grocery clerks, teachers, agriculturalists, and public transit operators worked long, strained hours. Even though the dynamics of the economy were changing and disparities were presenting themselves, Teton Valley hid behind the mountains.

I walked into the local supermarket, Broulims, on April 18, 2020, just after the mask man-

date had been issued. I might have been the only one who got the memo. The majority of employees and customers were not wearing masks or wore a mask that only covered their nose. Just that morning, the New York Times front page headlined that hundreds of slaughterhouse workers were dying because their employers were not taking precautions to protect their workers. On the same front page other articles explained "how millions of women became the most essential workers in America" and that "It's the end of the world economy as we know it."

I walked through Broulims in a daze, stunned by the detachment from world reality that surrounded me. When I couldn't find the canned artichoke hearts I reverted to an employee. I turned to him, mask barely covering his face, and asked the question as quickly as I could get the words out of my mouth and then rushed off. I picked up speed through the rest of the store, threw items from the shelves into the cart and spoke one word answers at the check-out line. "How are you?" The polite and engaging cashier asked, but I, too caught up with the complexities of COVID brushed her question away and simply

answered 'fine' without even returning the respect. I was embarrassed by the ignorance of the supermarket, well, the entire Valley.

And that's the way the pandemic happened here: weeks moved on and the virus took lives more in some days than others. Some people in Teton Valley were disheartened by the slow crumbling of a nation, but mostly, people sat gloriously in their privilege. And I too felt a sense of ignorance simply by living in the wealth and privilege of Teton Valley.

Outside of the Valley, communities and societies discovered that, ironically enough, a worldwide pandemic is a time to collaborate. There are plenty of examples of this type of constructive collaboration. On March 18th 2020, the EU sent fifty tons of personal protective equipment (PPE) to China. At the end of March when the pandemic took hold in Europe, China returned the favor and sent supplies back with shipments inscribed with the Chinese flag and the words "the friendship road knows no borders." Meanwhile the U.A.E was also sending aid to Syria, Pakistan, and Iran (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). In many ways the world realized the necessity for collabo-

ration – some countries had more resources earlier in the pandemic and some more later. Each country was experiencing a humanitarian, economic, and political struggle from COVID-19.

Back home, in Teton Valley, people collaborated and escaped isolation in a much smaller way. Many nights at 8pm my grandma and I stepped onto her front porch to howl with fellow comrades in Teton Valley. This howling felt like a call to solidarity, unity, and hope. There was something alleviating about using your voice without using your words. The emotion that prevailed in peoples howls was concern, anticipation, and troubled. By night, I felt this wide span of emotion through these howls but by day many people continued to act like our Valley was untouchable.

As cases were rising at record levels in the US people in our Valley seemed to be unfazed. In May, I received a text from a childhood friend saying 'party at my house tonight, invite everyone.' I smirked when I saw it, in utter surprise of its content. Later that month, I had a conversation with someone who believed that COVID-19 was a conspiracy contrived by the government to scare people. 'Huh?' I said, shocked by the audacity to

believe such absurdity. This mentality was consistent throughout the younger generation in Teton Valley. When I commented out of concern of contracting the virus, I was met with condemnation. At points, even my family and I didn't agree on COVID precautions – I frequently didn't attend gatherings because of the high numbers of people attending events and the 'unawareness of the situation at stake' that I thought it presented. I constantly wondered where information was getting lost and why my concerns were drastically different from most people in Teton Valley.

Many people in the Valley urged that our community was small enough that COVID wouldn't 'reach us'. The phrase 'they don't know what they're talking about' was certainly thrown around, the 'they' referring to 'the WHO.' Talk and gossip swirls around Teton Valley and soon enough it seemed like everyone had conformed into the 'we are invincible' mindset. In Idaho, climates are fierce and they almost seem to mold the people. We know enough not to cry just because a pandemic is threatening so many lives as if it is nothing more consequential than falling while skiing.

Although countries took leaps

of collaboration the division of people blew up when COVID hit. The most prominent question that was at the forefront of everyone's minds nationwide was 'how do we handle COVID-19?' Do we shut down all non-essential businesses? When do we reopen them? Does everyone need to wear a mask? In some parts of the US like New York City, we saw people being extremely careful, taking every precaution to protect themselves and their families. And in other parts, like Idaho, where I lived, it was a struggle to insist that people wear a mask at work. The overruling conservative majority in Idaho wanted the economy to flourish more than they cared about people's lives. What does this say about a population? At what point could the human population truly come together in solidarity?

COVID-19 changed Teton Valley in unexpected ways. Urban dwellers from New York City, Los Angeles, Houston, and Miami are relocating to the Valley. As a result, housing prices are rising more than they have ever before. In a region where land was once literally free, it's now hard to find acreage for sale and a home that sells for under a million. Urbanites who are moving to Teton Val-

ley will add a new layer to the economic and political climate. The Valley is already rethinking school systems, infrastructure, and the job industry.

Increased population is bound to happen. People are continually searching for new destinations to start their lives. We have seen small towns in the West like Telluride, CO, Whitefish, MT, Alta, UT and many more expand in the last ten years. COVID has simply made Teton Valley next on the list. For the Valley this means increase in job opportunities, cultural diversity, and public transportation. I like to see these drastic changes as a way to rebuild and reimagine our land, economy, and culture.

I feel a strong connection to my Idaho roots, but I too moved out of the Valley and find myself being the 'newcomer' in many places across the US. In turn, I advocate for this: relocating, starting a new lifestyle, becoming one with the Rocky Mountains. COVID, for some, happened to be a great way to start a life somewhere else, especially for those moving to the Teton Valley region. Perhaps, with new people moving in the isolative mindset that composed Teton Valley will begin to change. That when a pandemic arrests our nation instead of

talking nonchalantly about conspiracy theories we will focus on the people who are losing their lives. What is more important, more essential, and more pressing in these unprecedented times is to look beyond our small village to the struggles, ideas, and advancements of the wider world. Working together is challenging, differing beliefs bring conflict and misunderstanding, but at the end of the day we must realize that we all want a more empathetic world. Change is instigated with worldwide support.

And I guess in the end, that is what the Pandemic taught me – that it is my responsibility to help this happen. When I returned home in January of 2021, instead of walking into Broulims with the bountiful anger that I had harnessed a year before, I attempted a conversation with one of the cashiers on an article that morning in the New York Times titled 'The Fullest Look Yet at the Racial Inequity of Coronavirus.' Let's talk about this, behind our masks.



STEWARDS OF THE LAND

The West is known for its ‘big skies.’ It is literally Montana’s state motto. And you don’t quite understand how big it is until you are laying in a field in Idaho or Montana at midnight. You feel as if you are about to be swallowed, like you are floating in the vastness and all-encompassing atmosphere.

My mom has always been quick to claim claustrophobia. Too many trees, she feels trapped. Too many buildings, she can’t breathe. Too little sky and she can’t see. It turns out my mom isn’t the only one who feels this way. When I ask people like Crista Pentz why she moved to Teton Valley, Idaho, over twenty years ago, she, like so many others, tells me that “Every time I drive somewhere and I look out and I see the big open spaces, it’s what keeps me here.” Pentz has lived in the Valley for over twenty years and is still enthusiastic about the wide open spaces. Moving out East I learned that many places in the West are truly distinct in their expansiveness. Everyone in Teton Valley is drawn to this vastness.

My mom likes to say the

Valley has three distinct groups; multigenerational ‘lifers’, first generation skiers, and newcomers. These groups all identify as stewards of the land in their own ways. Despite which group we belong to we all have a deep connection to these open spaces for different reasons. Interestingly enough, these groups all have their own chronology. First came the multigenerational lifers in the early 1900’s who find a dedication to the land through their religion. My mom, who is included in the ‘first generation skiers’ finds her roots deeply entangled in the mountains surrounding the Valley. Her friends seem to have found parts of their heart located in the Tetons as well. Finally, people in their mid to late 20’s, just older than me, who recently discovered the Valley were unprepared to receive what the mountains were sure to give them. And what’s the West without newcomers?

The multigenerational lifers might be the most traditional pioneers. They live in Teton Valley to make a living off the land. Like so many Americans they

view land, in part, as real estate. But there seems to be something richer at the base of their connection and that is their devoutness to God.

The Valley is remarkably flat, the soil is dense with rocks, the summers are painfully hot and dry, and the winter offers no opportunity to grow crops. In total, it is not the ideal climate for an agriculturalist. However, the multigenerational ‘lifers’ own most of the farmland that makes up the open space of Teton Valley. These agriculture businesses have existed since the early 1900’s when Mormons settled in the Valley. From the Bible, Mormons adopted the idea that landscape was a vehicle through which God rewarded or punished human behavior. God assigned them the task of improving raw wilderness in order to return the Earth into a state that was more similar to the Garden of Eden. The pioneers who settled first in Utah, and then moved north to Teton Valley believed that land ownership was divine and for humans to have responsible stewardship over the land they must use their resourc-

es with ethical practices. The intensive labor that was required to settle Teton Valley was no hardship for the Mormons as long as they remembered that their work was greater than themselves, it was for God.

These first Mormon settlers, worked together to build infrastructure, irrigation canals, and roads. Robert Piquet, who is Mormon and has lived in the Valley for generations feels his religious connection to the land. "The land is what our entire livelihood is based on. It is a religious experience every morning. I feel like we are being confirmed by the Holy Spirit that we are doing good when we feed the cows." Working this land stems from the idea that they are serving the Lord and overcoming every obstacle that presents itself. Although they cultivate the land to make money, the lands significance reaches beyond wealth. It is a tool for them to be closer to God and in turn, closer to each other.

Everyone loves the land for different reasons. If the Mormon settlers left the mark on the land with their blood, sweat, and tears

then the next group of people were trying to leave less of a permanent footprint. Although they see the land differently, they care just as deeply. The first generation skiers have lived in the Valley for 20-30 years. They came to escape corporate America. Twenty years ago ski towns across the West such as Vail, CO, Park City, UT, and Big Sky, MT were already expanding at rapid speeds. Teton Valley had not yet been discovered, or rather, had been discovered by very few. Rob Marin moved to the Valley in 97' and said "I was attracted to Teton Valley because it was open space, less developed, less of a tourist destination." Marin grew up in California and has lived in other ski towns across the western United States. He epitomizes this notion of wanting to leave corporate America and refers to his recreational jobs when he says "It allowed me to stay on the periphery and immerse myself in the natural world, you accepted the lower wages and living out of your truck for four months a year and stuff like that because you were free."

Many of the people who have

lived in the Valley for 20-30 years' chose it because the mountains offer reconciliation between human and land. Brian McDermott, escaped his urban, New Jersey lifestyle, to find a different mentality that existed in people who live in Teton Valley. "The kind of people I get to interact with are a product of the land. They came here to enjoy the land or they were born here with a natural respect for it." Although, many of these first generation skiers aren't religious in the traditional way as we know it, they worship the land by becoming intimate with its ridges, crevasses, and peaks.

The first generation ski bums lived through the 80's; they were artists, creatives, and outdoor enthusiasts. They connected spiritually to the mountains. The mountains and their identity were inseparable. Paul Forester who has been in and out of the area for the past twenty years but who always returns writes "While raising kids and working in corporate America I committed myself to break free from this cycle. Yearning to evolve and grow past what felt like an unrewarding and

mundane career, I dedicated myself to study ... When I am up at the top of mountains with their ageless granite spires reaching up to the sky, my heart is completely free and I can truly hear myself." Many of these first generation 'ski bums' see a reflection of themselves in the mountains. Like their identity belongs more with the natural world than it does with other people. By night they dream of backcountry skiing up Teton Pass and by day they pursue those dreams. They assign themselves the ministers of the mountains because it is their home and without them they are nothing.

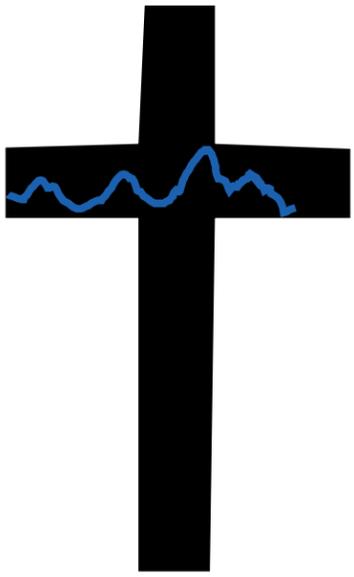
The newcomers were unprepared for what the mountains gave them. Much like the first-generation ski bums, these people were dissatisfied by the speed and fast pace that the workforce in most cities in the US required. They found themselves migrating to places where outdoor recreation was most prominent. Kieron Callahan who moved to the Valley just under two years ago says "It goes above recreation, not to sound too new age, white dude, hippie dippie, or whatever

but the mountains are my church. So, being able to live this close and get in them whenever is pretty important." As newcomers arrived, like Kieron Callahan, they were surprised that the mountains were the only church they needed. In the Tetons they experienced a detachment from the rest of the world. Eventually, they saw themselves as stewards of the sanctuary that is Teton Valley. Although, they didn't know their ultimate purpose in Teton Valley, they didn't need too. Perhaps, the mountains became the Godly pursuit that they were searching for.

Let's not lose sight of the fact that land is money, but out here in the Tetons, land is religious. The land that makes up Teton Valley, is greater, more divine, than the people who live there. People, despite the group they happen to fall into, all have assigned themselves stewards of the land.

When I was ten, my mom and I decided to take a trip on horseback over the Tetons. Twenty five miles over one of the grandest mountains in the West is no small feat. We left from our house

at 5AM, trekked through Alaska Basin and over the rigid cliffs to a new state. I sat on my horse, Lunchbox Louie, named for his love of cherries. A vertical wall protruded on my right and on my left was a cliff that fell fifty feet. The trail reached no wider than four feet and my horse walked with careless steps as if this day was no different than any other. I looked straight forward and prayed with each of Louie's steps: "Dear God, let me live, let me live." I suppose these mountains have made me religious too.





THE LAND OF MAKE BELIEVE

Fiction

Some people considered Uma the Wind of the West and Ebilene the Trees.

Uma was earthly, neither vain nor superstitious. Uma pinned flowers in her hair and wore lavish necklace jewelry. Her hat brim was wide and flapped in the wind. She didn't like walking much. She preferred prancing and skipping and refusing to fall in love. It was rare to see her frowning or irritated. Her fits of anger were always for rightful reason. She had an affection that was deeper and more powerful than anything else in life. And that was for her sister, Ebilene.

Ebilene never showed the same spark as her sister. Ebilene's thick skin protected her from the outside world. Inside, Ebilene seemed made of heartwood. It centered her, balanced her within the turbulence of society. Ebilene was wise before she grew up. She understood the complexities of the world; what people expected of her and her role in society long before she was an adult. Some mornings, she lay on a patch of dry grass and thistles and looked into the sky for hours. Her hands clawed the ground, her fingers moved deeper into the soil, as if the dirt on top had not pleased her. Uma wondered about her sister's strange habits but otherwise let them exist without question.

Uma and Ebilene's house

was on the outskirts of town. The aspens that surrounded their home were resilient. Both Uma and Ebilene were fond of the Aspens. Many evenings they sat on their porch and listened as the wind swirled around the trunks and through the leaves. The wind spoke to them. But they did not know how it felt, truly felt. They sensed it when it hit their skin and at night as it rocked the cabin, but because they had never been in it – flew with it – they could not totally understand it. The wind spoke of freedom, as if it had no obligations, no reservations, no deception. It was everywhere and everything all at once. Each night before bed, the sisters sat in their wooden chairs while clasping each other's ageless hands, closing their eyes and imagining themselves with wings.

In 1960, Teton Valley was populated by 438 people. Two of them were Ebilene and Uma and they were well known. They were among the few unmarried women around; as such, they were the center of the town's talk. Ebilene, for her dedication to her job. Uma, for gossip. Uma was the sole female writer at the Teton Valley Gazette; her beat was 'the woman's experience.' Some men rejected her work but the majority had affairs with it. They read it on break in the bathrooms or smiled at it in the bars

late at night. This was a kind of secret, one that stays hidden from their wives but apparent to their fellow employees.

One article that received significant attention was titled, "My Blood." It followed life through the narrative of the menstrual cycle:

The four days I bled in January were the days I returned to a self, more authentic than anything I imagined myself being. I was flattered with genius ideas of the advancement of the human condition. Like equitable wage and women's rights. I entered a state of mind that was impenetrable of wrongs. I entered the aspen forest and hummed tunes with the magpies. I fought the contempt of myself and replaced it with the mastery of respect. And then I pondered, 'men never get the opportunity four days a month to experience brilliance, how pitiful.'

People ate up this work like candy. They loved hearing of the details that, to her, were generally discarded thoughts. Her close friends commended her for such an honest and humorous treatment of a natural occurrence. Only few went so far as to cut it out of the newspaper and burn it.

Ebilene worked as a school nurse and existed on the periphery. She followed each policy, rule, command, and demand. The con-

versations with the children relegated her to the past – a past that was simplified by a child’s oblivion to the realities of life as a woman. She aspired to return to this past, where life was full of dreams, sweet laughter, and fairytales. Often, as she sat in her chair at work between students visiting she reminisced of the bliss of letting go, saying the words that ached deeply in her heart, being the self that was trapped inside of her. When talking to fellow coworkers or her boss she smiled pleasantly as if her personality was nothing more than an advertisement she saw on TV - happy, responsive, alluring. It was only with her sister, Uma, that Ebilene felt like this was what womanhood was like – the ability to be honest without repercussions.

Ebilene reacted only slightly to gusts of wind and even then, during a blizzard, she held onto her branches like without them she would fall apart. As a young child, Ebilene dreamed of flying. At eight she looked her father directly in the eyes and said “When I get older, I will fly.” He made a half smile, squinted his eyes, rested his hand on Ebilene’s shoulder and said “Oh honey, if we ever learn how to fly, men will surely be the first to do it.” From that day forward, Ebilene’s dreams decayed, like rotting wood. A nurse, undeniably an

excellent job, was what her father had wanted her to be. Ebilene conformed to her father’s desires and forgot about her heartwood.

In Ebilene and Uma’s eyes, sisterhood was the one truth to the world. Sometimes Uma returned home in a craze: “Listen to what I read today, Eb!” Her descriptions always reached further than what she had read. Language energized Uma and made her mind a flurry. As Uma chattered on, Ebilene mixed up a batch of cookies and let Uma’s words float.

As days turned into nights and nights to weeks and then to years, the sisters knew that they had been missing a part of themselves all along. A sense of fullness. The minor disturbances perturbed Ebilene. When Ebilene walked into work her boss rested his chin over her shoulder as she organized papers. Ebilene was numbed by the constant harassment of the men around her.

Uma felt the necessity to write about women because of their misrepresentation. If she wrote about culture or crises or politics her thoughts would be discarded as if they were nothing more than childish. One memorable day, Uma walked into the local grocery store and Ken, the owner, started up a conversation. “Have you started thinking about marriage yet,

because pretty soon it will be too late.” He threw his head back and laughed. “Was that too forward?” Uma kept her eyes on the aisle and shook her head, unwilling to give him the attention he was seeking. As Uma carried her basket towards check out, he brushed his hand along her bosom and smiled mischievously.

In the wind they imagined being the ones who were brazen.

They were tired of the daily wind storms that over time, built crevasses in their skin and age marks on their faces. They were tired of a lifetime of small injustices from their father whispering to them that ‘men are the ones who make it’ to grocery clerks stroking their bosom. These seemingly inconsequential statements left them unable to separate the damage from the blessing. Separately, but simultaneously their thoughts rose and fell, increased and decreased, and whipped and whirled.

One morning, Ebilene awoke and felt something deep inside of her that she had not felt before. It was like something had been released from her chest. She stood taller and her body moved with the untamed forest around her.

When Uma awoke, a change manifested too. Something cold. Something undone. Undoing.

The sisters ate pancakes

and coffee that morning. Although nothing between them had changed they both were hit with a lifetime of injustices. They had a new bond, a spark. Blue in fire. Flames. Their energy was heated with a reverence that was more powerful than the people they worked for. They left for work, but this time taking steps of dignity and leaps of grace.

Uma arrived at the office and wrote. Her words were pristine. They shone with a truth that many would never understand. It was a truth inherent in Ebilene and Uma but unknown to much of the population. Uma wrote intensely for the next three weeks and didn’t publish a single article. Her editor and coworkers at The Gazette were confused. In the long history of Uma, a week had not passed that an article wasn’t published. Her editor demanded that something must come soon.

The town grew quiet. Men were angry because they missed their secret fetish and women craved the truth. At the supermarket, some people flipped through the paper and when not finding Uma’s work, decided to save the dime. The town had yet to experience such misery since the Great Depression and the death of a Teton Valley cowboy, Gus. Uma kept writing.

In those three weeks,

Ebilene and Uma observed each other at a distance both knowing that something had changed in the other. A discovery that had been budding inside of them since they were born.

That year spring came in full force.

April was windy. The end of the winter in the Valley always is. The newspaper and radio warned residents to stay inside. The first of April marked the fourth week that Uma hadn’t published. That day she strolled into her office with a smirk on her face and handed her boss her final article.

At 6PM the sisters arrived home. Ebilene ran to Uma and divulged “Sister, the wind is free, it speaks its own language and exists abundantly and unhesitatingly anywhere and everywhere it wants.” Uma spun, and her sun hat twirled with her. “Let’s go then.” Her words echoed as if the wind was carrying them. Moments later, the wind spoke but instead of hearing it and listening to it – they let it take them. Ebilene howled and moved her arms from side to side. Her fingers floated and her hair tangled itself in time. Uma’s body disintegrated limb by limb. There was no earthquake that day but their bodies twisted into the air and slowly disappeared from the human eye. Many Aspen leaves fell that night

and the wind blew harder than it ever had before in the history of Teton Valley.

The two women were never again seen, but they forever remained in mythology and classroom texts as “the women who changed time.”

The residents of Teton Valley were so upset with Uma’s article they threw out that week’s entire edition. ‘What happened to her?’ High schoolers murmured. “Damn women. Just get up and leave ya with nothing,” some men said at the saloon. But the women of Teton Valley knew exactly what Uma had done – and they praised her like the heavens for the rest of time.

“Love” by Uma Steeple:

Remember to pray before you fall in love. God won’t save you but your prayer might. When I go to sleep at night, I see my sister, not in the form she exists in but one that moves deeper and deeper into the clouds. Her gaze is never present, it searches for something that doesn’t exist in this world. For a lifetime, I wondered what she was seeking. I soon discovered it later for myself. That my time and yours is worth more than a dime.

Part III

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Brian McDermott, Economic Manager in Teton Valley Idaho, Interview, January 2021

Rob Marin, Geographic Information Systems Coordinator, January 2021

Anna Trentadue, Program Director at Valley Advocates for Responsible Development

VOICES FROM TETON VALLEY



I asked everyone I knew in Teton Valley if they would be willing to contribute to my magazine. I urged people to write any personal story about their experience with the land in Teton Valley. I greatly appreciate the contributors - they make this magazine whole. All contributor's articles are in their raw, unedited form. I like to see myself as a collector and I want your words to speak as you wrote them. As I read these essays, narratives, snippets, personal histories, I was struck by the memories that are engraved into the land. The sagebrush are my childhood dreams, the farigrounds are a mother's child, the mountains are finding onesself, the whiteness is unwelcoming, a meal is a fluttering of everything that once was, and the valley is the palm of your hand. Welcome to voices from Teton Valley, ID.



The Palm of Your Heart

There is an ache that sets in when we discuss our departure from the Teton Valley. I feel it also. My Dear One, things change. You may grow up and you may grow on, you may leave the valley, but the Teton Valley cannot ever be gone from you. It has become you. You carry it with you. It is alive in your bloodrun, in your heart-rhythm, in your wide-valley glance of what is in front of you. It has become you, in its tenderness, its kindness, and the soft way it raised you to understand nature and openness and trust. This valley can't be left, it is a part of you. You have become its landscape. You carry the palm of its heart with you.

Do this, my Love. Cup your hand, as if you are holding something tiny, quiet. Look closely. See it? The topography of this home is known like the inside of your own hand. Your fingers all together, your thumb a rim as if the content could be liquid. Curve it small and tight. Notice the folds and creases, the meandering of the lines like waterways, the basin, the apex at your fingertips, the landscape of silence, the fleshy hills of calm, the endless variation of the geography like skin. Bring the contents of the palm to touch your heart. See? This valley is never far. Look close at your cupped hand; the folds and the curves and the hills and the valleys, the nobbs, and the way the palm reaches, basin-like, into an extension of forever, into the dry-farms of Idaho. Into big sky country. See how you will always hold this valley as your own?

Orient your cupped hand, so that your fingers, the entire range of them, are to the East. Isn't that impressive? The middle finger, so grandeur in its height, its purpose, its popularity. The tall and slightly egoic way it reaches above the rest, claiming all attention and desire. So Grand. It leaves the less-known peaks draping at its side; nameless and without affirmation. But part of an infamous mountain range, nonetheless. Those smaller peaks, pinky, pointer, ring finger: Owen, Tee-winot, the South. The range can be a backdrop or an accomplishment. Within its midpoints, its folds and its knuckles, within the $\frac{1}{4}$ mark and $\frac{1}{2}$ way mark where we can find its solace. A sanctuary. Fields of green and flowers, and snow fields and marmots. Silence amongst the aspens tucked into the knuckled folds. True beauty hidden to those who don't know how to wander slow.

Trace the lifeline of your cupped palm slowly with one finger while you reminisce of days on the Teton River. The main crease of your palm, your lifeline, the lifeline of the valley. Notice the streams and springs that feed into it. See how you connect your soul to that which is your valley's soul? Through lifelines, waterways, veins of life. The braids and folds and journeys meander your palm, meander your valley. Sway and scurry and carve and bend the pathways and the reeded grasses on its shore. The moose wander, fish declare a ceasefire from man-made distraction. That which is unimportant sinks and that which remains floats into you. You can

rest here, on her waters, and let the lazy river settle you into summer. The solstice's promise reflects off her waters, into the heart center of each one of us. The lifeline traced by those who know how to pause.

Your thumb, cupped along the side of the great valley, as a gentle steadfast western ridgeline. Steady the ridge as it climbs to the low peaks and easy meadows of the Big Hole Mountain Range. Your thumb's bend creates the synchronicity of valleys, the repetitive angles that leave similar shadow lines, and light. The creases inside your knuckles show valleys and waterways that nurture the fields. Canyons demure but worthy of our steadfast companionship; Henderson, Mahogany, Horseshoe. See them along your thumb's exterior, the cradle of this valley, the ridgeline that rocks the valley safe and quiet.

You are bound to green sways of grass, tender nightfalls near eleven, stars as reminders of infinity, simplicity in the breeze-quiet. In the palm of your heart, you are tied forever to the heartbeat that the rest of the world ceased to listen. Leaving Teton Valley requires great strength and a lot of bravery. It demands a seeking and promises a return. Wherever you may settle, you will be drawn to a return like we are drawn to our own true core. Over and over again. But while you roam, let the cupped hand curve its natural map of what your heart knows is always home.

40 ACRES, 20 YEARS

Thanksgiving we move into the old Sears & Roebuck A-frame, newly fitted with south facing windows. A raspberry patch reaches toward the tall grass & binding weeds.

At the bottom of the pasture, the original homestead is listing toward the earth, tired but still inhabited. A fox family makes a home in the dirt floor.

The land is slope & bend, field & forest, creek & springs, a subtle path into the wilderness.

Our neighbors are the owls, moose, bear, and martens. It is wildly quiet. We explore on soft feet to find huckleberry patches, dark springs, lady's slipper, the waypoints of bear & mountain lion, morels real & false. We make a never-ending retreat.

Beehives placed in the meadow ringed by chokecherries result in one very satisfied bear. Tulips migrate as if by magic. A marten steals chickens one by one. An owl spooks the rest. The dogs patrol the edge of the forest where the bears remain. The wind howls and the snow reaches the roof on the north side.

A baby arrives in the

living room. Her eyes unfocused as the dappled light through aspen leaves. A newly born moose is tangled in the loose barbed wire. The mother waits for days. I deliver her calf to the ring of chokecherries, heartbroken. A slack fence is deadly. We learn.

Aspen shoots fill the meadow and soon, so soon, it is a grove. The old growth falls. The creek floods, jumps its bank, and meanders a hundred times. Bull thistle gives way to knapweed and hounds tongue. A garden leads to a porch leads to a garage. The homestead is revived but the raspberry patch has moved on.

A small boy wanders up the field without looking back as if called by another wildness. A wayward blue heron browses overhead. The red-tails circle and shrill their annual romance. Generations of dogs tear through the undergrowth chasing grouse & rabbits.

A neighbor appears first to the south, across the creek. Then another to the north, through the chokecherries. The houses are palatial with enormous windows that provide perfectly framed views. Their gates

are closed tight. Meanwhile, the children stretch and grow. Their paths meander through mystery. Our gate, as rickety as it is, remains open to their return.

After each interminable winter the Spring Beauties emerge, right along the edges of receding snow. This perennial miracle leaves me grateful & heartened. I see the voles have turned the soil again. The creek is roaring. I am endlessly humbled & held by the mystery that surrounds. I release to the ground tears of Thanksgiving.

By: Deirdre Morris



TETON VALLEY SEASONS

Super Snow Season

Let's start with winter...winter here in Teton Valley, ID seems never ending but the fun part is that we get Super Snow! There can be big saturated snowflakes, crisp bluebird days, and if you are at Grand Targhee ski resort sometimes the snow can look like glitter in the air. Some days might fool you into thinking it is nice outside but when you step outside you are slapped by ice cold wind. There are also flat & bleak days that make you just want to drink hot cocoa and watch a movie. Winter here can be confusing...in November there might be deep snow but in December there might not be snow for weeks. A Teton Valley winter makes you happy when you sled behind a snowmobile with a friend, score or block a goal in a hockey game, or wait for a school cancelling storm to bluster in. It can also humble you when icy wind hits your face while feeding your animals, when your truck is stuck in a snow drift, or you fall so much trying to ski or snowboard that you are sore for a week!

Mud Season

Spring in other places might be about the flowers budding and the warm weather coming but not so much in Teton Valley. Yes, there are the first buttercups & shooting stars but spring here is mostly Mud Season. It starts when the snow turns dirty, the trees come poking up again and all the snow turns to rain....then mud is everywhere. The horse people start to clean up the once frozen horse manure from winter and the valley kids are getting ready for 4H season.

Here is a true valley mud season tale: My mom and I had just figured out our "hen" was actually a rooster because 'she' started crowing. One day I was shoveling manure and the rooster started attacking me! I started chasing him, trying to kick him away with my boots. As I was trying to chase him, I was also running away too! Before I knew it I slipped and fell in a colossal mud and manure mash. I felt like those slow- mo commercials where someone spills something and yells "nooooooo." Mud and horse manure infested my boots, clothes, hair and hands. My mom chased the rooster away and helped me up but I feared both the rooster and the mud from that day on! Later that day I went to my dad's and he said "Daisy, the house smells like horse sh*t!" I started laughing.

Wild n' Free Season

Summer in Teton Valley is exquisite! The grass is verdant and you can still see snowcapped mountains. After all the mud dries up from the spring people are excited to bike, hike, horseback ride, motorcycle, and just feel free!

You can have a lemonade stand with your friends, ride your bike for ice cream from Corner Drug or The Emporium, swim in the Big Eddy, ride your horse up Horseshoe Meadows and dance around a bonfire. If you are lucky, you can do all that on one summer day! You can definitely plan on coming home sometimes with scrapes and bruises. There is also Thursday night barrel racing club, starry nights, getting frustrated at tourists, and watching the clouds go by or playing with slime!

Yebaani Season

Yebaani is the Native American Shoshone word for autumn. The Shoshone-Bannock people were the original keepers of what is now Teton Valley. People here call a good fall in Teton Valley an Indian Summer. This means more days of sunshine and more time to prepare for winter.

A lot of changes and questions come in autumn and you just never know when the snow will fall. Will it be 10 degrees on Halloween making your costume obsolete under all your winter coats? Will it be your last horse ride until Spring? When will be the last time you'll be able to camp under the stars? Will you be able to get all the outdoor chores and activities done?

Yebaani in Teton Valley is the time of bright, leafy magic and preparing before the snow flies. All the seasons come together in fall... a little bit of rainstorms, sunshine, snow flurries and color all at once. Yay Teton Valley!

This little town is wonderful and writing this reminded me of how lucky I am to live here. I chose to do this writing about the seasons because they are an infinite part of what makes Teton Valley.

IGNORANT HEARTS OF TETON VALLEY

Teton Valley is a beautiful, dream-like paradise. If you have stepped foot here, you have felt the true peace and wild enchantment of the skies and the mountains. The valley breathes air of healing, and it may feel like anyone can heal here. Since I was younger, it was a safe-haven. Nothing happened here, it was peaceful, quiet, and happy! I heard stories of bigger cities and couldn't help but cringe, know-

ing I was lucky to be growing up in the greatest place ever. But the more I grew, the more I felt trapped, and as my eyes opened to the reality around me, I realized the dark gaze that this community had upon me. Here, there are people here who would never accept me or see me as an equal. The horrifying truth is that Teton Valley is just like any other place.

I know you don't want to hear that. Of course Teton Valley

is great, but at the heart of our community, there is a problem that too many people are ignoring, and that ignorance is topped off with the delicious flavor of white privilege.

This is about the woman making a sandwich, correcting a Hispanic mother on how to say pickle as she visibly shakes in embarrassment. It is about that man working behind the counter lightly joking about burning Jews while customers stand around

uncomfortably. It is about the man denied service at the register because he doesn't speak English and there is no translator in sight. This is about the Thai waiter, mocked for his heavy accent and told to speak English, as he tries to compose himself enough to take the order. Always, we all stand in shock, frozen in shame. It is a shame for believing that this place was better, different, or brighter. It is a shame that believing that, in the places where

the sun shines and the mountains tower, no evil can touch us. Even as it cackles in our glowing faces. Facing the truth we know, there are people here who are racist, aggravated or confused by the people of color in this valley who only want to fit in. This community has so much room to grow, but it cannot as long as so many people choose to look the other way. Teton Valley fails over and over to protect and advocate for anyone that isn't a wealthy white person.

In the end, all we want is to salvage the prosperity of this valley. Because, as it stands, there is still an abundance of beauty, turned heads, and ignorant hearts.

By: Patricia Lazalde





THE TETON MOUNTAINS

What are the Tetons to me? Well first and foremost they are my home and I feel unbelievably blessed to live and be here. I am here because of long term planning, a huge driving desire to be here and obviously very good fortune. Mountain landscapes have always moved me and while I still hope to immerse myself in foreign cultures and see the sunrises and sunsets in far off lands, I worked hard for and am blessed to have 'home' in one of the most beautiful and serene places on the planet.

There is so much noise in our daily worlds these days. There are so many distractions that keep us from really listening to our inner selves and finding our authentic paths forward. Most of these were imposed by societal patterning long before we even realized what was happening. Others seem self-imposed maybe because we don't really want to deal with our past hurts, acknowledge past disappointments or slow down long enough to find our own paths through this crazy world. While raising kids and working in corporate America I committed to myself to break free from this cycle. Yearning to evolve and grow past what felt like an unrewarding and mundane career, I dedicated myself to study ... to reading scripture and philosophy and to learning from the prophets, saints and wise men who have gone before me only to find after years of study that they all are saying the same thing ... that the answers are not in the books and the answers don't live in the scriptures. They lie within us all.

'God', the divine, our light, lives within all of us, within our souls and it's our job to find the quiet and peace so that we can hear it's voice and find our own way through our unique karmic journey. Our answers lie within. Some seem to find that stillness in meditation, some in prayer, some in art, music, yoga or even in writing for it is different for us all and we are all on our own personal path and journey, but for me it is found high in the mountains, up in the thin air and raw beauty at elevation.

When I am up at the top of mountains with their ageless granite spires reaching up to the sky, my heart is completely free and I can truly hear myself. Looking out on the beautiful Teton Mountain Range and experiencing its timeless beauty just makes me feel puny and insignificant but in a very very good way. My petty issues and problems seem to be just that, petty and insignificant. They evaporate as do the noises and influences of the world I left so very far below. They are a place where I can hear myself and be most 'myself'. I can spend hours upon days without anything in my ears but the sound of the wind and the freedom of my thoughts. That is what the Tetons are to me.

I climb and ski them in the winter. I hike through them with my llama string on multi-day treks in the summers and I ride my horse through their mountain passes during that very short window when they are open and free from snow. They are the place where my life is free and its rhythm easy. They are a sanctu-

ary where there is no status, no expectations, no past and no future ... only the now and the raw beauty of this land.

I know I haven't changed the crazy world beneath me during my voyage up high but maybe I have because I'm changing me from the inside out and I'm changing the way I look at the world. As I come around every corner or topple over each knoll what do I find but myself in its serenity, in its peace and in its beauty. To me the Tetons are my quiet place where I can find myself, where I can hear myself, where I am home.

Enjoy
Enjoy the challenge
Enjoy the clarity
Revel in the beauty that surrounds you
Understand the age of the world
Realize how many have stood
Where you stand & seen the same
Understand how much life changes
See how mother earth has (& will) outlive us all
Bask in your insignificance ... and the insignificance of your problems
Be free -- this is as bad as it gets
Know that the worst thing that can happen in your life is you end up here,
Dirt poor ... Teton dirt poor realize the strength that comes from that realization
life is good
Enjoy

By Paul Forester

LUNCHBOX LOUIE

By: Mac Sullivan



Moments that mean the most to me in Teton Valley are those where one is so present, that you want the moment to last forever, and it does in a way... in your heart and the hearts of those you share it with.

Let's start with Amateur Rodeo Night on Thursdays at the Driggs Fairground in Teton Valley, Idaho. Amateur in this instance means you can ride a donkey, a mule, a pony and of course, a horse and even walk the barrels if you want. We did that from time to time, if we had a fired up 'hot horse', we'd walk them around the barrels to help them remember their calmness and quiet minds.

Many nights we'd bring a trailer full of horses, each one of them needing to be worked this way or that way and experience Rodeo Night. Particularly Lunchbox Louie. Lunchbox Louie was pint size, you would say, maybe the size of two and a half bales of hay, and Louie's rider, Luke was pint size too! With the colors in the sky serenading us with rusty golds, cotton candy pinks and violet hues, the horn blew hard, the arena gates swung open and spectators saw a midnight dynamo, Lunchbox Louie and Luke bolt the gate. To the spectator's surprise, the duo headed straight for the west fence

across the arena and then for the fence on the other side of the arena and then tried for the opening gate where they started from. Needless to say, they were supposed to make a straight shot to the barrels and do a configuration of eights around them. Luke couldn't have been more than 8 or 9 years old, and you could see stubborn against stubborn in pure action. If anybody knows ponies, the pony is going to win. If anyone knows Lunchbox Louie, you'd take a wager on him too! Everyone on the stands and Luke's Mom too, was holding their breath for that little girl because you could see her determination all the way up the stands.

The evening fell silent, if you can imagine that, with all those horses in the paddocks, the cows at the north end and Waylon Jennings drifting through the evening haze. The sunset even held still as all watched the grit of this pocket sized cowgirl work her way with Louie.

Finally, when it didn't seem like it was going to happen and Louie was going to keep his reputation of mudeatin stubborn, Luke's unfaltering intention got through to Lunchbox Louie and they sprinted in the right direction, rounding the first barrel, around the second and rounding the third and then a high fired gallop to the home

gate. You could see stubborn melded with determination and finished together as one might of will.

Now, we all expected Luke to have tears in her eyes, because her and Louie's time was not one for the books. Some would even call it disqualified. Not Luke. She had the biggest grin on her face, threw her arm in the air, and said, "We did it!" The crowd exhaled a grand congratulatory exclamatory sigh of.....relief. Followed by foot stomping on the bleachers and rowdy clapping for this gritty cowgirl and her fiery steed, Lunchbox Louie.

This pair purely stole the hearts of the crowd.

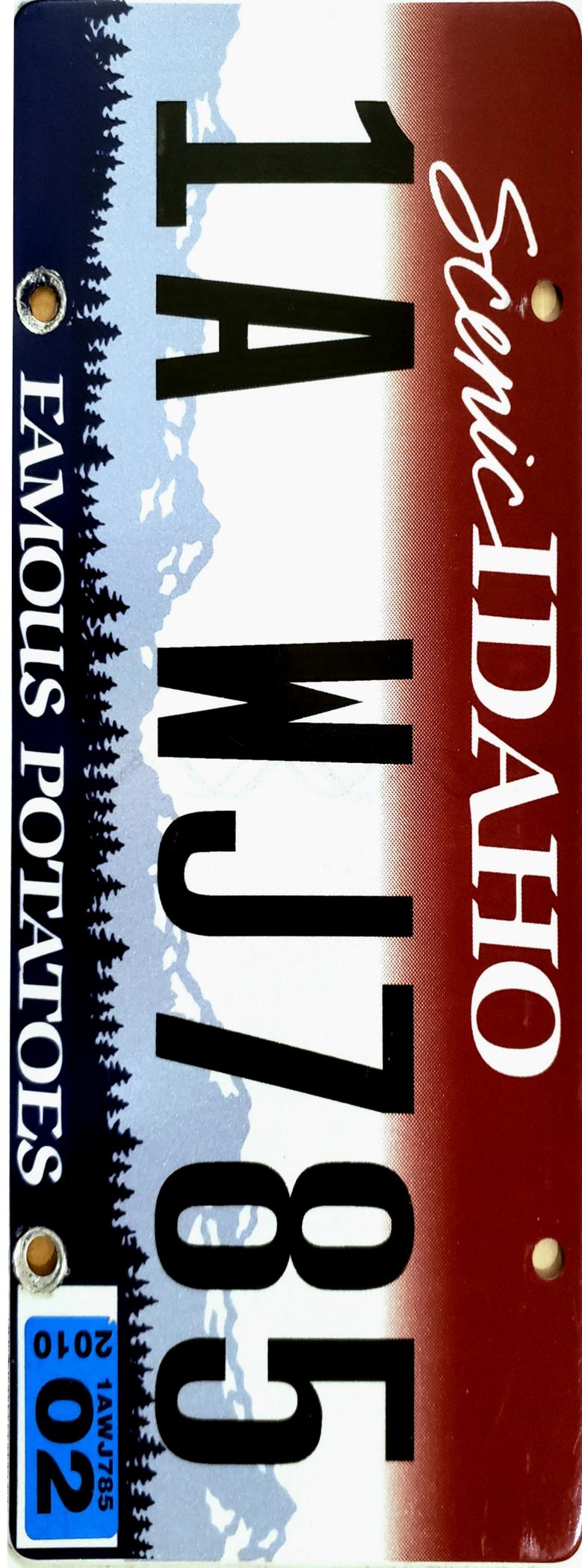
The night moved on, the sunset continued in its sacred colors setting over the Big Holes and the dusty arena and the crowd and the horses and cows and loud speaker. Yes, this moment stood still and was one of those moments that last forever and ever, etched in our hearts in Teton Valley, Idaho.



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