

# Dear Friends

Ed Marston

April 28, 1997

### **Big Sky, big stress**

The March 31, 1997, issue of HCN described the litigious nature of Montana's Big Sky Resort. We've gotten interesting responses to the story. Writer Ray Ring, sitting in Bozeman, says he sees signs that the article may have helped shift the tone of the dialogue. After a recent meeting, Gallatin County commissioner Jane Jelinski was quoted in the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle* as saying, "This is the first Big Sky hearing in a long time where someone's character wasn't impugned."

Less positively, HCN received a death threat directed at one of the people quoted in Ring's article. We even had to pay for the threat, since it came in on our 800 number. When we traced the call and Ring rang the number back, a passerby picked up the telephone, which was on a busy Seattle street.

Finally, we were contacted by an attorney for the Lone Peak Lookout, a newspaper that circulates in the resort. He convinced us that there were three problems with the sidebar titled "Chet Huntley's legacy includes suppression of a free press." In particular, there was no intent on the part of HCN or Ray Ring to imply by headline or text that the Lone Peak Lookout newspaper is controlled by the Big Sky Resort or its principals.

We regret the use of the phrase "sweetheart deal" in the following sentence: "Appreciated by its readers, the Bugle fought an uphill battle, partly because of a sweetheart deal the Lookout had with the resort."

Although it was reported in various court documents and news stories that the Lone Peak Lookout gave Big Sky Resort two free pages of advertising in return for distribution rights on resort property, and the HCN article repeated that, in fact the original letter of agreement between the resort and the Lookout calls for the resort to pay for all but 26 column-inches per week of ads in the Lookout.

### **We're reading you**

The response to the reader survey/Research Fund appeal has been very strong. We can't acknowledge what will probably total 5,000 surveys, but we do read all of them, enter the results in a database, and ponder their meaning. If your survey is lying around, please fill it out and mail it in. They are very helpful.

In addition to considering itself "A paper for people who care about the West," HCN makes two other boasts: that it essentially has no advertising (the page of ads in each issue contributes about 1 percent of the annual income), and that readers are asked to give to the Research Fund only once a year.

Some readers who had already donated to the Research Fund, and who got a Research Fund card with their survey, wondered if we had changed that policy. We haven't. But it's easier and cheaper to send everyone a card than to have two separate mailings. And we've found that some people want to contribute twice in a year.

But if you have already contributed, please accept our thanks and recycle the card. As the letter enclosed with the survey and Research Fund card says, "If you haven't made a contribution to the 1996-1997 Research Fund drive, please consider making one ... If you have given to the 1996-1997 Research Fund, thank you for your generosity."

The Research Fund puts print and photos and drawings on the page. Without the Research Fund, there literally is no High Country News.

### **Feedback**

Speaking of Research Fund contributions, the March 3, 1997, “Dear friends” column referred to the Henry P. Kendall Foundation’s “generosity” in supporting HCN’s intern program. The foundation’s Ted Smith suggests that that was the wrong word. Kendall isn’t being generous, he said. “Rather, we invest where we believe the highest level of social benefit can be achieved.” He also suggested that HCN think of “its hundreds of enlightened contributors more as thoughtful investors than as bestowers of charity.”

### **Extravagant**

The survey and some letters have given us extravagant praise for the April Fools’ page in the March 31 issue, and some extravagant blame. One reader said he laughed until he cried; another reader said he just cried. And a long-time subscriber from Grand Junction, Colo., wrote more in sorrow than anger to say she usually shares the paper with her mother – -But not this time.”

One copy of the March 31 paper (-Big Sky, Big Mess’) did not make its usual rounds because, the reader said, “You cannot afford to lose credibility by printing such (April Fools’) drivel. And I cannot afford to circulate such crass material in a business environment.”

### **The Unabomber**

The 49<sup>th</sup> annual Conference on World Affairs at the University of Colorado, Boulder, packed in about 160 panels during its week-long run in early April. They included public radio reporter Margot Adler, gay activist Candace Gingrich and writer Adam Hochschild. For us, the high point came on the last day of the conference, at a panel titled “The Unabomber Had a Point.”

After the introductory talks, an audience member told the four panelists that they had not given the Unabomber enough credit for his insights into the dangers of technology. Credit-card purchases at supermarkets, he said, allowed stores and maybe the police to track people’s purchases, and know from what they bought who might have AIDS or who might have had an abortion.

Adler said she thought government “was too busy to keep track” of such things, and her fellow panelists concurred.

“You are naive,” the questioner told them.

But a different answer came from the audience, from engineering Professor John Hauser, who lost most of his right hand and parts of his arm to a bomb placed by the Unabomber in 1985 at the University of California, Berkeley. Hauser said, “My hand was damaged when I picked up a looseleaf binder I thought one of my fellow students had left behind.”

The bomb changed his life; among other things, he can no longer do something he loved to do – fly jet planes – and the terror of the experience was heightened because he was wounded by an everyday object. This could have made him afraid to open a door or pick up a pay phone.

Instead of being driven into reclusive, protective ways, he said, “I redirected my life. I didn’t become fearful. I retained the belief that most people are OK,” and that the world, for the most part, was safe.

Technology, he concluded, has its dangers, but the greater danger is that we will be paralyzed by our fear of it.

Later, Hauser told us he survived the Unabomber because earlier in the day “a fellow graduate student had pushed the loose-leaf – attached to a box – aside, rotating it 90 degrees.” So when Hauser opened it, the bomb’s main force didn’t come at his chest. But it still had the strength to drive his class ring into the hard plaster wall of the Berkeley lab, leaving a mirror imprint reading “Air Force Academy.”

Soon after the explosion, he received an invitation to apply to become an astronaut. He couldn’t do that. But when one of his graduate students at CU took him mountain climbing, Hauser found that even with only one functioning hand, the sport is within his grasp.

### **New for Spring**

Spring intern Emily Miller, from Washington, D.C., spent her senior year at Princeton engrossed in the 1960s. Her senior thesis focused on alternative spiritual movements, like that of Timothy Leary, whose acid-inspired mantra was “tune in, turn on, drop out.” Since graduating in 1995 with a degree in religion, she has held a variety of jobs, ranging from production assistant on a TV remake of *The Shining* in Estes Park, Colo., to interning at *MIGHT* in San Francisco, a magazine aimed at the 20-something generation. Last winter, she took part in a mountaineering expedition in Patagonia, Chile, where she spent five showerless weeks on a very wet glacier.

She plans to do wilderness search and rescue and emergency medical technician training this fall in Colorado, and lead her own trips in the future. For now, she is eyeing the peaks around “intern acres,” and can’t wait to explore nearby rocks, rivers and mountains.

– Ed Marston for the staff

The Ted K Archive

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High County News. <<https://www.hcn.org/issues/issue-108/dear-friends-10/>>

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