# *JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE*

VOLUME 11, NUMBER 2 SPRING 1996

**A History of the Palisade Wine Industry—page 1**
**The Birth and Early Years of Club 20—page 25**

**JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE** is published quarterly by two student organizations at Mesa State College: the Mesa State College Historical Society and the Alpha-Gamma-Epsilon Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta. Annual subscriptions are $14. (Single copies are available by contacting the editors of the Journal.) Retailers are encouraged to write for prices. Address subscriptions and orders for back issues to:

Mesa State College
**Journal of the Western Slope**
P.O. Box 2647
Grand Junction, CO 81502

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS: The purpose of THE JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE is to encourage scholarly study of Colorado's Western Slope. The primary goal is to preserve and record its history; however, articles on anthropology, economics, government, natural history, and sociology will be considered. Authorship is open to anyone who wishes to submit original and scholarly material about the Western Slope. The editors encourage letters of inquiry from prospective authors. Send materials and letters to THE JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE, Mesa State College, P.O. Box 2647, Grand Junction, CO 81502.

1) Contributors are requested to send their manuscript on an IBM-compatible disk. DO NOT SEND THE ORIGINAL. Editors will not return disks. Material should be footnoted. The editors will give preference to submissions of about twenty-five pages.

2) Allow the editors sixty days to review manuscripts. During this time, the editors ask that you not submit the article to another publication.

3) Footnotes should appear at the end of the manuscripts. In THE JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE, all footnotes will be published at the end of the appropriate article. For footnote form, consult the University of Chicago's most recent edition of **A Manual of Style**.

4) Whenever possible, historical photographs should accompany manuscripts, along with written permission from the owner to publish the photos. Upon request, the editors will send standard release forms to prospective contributors. Send copies, not the originals, of photographs. Photographs will not be returned. Xerox copies are not acceptable.

5) Send copies, not the originals, of graphs, charts, and maps. Such material must be clear and suitable for reproduction. These items will not be returned.

6) Authors submitting articles which include oral history or interviews must send the appropriate release form signed by the subject(s) of the interview(s). Those needing release forms should write the editors.

7) Artists wishing to submit cover drawings are asked to write the editors before sending materials because drawings must relate to articles published in the Journal. Artists must grant permission in writing before a drawing will be printed. Standard release forms are available from the editors.

# *JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE*

Printed on Recycled Paper by Sutton's Printing

The Journal of the Western Slope is a member of the Media Board of MSC and abides by its policies, procedures, and code of ethics.

THE COVER: The drawing of Carlson Vineyards winemaker Parker Carlson is by Ami Turner. She is currently a Senior at Mesa State College majoring in Art. She is looking forward to continuing her studies at the graduate level.

## *Contents*

(Photo courtesy Colorado Wine Industry Development Board)

*Merlot grapes, Grande River Vineyards, Palisade, Colorado. Photo credit, Herb Sanders.*

# A History of the Palisade Wine Industry
**by Michael Moloney**

*Michael is a native of Massachusetts. He moved to Colorado and the Roaring Fork Valley in 1984. He will graduate from Mesa State College in 1997 with a B.A. in History.*

In the early 1970s the federal government, using taxpayer money, set out to stimulate economic growth in the four corners region of the Southwest. Twenty–five years later Palisade, Colorado, is enjoying the end result of this promotion in the form of a rapidly growing wine industry. While federal aid helped the industry get started, state aid is helping the industry grow and prosper. However, to attribute the industry's success solely to government sponsorship is misleading. Such factors as California weather, the decline of the peach industry and the persistence of some pioneering individuals make the Palisade wine industry what it is today.

The Colorado wine industry has grown tremendously in the past ten years. In 1984 there were twenty–three acres of wine grapes in Colorado, while in 1995 there are about four hundred acres. Seventy–five percent of these acres, and most of the wine making capacity, is in Mesa County, primarily the Palisade area. This Mesa County acreage will produce about 240,000 bottles of Colorado grown wine in 1995. The concentration of these vineyards and wineries in the Palisade area bolsters a growing tourist industry. In 1995, over 23,000 people visited the five area wineries between June and September, making wineries the second most popular local attraction.[1] Palisade's wineries have recently surpassed Grand Junction's Dinosaur Valley Museum in popularity, and are second only to the Colorado National Monument.[2]

Grape growing and wine making started in Western Colorado around the turn of the century. Frank Marolt emigrated from Austria in 1903 and became a peach grower and miner in Rapid Creek, an area about two miles east of Palisade. The Marolts were Slovenian, a Slavic people, some of whom lived in Austria. Marolt grew wine grapes, not just table grapes, and made wine for home consumption, a common practice in the Rapid Creek area. The Kladdocks, also Slovenian, and John Goffredi from Italy also made their own wine.[3] Pete Landini and Valentino Gobbo, Italian farmers in the Fruita area, were successful home wine makers in the early part of the twentieth century.[4] However, these were small noncommercial plantings.

Grapes thrived on a larger scale in Palisade, a section of which was once called Vineland. The details of these Vineland grapes are sketchy, but an undated photograph hanging in the Palisade library reveals their former existence. Some longtime Palisade residents say that the grapes were nearly gone by 1920, and after that only a few backyard plots remained. Prohibition led to the demise of grape acreage, which was replanted in peaches.[5]

While some European immigrants grew small quantities of real wine grapes, the larger plantings of grapes in Vineland were table grapes. The distinction between the two is important. Table grapes, Vitus Labrusca or the descendants of wild grapes discovered by colonists in New England, are grapes one would eat, or use for juice and jelly. The Concord grape is a Labrusca grape. Wine can be made from these grapes, but it is not the same type of wine produced in the famous wine production regions of France, Italy and California, which is made from Vitus Vinifera. These grapes—Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Merlot and others—are smaller, thinner skinned and have many seeds.[6] Vinifera grapes produce the higher–end varietal wines that characterize the current Palisade wine industry. The industry targets this market rather than the volume oriented production of large bottles or jug wines.[7]

Another Slovenian, Gerald Ivancie, introduced Western Colorado to its modern phase of commercial Vinifera grape growing. His Slavic parents lived in Austria on the sunny side of the Alps between Trieste and Vienna. When the family immigrated to the United States in 1910, they brought generations of wine making and grape growing experience. Gerald was born in Minnesota in 1923, and he became a periodontist, a specialist who treats bone and gum disease. After moving to Denver in 1958, Ivancie made wine for home consumption, and, in a story quite familiar in the wine business, his friends encouraged him to produce wine for them to buy. In 1968 he started Ivancie Wines. With help from his wife and nine children, he began making wine from grapes purchased in California.[8]

The winery was successful, selling wines to many Denver restaurants and retail shops, but California grapes became a problem when harsh weather in 1972 led to a poor California grape crop. At this time California wines were working their way out of the French shadow, slowly gaining acceptance in the national and international wine communities. The depleted supply and increased demand led to fierce bidding and high prices. From 1968 to 1973 Ivancie saw the price of Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir grapes he purchased go from about $300 a ton to about $1,000 per ton. Such prices meant that there was simply no way he could make a profit, especially after adding the cost of transporting the grapes from California to Colorado. Even before the California grape shortage in 1972, Ivancie wanted grapes grown closer to home. The 1972 season simply provided the final impetus. Ivancie knew, as did most people in the wine business, that where you could grow stone fruit (peaches, apricots; fruit with pits), you could grow Vinifera grapes. As the price of California grapes climbed, he looked toward Western Colorado.[9]

When Ivancie began his winery in 1968, he hired Warren Winiarski, a consultant from California, to help him in setting up the equipment and finding the right grapes. From 1966 until 1968 Winiarski worked for Robert Mondavi, the famous California wine maker. After that he consulted for various wineries, including Ivancie's.[10] Winiarski went on to found Stags Leap Wine Cellars, where he gained a reputation for producing some of the finest Cabernet Sauvignon in California.

Winiarski, with several other consultants and viticulturists hired by Ivancie, decended on the Western Slope. They began working with Curtis Talley, who was the agriculture teacher from 1951 until 1983 at Palisade High School. They asked him about potential growers and local climatic conditions. Talley had recently purchased additional land in Palisade, and Ivancie's men talked him into planting grapes. Five others also entered the business: Fred (Danny) Bracken, Ralph Blatnick, George Zimmerman, Ken Schmidt and Jim Gigoux. All of these fruit growers were located in Palisade and East Orchard Mesa except Gigoux, whose vineyard was in the Redlands area of Grand Junction. This initial planting, the first commercial planting of Vinifera grapes in Western Colorado, was modest. The six growers combined to plant about twenty acres.[11]

Problems in the peach industry encouraged Grand Valley fruit growers to experiment with grapes. Freezes in the winter of 1962–63 reduced the crop of Mesa County peaches and signalled the demise of the Redlands as a viable growing area. Peach acreage in Mesa County began to decline by about one hundred and fifty acres per year. Harsh winters in 1971 and 1972 also hurt the peach industry. Consequently, 1973 was a good time for Ivancie to push grape cultivation to a fruit growing audience.[12] In January of 1974, less than a year

(Photo courtesy of Colorado Wine Industry Development Board)

*Grape harvest at Plum Creek Cellars, Palisade, Colorado. Photo credit, Herb Sanders.*

after the first planting, the six growers wrote to Dr. K. M. Brink, head of the Department of Horticulture at Colorado State University. The growers said, "With the decline of the peach industry in the fruit producing areas it appears that other high dollar production crops should be explored for their adaptability in the micro climates of Colorado West."[13] Peach growers were anxiously looking for an alternative or supplementary crop.

Ivancie split the price of the vines with the growers. They supplied the remainder of the planting fees and, of course, the land. They signed a contract with Ivancie giving him exclusive rights to purchase the grapes. However, all of the vines planted in 1973 died. Danny Bracken, one of the original growers, said that the root cuttings that they received were bone dry.[14] They were purchased by Winiarski in Southern California and shipped across the desert in an open truck, but the cuttings were unpruned and ill–protected for the long trip. The vines died before winter.[15]

A second planting in 1973 survived, but more bad news followed. In late 1973 Ivancie sold his interest in the winery to a group of investors led by Jerry Shaw. Shaw was working for Ivancie in trying to improve sales and marketing, but Ivancie and Shaw had different business philosophies. Ivancie wanted to keep the winery's focus on high quality and low production, but Shaw wanted the opposite. He sought a more commercial approach with bulk packaging. This rift led to Shaw's buyout of Ivancie and other stockholders, but the Ivancie name was retained. Ivancie had other reasons for selling his interest in the winery. It takes three to five years for newly planted Vinifera vines to produce usable fruit and Ivancie would have had to wait until 1976 or 1977 to reap the benefits of his Colorado planting. In the meantime he would be dependent on California grapes, and they were not getting any cheaper.[16]

At the beginning of 1974, the six original growers had less than a year of vineyard experience and were now without the support of the man who got them started in the first place. They were still under contract with Ivancie wines and the winery supplied them with a newsletter to assist them in grape growing.[17] They needed all the help they could get because of the problems they faced. Some of the growers lost nearly half of their vines during the first winter, and things only got worse.[18] In March of 1975 Ivancie closed its doors for good. David Nixon, production manager at Ivancie Wines, cited marketing problems as the reason for the closure.[19] Now, even if they could produce mature grapes, the growers did not have a buyer for their grapes.

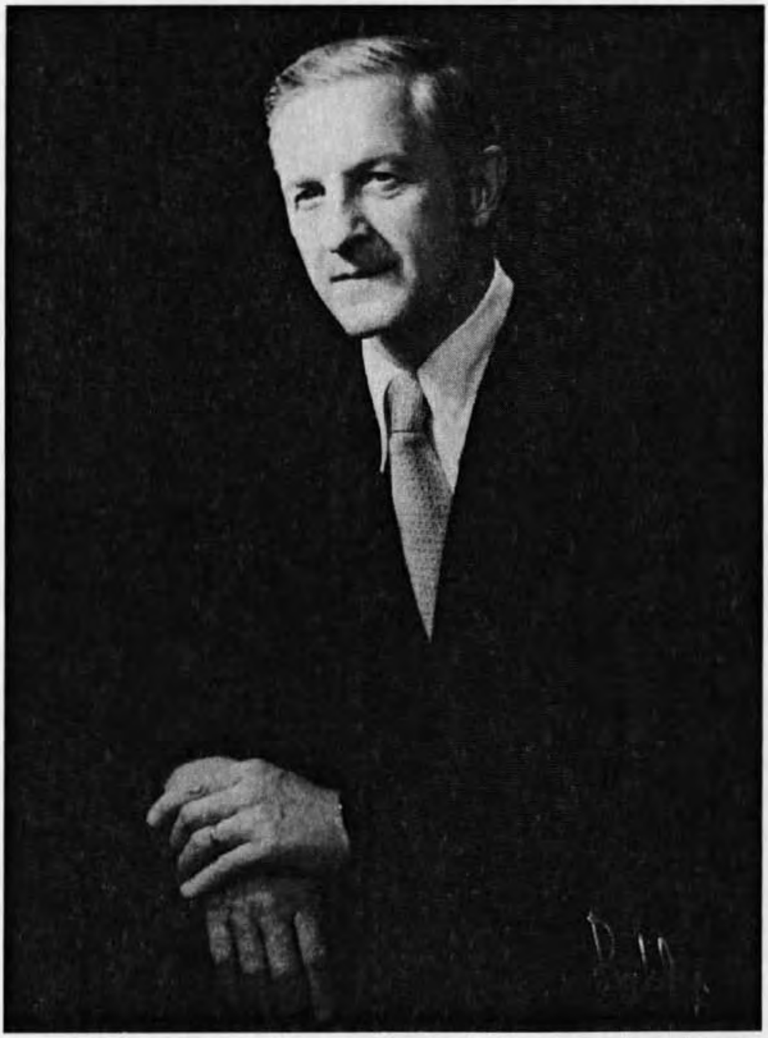
During this rocky beginning, the growers received help from the federal government when the Four Corners Regional Commission got involved in the Western Colorado grape experiment. The Commission, funded with taxpayer money, was a federal agency designed to encourage economic growth in the Four Corners states: Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah, in addition to Nevada.[20]

The Four Corners Commission began its investigation into grape growing in the Southwest in 1973.[21] Ivancie had acted independently of this organization. He was researching with the intent to plant, and using his own money early in 1973. He signed contracts with the fruit growers and planted vines before the feasibility studies were published. Two of the original growers still in the area, Curtis Talley and Danny Bracken,[22] said no one from the Four Corners project talked to them until they had vines in the ground. Initial research discovered people familiar with the industry who said that grape planting, and hence the foundation of the wine industry, began with the Four Corners Commission. However, Ivancie's experience predated the Commission's involvement in the wine industry.

The Four Corners Commission gave two grants for feasibility studies: one to Club 20, a lobby group that acts as a super chamber–of–commerce for Western Colorado, and the other to Colorado State University. The studies were promising, noting that Western Colorado had a climate similar to other wine producing regions, most notably Washington state and, to a lesser extent, California. The feasibility studies led to more funding. Colorado State University applied for a Four Corners grant.[23] The money they received allowed them to set up a research station on East Orchard Mesa in 1974. They also had a research station at Austin, Colorado, about forty miles northeast of Grand Junction. In the other Four Corner states, federal money went to universities to study and improve the grape growing ventures in their areas.[24]

Experts started coming in from all over the country to study the existing vineyards from the Ivancie planting, and to plant grapes in parts of the Grand Valley other than Palisade and East Orchard Mesa.[25] One of the outlying areas included Fritz Gobbo's farm in Fruita. Fritz was the son of Valentino Gobbo, the Italian farmer who grew Vinifera grapes in the early part of the century.[26] Wade Wolfe from the University of Arizona, who flew into the Grand Valley three or four times a year, was especially helpful to the local growers.[27] Dr. Walter Clore, the father of the wine industry in Washington, came over from Washington State University. James K. Stacey was stationed at CSU's Austin center, and Greg Loeffler manned CSU's station at East Orchard Mesa. A Regional Grape Advisory Board coordinated all of this.[28]

A major concern was studying how the grapes reacted to weather conditions in the Grand Valley. Those studies showed that the Palisade area has a growing season of about one hundred and ninety days and an average of



(Photo courtesy of Ivancie family)

*Dr. Gerald Ivancie, founder of Ivancie Wines.*

about three thousand degree days. Degree days are the number of degrees that the average daily mean temperature is above fifty degrees between April 1 and October 31. For example, if every day had an average temperature of seventy degrees, that would be a total of twenty degree days (the difference between fifty and seventy). Multiply this by the days in the growing season to arrive at the annual number of degree days. Western Colorado degree days compare favorably with other famous wine producing regions in Europe and California; however, the cool nights and cold winters have a great effect, both good and bad, on the grapes.[29]

Palisade is different from the major wine producing areas for two reasons: altitude (4800 feet) and distance from an ocean. Oceans and other large bodies of water tend to mediate temperature on nearby land masses, both daily and seasonally. Being one thousand miles from a major body of water, Colorado tends to have a greater temperature extreme from day to night, and from summer to winter. Temperature that goes below zero for an extended time can devastate grape vines. California, France and Italy just do not get that cold. The daily temperature fluctuation between hot days and cool nights produces excellent fruit because warm days build the grapes natural sugar, while the cool nights retain the grapes acid level. Western Colorado is right on the marginal edge where great wine is made. The volatile climate and daily temperature fluctuation produces grapes that are always at the point of stress. The result is intense flavors. However, this same marginal climate, with its cold winters, can devastate a grape crop.[30]

Cold weather hardiness was a major concern for Grand Valley grape growers, so the Four Corners Regional Commission looked at the problem. Severe winter temperatures can kill the vines back to ground level, resulting in the loss of the part of the vine that is above ground. The roots survive, allowing the vine to grow back; however, the vine will not grow back fast enough to produce good fruit the next year. Proper retraining will allow a severely damaged vine to produce grapes two years after the freeze, but one year's production is lost. Furthermore, late spring frost can affect a grape vine's new buds. In the mid– to late–seventies the original six Western Colorado grape growers had many problems with winter kill. Some lost up to seventy–five percent of the vines above ground level. The Four Corners Commission helped the growers to get through this difficult transitional period. Without the federal funds, the new grape industry might have collapsed. Ivancie's departure meant they had no consistent market. Local producers advertised in newspapers and sold their grapes to hobby wine makers. While they could sell their grapes for a good price, there was no one large buyer, making for many small and cumbersome transactions.[31]

While the Four Corners research was helpful in establishing Vinifera vineyards, the six original growers were the real heroes of the grape industry. They supplied the land and the hard work that gave Western Colorado a fairly steady supply of Vinifera grapes. Help from outsiders was important, but the Grand Valley grape growers often acted on their own, adapting their crop to the growing conditions and climate in Western Colorado, and they took the financial risks.[32]

The most important aspect of a wine industry, the ability to produce consistent fruit, was in place. Now it needed a winery, and again the growing industry received timely help from the government. In 1977 Robert Burford, a Republican state representative from Grand Junction, pushed the Colorado Limited Winery Act designed to meet the needs of a small winery. The act established a class of winery that produced less than 100,000 gallons (42,000 cases or 504,000 bottles) of wine per year and used at least fifty percent of Colorado grapes. This percentage would increase to seventy–five percent after five years. Such wineries would be taxed at one–half cent per quart instead of the standard six cents per quart. These limited wineries could have tasting rooms at the facility and sell wholesale and retail from the premises. This was strong encouragement for someone to start a winery using predominantly Colorado grown grapes.[33]

Shortly after the Limited Winery Act, the federal government published the results of the grape research of the Four Corners Regional Commission. In April of 1980 the commission published "Grape and Wine Production in the Four Corners Region." This study, technical bulletin 239 from the University of Arizona Agricultural Experimentation Station, was a how–to book for wine industry development. It covered the proper climate, soil, and planting techniques required for vineyard establishment, including disease and pest control, and included a cost analysis for planting a vineyard and establishing a winery. The University of Arizona, Colorado State University, New Mexico State University and Schick International in Salt Lake City all collaborated to produce this comprehensive blueprint for a winery in the Four Corners region.[34]

The state and federal presence provided encouragement and guidebooks, but the individuals who took the risks and dreamed the dreams made Western Colorado's wine industry a reality. The Palisade grape growers did their part, and so did promoters in Denver. In the 1970s Jim Seawald, who owned a hobby wine making store, was the unofficial leader of a group of oenothusiasts (one who practices the science of wine making). Seawald and his customers bought grapes from out of state.[35] Seawald bought California grapes from Ivancie's former consultant Warren Winiarski. Seawald and Ivancie knew each other because Seawald worked and volunteered at Ivancie's winery to learn more about the commercial aspects of wine making.[36] In the late seventies Seawald and the hobby wine makers around him wanted grapes from Western Colorado instead of ones from California.

In 1977 and 1978 Seawald headed a group of eighteen investors who founded Colorado Mountain Vineyards in Denver. In 1978 the winery produced its first vintage from Colorado grapes. The wine community in Denver became increasingly interested in Colorado wine. Unfortunately, the winter of 1978–1979 was exceedingly harsh and all of the Western Colorado vines froze back to the ground. Colorado Mountain Vineyards had to find out of state grapes for a 1979 vintage.[37]

Despite the obvious weather related obstacles, Seawald and his wife Ann wanted more. They wanted a winery near the grape supply. In the summer of 1981 they moved Colorado Mountain Vineyards to East Orchard Mesa near Palisade, leased a building built for them by a secondary investor, built a house next door and began planting grapes in 1982. Jim Seawald served as president of the winery, while Bennett Price was the vice president. Price, a home wine maker from Aurora, was one of the original investors in the winery. He moved to Western Colorado in 1981 and bought five acres of vineyard from Danny Bracken, one of the original plots planted in the Ivancie era.[38]

Seawald and Colorado Mountain Vineyards started a trend that brought the wine makers to the grapes. Enterprising home wine makers from Denver began moving to Western Colorado where the grapes grew. However, there were problems. Hobby wine makers were just that: people with steady jobs who made wine on the side. Commercial wine ventures required a lot of capital. Colorado Mountain Vineyards was financially troubled from the start and a series of stock offerings led to disaster in 1988. The final offering failed to produce the minimum capital and, in a complex series of buyouts and liens, the winery ended up in the hands of Tom Husband. Husband lived in Arizona, so he kept Seawald as wine maker and changed the winery's name to Colorado Vintage Cellars.[39]

Other home wine makers from Denver who migrated to Western Colorado include Mary and Parker Carlson. Parker worked for Coors Ceramics in Golden, Colorado, but transferred to Grand Junction when they opened a Western Slope facility in 1977. In 1981 the Carlsons planted four acres of vines on what was once Cap's Orchards. They sold grapes to Seawald and Colorado Mountain Vineyards. In 1988 the Carlsons started their own commercial wine venture, producing about 1100 gallons of wine. Currently they produce about 15,000

(Photo courtesy of Colorado Wine Industry Development Board)
*Mary Carlson, Carlson Vineyards, checking grape sugar content with a refractometer, Palisade, Colorado. Photo credit, Herb Sanders.*

gallons of wine. They specialize in fruit wines and are now the largest fruit wine producers in the state. Carlson Vineyards was the first winery to start in the Palisade area—the others were established in Denver before they moved West.[40]

In 1985 a group of Denver hobby wine makers led by Doug Phillips and Eric Bruner opened Plum Creek Cellars in Larkspur, a Front Range town south of Castle Rock. The winery was named for the creek that ran nearby. After making wine with grapes purchased from Western Colorado, they also decided to move closer to the grape source. In 1990 they moved Plum Creek Cellars to its current location in Palisade. Presently they have a total of about forty–eight acres of vineyards, twenty–three in Paonia and twenty–five in Palisade.[41]

In 1987 Stephen Smith, also a home wine maker from Denver, began to buy land in Palisade and East Orchard Mesa. He purchased one hundred and twenty–five acres of land south of the Colorado River near Palisade and planted about twenty acres of grapes. In 1988 he purchased parcels of land along Interstate 70. He ended up with about fifty acres there, thirty of which he planted with grapes. All totaled, Smith has over fifty acres of grapes, making him the largest grape grower in the state. In 1990, he opened Grande River Vineyards and produced his first vintage.[42]

Also in 1990, two governmental related events occurred. The first was the establishment of the Grand Valley as a federal viticultural area, followed by the passage of the Colorado Wine Industry Development Act. A viticultural area is a specific grape growing region separated from others by soil, climate, history and geographic features. It is a micro climate that produces a consistent grape and taste. In 1990 the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms designated the Grand Valley as a Federal Viticultural Area. The Seawalds pushed the vitacultural designation, using figures and information tabulated by Rick Hamman, the viticulturist at Colorado State University's Orchard Mesa research facility. It allows local wineries to identify their wines as being made from Grand Valley grapes, as long as one hundred percent of the grapes come from their vineyards. The vitacultural area is a marketing tool. Consumers, in state or out, do not know much about the Grand Valley as a wine producing area. However, the Napa Valley of California is a viticultural area which started as an obscure local designation and developed into an industry standard. While the Grand Valley designation may never become as recognizable as the Napa Valley, it could become important in the future if the Colorado wine industry experiences significant growth.[43]

The Colorado Wine Industry Development Act was organized by Ron Smith, the Colorado director of the National Federation of Independent

Businesses, a small business lobby group. Doug Phillips of Plum Creek Cellars and Stephen Smith (no relation to Ron) of Grande River Vineyards led industry support for the bill.[44] Interestingly, Ron Smith started a winery one year after the Wine Industry Development Act went into effect. The Wine Industry Development Act changed the tax structure to generate about $300,000 annually for the newly created Colorado Wine Industry Development Board. The Board is obligated to spend one–third of that money to research grape growing in Colorado and another third of the money to promote and market the Colorado wine industry.[45] Three separate excise tax surcharges generate revenues. First, all wines sold in Colorado (not just Colorado wines) are taxed an additional three–quarters of a cent per bottle. Second, wines produced in Colorado are subject to an additional nickel a bottle tax. Third, Colorado grown wine grapes are taxed at eight dollars a ton.[46]

This money supports the local wineries. Parker Carlson, for example, says that he could never afford the kind of help he gets from the Wine Board if he had to purchase similar services on the open market.[47] The Wine Board has been effective. Since its inception in 1990, the number of Colorado wineries increased from five to fifteen.[48]

To research grape growing in Colorado the Wine Board hired Rick Hamman, a horticulturist from Colorado State University stationed at its Orchard Mesa research center. Hamman, who took over the University's center in 1980, provided a link between the old Four Corners influence and the newer Colorado Wine Board. He was hired as a technician principally for fruit tree studies. From 1980 to 1990 Hamman worked after hours on the research center vines left over from the Four Corners project. In 1990 the wine board hired Hamman to concentrate solely on grapes.[49]

The Orchard Mesa research center currently has about three acres of experimental vineyards that contain forty different varieties of grapes. Hamman works to improve the cold hardiness of the grapes, because winter injury is the greatest drawback for quality wine production in Colorado. He also provides technical support for area growers, and advises potential growers in site selection, irrigation, general vineyard start up and maintenance practices. Hamman publishes the "Colorado Grape Growers Guide," and frequently publishes his work on cold weather hardiness in the *American Journal of Enology and Viticulture.*[50]

John Lowey handles the marketing aspect of the Colorado Wine Industry Development Board. Lowey, the Executive Director of the Board, was hired in May of 1994. He came from the Texas wine industry where he was president and Chief Executive Officer of Llano Estacado, a winery near Lubbock. He

(Photo courtesy of Colorado Wine Industry Development Board)

*Plum Creek Cellars winemaker Erik Bruner checking fermentation progress, Palisade, Colorado. Photo credit, Kenneth Redding.*

saw the Texas wine industry grow from 100,000 gallons in 1983 (about the size of the Colorado wine industry in 1995), to 1.5 million gallons in 1994.[51] While the Colorado wine industry may never be that big, Lowey's experience in Texas is important because he can apply what he has learned to the Colorado industry. He is developing contacts with lawmakers, newspeople and retailers around the state that will lay the groundwork for future growth.[52]

Lowey offers an interesting perspective on the potential of Colorado grown wines. He cites states with wine industries that have populations similar to Colorado, such as Washington state, which has a well established wine industry. It is successful enough to account for twenty–six percent of the wine sold in the state. Oregon wines account for ten percent of the wine sold in Oregon. Colorado consumes about eight million gallons of wine per year, and only about 100,000 of those gallons, or 1.25 percent, are Colorado grown wines. To capture ten percent of the Colorado market the industry would have to produce and sell about 800,000 gallons per year, an eight fold increase over present production. Lowey thinks that this is an entirely feasible goal, and to reach it the Western Colorado wineries will have to more actively pursue the Front Range market, which accounts for eighty percent of the wine consumed in the state. He sees this as the key element to long term success.[53]

The Wine Board promotes Colorado growers, in addition to the wineries and the manufacturing end of the business. If Colorado grown wine does well, the growers do well. This is important because of the ratio of growers to wine makers—there are over eighty Vinifera grape growers in Colorado and about sixteen wineries. The disparity of this ratio helps to explain some of the dynamics of the industry. There is a romantic misconception of wineries as places with a large facility, generally a chateau or similar impressive structure, surrounded by acres of neatly rowed vines. There are many wineries like this, but there are also wineries that have no grapes, and grape growers that have no wineries. The majority of Colorado's grape growers simply grow grapes and sell them to manufacturers. They do not make any wine themselves.[54] Some wineries grow more grapes than they can process. Steve Smith at Grande River is the largest grower in the state with almost sixty acres. He makes wine, but does not have the manufacturing capacity to use all he produces, so he sells most of the grapes he grows.[55]

At the other end of the scale are wineries like Plum Creek and Carlson Vineyards, with more wine making capacity than grape growing capacity. Consequently, they make wine from their own grapes and buy grapes from growers. For the year 1994 only seventeen percent of Carlson Vineyards production came from grapes that they themselves grew.[56] An extreme example is Columbine Cellars, which is one of the largest wineries in the state but does not own any grape acreage. They buy grapes from Colorado growers and make the wine in Denver. Columbine Cellars was located in Palisade but recently moved to a larger facility in Denver.[57]

Colorado Cellars adds a more complex element. Colorado Cellars is the winery founded by Jim Seawald. The name has changed from Colorado Mountain Vineyards to Colorado Vintage Cellars to its current name, Colorado Cellars. Seawald lost the winery in 1988 and it ended up in the hands of Tom Husband. Two years later, Husband sold the winery to Rick and Padte Turley. The Turleys own about twenty acres of grapes, enough for about one–third of their production. They buy grapes from local growers, but they also buy grapes from California.[58]

Buying grapes from out of state is nothing new in Colorado, it is how the industry started in the first place, and most Colorado wineries have used out of state grapes from time to time. Turley is the largest user of out of state grapes. The wine that Turley makes from California grapes is White Zinfandel, one of the best selling wines in the United States.[59] The Zinfandel grape, a red wine grape, which in this case is used to make white or blush wine, does not grow well in Colorado. It is a late ripening grape and the vines are susceptible to winter freezes. Parker Carlson has been trying to grow Zinfandel for nine years with little success. He still has a small row of Zinfandel, but not enough for commercial manufacturing.[60] Turley also grows Zinfandel grapes, but is unable to grow enough to meet the demand—he sells 3000 cases per year of White Zinfandel, his biggest selling wine.[61]

The importation of California grapes is important because it points to the different philosophies within the industry. Many wineries frown upon the use of out of state grapes and think it is a poor long term strategy. Turley approaches the situation with a merchant's mentality. He says, "All romance aside, this is a business to us. If I don't make a profit here, my kids don't eat, we close the doors."[62] He would like to use exclusively Colorado grapes, but if the consumer wants Zinfandel, and there are no Zinfandel grapes in Colorado, then he will look out of state.

Turley says that he and his wife Padte are sole owners of the winery, have no investors and no other sources of income.[63] Doug Phillips, part owner of Plum Creek Cellars and a worker's compensation lawyer, says that most of the wineries in the state are owned by people who continue to have other employment or are supported by investors.[64] There are exceptions. Parker Carlson continued to work a second job until his winery matured, but now devotes all his time to the winery.[65] That is the general trend for small wineries in the state: the owners phase out their outside employment as the winery grows.

As Colorado wineries grow from part–time hobbies to full–time businesses, marketing becomes increasingly important. It will make or break a winery. The wine industry is highly competitive—it supports products from various countries and several states. There are about six hundred wineries in California alone, and about 1500 in the United States. There is quite a bit of competition for a limited amount of shelf space, and that is where the name Colorado comes in. According to John Lowey, the Colorado consumer wants Colorado wine. A small in–state wine industry will produce new wine drinkers. People will start to drink wines simply because they are from their state.[66]

Wine requires a different kind of marketing than other agricultural products in the Grand Valley, such as peaches, apricots and sugar beets. Columbine Cellars is a good example of this modern, marketing oriented wine industry. Ron Smith and Dan Prinster started Columbine Cellars in 1992 as Vail Valley Vineyards. Smith is the small business lobbyist who was instrumental in the passage of the Colorado Wine Industry Development Act. Smith studied the Colorado wineries and used them as the centerpiece for his Masters of Business Administration from the University of Colorado. Smith, the Colorado director of the National Federation of Independent Business, was also inspired by a friend who was the Oregon director of this organization. That friend established Willamette Valley Vineyards, a market–driven winery in Oregon. Smith's partner, former state representative Dan Prinster (D–Grand Junction), has similar marketing qualifications. Prinster has a graduate degree in economics and was a principal in the Wingate group, a now–defunct Grand Junction advertising venture. The two men opened Vail Valley Vineyards without owning any vineyards, planning to make wine from grapes purchased from Grand Valley growers.[67]

Columbine Cellars (Vail Valley Vineyards) is also concerned with marketing, and currently has a wide range of wines that sell the image of Colorado. They have labels featuring scenes from Vail and Aspen. One label has an illustration that closely resembles the Maroon Bells, twin 14,000 foot peaks that are almost a three hour drive from the grape source in Palisade. Columbine Cellars recently contracted with Curtis Talley to buy his grapes. Talley represents the old and the new in Grand Valley agriculture, and also connects the old and the new of the wine industry. The grapes he has been growing since 1973 are now sold to a winery in Denver (Columbine), made into a finished product by Columbine's wine maker from California (Matt Cookson), and marketed with names and labels that borrow the image of internationally known resorts in Western Colorado (Vail and Aspen).[68]

Carlson Vineyards uses humor to market its wines. For example, they capture Grand Junction's dinosaur excavation heritage with a series of wines such as "Paradactyl Pear," "Sipasaurus" and "Tyrannosaurus Red," complete with a label of T-rex sipping wine in front of the Bookcliffs. Carlson also produces "Prairie Dog Red" and "Prairie Dog White," to poke fun at the controversial prairie-dog shoots in the Montrose County towns of Nucla and Naturita. But all this fun is serious business. Wine makers who are not good at marketing will soon find themselves in another business.[69]

Good marketing alone does not guarantee success in the wine industry, it also takes deep pockets and patience. According to John Lowey, Director of the Wine Board, the rule of thumb in California is that it takes ten years for a winery to break even. The standard industry joke is: "How do you make a small fortune? Start with a large fortune and buy a winery." The obstacles are daunting. After purchasing land and planting grapes, a grower must wait three to five years for the fruit to mature. There is also the price of the building and the related wine making equipment, and weather related failure can further hinder any profit expectation. These factors help to put the earlier failures of Ivancie and Seawald into perspective.[70]

Ivancie and Seawald were true pioneers, and their experiences made it easier for the next wave of pioneers that comprise today's young industry. But the failures may not be over. In its twenty–three year existence, the industry has continually searched for the grapes most able to thrive in the challenging Colorado climate. Scientific research develops new ways to combat the cold winters and produce a consistent crop, but disaster can strike at any time. A look at previous vintages illustrates that one bad winter can devastate production.

Colorado Wine Grape Acreage and Production: 1984–1996[71]

| Year | Acres Planted | Grape Yield (tons) |
|---|---|---|
| 1984 | 23 | 11 |
| 1985 | 28 | 28 |
| 1986 | 103 | 35 |
| 1987 | 174 | 95 |
| 1988 | 207 | 66 |
| 1989 | 219 | 11 |
| 1990 | 242 | 107 |
| 1991 | 270 | 41 |
| 1992 | 300 | 260 |
| 1993 | 340 | 438 |
| 1994 | 380 | 411 |
| 1995 | 400 | 562 |
| 1996 | 430 | 475 |

Both 1989 and 1991 had extremely low yields. Another such year could prove difficult for the industry. Winery owners must meet payments on their production capital, and making and selling wine are the means to make these payments. If the Colorado grape crop freezes out, owners may be forced to look for out of state grapes to make wine.[72] Such action could confuse consumers intent on buying Colorado grown wine. The admirable integrity of producing only Colorado grown wine may prove difficult in the face of a severe winter.

However, 1995 was an excellent year for the industry. The long summer and mild fall produced a record amount of grapes. Four hundred acres produced 562 tons of grapes, a figure that would lead one to believe that these acres are producing a little more than one ton per acre, but some of these acres are new and not yet producing fruit. In 1995 many area vineyards produced at a rate of five to nine tons per acre.[73] Four to six tons per acre is normal on a good year. Each ton produces about 150–160 gallons of wine. At five bottles per gallon, and twelve bottles per case, in a good year an acre can produce about three hundred and ten cases or 3700 bottles of wine. In the simplest of terms, it takes about three pounds of grapes to produce one bottle of wine.[74]

No matter how much money is invested in wine making equipment and how much expertise is invested in marketing, the wine industry cannot escape from its agricultural base. If a winter is severe, it will suffer. In this sense it is much like the peach industry that has defined agriculture in the Palisade area for most of the century, because the cold winters and late spring frosts affect both grapes and peaches. It is a common belief that grapes are less susceptible to the cold than peaches, but every grower interviewed said otherwise. They all agreed that one is no easier to grow than the other. The decline of the peach industry is not due to the proliferation of grapes, but instead the growth of population. During the oil shale boom of the 1970s, land was simply more valuable for housing than for peaches. This trend continues with the current economic upturn in Western Colorado.[75]

Grapes should not be blamed for the decline of the peach industry, that is a function of the changing nature of Western Colorado. In fact, grapes can help the peach industry by allowing fruit growers to diversify. There are over eighty grape growers in Colorado, and many of these growers are experienced fruit growers who use grapes to supplement their other crops. Curtis Talley explains that grapes let him spread out his work load. Peaches are harvested earlier, beginning in August (depending on the type of peach tree). Grapes are harvested later in mid to late September, allowing Talley to spread out his labor. He does not have to harvest his fruit all at once, and he can maintain a smaller labor force and refrain from hiring temporary employees.[76]

In 1995 there are about 2000 acres of peaches in Colorado, compared to about four hundred acres of grapes. Seventy–five percent of these acres, both peach and grape, are in Mesa County.[77] All of these vineyards and accompanying wineries are creating something the peach industry nevercould—a tourist attraction. The potential here is great. Napa Valley is the number one tourist attraction in California, and wine producing areas make for romantic, leisurely weekend retreats. The summer of 1995 saw 23,000 people visit the five wineries in Palisade and one–third of these people were from the Front Range. While many of these people stop at Grand River Vineyard's new location on Interstate 70, some come for the weekend and contribute to the local lodging and restaurant industries.[78]

The wine industry in Western Colorado has come a long way since its beginnings as the homegrown product of European miners in the early part of the twentieth century. Using a combination of personal vision and hard work, coupled with timely bureaucratic aid, it is an industry of the modern West. It retains the agricultural influence so imbedded in the Grand Junction character, but agriculture is only a part of the industry. It also requires a new kind of entrepreneur, one with patience and ample funding. It requires an aggressive marketing approach, a sound manufacturing effort and an awareness of the growing tourist element. It is a modern multifaceted industry that exemplifies the changing West.


(Photo courtesy of Colorado Wine Industry Development Board)

*An assortment of Colorado Wines. Photo credit, Kenneth Redding.*

# NOTES

[1]John Lowey, director: Colorado Wine Industry Development Board, interview by author, 3 October 1995, Grand Junction, Colorado, tape recording in possession of Museum of Western Colorado, Grand Junction, Colorado.
[2]Debbie Kovalik, director: Grand Junction Visitor and Convention Bureau, interview by author, 3 November 1995, Grand Junction, Colorado.
[3]Frandk Marolt Jr., interview by author, 1 November 1995, Palisade, Colorado.
[4]Bruce Isaacson, author of First Four Corners Commission Feasibility Study, interview by author, 8 November 1995, Grand Junction, Colorado.
[5]Norm Wycoff, Palisade resident since 1903, interview by author, 13 November 1995, Palisade, Colorado.
[6]Bruce Isaccson, "The Economic Feasibility of Growing Grapes in Colorado West" (Grand Junction, Colorado: Club 20 Economic Development Division, 1973), 7, photocopy in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.
[7]Lowey interview.
[8]Gerald Ivancie, interview by author, 2 November 1995, Littleton, Colorado, tape recording by telephone, in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.
[9]Ibid.
[10]Walter Winiarski, interview by author, 10 November 1995, Napa, California.
[11]Curtis Talley, interview by author, 13 October 1995, Palisade, Colorado, tape recording in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.
[12]"Vinifera Grapes in Colorado West as the Basis for a Wine Industry," 12 March 1976, 10, photocopy in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.
[13]George Zimmerman and others, Palisade, Colorado, to Dr. K. M. Brink, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, 4 January 1974, photocopy in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.
[14]Danny Bracken, interview by author, 27 October 1995, Palisade, Colorado, tape recording in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.
[15]Winiarski interview.
[16]Ivancie interview.
[17]James K. Brink, Austin, Colorado, to George Zimmerman, Palisade, Colorado, 28 March 1974, photocopy in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.
[18]"Vinifera Grapes in Colorado West," 11.
[19]David E. Nixon, Englewood, Colorado, to Carl A. Larson, Executive Director Four Corners Regional Commission, Farmington, New Mexico, 2 March 1976, photocopy in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.
[20]Art Moss, former president Club 20, interview by author, 10 November 1995, Grand Junction, Colorado.
[21]Isaacson interview.
[22]Talley and Bracken interviews.
[23] K. M. Brink, head of Department of Horiculture, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, to George Zimmerman and other grape growers, Palisade, Colorado, 21 February 1974, photocopy in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.

[24]"Aficionados May Toast With 4–Corners Wines," *The Daily Sentinel* (Grand Junction, Colorado), 28 October 1976, 8.
[25]Talley interview.
[26]James K. Stacey, "Feasibility of Wine Grape Production in the Outlying Areas of the Grand Valley" (Austin, Colorado: Colorado State University, Austin–Rogers Mesa Research Center, 1 July 1976), photocopy in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.
[27]Talley interview.
[28]"Grape Expert to Visit Prior to Conference," *The Daily Sentinel*, 24 July 1976, 7.
[29]Isaacson, "Feasibility of Grapes," 10–11.
[30]Eric Bruner, owner Plum Creek Cellars, interview by author, 31 October 1995, Palisade, Colorado, tape recording in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.
[31]Bracken interview.
[32]Talley interview.
[33]*Colorado Limited Winery License, Colorado Revised Statues*, vol. 5B, article 47–113.1 (1991).
[34]"Grape and Wine Production in the Four Corners Region" (University of Arizona, Agricultural Experiment Station, Technical Bulletin 39, April 1980), photocopy of title page and table of contents in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.
[35]Bennett Price, interview by author, 3 November 1995, Palisade, Colorado, tape recording in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.
[36]Parker Carlson, owner Carlson Vineyards, interview by author, 3 November 1995, Palisade, Colorado, tape recording in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.
[37]Price interview.
[38]Ibid.
[39]Ibid.
[40]Carlson interview.
[41]Bruner interview.
[42]Stephen Smith, owner Grande River Vineyards, interview by author, 26 September 1995, Palisade, Colorado.
[43]Rick Turley, owner Colorado Cellars, interview by author, 12 October 1995, Palisade, Colorado, tape recording in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.
[44]Smith interview.
[45]*Colorado Wine Industry Development Act, Colorado Revised Statutes*, vol. 14, article 29.5 (1995).
[46]Lowey interview.
[47]Carlson interview.
[48]Lowey interview.
[49]Rick Hamman, viticulturist at Orchard Mesa Research Center, interview by author, 10 October 1995, Palisade, Colorado, tape recording in possession of Museum of Western Colorado.
[50]Ibid.
[51]Lowey interview.

[52]Carlson interview.
[53]Lowey interview.
[54]Ibid.
[55]Smith interview.
[56]Carlson interview.
[57]Lowey interview.
[58]Turley interview.
[59]Ibid.
[60]Carlson interview.
[61]Turley interview.
[62]Ibid.
[63]Ibid.
[64]Stuart Steers, "Colorado's Whine Industry," *Westword* (Boulder, Colorado), 1–7 November 1995, 6.
[65]Carlson interview.
[66]Lowey interview.
[67]Ginger Rice, "New Winery Added in Palisade," *The Daily Sentinel*, 14 June 1992, sec. D, 1.
[68]Talley interview.
[69]Lowey interview.
[70]Ibid.
[71]Rick Hamman, viticulturist, Orchard Mesa Research Center, Grand Junction, Colorado.
[72]Carlson interview.
[73]Hamman interview.
[74]Mary Carlson, owner Carlson Vineyards, interview by author, 26 September 1995, Palisade, Colorado.
[75]Harold Larson, superintendent of the Orchard Mesa Research Center, interview by author, 27 November 1995, Palisade, Colorado.
[76]Talley interview.
[77]Colorado Department of Agriculture, *1994 Colorado Fruit Tree Survey* (Lakewood, Colorado: Department of Agriculture), 9–12.
[78]Lowey interview.

## The Birth and Early Years of Club 20
### by Tim Pollard

*Tim is a 1996 graduate of Mesa State College and is currently attending the University of Colorado at Boulder.*

Club 20 is an organization made up of over seventy–five municipalities, dozens of chambers of commerce, and hundreds of businesses throughout the Western Slope of Colorado. Originally comprised of twenty counties (hence the name), twenty–two counties are now members. Few other organizations of this interest group genre can boast such a wide spectrum of political viewpoints and affiliations as does Club 20. In order to understand why this group was formed and why it is still a growing, vibrant organization today, it is necessary to have a firm grasp on the history of conflict between the Western and Eastern United States, and how that interstate conflict translated into intrastate conflict in the Centennial State.

As the population of the West increased, newly formed state and territorial governments quickly realized that their isolation from the economic and political centers of the East made them relatively unimportant politically at the federal level. They were relegated to almost colonial status with the banks and politicians in the East controlling their destinies. Historian Robert Athearn mused, "While Americans long had boasted that they possessed no colonial system, that such exterior control was just a bad memory from which free people had emerged." In actuality the system by which new Western territories were governed was much like the system of governance that the British had used to control their colonies world wide.[1]

During the Great Depression, the Western states plunged further into dependence. The Western frontier had changed from a land of opportunity to a region dependent on the Federal government in the East for its very economic survival. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal programs such as the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps helped to pull Western states through the economic hard times.

The economic crunch revealed the frailty of Western economies built only on the export of raw materials and agricultural products. When crops failed and Eastern capital was not available to infuse the mining industry, whole communities disappeared. Gerald Nash argues that the West's economic well–being was entirely dependent on "shipping its raw materials out to be processed in the East—which also retained a major portion of the profits derived from their fabrication." Very little large–scale manufacturing took place in the West, even though natural resources were abundant in the region. In 1940, according to Nash, barely five percent of Western income was due to manufacturing enterprises.[2]

On the eve of World War II, Westerners were very pessimistic about what the future had in store for them. While economies elsewhere seemed to be on the upswing due to billions of dollars in government defense contracts, Western states saw next to none of this infusion of capital into their economies. Most of the contracts were awarded to large manufacturers, while Western industries were generally smaller enterprises. According to Nash, cities like Los Angeles "became so alarmed over this development that in the spring of 1940 the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce established a special office in Washington, D.C. with the specific purpose of soliciting government business for its clients."[3]

Political activism paid off in numerous ways for Western economies. By the time the United States declared war on Japan, major defense contracts were being awarded to Western industries. Throughout the war, new industry and capital flowed into this depressed region like never before. World War II would prove to be a defining moment in the history of the Western United States. The conflict helped to bring the Western economy back from the brink, and through the privatization of many war–time industries, helped broaden and diversify its economic base. Nash saw World War II as a watershed event in the history of the West and declared, "The West emerged from the war as a path–breaking self sufficient region with unbounded optimism for its future...a newly diversified economy was booming, [and] a vast influx of population was changing the very fabric of western society."[4]

While the relationship between the federal government and Western states had greatly improved after the war, and colonialism was no longer cited on a Western list of injustices, in at least one state these same charges of colonial type controls was levied from one region of this state onto another. Colorado would stage a micro–cosmic repeat of the East/West conflicts of a generation before within its own borders.

Colorado has an amazing variety of climates, elevations and landform variations. It is divided almost down the middle by the Rocky Mountains, and this division helped to produce two very distinct political cultures on its Western and Eastern Slopes. Eastern Colorado is a fairly urbanized, cosmopolitan region with massive industry, an international airport and well over eighty percent of the state's population. The Western Slope, conversely, is a sparsely populated, mostly agrarian region with little heavy industry and no large metropolitan areas.

Much like Westerners in the early 1900s, the citizens of twentieth–century Western Colorado felt like they were being controlled by an Eastern power. However, this time the power was not the politicians and bankers of the East Coast, but the politicians and bankers in the eastern half of their state. The population, and therefore the money and influence, was centered in the East, and the citizens of the West felt like they were getting the proverbial short end of the stick in their own state capital.

Major differences of opinion between the residents of the Eastern and Western Slopes were evidenced in all sorts of political issues. During the early 1950s, the major complaint of Western Colorado residents about their colonial masters was the unfair preference that counties east of the continental divide seemed to enjoy when money was appropriated for state highways. This adversely affected Western Colorado's ability to compete for industry and tourism dollars. The problem was acute. At a time when nearly half of the state's highway miles were on the Western Slope, the State Highway Commission allocated only about ten percent of available money for use on those highways.[5] In fact, Western Colorado boasted only one completely paved highway in 1953, Highway 6, which was a major arterial through Western Colorado to Denver and the East Slope.[6]

Preston Walker, a newspaperman at the Grand Junction *Daily Sentinel*, realized that in order for the Western Slope to resolve these inequities in highway funding they would have to show a united front at the state capital. In 1953 he began organizing Western businessmen and community leaders for this purpose. Walker was a fascinating man. Bill Cleary, former aide to Congressman Wayne Aspinall and former Club 20 President, described him


(Photo courtesy Club 20)

*Clockwise, from lower left, Ken Johnson, Dale Hollingsworth, Mike Valentine and Wally Foster, 1965.*

as passionate about Western Colorado. "He was an irascible character, and you didn't want to get on the wrong side of him," Cleary said. Walker also had a fiery temper. He was a man of small stature, yet he commanded respect, as his commitment to Western Colorado's future was always clear and uncompromising.[7]

Former Colorado Governor John Vanderhoof agreed with Cleary's portrait of Walker to the point that they used some of the same words to describe him. Both characterized him as "irascible" and, Vanderhoof added, "Pres was rough and he talked rough...he was not brilliant but he was a brash, effective leader." Vanderhoof added that Walker's use of the *Daily Sentinel* as a vehicle for communication of his pro-Western Colorado message greatly increased his effectiveness. Without this tool he might never have been able to bring the counties of the West together as Club 20.[8]

Throughout the early 1950s Walker, in the editorial pages of *The Daily Sentinel*, railed against the deplorable condition of Western highways. He gained considerable support from other West Slope partisans, but he saw no change in Eastern attitudes. Walker realized that if he was ever going to effect major change in the highway system it would require a force much greater than one man and one newspaper could generate.[9]

It is hard to tell when the idea occurred to Walker—or even if it was his own idea—but in 1953 he began to formulate a plan to unite the Western Slope of Colorado into a political interest group (at the time it was known as a "super chamber of commerce"). Many people joined his effort early on, but he relied on fellow businessmen H.R. (Red) Holliday of Delta, Lyman Thomas of Montrose and Lew Parcell of Silverton to help with a substantial portion of the work involved in putting this organization together. The Club's first real organizational meeting took place in Ouray, Colorado, on April 10, 1954, with Preston Walker presiding as temporary chairman and Red Holliday acting as temporary secretary. The four men had done much to publicize the event and to try and stir up political activists slope-wide.[10]

Their labors were rewarded with attendance of about sixty-five people representing eighteen counties. A committee, which included Walker and Holliday, was elected to prepare a constitution and bylaws for the group. This document was to be ready to present to the Board of Directors for their approval at the next general meeting, no more than sixty days in the future.[11] The constitution, when completed, detailed a threefold purpose:

> 1. To formulate, through careful analysis, plans and programs for the development, improvement and general

> welfare of all Colorado territory west of the Continental Divide, to promote, develop and improve, through coordinated action, all resources, and to promote a harmonious relationship of inter–community planning.
> 2. To act as a guide for all organizations in Western Colorado in order that they shall work as a unit for regional betterment.
> 3. To advance the commercial and economical interest of Western Colorado and the general welfare and prosperity thereof.[12]

On May 22, 1954, the Club again met in Ouray and adopted its constitution and bylaws. Preston Walker was elected as president of the organization for a one year term.[13] During this formative period Walker garnered much praise for his efforts from other newspapers across Western Colorado. He was nearly deified for his role in forming the Club. An editorial in the Hotchkiss *Herald* described Walker's undertaking to unite the West Slope as "comparable to the efforts of our founding fathers to form the United States from 13 widely scattered colonies, who often (had) conflicting...interests." [14]

As soon as the organizational meetings were complete, Walker quickly focused the group's attention on the issue that had created the need for such a group. It was time for Preston Walker and Club 20 to offer a solution to the Western Colorado highway crisis. A Highway Committee was chosen (later it would be called the Transportation Committee) which included, among numerous others, Red Holliday, Lew Parcell and Preston Walker.

Newspapers across the Western Slope decried the condition of the region's highways. One paper went so far as to say, "Our highway system in parts of the Western Slope is little improved over the stage coach ruts present in the East almost two centuries ago."[15] Walker certainly would have agreed with this statement, and with the backing of his Western Slope interest group he planned to change the way that the State Highway Commission allocated their resources.

The Highway Commission in Colorado had long made population a major factor in doling out road improvement money. Obviously this left Western Colorado at a distinct disadvantage when competing for funds. Walker's argument was simply that funding should depend as much (or more) upon miles of road as it did on population. If the allocation formulas could be modified to reflect his opinion, then the Western Slope would be much more likely to receive its share of highway funds since nearly half of state highway

(Photo courtesy Club 20)

*Rex Howell, Jim Duggan and Lew W. Parcell.*

mileage was west of the mountains. Armed with this logic, Walker and the Highway Committee of Club 20 set out to draft a master plan for Western Colorado highway improvements for 1955. By November the Committee had put together an ambitious plan to present to the State Highway Commission.

Club 20's proposed highway improvement plan for 1955 contained recommendations for enhancement of about twenty Western Colorado highways through more than forty specific projects. Each proposal was rated as a Category One or Category Two initiative, with Category One being of utmost importance and Category Two describing a project that could wait until the next year for completion, if necessary.[16] In a newsletter entitled "Club 20: The First Thirty Years," Larry Brown claimed that this document was "the first comprehensive, regional in scope, highway request and recommendation in the history of [Colorado]."[17] Walker presented the Club's plan to the Highway Commission during their annual meeting in late November and early December of 1954.

Although most highway projects that Club 20 mentioned were not completed in 1955, the Club won a major victory for the people of Western Colorado. While it is estimated that in 1954 only about ten percent of state highway improvement dollars ended up on the Western Slope,[18] during fiscal year 1955 that amount more than doubled as approximately twenty-five percent of the state highway budget was spent in the Western counties.[19]

Preston Walker and the members of Club 20 were well on their way to achieving equity in highway spending after little more than one year in operation. However, the members of the Club had little time to celebrate. From December of 1954 to early in 1955, a conflict arose within Club 20 that threatened to tear the fledgling organization apart.

For years there had been much debate on both sides of Colorado's Rocky Mountains as to the value of drilling a tunnel to make a safer, all-weather highway through the state. Proposals were delivered to the Highway Commission favoring sites all over Colorado from Monarch Pass to the more northern route at Berthoud Pass. All levels of government from local to federal were involved in the planning and fund raising process to make this dream a reality.

Ironically, at the very meetings where Preston Walker had so much success with Club 20's highway plan he also made a monumental error by violating the very Club rules that he had been instrumental in forming. From its inception, Club policy stances were supposed to be created by the Board of Directors. Walker, in a seemingly innocuous fashion, voiced his opinion

(Photo courtesy Club 20)

*Preston Walker addressing a Club 20 Highway Committee meeting, circa 1955.*

on an extremely controversial issue without their approval. He made it clear to the Highway Commission that he was not in favor of building a tunnel. He called the tunnel a "luxury," and an item that "was not too important [to Western Colorado] at this time."[20] He continued to say that, "no tunnel would make these mountains look like Kansas flatlands to tourists."[21]

Some Club 20 members, led by the Montrose and Rifle delegations, were infuriated by Walker's statement. The Rifle Chamber of Commerce went so far as to draft and approve a resolution denouncing Walker's remarks and denying that Walker's opinion coincided with that of "any substantial number of individuals, associations, cities and counties of Western Colorado."[22] Walker had to sacrifice a bit of his personal pride to hold the Club together against the gathering tempest of disunity. He did not go so far as to apologize for his tunnel statements, but he did do his best to qualify them and to soften their concreteness. Walker backtracked by saying that he was not against a tunnel, but thought at this time that the money would be better spent on existing high mountain passes.[23] Later the Club drafted a resolution which incorporated this opinion, in order to please those communities who had been dissatisfied with Walker's earlier comments.

Preston Walker died in late May of 1970.[24] He served three terms as the Club's President from 1953–1955 and then three more consecutive terms between 1968–1970. Walker would be proud to see Club 20 today. Although the Club no longer focuses so much of its energy on highway issues, it is still much involved in transportation lobbying. Club 20 has also broadened its lobbying base in including issues from agriculture to tourism. Club 20 attempts to achieve these goals through a unique, bipartisan structure whereby policy is made at the committee level. The group's four standing committees are Public Lands/Natural Resources, Tourism, Economic Development, and Transportation, with each main committee breaking up into numerous subcommittees to draft policy on specific projects. Committee membership is open to all dues–paying parties concerned with furthering the interests of the Western Slope of Colorado. Dues are calculated on a sliding scale according to the size of the organization requesting membership, with annual dues ranging from $35 to $5,000.

Once a committee has agreed on a particular policy stance, the resolution or opinion is sent to the Board of Directors for final approval. This Board is made up of representatives from each of Colorado's Western Slope counties. The Directors are selected at individual countywide caucuses of Club 20 members. Population is not a factor in determining representation on the Board of Directors. No matter how many representatives each County has, each individual County only has one vote at the Board level. [25] The Board's approval of policy stances is the framework which guides the organization's Executive Officers throughout the course of the year. Every press conference, summit meeting, or piece of correspondence pertaining to a specific issue that is generated by the Executives, must reflect the opinion of the Board of Directors on that specific issue.

(Photo courtesy Club 20)

*Club 20 Highway Committee meeting, 1960.*

Despite many successes, the Club is in no danger of being obsolete. The feeling that the Western half of the state remains a stepchild or colony of the Eastern half is still carried by some Western Coloradans. Current issues such as Denver's building of a multi–billion dollar international airport at a time when the Western Slope cannot even obtain reliable jet service tend to exacerbate the problem.

The Club's mission is the same today, nearly forty–two years later, as it was at the time of the group's inception. Few other organizations of this interest group genre can boast such a wide spectrum of political viewpoints and affiliations as does Club 20. The Club's Executive Officers and Committee Chairpersons may often be diametrically opposed to one another ideologically, and yet work together through the Club 20 forum to attempt to better their region. The Club has stayed true to its founding axioms, and has proven that in unity there is strength. Club 20 remains an interest group in the purest sense of the word.

## NOTES

[1]Robert G. Athearn, *The Mythic West in Twentieth Century America* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 108.
[2]Gerald D. Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 5.
[3]Ibid.
[4]Ibid., 216.
[5]Willis Carr, "40 Years of Clout: Anatomy of an Interest Group," *Colorado West News Magazine*, Vol. 7, Number 1, (Spring 1993), 5.
[6]Larry Brown, "Club 20: The First Thirty Years," Club 20 Archives, Grand Junction, Colorado, 1982.
[7]William Cleary, interview by author, 21 November 1995, notes in posession of author, Grand Junction, Colorado.
[8]John Vanderhoof, interview by author, 28 November 1995, Grand Junction, notes in possession of author, Grand Junction, Colorado.
[9]Ibid.
[10]*Steamboat Springs Pilot* (Colorado), 15 April 1954.
[11]Ibid.
[12]Club 20 Constitution and Bylaws, 1954, 1–2, Club 20 Archives, Grand Junction, Colorado.
[13]*Gunnison News-Champion* (Colorado), 26 May 1954.
[14]*Hotchkiss Herald* (Colorado), 16 September 1954.
[15]Ibid.
[16]Preston Walker, Grand Junction, to Colorado Highway Commission, Denver, November 1954, Club 20 Archives, Grand Junction, Colorado.
[17]Brown, "Club 20," 2.
[18]Ibid.
[19]Preston Walker, Grand Junction, to Club 20 members, September 1955, Club 20 Archives, Grand Junction, Colorado.
[20]*Boulder Camera* (Colorado), 30 November 1954.
[21]*Denver News*, 5 December 1954.
[22]*Rifle Telegram* (Colorado), 22 December 1954.
[23]*Greeley Tribune* (Colorado), 1 December 1954.
[24]*Grand Junction Daily Sentinel* (Colorado), 29 May 1970.
[25]*Meeker Herald* (Colorado), 3 June 1954.

# BACK ISSUES

Vol. 1 #1 Hard Times But Good Times: The Grand Junction Women During the Great Depression *How Grand Junction women marshalled limited resources to survive the Great Depression.*
Recollections of the Redlands *A regional history of a community at the foot of the Colorado National Monument.*
#2 Uncompahgre Statesman: The Life of Ouray *In our opinion, the best biography of Chief Ouray.*
#3 The Grand Junction Town Company and the Land Dispute with William Keith *The legal battle over control of the townsite in early Grand Junction.*
The Avalon Theater *A theater which brought high culture to Grand Junction.*
#4 The Grand River Ditch *An excellent study of a large scale irrigation project in the Grand Valley.*
Recollections of Naturita *Small town life on the Western Slope.*

Vol. 2 #1 The Roan Creek Toll Road *An early–day transportation project along the Colorado River.*
Harvesting Peaches with German Prisoners of War World War II *German prisoners used as agricultural laborers on the Western Slope.*
#2 Birds of Mesa County *An illustrated guide to birds of the area.*
Crawford: A Good Little Town *A good short history of a Western Slope town.*
Chinese in Early Grand Junction *An ethnic history.*
#3 Reminiscences of Early Life in Grand Junction *A pioneer woman's account of watching railroad building and settling on the Western Slope.*
#4 The Schiesswhol Building: An Economic Barometer of Grand Junction Business Activity, 1908–1934 *A case study of business cycles in Grand Junction.*
The New Deal Programs as Seen from Loma *A community's mostly negative reaction to New Deal measures.*
The Peach Festival 1887–1909: A Celebration of the Land *An annual social event in the early Grand Valley.*

Vol. 3 #1 SOLD OUT
#2 "A Monument for Good in the World and Glory of God": The Parachute Home Culture Club *How determined women brought appreciation of high culture to a pioneer village on the Western Slope.*
The Little Empire of the Western Slope: Boosterism in the Early Grand Valley *Encouraging investment and settlement during the early days of the Western Slope.*
#3 Development of Grand Junction and the Colorado River Valley to Palisade 1881–1931, Part I *This is one of the standard histories of the Grand Valley.*
#4 Development of Grand Junction and the Colorado River Valley to Palisade 1881–1931, Part II *Continuation of #3.*

Vol. 4 #1 The Ku Klux Klan in Grand Junction 1924–1927 *The rise and fall of this organization in Grand Junction during the 1920s.*
#2 The Schmidt Family Hardware Store and Grand Junction, A Partnership *A business history of an institution in Grand Junction.*
Early History of the Grand Junction High School Band *Starting a band in a high school.*
Transcendental Twisted Trees and Enos Mills *Reflections on ecological history.*
#3 The Crawford Mill *The history of a small flour mill in a Western Slope town.*
The Survival of Judaism in a Far Western Town: A Brief History of the Jewish Community in Grand Junction *Grand Junction's Jewish Community.*
#4 Archaeological Investigations at Battlement Mesa *An archeological study.*
Enstrom's: More Than Just Toffee *History of a successful candy company.*

Vol. 5 #1 Higher Education and Mesa State College: A Study of Roles and Influences *A study of Mesa State College and its governing board.*
In the Spirit of Public Service: Leslie Savage of Western Colorado *A Western Slope leader and his promotion of higher education.*
#2 A Reminiscence of Mesa College at the End of World War II 1944–1946 *The war's end and its impact on college life.*
The Manhattan Project on the Colorado Plateau *How Western Colorado fit into the Manhattan Project.*
The Plateau Canyon Road *The building of a road through a rugged portion of Colorado.*
#3 Grand Junction's City Parks: A History of Community Cooperation *How one city has dealt with the issue of parks and recreation.*
Reminiscences of an Inveterate Colorado Skier *A long–time skier's reflection on that activity in Western Colorado.*
#4 A Twentieth Century Stopping Place: The St. Regis Hotel 1893–1990 *The history of a hotel that was once the hub of fashionable society in Grand Junction.*
Johnson's House of Flowers: A Family Tradition *A family business history.*
Solid Cold: A History of the Grand Junction Ice Houses *The transportation and storage of ice in early Grand Junction.*

Vol. 6 #1 Community Development and Historical Events: Social History and Folklore of the Grand Valley *One old timer's candid reactions to a multitude of events on the Western Slope.*
#2 Bloody Grass: Western Colorado Range Wars, 1881–1934 *A well documented account of the cattle and sheep wars.*
The Life of a Sheepherder: Then and Now *The daily life of a sheepherder.*
#3 Hispanic People of Grand Junction *An overview of Hispanic life in a Western Slope city.*
The KREX Story: A History of Broadcasting in the Grand Valley *From radio to television in Grand Junction.*
#4 The Civilian Conservation Corps on the Colorado National Monument *A case study of the CCC in Western Colorado.*
Onion Valley: The Fate of the One–Room Schoolhouse *History of education on a small scale.*

Vol. 7 #1 A Study of the Retolza Boarding House and its Role in the Life of the Basque Itinerant Sheepherder *Ethnic social history.*
The Western Hotel of Ouray—A Hundred Year History *A hotel which reflected the fortunes of a Western Slope mining community.*
#2 Women Coal Miners, The Orchard Valley Mine, and the Efficacy of Affirmative Action *What happened when women went underground in the coal mines.*
Women and Their History in Kannah Creek *A case study of women in a small community.*
#3 Labor Shortage and its Solution During WWII in the Grand Valley of Western Colorado *How an agricultural area coped with labor shortages during wartime.*
John Lawrence and the Opening of the San Juans, 1869–1882 *The development of trade between the Western Slope and the San Luis Valley.*
The Howard Lathrop Agriculture Center *Mesa State College's farm.*
Las Immigrantes Mexicanas *An ethnology of Hispanic females in Grand Junction.*
#4 100 Years of Uranium Activity in the Four Corners Region, Part I *An insider's history.*

Vol. 8 #1 100 Years of Uranium Activity in the Four Corners Region, Part II *Continuation of #4.*
#2 Fort Crawford: A Symbol of Transition *A Colorado fort and how it impacted the Ute Indians.*
#3 Cesspools, Alkali and White Lily Soap: The Grand Junction Indian School, 1886–1911 *An excellent study of an "off reservation industrial boarding school."*
#4 Shoo Away the Snakes, Prairie Dogs, and Rabbits; Let's Make the Desert Bloom: The Uncompahgre Project 1890–1909 *Digging the Gunnison Tunnel, an important water diversion project on the Western Slope.*

Vol. 9 #1 The Blind Immigrant *A blind Norwegian immigrant's life as a farmer and rancher.*
I Don't Even Hear the Trains Run Anymore *An ethnology about the feelings of former railroad employees about their "buyout" by the company.*
Gandy–Dancer to Shoe Clerk *Making a living during the Depression required versatility.*
#2 Hotel Colorado: Playground of the Rich and Famous *The history of an institution in Glenwood Springs.*
Grand Junction Clay Products Company *A brickyard that supplied building materials for a growing community.*
#3 Whose Water is it Anyway? Bureaucrats, the Animas–LaPlata Project, and the Colorado Utes *A scholarly study of a controversial water project.*
#4 A History of Rapid Creek *A case study of a small ranching and farming community.*

Vol. 10 #1 Objective History: Grand Junction, Colorado, Part I *A general history of a Western Slope city.*
#2 Objective History: Grand Junction, Colorado, Part II *Continuation of #1.*
#3 William Moyer: The Rise and Fall of a Small–Town Progressive *History of an influential Grand Junction businessman.*
The Life of Humanitarian Sabina Veronica Lally O'Malley *A biography of an early Grand Junction volunteer.*
#4 Land's End Road *The construction of a road to the summit of the Grand Mesa.*
Sights on the West Coast But Home in Grand Junction *How two families came to settle in Grand Junction.*
Tales of Black Mesa *Folklore of the Western Slope.*

Vol.11 #1 "Queen" Chipeta *A look at the legend and reality of Chipeta's life.*
Audre Lucile Ball: Her Life in the Grand Valley From World War II Through the Fifties *Domestic life in the 1940s and 1950s.*

## THE PATRONS' PAGE

Those persons who send a patron's subscription of $25 or more for a one year's subscription make the **JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE** a better publication. Patrons' contributions make possible the publication of special editions such as the biography of Chief Ouray. Also, patrons enable the editors to furnish some complimentary subscriptions to educational institutions and to publish more photographs in each issue. Without the support of patrons, the publication of this Journal would be difficult. The members of the Mesa State College Historical Society, the Alpha-Gamma-Epsilon Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, and the editors of the **JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE** thank the individuals and businesses listed below who are our patrons:

Mr. & Mrs. Walter R. Averett, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Herbert Bacon, Grand Junction
Charles W. & Velda Bailey, Grand Junction
Glenn Burnham, Denver
James Butner, Grand Junction
Dr. Chris Buys, Grand Junction
Tess Carmichael, Grand Junction
Edward F. Carpenter, Grand Junction
Betty Castleberry, Grand Junction
David Chase, Grand Junction
Iona Coe, Grand Junction
Dr. & Mrs. R. B. Crowell, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Lit DuPont, Fruita
Fred D. Eble, East Dennis, MA
Mr. & Mrs. T. F. Ela, Santa Fe, NM
Mr. & Mrs. William M. Ela, Grand Junction
James Elsberry, Grand Junction
Ann L. Ennis, Akron, OH
Abbott E. Fay, Paonia
Henry Filip, Palisade
Mr. & Mrs. David E. Flatt, Grand Junction
Joanne Florian, Grand Junction
William M. French, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Earl Fuoco, Grand Junction
Betty Goff, Grand Junction
Pat Gormley, Grand Junction
Calvin & Alma Gower, St. Cloud, MN
James R. Grisier, Grand Junction
Vi Haseman, Grand Junction
Rosemary C. Heaney, Grand Junction
Elaine Henderson, Hotchkiss
John & Particia Henson, Grand Junction
Holiday Inn of Grand Junction
Bruce B. Johnson, Grand Junction
Diana Jones, Grand Junction
Dr. & Mrs. James Johnson, Grand Junction
Gregg & Kristine Kampf, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Miles Kara, Grand Junction
Frank Keller, Grand Junction
Glen Kendall, London, England
Ben Kilgore, Grand Junction
Richard W. Kimmel, Jr., Jefferson
John Knight, Littleton
Gary & Marilyn Kroft, Glade Park
Nadine Lippoth, Grand Junction
Aaron & Beth Long, Grand Junction
Don MacKendrick, Grand Junction
Mesa State College Alumni Association
Charles & Sharon Meiklejohn, Palisade
Earl Monroe, Delta
Mr. & Mrs. Melvin R. Muhr, Grand Junction
Jeffrey M. Nakano, Grand Junction
Betty M. Neubauer, Grand Junction
William R. Patterson, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Rob Peckham, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. John Pendergrast, Grand Junction
Morton Perry, Grand Junction
Daniel E. Prinster, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph C. Prinster, Grand Junction
Dr. & Mrs. William E. Putnam, Grand Junction
James & Betty Rankin, Grand Junction
Ann & Paul Reddin, Grand Junction
Martha Rife, Grand Junction
James M. Robb, Grand Junction
Katherine B. Roe, Colorado Springs
Dr. & Mrs. Geno Saccamanno, Grand Junction
T. R. Sadler, Grand Junction
Robert & Janet Scheevel, Grand Junction
Robert P. Schulte, St. Louis Park, MN
Steve & Tracy Schulte, Grand Junction
Ruth P. Smith, Grand Junction
Mrs. John W. Sneed, Grand Junction
James E. Stafford, Grand Junction
Mr. & Mrs. Robert V. Sternberg, Cincinnati, OH
Mr. & Mrs. John Tomlinson, Westminster
Mr. & Mrs. Dwight H. Tope, Albuquerque, NM
Marjorie F. Tope, Maitland, FL
West Slope Environmental, Grand Junction
John Wolcott and Roxana Hickman, Grand Junction
Pat & Zang Wood, Flora Vista, NM