

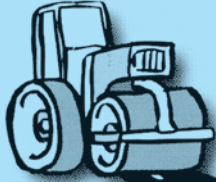


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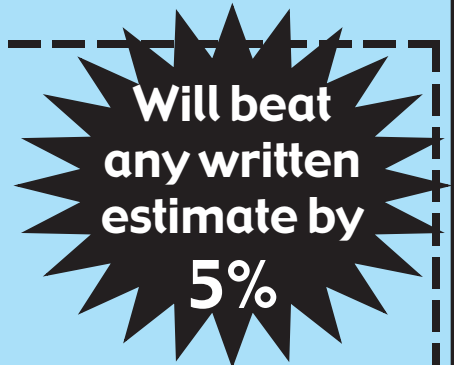
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**Positive News for a Change!**

Check the online issue to see the pictures in color!

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## HANDY NUMBERS

### COUNTY SERVICES

Fire & Ambulance .....	911
Jefferson County Sheriff.....	303-277-0211
Boulder County Sheriff.....	303-441-4444
Gilpin County Sheriff.....	303-582-5500
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Golden PO Bulk Mail .....	303-278-9235
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Ralston Valley Sr High .....	303-982-1078
Golden Senior High .....	303-982-4200
Nederland Elementary .....	303-258-7092
Nederland Jr & Sr High.....	303-258-3212
Gilpin County. ....	303-582-3444

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# Lightning Tips

Electrical strikes and surges from lightning can destroy your home, cause severe injury and even death. With the recent lightning strikes affecting residents across the nation, the nonprofit Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH)<sup>®</sup> offers the following tips to help families reduce their risk of lightning injuries and protect their home.

## Protect Your Family

1. Stay alert and listen carefully for the first signs of lightning or thunder. Remember, "If Thunder Roars, Go Indoors<sup>™</sup>."

2. Seek shelter. Lightning often hits before the rain begins, so don't wait for the rain to start before leaving.

## If Outdoors

1. Avoid water, high ground and open spaces.

2. Stay away from metal objects including wires, fences and motors.

3. Find shelter in a sizable building or in a fully enclosed metal vehicle. Completely close the windows and don't lean on the doors.

4. Do not get under a small canopy, small picnic shelter, or stand near trees.

5. If you cannot take shelter indoors, crouch down with your feet together and place your hands over your ears to minimize hearing damage from the thunder.

6. Stay at least 15 feet away from other people.

## If Indoors

1. Avoid water and stay away from doors and windows.

2. Do not use landline telephone or headsets. Cell phones are safe.

3. Turn off, unplug and stay away from appliances, computers, power tools, and television sets as lightning may strike exterior electric and phone lines inducing shocks to equipment inside.

## After the Storm

1. Do not resume outdoor activities until at least 30 minutes after the last lightning strike or thunderclap.

2. Call 911 immediately if anyone is injured and use first aid procedures. Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge, so it is safe to administer medical treatment.

## Protect Your Home

### Surge Protective Devices

1. These systems protect electronic and electrical appliances from all but the most severe electrical surges or direct strikes.

2. They should be installed at all items to be protected. A good electrical grounding system is essential.

## Whole House Surge Protection

1. A whole house surge protection system can be installed on the electric meter or the electrical panel to help protect the appliances and electronic equipment in your house such as computers, TVs and DVD players.

2. Contact your local electric company for installation information. If your utility company doesn't offer the service, a qualified electrician can install this device at your electrical panel.

## Lightning Protection Systems

1. These systems provide a direct path for lightning to follow to the ground rather than through the home structure and its wiring. Consult a qualified contractor (UL-listed/LPI-certified or qualified electrician) for installation.

*This list was provided by the nonprofit Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH)(R).*

**Editor's Note: For mountain residents-try to observe your immediate area for smoke or flames caused by lightning and report anything of concern to 911.**



# TRI-COUNTY MOUNTAIN CRAFTS

<p><i>Jefferson</i></p> <p><b>Friday</b> <b>Sept. 19</b> <b>6 - 9 PM and</b></p>	<p><i>Gilpin</i></p> <p><b>Friday Night</b> <b>Meet the Members</b> <i>Enjoy light snacks &amp; Beverages!</i></p>	<p><i>Boulder</i></p> <p><b>Saturday</b> <b>Get a Head Start on your Christmas Shopping!</b></p>
<p><b>Saturday</b> <b>Sept. 20</b> <b>10 AM - 4 PM</b></p>		
<h2>2ND ANNUAL AUTUMN ARTS FESTIVAL</h2>		

# Two Mountain Chainsaw Mamas

By Sondra Fields

Once upon a time in the not so distant past two mountain women, Kathy and Karen, unbeknownst to each other, picked up their chainsaws and began transforming old dead trees and logs into works of art.

Now, Kathy and Karen, who live within 15 miles of each other in the mountains above Golden, Colorado, have never met. In fact, Karen Adler, (pictured here at right) who's been a chainsaw mama in the Nederland/ Rollinsville area since 1997 had no idea Kathy Hutchens existed even though Hutchens, who lives in Coal Creek Canyon (pictured here below), has been creating chainsaw art since 2004. Hutchens had heard of a woman chainsaw artist in Nederland, but that's about all she knew.

These are two strong, independent women who, as you might suspect, are alike in many ways and quite different in others. Both, not surprisingly, have a background in art and both women are passionate about their work. Bears are their primary sculpture subjects. Another similarity is they each say they wouldn't be able to do their work if not for the help of men in their lives.

Karen's husband Dan has been her biggest cheering squad, encouraging her from the start. In fact, Dan Adler is responsible for getting the

chainsaw into Karen's hands. One day, somewhere in the mid-ninety's, Dan watched his creative wife chip away at a piece of wood with her pocketknife. As she laboriously

carved one ornament after another, he realized the process was much too slow. Being the male problem solver that he is, Dan began buying power tools for Karen. First came a dremel, then an electric carver. The third power tool Karen received was a chainsaw. "I wore out the dremel," Karen remembers, "dulled and broke the carving tips for the electric carver, went through countless angle grinders and burned up 3 electric chainsaws in the first couple of years. So he got me a real chainsaw with a full chisel chain; that way I could really remove some material. Rrr, Rrr, Rrr..."

From Kathy, I learned there are special chainsaws for carving that are smaller and have narrower and more pointed blades. Kathy uses carving blades of three different sizes to produce the uniquely expressive animals for which she has become known.

Karen, has heard of these special carving blades, but so far has never used one. She uses the big old chainsaws. One of her rules for safety is if she cannot hold the saw in one hand she doesn't use it.

Where Karen has husband Dan for encouragement and help hauling logs around, Kathy has neighbor Dave. Dave helps with pulling massive logs into her work yard and keeps Kathy's saws sharp and buzzing away. Dave is Kathy's backbone. As a thank you Kathy carved him a six-foot snarling grizzly bear –teeth and all. It took her 25 hours.

Kathy's wood carving career actually began in her 20's. As an outdoor person she was always in the backcountry: backpacking, camping, hiking. As she meandered among the



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majestic trees she felt at one with the spirit of the forest. From time to time she'd stop, pull out her chisel and carve some eyes and a chin, an animal, or maybe just a design, whatever she saw in the dead trees she came across—just little bits of things and only on

but Kathy wanted more. As the world turns, it just so happened that her instructor was headed out East to study with a very exclusive and expensive chainsaw artist. “Wow,” thought Kathy, “that sounds cool!” Since several thousand dollars was out of her reach she headed to her computer. With a little research she found Kenny in Washington State who would become her chainsaw teacher. She didn't even own a chainsaw. They terrified her. Nonetheless, something was compelling Kathy beyond her fear.

dead trees. It was fun to leave a little forest art behind for other hikers to enjoy. This was many years before carving with a chainsaw became her passion and many years after her love of nature was infused into her being.

Kathy Hutchens had worked as a journeyman lithographer and desktop publisher for too many years, 35 to be exact. She'd worked with famous artists like Frank Howell and Robert Venosa, was financially successful and fried... ready, more than ready, to kick the computer to the curb and step back into nature—maybe carving big logs with a chainsaw would be her next venture.

Kathy's entre into nature came in a somewhat unusual way. It was her last year of high school when she became seriously ill, was bed ridden and slept a lot. Yep, mononucleosis. She slept and dreamt. Dreamtime became real time. She'd be in a cave exactly like in the book *Valley of the Horses*. With her in the cave were all these animals: a horse, a lion, and a bear. They were her friends. When she and her animal friends would go into the forest she found she could communicate with the trees like she did with animals. Kathy says that during that dreamtime the trees taught her how to listen. “They're a library of ancient history.” To this day before cutting into a log she looks and listens to discover the spirit hidden within the wood.

Her fears were soon quelled. Kathy was ready for a leap and Kenny was there to assure her. He promised to teach her so she'd feel secure and be safe. The reward would be her new ability to use a chainsaw as a tool for making beautiful art. She saved her money, went off to Washington, had “so much fun,” and came home with a healthy respect for this very dangerous tool.

Sculpting wood began for Karen at age nine when she received her first pocketknife. A year earlier when her brother turned nine he received a knife and that was it; Karen had to have one too. She was unrelenting in making her desire known for an entire year until she had a pocketknife in her hands. She's been carving one thing or another ever since.

Where Washington Kenny taught Kathy chainsaw safety and the elements of artful chainsaw carving, it was husband Dan who instructed Karen on safety rules, mindfulness and good posture, but not on carving. *(Continued next page.)*

At one point in her adult life Kathy was in between projects and antsy. She'd just finished building her house, and needed something creative to do. A class on bench building, taught by a woman, whose name escapes her, was the answer. Her first bench sits beside her house today...



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## Highlander Arts

Karen is self-taught. “It just made sense to me,” Karen says, “I have an incredible sense of three dimensions.” Karen admits she too was initially scared of chainsaws. As a result she has become an impeccably safe chainsaw operator.

Safety comes first for Kathy. She emphatically states, “You don’t just pick up a chainsaw and start carving. You have to know what you’re doing...it just takes a second to get injured.” Kathy Hutchens and Karen Adler have both had excellent teachers. Neither woman has had an accident with their chainsaws in all the years they’ve been carving.

As a kid Kathy was noted for her ability to draw. Throughout grade school she was considered talented in music and art. “In junior high, Kathy recalls, “I actually won a State award for this massive macramé hanging that covered half a wall. I was the kid who would stay on the shore with my sketch board, when the family went out on the boat fishing. My feelings come out in art— always.” Karen, on the other hand, although she’d been making art since toddlerhood, never considered herself an artist. Her art teacher mother was constantly correcting her work. As a result, Karen grew up thinking she wasn’t very good. It was her husband who recognized her talent and encouraged her.

Karen and Dan Adler owned the Village Video store in Nederland from 1986 to 2005. It was at the store that Karen really began to use her artistic talents. She’d paint the windows; make holiday decorations and displays like a batman cave or a T-Rex head when *Jurassic Park* came out. It was during the video store days, around 1997, when she began her chainsaw carving. One of the first things she carved was a garden gnome. Karen carved it for herself, but took it into the store to show folks. Soon requests for her chainsaw carvings were coming in.

Eventually, she carved a bear that ended up in front of the B & F Market in Nederland. That was great advertisement.



Another chainsaw creation of great fun was carving the Frozen Dead Guy Days ice sculpture in the Nederland roundabout. Karen did this ice carving three different years. Chainsaw artist Karen Adler was becoming known. From there on it’s been word of mouth.

Some pretty impressive orders have come in. One commissioned piece was a totem pole reflecting the totem symbols and style of the Haida Indians of the Pacific Northwest. It took her a year of research, many meetings, and 376 hours of carving to create this strikingly beautiful 20-foot tall totem pole. She’s had a few large commissions like the totem pole. Another being a 10-foot mama bear with two cubs. On this one she used her chainsaw while standing on a scaffolding 10 feet above the ground. Around the Lagos Lake community you can see statues of bears and other creatures on front porches and beside doors and many street signs carved by Karen help folks find their way.



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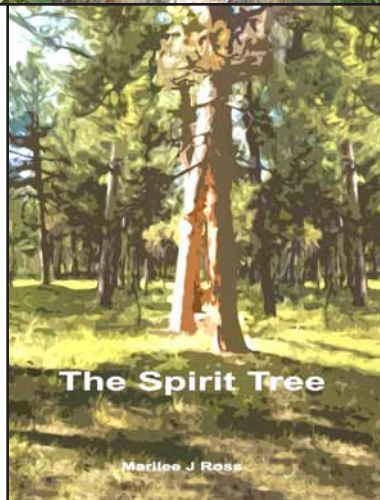
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desire to get lost in my projects,” she explains, “I’m constantly amazed that such a heavy piece of equipment can just melt the wood like butter. Following the grains and the wood patterns is like a runner’s high. An intense part of your brain is activated and the rest of the world disappears as you get into the spirit of the wood. The tree tells me go a little deeper here, make a curve or make it pull out.” Today, after a recent recovery from another serious illness, Kathy has more clarity than ever before. “I see the wood more creatively... I feel honored to be able to do so much being a part of nature, preserving nature.”

In fact, a newly published book, classified as a children’s book, but actually a book for children of all ages was inspired by Kathy’s passion to preserve nature. Local author Marilee J. Ross tells the story of an old grandfather tree known as the *The Spirit Tree*, the title of her book. Spirit Tree is about to be cut down by the forest service when Kathy intervenes (this part is based on Kathy’s experience). The Spirit Tree under Kathy’s adept hands is transformed into The Spirit Bear, which stands on guard with his walking stick welcoming hikers into the forest. *The Spirit Tree* book as well as Kathy’s bear sculptures can be found at the Wondervu Gift Shop next to the Wondervu Café in Coal Creek Canyon.

The Mad Moose in Estes Park and The Happy Cooker in Georgetown are two stores that carry Karen’s sculptures. As for the future Karen says, “I’ll be working at something till the day I die.” She loves all forms of art: carving (bears, moose, walking sticks, wall hangings, signs, etc.), painting, sewing, ceramics, photography, you name it. Presently, she’d love to be a full time Chainsaw Mama.

Being a full time Chainsaw Mama is Kathy’s desire as well. Her next step is going to the customer and creating sculptures right on their property. Besides her beloved bears, she loves making tables, lamps, bear benches, and New Zealand Tiki totems poles. Neither Karen nor Kathy is limited to the amazing bears they carve. They’re open to what the future has to offer. Mountain Chainsaw Mama Kathy Hutchens can be reached at 720-227-1072. Mountain Chainsaw Mama Karen Adler’s website is [www.roniart.com](http://www.roniart.com)

Before lifting her chainsaw, Karen looks at the log. She determines the front side, then the back side of the bear; if that’s the creature she’s creating. Next, she studies the wood to see if the bear will be standing straight or will its posture be twisted in some way. Looking at the wood she asks herself, “Can I get out of this wood what I want? Is there enough material there to leave behind what I want?”

Kathy approaches her carving from what could be considered a more spiritual perspective. “It is my heart’s

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# Buffalo Field Campaign ~ [www.buffalofieldcampaign.org](http://www.buffalofieldcampaign.org)

Rosalie Little Thunder September 19, 1949-August 9, 2014

- The Buffalo Field Campaign family is mourning the passing of Rosalie Little Thunder, our co-founder, leader, and a strong source of inspiration to all who had the honor of knowing her. She passed away on Saturday, August 9. Since hearing the news I've been having a hard time finding words to express who she was, the impact she made with her life, and how much she gave for the buffalo and all beings. Seeing the Montana buffalo slaughter firsthand in 1997 inspired her to

found Buffalo Nations, the organization that would become Buffalo Field Campaign. In her words: "Since I witnessed the 1996-97 slaughter, I have continued to be involved in the ongoing effort to stop the slaughter. Mike Mease and I collaborated and founded Buffalo Nations, whose mission was simply to protect the Yellowstone buffalo herd. Two strategies evolved and therefore, two projects also evolved. The immediate threats to the herd, demanding immediate action, was undertaken by Buffalo Field Campaign. The second strategy was to coordinate cultural approaches and seek tribal involvement. Buffalo Nations continued to function by its Lakota name, Tatanka Oyate."

In the winter of 1999 Rosalie led 40 Lakota men and women and 60 others from different tribes on a 507-mile walk from the Black Hills of South Dakota to Yellowstone's Roosevelt Arch, at Gardiner, MT. She carried the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe Bundle of her people. The walk was, in her words, an act of spiritual activism for the buffalo. In her view, activism is an integral part of community and community is essential to survival: "Remind yourself every morning, every morning, every morning: 'I'm going to do something. I've made a



commitment.' Not for yourself, but beyond yourself. You belong to the collective. Don't go wandering off or you will perish."


While we knew her as a visionary activist, artist, and organizer who dedicated a great part of her life to protecting wild buffalo, Rosalie was so much more. She was a counselor, a professor, a guardian of the Lakota language and culture, and a well-respected elder who fought tirelessly for the rights of Native (and all) people. As a mother and grandmother she was devoted to her extended family and their well-being.

Rosalie was a member of the Sicangu Lakota Oyate; Burnt Thigh Band, of the Little Thunder Tiospaye and the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. She lived in the Black Hills Treaty Territory in Rapid City, South Dakota. Rosalie remained active in the struggle to protect the buffalo until the very end of her life. In April Rosalie and BFC habitat coordinator Darrell Geist co-wrote *The Bloody Politics of Bison Slaughter: An Open Letter to Tribal Leaders and the American People*, calling on tribes and tribal organizations to stop participating in the wild buffalo slaughter and calling attention to the corrupt bison management policies of Montana and the federal government:

"Traditional people must guide our tribal leadership in a manner that reflects the integrity of our historical and cultural relationship with our relative, the buffalo. Montana politics has made a mockery of a keystone species." A close friend of Rosalie's, Jacie Estes, wrote on her blog about the belief that after you pass you meet a grandmother who asks whether you have helped the people, fed the hungry, and been kind to all. "Knowing Rosalie," she wrote, "she has been having good conversations with her but we know her answer to all questions is yes."

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# Gilpin Art Studio Tour ~ Update-Subdivision Paving

Dear Readers,

The Gilpin Art Studio Tour is organized by the artists to foster an appreciation of the arts in Gilpin County. It coincides with the fall aspen viewing. Enjoy your day in the high country meeting local artists and craftspeople that exhibit their work, demonstrate their craft and offer work for sale. The art for the group show is now on display at the library and will be available for viewing for the next several weeks. Please stop in if you are in the area.

**Location - Gilpin County Library, 15131 Hwy 119, Black Hawk: Dates: Meet Artists - Sept. 11th, Thursday 5:30 -7:00 PM TOUR: Sept. 20th, Sat. 11:00 AM - 5:00 PM - Sept. 21st, Sunday 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM**

## From BoCoFirm August 20, 2014

County continues its campaign of misinformation, in Sunday's Daily Camera and yesterday's public meeting, the County Commissioners continue to refuse to tell us the truth about why they defy the will of their constituents and that of the Court by refusing to fix our roads. The Commissioners went so far as to write: "While we respect the judgment of the court, we are disappointed with the ruling, as it removes an important tool (the LID) from the tool kit"(REF: Guest Editorial, Boulder Daily Camera, "Roads, funds and road reconstruction" Domencio, Gardner and Jones, August, 17, 2014).

This is analogous to a burglar complaining that the police removed a lock pick from his tool kit. It shouldn't be that difficult to understand. Using a LID for road maintenance is illegal. How long do they expect us to put up with this behavior? What's the truth? Do we have the funds or not?

On July 16, 2014, the County stated that "the Board of County Commissioners has already approved the budget for 2014 work and plans will move forward this year, independent of the legal outcome." The next day the Commissioners approved a \$4.4M contract with Asphalt Specialties for the repair of subdivision roads. By law the Commissioners cannot approve a contract without sufficient funds in the bank to cover the cost of the

contract. So what is the truth? We know the County had sufficient funds on July 17th. Then the funds "disappeared" a few days later. Did the funds "disappear" to punish subdivision residents because the County lost the lawsuit?

Let them eat bikes - And while Commissioners want us to believe that we simply don't have the money to fix our roads, someone ought to tell the Transportation Dept. Because they have under construction or are planning bike path shoulders all over the county. So the question remains. Why won't the Commissioners fix our roads?

Both Boulder County citizens and the Court have made it 'abundantly' clear. It is time that the Commissioners comply with state statutes. It is time to stop this nonsense and simply fix our roads. The issue isn't the absence of a plan. The issue isn't that the County doesn't have the funds to fix the roads.

BoCo FIRM will continue to work on your behalf until our roads are fixed without new taxes. The Plan to fix our roads -The Commissioners continue to state that they need a "new" plan to fix the subdivision roads. In actuality, the plan to fix our roads is straightforward. We submitted it to the Commissioners over three weeks ago. It is available at our web site [www.BoCoFIRM.org](http://www.BoCoFIRM.org)



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# Paying Water Users To Conserve For Hydropower

From Nelson Harvey

Here's a sure sign that your region's in drought: you stop paying your utility for the privilege of using water, and the utility starts paying you not to use water instead.

Outlandish as it sounds, that's what four major Western utilities and the federal government are planning to do next year through the \$11 million Colorado River Conservation Partnership. Under the agreement, finalized recently between the Department of Interior and the utilities Denver Water, the Central Arizona Project, the Southern Nevada Water Authority and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, farmers, cities and industries will get paid to implement two-year, voluntary conservation projects that put water back into the Colorado River. The goal is to demonstrate that so-called "demand management" can prevent water levels in lakes Powell and Mead from dropping too low for their dams to generate electricity.

"We want to demonstrate how we can live within our means on the river," said Jim Lochhead, CEO of Denver Water, whose city relies on Colorado River water piped east over the Continental Divide for about half of its water supply.

In the agricultural sphere, one candidate for funding

under the partnership would be rotational fallowing agreements, where farmers band together, dry up some of their land and leave the associated water in the river in dry years. Yet after years of Western cities "buying and drying" nearby farms to lubricate their growth, agricultural groups are eager to see other non-fallowing options explored as well.

"Fallowing is really a blunt force tool that would harm agriculture," said Terry Frankhauser, executive vice president of the Colorado Cattlemen's Association. "We want to try to explore other ways of reducing demand," like switching to less water intensive crops, watering less and accepting reduced yields, or water banking—foregoing diversions when you don't need them in exchange for the right to use more later.

In cities, projects eligible for funding could include things like water-smart landscaping, increased use of reclaimed water, or efficiency standards for appliances and new construction.

Whatever the demand-reducing mechanism, Lochhead said, "The goal is to develop a plan that we can put into place as we need to in emergency situations." And for water managers who depend on the Colorado River, losing power-generating capacity in lakes Mead and Powell would certainly qualify as an emergency. If water levels

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drop that low, there likely won't be enough head pressure in Lake Powell behind the Glen Canyon Dam to push through 7.5 million acre feet of water over 10 years. That's how much the upper basin states—Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming—are required to deliver to the lower basin under the 1922 Colorado River Compact. If they fall short, the lower basin states—Arizona, Nevada and California—have license to place a call on the river and force their friends in the upper basin to cut consumption. If the turbines inside Glen Canyon Dam ground to a halt, it could prompt power prices in the upper basin to spike. "If that happens, it would mean chaos in the basin among water users because everyone would be scrambling to try to shore up our water supplies," Lochhead said.

And losing power generating capacity could have other consequences: proceeds from the electricity generated at Glen Canyon Dam now fund recovery programs for four endangered species—the Kanab ambersnail, the razorback sucker, the humpback chub and the southwestern willow flycatcher—that are native to the Colorado River Basin. If enough water in Lake Powell evaporates, funding for those programs could too, allowing the federal government to intervene and curtail water use in the upper basin in the name of the Endangered Species Act.

Finally, if the turbines inside Glen Canyon Dam ground

to a halt, Lochhead points out that it could prompt power prices in the upper basin to spike, since roughly 5.8 million people now depend on electricity from the dam for a portion of their power supply. Exactly how much rates would rise remains unclear.

So how real is the threat of losing power at lakes Mead and Powell? The waters of both reservoirs aren't circling the drain just yet, but the prospect of either dropping below "minimum power pool" is hardly academic: modeling completed by the Bureau of Reclamation last year suggested that if the drought and water usage trends that prevailed in the basin between 2001 and 2007 continue through the end of this decade, there's a one-in-five chance that both Mead and Powell could drop too low to generate power by 2017.

"The consequences of that are really pretty devastating," said Lochhead. "We need to be ahead of that curve instead of being reactionary."

*Nelson Harvey is a freelance reporter and the editor of Edible Aspen Magazine.*

**Editor's Note:** I find it highly contradictory that Denver Water can act so 'conservation conscience' to protect hydropower while they are fighting to increase the size of Gross Reservoir by pulling even more water from the Colorado River through the Moffat Tunnel, don't you?



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# The Battle For Women's Suffrage Continues

By Gabriel Furshong

On the first day of February 1911, a determined woman named Jeannette Rankin stood before the Montana State Legislature and told the story of the long half-century battle for women's suffrage. Wyoming Territory came first, giving women the right to vote in 1889; Colorado Territory was next, extending the vote to women in 1893. By the time Rankin delivered her speech to Montanans, Utah, Idaho and Washington had all done the same.

Facing a chamber of white male Montanans empowered to make decisions for everyone else in the state, she framed her argument as part of the historical fight for American independence. "We are asking for the same principle for which men gladly gave their lives in the revolutionary war," Rankin said. "Taxation without representation is tyranny."

Two years later, an all-male legislature conceded that Rankin was right and voted to amend the Montana

Constitution to give women access to the ballot. A popular vote followed in 1914, with 53 percent of men voting to extend the franchise to women. Not one to waste time, Rankin ran for federal office at the first opportunity, and, in 1916, she became the first woman elected to the U.S. Congress, placing Montana at the forefront of the fight for women's equality.

Exactly a century has passed since the first woman cast a vote in Montana: Montanans elected a female governor in 2000, and in the 2013 state legislative session, a record 28 percent of lawmakers were women. For Montana native and Democrat Diane Sands, however, this is not enough.

"Suffrage is a process, not an endpoint," she said, shortly after announcing her decision to run for State Senate last fall. "The point of suffrage is to have a voice in government, which is not just the granting of the vote." Throughout her entire career as a political consultant, campaigner and fundraiser, Sands has fought for equal rights. In 1996, she was elected to the Montana State

House of Representatives as the first openly gay legislator in Montana history. She went on to serve four sessions in the House.

Citing research from the Center for Women in American Politics, Sands argues that the fight to ensure that women are fully represented in government is as important today as it was 100 years ago. Currently, women hold 24 percent of seats in state legislatures across the country, 20 percent of seats in the U.S. Senate, and 18.5 percent of seats in the U.S. House.

Sands points out that a view of the numbers through a partisan lens is even more sobering. In the Republican Party, to which Jeannette Rankin belonged, women hold just 8.6 percent of the seats in state legislatures across

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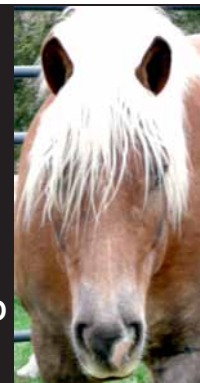
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the country, 4 percent of seats in the U.S. Senate and 4.3 percent of the seats in the U.S. House. In the Montana State Legislature, 47 percent of the Democratic delegation is women compared to 14 percent of Republicans, the majority party in both chambers.

On June 3, Sands came one step closer to improving these numbers by easily beating her male opponent in the Democratic primary to set up a general election contest with Republican Dick Haines, a former Missoula city commissioner.

A few weeks later, Diane Sands stood in front of a small memorial at Jeannette Rankin Park, near the University of Montana. The park was dedicated 34 years ago on March 4, on the day that would have been Rankin's 100th birthday. The park has been poorly tended since then; the paving stones that lead to the center of the lawn are overgrown with weeds, and the fountain at the end of the path hasn't worked for years.

The park's dilapidated condition seemed to reflect Sands' opinion of the present state of women in politics. "At the current pace, it will take more than 300 years to reach gender equity in our state Legislature," she said. "And there have been no women elected to federal office from Montana since Rankin."

The low-hanging political fruit has already been picked, Sands believes, and the battle for equal representation in

government will be tougher than the battle for the vote. It's not about solving just one problem; it's a fight to establish a kind of pipeline that encourages women to assume leadership roles in their careers and in their community. They can then receive recognition and support, run for office and, ultimately, win. The work to establish that pipeline involves fighting for equal pay, equal responsibility, and equal recognition, she said.

Sands paced around the cracked cement pad of the abandoned fountain, shaking her head. "There used to be lovely flowerbeds here," she said, "And look at all the damn dandelions in the path." She placed her hands on her hips. "We have to do something about this."

*Gabriel Furshong is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a column service of High Country News. He writes from Missoula, Montana.*



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## Hummingbird Survival

From Sarah Tory

Every year, the rufous hummingbird – a tiny fire-colored ball of feathers that weighs just three grams – flies up to 3,900 miles from its winter home in Mexico all the way to Alaska. At about three inches long, the rufous takes one of the longest migratory journeys of any bird its size. Over the past several decades, however, the feisty hummingbird has suffered: its numbers are declining at a rate of 3 percent per year, and now, scientists have a new theory as to why.

The rufous hummingbird is declining by 3 percent a year. Scientists believe drier conditions in the West are largely to blame.

Most scientific studies have focused on the fact that warmer temperatures push some birds into higher, cooler elevations and latitudes, but there's no consensus yet about how climate-driven changes in rain and snowfall will impact them. Yet newly published research that looked at climate impacts to 132 bird species across five western states and British Columbia, suggests that precipitation plays a surprisingly important role for many bird species, and particularly, for the rufous' long-term survival.

"The findings suggest that many birds tune into things that are controlled not by temperature but (mostly by) moisture availability, which carries over from the winter snowpack," said Julia Jones, a geoscience professor at Oregon State University who participated in the study. According to the report, rain and snow trends had major impacts on the population patterns of 60 percent of the bird species studied.

The researchers examined long-term data on bird populations and then tied the changes to concurrent climate events. In other words, if a species' population took a dip, the scientists looked to see what had changed in the regional climate at that time – temperature, precipitation or other variables. Precipitation was most frequently the best match to reflect shifts in bird populations over a 32-year period.

Matt Betts, an ecologist at the university and lead investigator for the study said: "We think that the (rufous) population is declining due to a general drying trend," referring to less precipitation in Western states seen over the last 40 years or so.

According to Betts, there are two possible reasons for the birds' dramatic decline. First, it could be that winters in the Pacific Northwest, where the birds arrive in May, have been receiving less snow, which means less moisture carried into the spring and summer, and thus fewer flowers for the birds to feed on. Plus, many hummingbirds nest in grassy mountain meadows, which rely mostly on



snow melt for spring growth. Or the crux of the decline, he said, could be that “the snow is melting earlier each spring, which means flowers bloom early and the hummingbirds, which are migratory, miss that peak in the blooming.”

Although the precipitation impacts are bad news for the hummingbirds, some species, like the drought-tolerant California towhee, will apparently be just fine; the study showed the desert-loving bird’s population has remained stable.

The next step, said Betts, will be to look at other habitat variables, like disturbance from forest fires and land use changes, like logging or other human development. For scientists, the challenge will be coming up with a way to predict how climate change will alter rain and snowfall as well as temperature – no easy task given the high natural variability seen in the West.

*Sarah Tory is an editorial intern at High Country News.*

*She tweets @tory\_sarah “This article was originally published in High Country News (hcn.org). The author is solely responsible for the content.”*

*Photo of Broadtailed hummer by Greg Joder.*



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# Thanks For The Wilderness We've Got

By Jonathan Thompson

Looking for a respite from jobs, laptops and cellphones, my friend Gabe and I backpacked into the Weminuche Wilderness in southwest Colorado this June. I'd like to say we were consciously celebrating the Wilderness Act's 50th birthday, but our decision to go into the area was mostly random.

If you're looking for solitude, wilderness can be a rotten choice, as the designation tends to be a people-magnet. Besides, the Wilderness Act is a bit worse for half-a-century's wear. Its philosophical underpinnings have been questioned. And our do-nothing Congress is especially useless when it comes to designating new wilderness areas, even if the proposals come from locals and have bipartisan support.

As we trudged up the trail past the wilderness boundary into a sloping field of tundra and rock, I got to thinking about what it must have been like to be environmentally minded in this region in the 1960s. By then, huge swaths of the San Juan Mountains had been forever altered by a century of hardrock mining. A spiderweb of roads covered the landscape.

Then, in 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Wilderness Act, which was created to hold such industrialization at bay. A few years afterwards, the Forest Service put forward a proposal to designate the Weminuche Wilderness. Most importantly, though, a diverse group of citizens from the region, from academics to hunters, helped shape the process. The effort, noted Ian Thompson in a special Durango Herald insert on the issue, was an attempt "to save the battered remnants of the original work of a Creator. To engage in this effort is the last hope of religious men."

Perhaps most remarkable is that the Forest Service proposal was not compromised into an unrecognizable pulp by the citizens' group, as one might expect today. Instead, the citizens expanded the Forest Service proposal to include previously excluded gems like Chicago Basin, a modern peak-bagging destination.

Gabe and I ended up next to an alpine lake that wasn't exactly untrammled. Half-burned cans and tinfoil and a broken fishing pole sat in the ring of an old campfire. Tailings piles from an abandoned mine climbed a slope next to the lake, and the rusty remnants of a wood-burning cook stove were scattered about an old cabin site. What

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really jarred us, though, was the sign telling us that the ground we were on was adjacent to private land, and that the owners sometimes helicoptered in to it and that we should respect their right to do so.

We had stumbled upon one of the most notorious mining claims in the state, a private parcel surrounded by wilderness that developer Tom Chapman has long tried to peddle or trade. In the meantime, guests from a nearby resort occasionally drop in via helicopter.

As we ate dinner and drank whiskey, we speculated on what we might do if the helicopter showed up. I'll spare you the details of our plan, particularly the part about two naked middle-aged guys performing an interpretive dance with a broken fishing pole. But I can assure you: It would have kept the helicopter away for a long, long time. Alas, the chopper never arrived to test our theory.

Even as Congress was preserving the Weminuche — it was officially designated in 1975 and expanded to its current size a few years later — the forces that threatened it were fading away. Chances are, miners and loggers would have stayed away regardless of the land's status. But there would have been other pressures on the land: Snowmobilers, motorcyclists and ATVers — now with advanced machines that can get them places that they wouldn't have dreamed of going in the 1960s — would

have pushed into the area. The same goes for mountain bikers.

And while the Forest Service could have denied those requests, they would have surely sparked massive battles in the process. Wilderness designation pre-empted those fights, saving us from their polarizing effects.

The wilderness system is not perfect; like the little lake we'd chosen to camp by, it looks more beautiful from a distance. But I, for one, am grateful that back in the 1960s, the nation's leaders had the wisdom to create the Wilderness Act, and that my parents and their fellow San Juan Basin citizens had the gumption and foresight to use it to protect a landscape that had nurtured them and their ancestors. That this probably couldn't happen today only makes their accomplishment more valuable.

Later that night, I awoke to what sounded like an animal breaking into our packs and stealing the summer sausage. I fretted about that for a while before turning to larger neuroses about work, life, love, children, mortality. Then I rolled over onto my back and looked up. There was no moon that night. And my God, the stars. The stars.

*Jonathan Thompson is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a column service of High Country News (hcn.org).*

*He is a senior editor of the magazine in Durango, Colorado.*



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# Duck, Goose, Duck

By Lois Hickman – JenLo Farm, Lyons

DUCK - On a frigidly cold January day, a skinny, shivering duck was brought to Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, near Lyons, Colorado. The kind person who found her thought he'd saved a wild mallard, but when he handed this cold, weak, and hungry duck over to the compassionate staff at Greenwood, they told him she wasn't wild, but a domestic duck, part mallard, but unable



to survive in the wild. They cared for her, making sure she was strong enough to be released—but not back out into the killingly cold environment she'd come from. Greenwood waterfowl experts determined that she was a Rouen; a breed developed several hundred years ago near the city of Rouen in the Normandy region of France. Crossing domestic with wild mallards resulted in ducks raised for their meat who can be mistaken for mallards but who are much heavier and stockier (three times the weight

of a wild mallard), with wings unable to launch them airborne. These ducks can't survive in the wild on their own. It is Colorado state law that domestic animals can't be left at Greenwood for more than 24 hours before they must find another home with a family who can safely care for them.

A call from Greenwood: "Lois, can you take this sweet duck? We're desperate to find a home for her." Yes, I could, and she was brought to JenLo Farm. I immediately named her Lakota in honor of a Native American tribe who once lived in this area. Lakota needed a gradual transition from the warmth and comfort of Greenwood to the more rugged life on a farm where she would be sheltered with other ducks and chickens in the unheated coop. For a week she lived in a snug pet carrier in the Tools and Treats storage shed, with a makeshift fence, food and water and a heat lamp. When the temperature finally rose from zero and below up into the 40s, the Lakota-duck setup moved to outdoor sunshine, where she and the *(Continued next page.)*

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## Highlander Animals

other ducks could ease into becoming acquainted through a safety fence. Wary curiosity gave way to happy acceptance; away went the fence, and Lakota blended into the gaggle as if she'd always belonged. She became the special friend of Lester, leader of the duck clan who had been the first to approach her when she graduated to outside living. She was ready to spend the nights in the coop, warmed by the body heat of 6 ducks sleeping together on the straw-covered floor, and 20 chickens on perches and in nesting boxes.

GOOSE - "Hello, Greenwood calling again. There's an adorable little goose waddling around on my desk and she needs a home. Can you please take her?" This

tiny gosling was found waddling in traffic in Parker, Colorado by a kind person named George. Unable to find anyone to claim her, George made the long drive to deliver this adorable yellow fluffball to Greenwood. Again, domestic, not wild, she was another candidate for JenLo Farm. She was brought in one of Greenwood's special bird carriers, a clear plastic storage tub with large ventilation holes cut in the top and covered with breathable mesh material and additional small holes punched around the



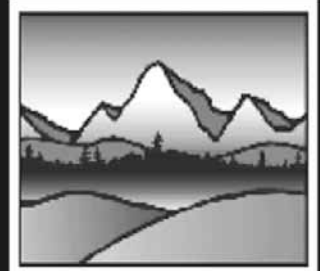
sides. This tub, with rags to snuggle on, a dish of water, and a supply of juvenile waterfowl food, was her first home at JenLo. Such a tiny baby needed to stay in the house for warmth, attention, and cuddling. And...frequent cleanup and laundry! It's all a part of caring for geese and ducks. They are very sloppy and messy; in the wild they would be

living in and near moving water. Domesticated, their people are responsible for providing the clean water and shelter they deserve. She was named after her savior, George. When he learned that the gosling was safe and that he was the gosling's namesake, he was relieved and happy. His musician's heart was even more pleased when I let him know that

this gosling appeared to enjoy music; whenever I'd play the piano, she'd peep right along keeping perfect time. (Her peep sounded more like a high-pitched "wheoo-wheoo.")

Georgee is a Chinese Swan Goose and I found, in my Google search, that these geese can be either brown or white as adults. Georgee, from being a downy yellow gosling, became a personable and lovely snow-white, grown up goose with a large knob at the base of her bill which is typical of Swan geese. Holding this friendly goose

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is like cuddling an amazingly soft, warm, heavy pillow. Since she is on the smaller side (these geese can be from 2 to 5 pounds with females being lighter than males) and the knob on her bill isn't very pronounced (males are more pronounced) we decided Georgee must be female.

Chinese Swan geese descended from the (now rare) wild Chinese goose whose natural breeding range is inland Mongolia, northernmost China, and southeastern Russia. They are much larger than their wild brothers. They're very talkative, bright, and social. Georgee certainly fills that description. She loves to be around people. She's right at your feet, following along with whatever you're doing and



giving a constant honking commentary. Of course, Joe tags along right behind her, with an occasional gentle "quack." He's like all Runner ducks; unlike Swan Geese, they're not constant conversationalists.

If you should be the lucky caregiver of a Swan Goose, be aware that they can live to be 20 years or more-even up 40 years. That involves a real commitment. Indian Runners, on the other hand, live from 4 to 12 years.

The first Swan Geese came to the United States as a gift to George Washington in 1788, when Gouverneur Morris, one of the Founding Fathers, gave him a pair, along with two Chinese pigs. (Just another benefit of googling for information!)

DUCK - And then, Jo, or Joe, depending on which this duckling would turn out to be. Only a few days after Georgee arrived, a little black duckling was found peeping in distress just outside Annabel's back yard, near a creek, in Louisville. Annabel waited about two hours for its mother to come, and when that didn't happen, she called Greenwood. She was told that the mother didn't come because it must be a domestic duck, probably

sold along with other ducklings as a cute little Easter Duck. Now, here it was, lost and alone. Annabel brought Joe to Greenwood, Greenwood called JenLo Farm; "This adorable little black duckling was just brought in. He'd be such a good friend for the gosling, don't you think?" Now, there were two fluffy babies seeking refuge. They lived on a bench in my kitchen for about two weeks, watching and pecking at each other through the clear plastic sides of their adjacent tubs, until they outgrew these comfy quarters. It was time to put them together in a large pet carrier in my living room. This was quite an event! At first they did a little bill-to-bill sparring as they got to know each other, but soon they were cuddling, necks entwined, lifetime buddies. How to keep the rug from becoming a duck/goose sloppy mess?

First, put down a large vinyl tablecloth and surround their pet carrier and tablecloth "yard" with a portable wire fence. That housing arrangement lasted about a week before it was time to move them outside during the day and back in the house at night. Next step? Out of the house permanently, to a small shed, in their pet carrier. Finally, they were too big for the pet carrier and were ready to be in a fenced-in area in the back yard during the day. At night, they were taken back to the safety of their padlocked shed. When in the outside pen, identical pools and bowls of food were set up on either side of their fence so that the other farm ducks could eat and swim next to them. Soon, the fence went away. They were ready to join Lakota and Lester and the rest of the flock of ducks and chickens during the day. For about a week, they preferred sleeping in their own quarters before they decided it was safe enough to be in the coop with the others at night.

Joe is an Indian Runner duck, like *(Continued next page.)*



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## Highlander Animals

the rest of JenLo's flock (except for Rouen Lakota). He has grown to be a handsome black duck with feathers shining iridescent green and purple in the sunshine. Runners are tall slender ducks, shaped like a walking bowling pin, that stand erect instead of nearly parallel to the ground. True to their name, they don't waddle, they run. It is thought that

they were bred in Indonesia over a thousand years ago to keep rice paddies bug free and fertilized. They spent their days in the paddies then were herded back to safe shelter at the end of the day. Each morning, their eggs would be collected and they'd be herded back to the paddy fields. They continue to be rice farmers' best friends; it's a convenient arrangement for both people and ducks, with no need for pesticides! Runners are said to keep vineyards in South Africa bug free too. Because they were shipped from an Indian port on their way to Europe in the late 1500s, they were called Indian Runners—but their first European destination was Holland, so they gained another name; Dutch Runners. Then, on to England and beyond, but they didn't change their name for any new destinations. Joe is definitely a guy. You can tell by his curly tail feathers. Georgee and Joe are inseparable, with his big friend Georgee in the lead and Joe keeping an attentive eye on his buddy, running close to her or splashing next to her in one of the several small plastic "ponds" we keep filled with cold water for our resident waterfowl.

Some things I've learned about geese and ducks: It's a long circuitous journey from Europe and Indonesia to Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center to JenLo Farm. It's important not to let domestic fowl have love affairs with wild ones. Their offspring can't survive in the wild. If you are lucky enough to have a goose or duck for a friend, be sure they have other feathered folks to hang out with. They like to be in a group. Safety is in numbers. They may live longer than you do, barring accidents or ravaging raccoons, and need godparents just in case! They're delightful. Just being around them, in the middle of a crazy, human-nutty day, is enough to bring you back to what really matters.

Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center is a non-profit

organization devoted to the rehabilitation and release of orphaned, injured, and sick wildlife. But, as you can see, domestic ducks and geese are occasionally brought to Greenwood, and homes are needed for them. If you would consider being one of these adoptive homes, and have the capacity to care for them in safety, please call Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center: 303-823-8455.

There are opportunities to volunteer at the Center, as well, and there is always a need for donations. It is very cost-intensive as well as labor and love intensive to care for the many animals that are brought there every year.

Check out their web site:

[www.greenwoodwildlife.org](http://www.greenwoodwildlife.org).

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# Career Coach Shares Tips For Women To Succeed

Author and long-time career coach Aimee Cohen weighs in on how women can be their own worst enemies in the fight to be our best in her new book *Woman Up!* released June 24th. Cohen lists behaviors and habits usually attributed to the female gender and how they undermine our efforts to be successful in the business world.

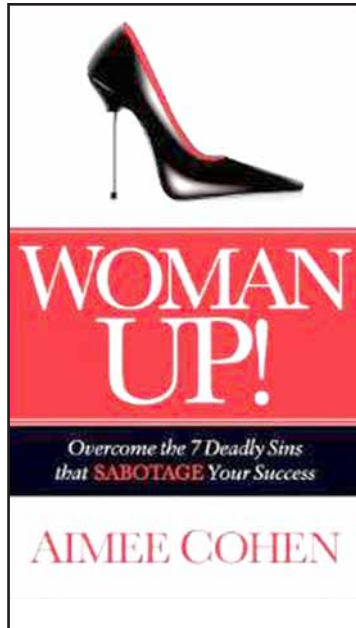
While bringing to light seemingly harmless traits, Cohen gives examples of how this list of things can hurt a woman's climb up a corporate ladder to break the glass ceiling. I suppose the list could also apply to women in the trades or unions, but in this book white-collar work is her main theme.

Today's aspiring woman isn't relegated to corporate work and Cohen's advice is transferrable to some self-employed entrepreneurs too. What she describes as the *Seven Deadly Sins that sabotage success* are sometimes cultural and societal stereotypes that can be considered negatives in a workplace and they can also hinder personal relationships.

It is all good information and changing something like a 'need to please' takes consistent effort and the ongoing awareness of when it is happening. This habit, and it is a habit for some women - not only cripples a person's ability for success it also takes away from the effort to focus on your own priorities. Most people (it happens with men too) with the need to please let that need circumvent their own goals and can make them seem unreliable because they often overextend with only good intentions.

American culture often promotes most of the seven sins because women are encouraged from infancy to be: perfect, helpful, kind, needy of masculine approval, overly communicative, highly competent and yet submissive. While these traits are considered positive in our society they do not necessarily serve women well in the boardrooms, classrooms or office settings.

So women must go against their initial trainings and modify behaviors that pose threats to them being and becoming successful at work. Cohen is to be applauded for her making the distinction that women need not try to be like men. Women come to the career table with certain attributes that just need fine-tuning to work well with



others.

I especially enjoy how she shares stories from her clients' experiences and the advice she gives each to overcome the deadly sins that can sabotage success in the workplace. It is really amazing that most women don't even know what their weaknesses are or how to stop doing things that keep them from moving forward career wise. I doubt any woman could read this book and not relate to at least one, if not all of the deadly sins at some point in their lives and careers.

These are life lessons that could give women that much needed support from another woman, and let's face it - like speaks to like - so much so that many women would become defensive if a male coworker or manager offered up the same advice. The book is also full of wonderful

quotes from powerful and intelligent women and two of my favorites are: "There is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women." by Madeline Albright and "Great minds discuss ideas, average minds discuss events, small minds discuss people." by Eleanor Roosevelt.

This book is a quick read and should be a reference book for all women who aspire to be successful. Now available at Amazon for under \$13 or eBook. *(The book has a notable punctuation error that is a bit distracting, but it is my guess it won't bother most readers.)*

By A.M. Wilks

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# Secrecy Never Went Away At Rocky Flats

By Len Ackland

June 6, 1989: In a dramatic, unprecedented raid on a federal nuclear facility, more than 70 U.S. agents burst into the sprawling Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant near

Denver seeking evidence of environmental crimes involving radioactive plutonium. Led by FBI special agent Jon Lipsky, the raid was kept secret from Colorado Gov. Roy Romer and the area's congressman, David Skaggs. Afterward, Romer angrily said, "It jars me to the bone that judgments we have made in Colorado about Rocky Flats may have been made on bad information."

June 7, 2014: I am among a few other people backstage at the Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities — not far from the now dismantled Rocky Flats plant — with Romer, Skaggs and Lipsky. The two former officeholders had just met the former FBI agent for the first time. All were about to participate in a public discussion marking the 25th anniversary of the raid. The backstage conversation was fascinating and somewhat tense, and it was recorded secretly, most likely by one of the participants. The recording was then given to a journalist.

Skaggs said later that he was surprised to learn that the conversation had been covertly recorded. "It's ironic," he said, "that in the context of an event that was designed to introduce retrospectively some transparency into the events of 1989, there was this opaque aspect of a secret taping." This odd recording incident suggests how secrecy — in various forms — grips Rocky Flats even now, 25 years after the plant stopped making plutonium bombs used to detonate U.S. thermonuclear weapons.

Former plant workers, who had "Q" clearances for top-secret nuclear work, legitimately can't talk about weapon details. Members of a federal grand jury from the early 1990s have been prevented by grand jury rules — upheld in court — from revealing testimony or their full 1992 report, though you can find the report on the Web. Some people worry that information still kept secret might affect public health and the environment. In the meantime, after a \$7.5 billion cleanup, most of the roughly 10-square-mile Rocky Flats site has been designated a national wildlife refuge. And though many studies of the effects of Rocky



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Flats on worker and public health and the environment have been conducted, experts agree that science can't resolve all of the questions. People in nearby communities continue to wonder aloud whether radiation or toxic chemicals from the plant caused illnesses or deaths among friends or relatives.

The uncertainties about Rocky Flats sometimes get confused with deliberately withheld information. And evidence, uncertainty and risk are weighed differently by different individuals and groups. For example, activists often see danger in the unknowns while land developers usually dismiss any risks. "Part of what is constantly being played out is the feeling that there are secrets," says Dorothy Ciarlo, a Boulder psychologist and oral historian who has studied secrecy at the facility. People think that "if we just burrow enough we can find out — whether or not that is in fact the case." Some secrets are easier to pin down than others. For instance, the secret recording of the June 7 backstage conversation was quickly given to Patty Calhoun, editor of Denver's Westword weekly, who saw nothing particularly newsworthy. Among other things, it included tidbits like former Gov. Romer asking former FBI agent Lipsky why he wasn't told about the 1989 raid, and the latter blaming a superior. And who made the secret recording two months ago? Ironically, the best guess is Lipsky, who retired from the FBI in 2004 and who has said publicly that agency bosses thwarted his Rocky Flats investigation. But Lipsky, the owner of Mission Accomplished Investigations in Southern California, refused to discuss it. He wrote in an e-mail, "I am not interested in being interviewed about that non-issue." The secret recording does appear to be a non-issue legally because Colorado law allows "one-party consent" when it comes to participants recording conversations either in person or on the telephone. But the issue of secrecy continues to be toxic when it comes to discussions of Rocky Flats. Former Rep. Skaggs, currently an attorney practicing in Denver, said, "The idea that somebody in that room was presumably looking for some kind of 'gotcha'

event, or at least was on alert for that, seems inconsistent with the spirit of the day." Len Ackland is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a column service of High Country News (hcn.org). He is a freelance journalist and retired journalism professor at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He is also the author of Making a Real Killing: Rocky Flats and the Nuclear West.



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# In The Meantime

By Melissa E. Johnson

*Here is a test  
to find if your mission on Earth is finished:  
if you're alive, it isn't.*

~ Richard Bach, *Illusions*

Statistics are out: "10 out of 10 people will die!" So said the random card I found on the ground by my gas pump.

Like a splash of cold water to the face, it lifted me right out of my head where I had been stuck worrying about something that I had little control over. It's easy to ignore the inevitable when we're healthy and young and living our dreams, or just caught up in the mechanics of life. But we all have an appointment with death sooner or later, which begs the question: What happens when we die?

I am drawn to this issue—life after life—because I can't wrap my head around the idea that when we die we are finished. Sure, our bodies return to the earth, entombed or scattered as ashes as we're reminded of the universal law that energy can neither be created nor destroyed, it simply changes form. Our loved ones will gather around our caskets and mourn our passing, comforting each other with comments like, "She looks so peaceful," or "They sure did a good job with him," staring at the body as if we're in there somewhere. Yet if ever there's proof that we're more than our bodies, it's in these moments.

When my grandfather passed a few years ago, I had the honor of being with him in his final days. He was concerned for my grandmother, and asked that we take good care of her, but otherwise, he was ready to go. He wasn't afraid. And as he moved in and out of consciousness, through labored breath, he shared his final thoughts, "We are born with a framework for society . . . or so we think . . . but it's an illusion . . . there's the body and the soul . . . but only the soul lives forever." It was my greatest spiritual experience, witnessing the soul of a man leave his body.

For the better part of a year, I had intense dreams of my grandfather. Not the man who suffered congestive heart failure and passed in his hospice bed, but the vibrant young man he had been when I was a little girl. At first I would wake up startled when he appeared, and I could never return to my dream. But in time, I willed myself to talk to him and he revealed some fascinating truths about his life in spirit form. I've often wondered what informed those dreams.

In his book *Life After Death: The Burden of Proof*, Deepak Chopra points to talking to the dead and near death experiences (NDEs) as two of six lines of evidence that the soul is real and eternal. He studied many cases of NDEs, where the person had been pronounced dead and was brought back to life, and he interviewed those patients about their experience. Intriguing to me was the

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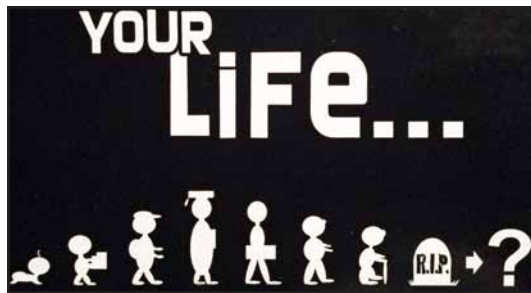
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discovery that across the board, people experienced what they believed. Christians reported

seeing angels and white light and Jesus. Muslims reported meeting Allah and scenes of Islam. Those who believed that they had wronged others, or that they had been "bad," reported an experience of torture and hell. Those who believed in nothing reported an experience of nothingness. And so on, extending the thread between life and death.

I know a guy who calls himself a "Militant Agnostic." "I don't know and you don't either" is his motto. I never understood this thinking. Sure, evidence based science has its place, but not in the realm of faith. If there exists even a possibility that there is an afterlife, why wouldn't we reach for that hope? Why wouldn't we believe? What do we lose? Maybe, just maybe, we would be more peaceful and relaxed and far kinder to every living thing around us.

Perhaps we would not fear death as we do. It's your life. What will you do in the meantime?



### Highlander Wisdom

Melissa is a writer, photographer, artist and lawyer. Read more on her blog at [www.HeartLaw.blogspot.com](http://www.HeartLaw.blogspot.com).

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# Equally Free To Sleep Under The Bridge

By Craig Gurian-RemappingDebate.org

*In its majestic equality, the law forbids rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges, beg in the streets and steal loaves of bread. — Anatole France*

According to N. Gregory Mankiw, writing in The New

York Times, economists need to honor the principle “first, do no harm” when offering policy prescriptions. That principle, to Mankiw, translates into the following: “when people have voluntarily agreed upon an economic arrangement to their mutual benefit, that arrangement should be respected.”

Still arguing that there is equality at the moment of contract. Incredible. What constitutes “voluntary” to Mankiw, an economist at Harvard? “An increase in the minimum wage would disrupt some deals that workers and employers have made voluntarily.”

In short, Mankiw is still peddling the long-discredited fiction that there is equality at the moment of contract. Just stop and assess how voluntary these arrangements really are. A man or woman needing a job goes to apply for one at a fast food restaurant. The job pays minimum wage. The prospective worker does have an initial choice: try to get the job as offered, or not take the job and go hungry.

Good news: the prospective worker applies and is selected for the job. Now she says to the manager, “I have some previous experience in the industry; I was hoping, in view of that, that you’d pay me more than minimum wage.” Anyone who thinks that would prompt a negotiation, please wait in line for a ticket back to planet Earth.

Mankiw’s argument is really the same argument that business owners had in the 1920s — before there was any minimum wage at all: the financial arrangements between employers and employees are contracts freely entered into. At least for many decades, people recognized that argument for its essential fraudulence; that sense of outrage needs to be rekindled.

“Dear United Healthcare, do you think you could customize my plan so that your reimbursements bear at least

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cutting edge issues with refreshing insight.)

some resemblance to my costs?"

For a second illustration, Mankiw argues against the Affordable Care Act. The ACA, he says, "has disrupted many insurance arrangements that were acceptable to both the insurance company and the insured." Here again, it is an argument entirely divorced from practical reality. People lived with those pre-ACA insurance arrangements not because they were "acceptable" but rather because they were the only game in town. Far from offering mutual benefit, those plans benefitted the insurers handsomely and ripped off the insured. Even though the Obama administration, as is its custom, has failed to defend and adhere to its initial decision and has instead allowed these starkly inadequate plans to continue to be offered this year, the fact remains that there is simply no negotiation possible between an individual on one hand and an insurance company on the other.


Mankiw's approach has as a necessary ingredient the complete denial of the reality of huge disparities in the relative power exercised by the two parties to an agreement. In the circumstances, to categorize such arrangements as voluntary is as fictional as describing the parties as equal to one another. Economists and policy makers who are interested in real voluntariness would do well to create conditions within which voluntary and mutually beneficial arrangements can honestly be achieved. *(Reprinted with permission from RemappingDebate.org, a public policy website dedicated to original reporting on*



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