

STORIES TOLD:  
LIFE ON THE PUBLIC LANDS IN  
SAN JUAN COUNTY



EDITED BY  
CHARLOTTE PALFREYMAN SMITH

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For information on copies, please contact the Redd Center.  
The pamphlet is also available online at [www.reddcenter.byu.edu](http://www.reddcenter.byu.edu)

*Cover photo: Gary Crandall*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The oral histories for this project were conducted by Brett Dowdle, Jessie L. Embry, and Charlotte Palfreyman Smith. These interviews are housed in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

Additional interviews used in this booklet were conducted for the Edge of the Cedars Museum in Blanding, Utah, with funding from the Utah Humanities Council and the Utah State Historical Society. These interviews with Wanda Kethum, Micah Loma'omvaya, Albert Cly Jr., Stella Eyetoo, Harry Hudgins, Imajean Pelt, and Lynn Stevens are housed in the Utah State Historical Research Center. Kent Powell made these interviews available.

Val Brinkerhoff, Andrew Gulliford, Oliver Harris, Gary B. Shumway, Kay Shumway, and LaVerne Tate graciously provided the pictures. For information on Val Brinkerhoff's (<http://cfac-old.byu.edu/valbrinkerhoff>) and Kay Shumway's (<http://kayshumway.com>), see their webpages.

## ABOUT CHARLES REDD CENTER FOR WESTERN STUDIES

The Charles Redd Center for Western Studies is a research center at Brigham Young University. In 1972 Charles and Annaley Redd, prominent southeastern Utah ranchers and philanthropists, donated funds to establish the Lemuel Hardison Redd, Jr. Chair of Western History at BYU, and the university created the Center to promote research and teaching about the West. For generations the Redds have lived and worked on the public lands in San Juan County.

The mission of the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies is to promote the study of the Intermountain West by sponsoring research, publications, lectures, classes, oral history and public programs in a variety of academic disciplines including history, geography, sociology, anthropology, politics, economics, literature, art, folklore, range science, forestry, and popular culture. Research grants are awarded annually to faculty members on and off BYU campus, students from BYU and other universities, museums and professional organizations and independent scholars. Specialized grants allow scholars to come to BYU to use the L. Tom Perry Special Collections and to research and write. For more information, see [www.reddcenter.byu.edu](http://www.reddcenter.byu.edu).

## INTRODUCTION

*Everything revolves around the public lands there.  
Maybe a more appropriate question is "What do you  
remember that you didn't do on public lands?"  
—Jordan Grover*

From the time of the Ancestral Puebloan people to the twentieth-first century, the residents of San Juan County have called the red rocks and soil home. The Ancient Ones vanished, leaving only the remains of their dwellings. Archaeologists are not sure what brought them to the land or why they disappeared. Historians have a clearer understanding of more recent settlers who tried to homestead and ranch among the rugged cliffs. Some left the area because it was too harsh. But many have remained and not only survived but thrived. The red soil has become a part of them and their families. People from all over the world continue to visit and settle in the area.

As much as the residents love the land, for the most part they do not own it. Only eight percent of the land belongs to individuals; the government owns and controls the other ninety-two percent. Residents and visitors alike debate how to use the public lands.

To understand that attachment to the land, Redd Center employees conducted interviews with thirty-six current or past residents who love Southeastern Utah. The Center also had access to interviews conducted for the Edge of the Cedars State Park and funded by the Utah Humanities Council and the Utah State Historical Society. These interviewees represent the diversity found in San Juan County. Some are Native Americans, Ute Mountain Utes and Navajos. The European American interviewees in Southeastern Utah also have various origins. Some come from Mormon pioneer stock, their ancestors having traversed the Hole-in-the-Rock Trail. Other residents relocated to San Juan County from the Mormon colonies in Mexico. Others still are relative newcomers to Southeastern Utah.

All groups have used and loved one area in particular, Westwater Canyon, just below the Edge of the Cedar, a state park and museum and the San Juan Campus of Utah State University in Blanding. This area has provided shelter for the Ancestral Pueblos, whom the Hopis and Pueblos claim as their ancestors; the Ute Mountain Utes; and the Navajos. While the European Americans have not lived in Westwater, the area has provided water and a play area for adults and children. It provides a case study of how various residents have used the public lands in San Juan County.

The views of all the interviewees have been arranged around themes that many mention including adventure, prehistory, history, scenery, and work. This booklet shows that despite their differences, residents and visitors love the public lands for the same reasons and hope that future generations will have the same respect for the land.

The Charles Redd Center for Western Studies itself has its origins in the red rocks of San Juan County. Lemuel Hardison Redd Jr. helped establish a cattle industry in the area. His son Charles developed that business to garner a fortune that he then used to create the Redd Center at Brigham Young University. The Center is pleased to share these stories of the lands of San Juan County. To use a popular phrase of the early twentieth-first century, hopefully the stories will help create “common ground” among groups that often disagree.

Jessie L. Embry  
Associate Director  
Charles Redd Center

## WESTWATER CANYON

*These are the memories that I have of Westwater and the people who lived here. We don't know what the future holds for our children, but I know that I will embed the stories of Westwater into them.*

—Wanda Keitchum

**Micah Loma'omvaya:** As Hopi people we're descendants of Ancestral Puebloan people. They carried on the farming tradition which is the core of our way of life. Of course, there is also a spring seep which provided a stable source of water for them in this area.

**Janet Wilcox:** We live here close to Westwater, and our boys thought that was their playground. They played all sorts of discovery games, Cowboys and Indians. They said, "We're going out to Westwater," and they'd be gone three or four hours, but we never worried about them a bit. They were with friends.

**Albert Cly Jr.:** When I was little, my parents used to put cans in our hands and told us to bring water to cook, clean, and wash with. We are elderly now, but we still use the water. The water tastes good, makes us feel good, and gives us life. We are all thankful for this water that comes out here. The water sustains us and is what makes us who we are. When we are tired and we drink the water, we are renewed. It makes us well again.

**Stella Eyetoo:** I used to walk around and play with the willows and make baskets where the water is.

**Kent Tibbitts:** The kids used to take their big wheels down there and ride them off that dam all the way to the bottom, turn around, and push them up. Lots of kids were down there playing. Westwater was just like an extension of our backyard.

**Harry Hudgins:** When I was a young boy, my mom and dad had a camp in Westwater Canyon. Along the path that crosses the canyon we cleared away the sagebrush and planted garden patches.

**Imajean Pelt:** When we were small, we used to go down the creek and play under the big tree. We used to climb the walls and the rocks. Then we would get our water. We explored the canyon here.

**Lynn Stevens:** When I was growing up in Blanding, the water system for the community was woefully inadequate. Tadpoles came right through the tap. Most of the people in Blanding relied on carrying water. Westwater Canyon was a very popular place because the spring there ran very well and the water was good. Westwater had a big attraction for playing. We played all kinds of games, particularly tag and hopping across and back over the creek.



*Ute woman dipping water from Westwater Spring. Photo provided by San Juan County Historical.*

*Wanda Ketchum:* When we were young, the kids would come down here in this canyon, and we would disappear for hours at a time and play. Where this little pine tree is behind me there was a little pond. We would swim in it in the summertime to keep cool, and when it would rain there would be fresh water in it.

## ADVENTURE

*I love the ruins; I love the canyons;  
I love the geology. I like the formations,  
finding pieces of dinosaur bone, the artifacts.  
I like walking, looking, hiking, and seeing.*

—*Oliver Harris*

**Winston Hurst:** The public lands are where I go to recreate and to exercise. They are my office and my playground at the same time. That's always been where I go, either alone or with good friends. They are a combination of a massive library, psychiatrist, religious leader, parent, and everything else.

**Lynette Stevens:** My daughter and I guided some people out in Wooden Shoe and took a wrong trail. We ended up going up Rig Canyon, which is so steep that once we started, it was too steep to come back down. We had to keep going up. It took us about twenty miles in the wrong direction without much water. A lot of people think that you can see where your destination may be across a canyon. It's very rare that you can actually go down into a canyon and come back out where you thought you could.

**Kent Tibbitts:** There's a place by the old Lake Powell road that goes up Cottonwood Canyon about a mile off of the highway where the water spills over some rocks. We'd take the band kids there every spring just before school was out to slide down them. Those kids had so much fun doing that. The water runs down the canyon, and by the time it gets down to the rocks, it's fairly warm from the sun. When my kids got old enough to do that, I started taking them out. Now they want to take their kids there. It's probably a drop as high as this ceiling down to this little pool. The pool's not too deep. They can stand up in it and walk out and climb back up to the top of the rocks.

**Andrew Gulliford:** One time Slick Horn Canyon and a couple of other lower canyons flashed. Somebody lost a whole eighteen-foot raft. There was so much water blowing out of the side canyons that it created a wave in the San Juan River that washed four miles upstream. San Juan County is not to be taken for granted in terms of being outdoors. You have to be prepared for just about everything.

**Robert McPherson:** The students doing the "Summer Experience," the other instructor, and I started down the trail to Rainbow Bridge. I wanted to try and keep people together, but in reality it was a physical impossibility. By the time it was dark, we had about eight people missing. When the moon came up, I left the other instructor with the group we had and thought, "I'm going to go back up the trail to see if I can find these people." I walked around until about two o'clock in the morning with my dog. Finally I thought, "Whatever. I'm going to get some sleep." At first light I was moving down the trail again to see if I could



*Comb Ridge. Photo copyrighted by Andrew Gulliford.*

find the lost souls. Then came the most glorious sight of my life. It was like in a movie. The sun was just coming up, casting long shadows. It was beautiful. It was actually the funniest thing I'd ever seen. I got up to them. One had sprained an ankle, one was short on water, and another person was this and that. But they were all okay.

**Andrew Gulliford:** My neighbor had a powered parachute the size of a two-lane asphalt highway that went almost like a go-cart. We picked a beautiful, cold day in March with no wind. We sailed up over the top of Tank Mesa and Comb Ridge and saw the cattle trails and stock tanks, knowing there were ruins tucked away in the different cliffs. We came over the edge of Comb Ridge, and within seconds we were over the top and floating down. It was like being a feather. Then we crossed the river, flew around the Mule's Ear a couple of times, and then up Chinle Wash, which was so exciting because there hasn't ever been any archaeology in there. We were eyeball-to-eyeball with these high ruins like Poncho House.

**Baxter Benally:** In the movies the guy would walk in the desert and try to squeeze the water out of a cactus. He'd cut it and eat it. We tried to imitate that, but it tasted awful.

**Robert Redd:** One time I was going up on the west bench of Lavender Canyon. My son Matt, who was about ten, went with me. We went up to the Dry Creek bottom and then came to the place where we wanted to climb the cliffs up the

bench. As we went up we passed this cute, inviting little cave. We knew that rain was a threat that day and thought, “If we got caught in a rainstorm, this would be a good place to shelter.” We pulled some dry wood into it in case we wanted to build a fire. We climbed out on top. We had noticed there were big, black clouds on the mountain, but now they were barreling down the canyon. We ran back. It started to pelt us with big old drops. We got a little fire started. At first there was this nice waterfall coming off the top of that cave. It was so loud you had to shout to talk. Then it wasn’t rain that was coming off there; it was little round hail pieces. They stacked up in a little cone. We’d take a little handful and eat it like ice cream. We had to stay in there about an hour. It was a dear moment for both Matt and me because it enforced intimate time. We were there at nature’s pleasure. By the time we walked home, we were wet, cold and ready for supper. Nature and its forces were very apparent to us and made the whole experience charming, although rigorous.

*Kay Shumway:* We put Gary L. Shumway, my cousin, on the end of a rope and threw him over a ledge. We could have killed that guy. He finally got in that alcove that had the ruin in it and found his older brother Devar’s name in there, which bummed us. We thought we were going to get in there and find a cave full of Anasazi olay water jars and blankets made out of porcupine quills. None of that stuff was there, just a name. We didn’t have the strength, it seemed, to pull him back out of there hanging on that rope. It was crazy to even try it, but we did. Everybody survived.

## PREHISTORY

*Everyone can be their own little  
archaeologist or anthropologist in San Juan County.  
—Andrew Gulliford*

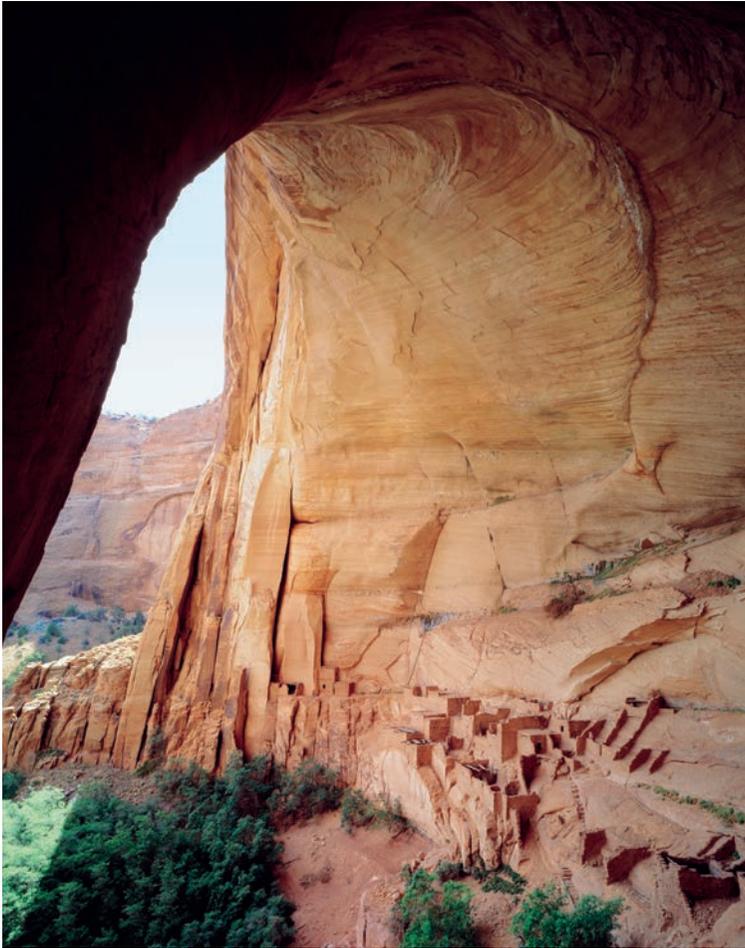
*The ruins present endless surprises.  
—Oliver Harris*

*Being in touch with a ruin or an artifact  
that comes from long ago gives you  
a different sense of history. You realize  
you're not the only ones that have been there.  
—Andrew Gulliford*

**Micah Loma'omvaya:** When I come back here to Westwater, I really see the presence of my ancestors. I know that the traditions I'm carrying on are tied to these places. The one thing I don't see here is any pottery. I feel a little sad because, as in our tradition, they would have left broken pottery to make sure that their footprints were left here and that they should remain here for people to see. Visit with respect. Visit with a humble heart and an open mind so that you can really see how these people lived, what conditions they had to live with, and the happy life they would have led here. It is very interesting to me just to be able to walk in their steps. Just looking around here is very fulfilling to see and know that my ancestors lived here and were able to survive and probably live a good, full life here as well.

**Lynette Stevens:** Walking out to feed the horses, I bent down and found a really long rock. It was white and sloped at each end. It looked like maybe it was a piece of jewelry at one time. The Anasazi used rocks for all kinds of things—to shape, to cut, to pound, to do whatever they needed to do to survive. We see remnants of those kinds of things here.

**Andrew Gulliford:** We looked down at this site with binoculars. It seemed impossible to enter. It was two hundred feet from the top of slick rock on a narrow ledge and then a three hundred foot drop. If you had an accident, you were dead. We made it through the defensive wall and into a room. I remember seeing and feeling as comfortable as if I had been in the womb. It was safe compared to what we just did. It got worse. The path narrowed, and at a certain point, I couldn't even stand up. I remember coming around the corner crawling. I was in an absolute panic. I was so nervous that when I finally got to a place where I could sit down, my heart was pounding. I used my binoculars to look down the canyon, across the creek, and over at the ravens to calm myself down by pretending that things weren't as far away as they were. It worked. I finally got my nervous system



*Anasazi Ruins. Photo by Val Brinkerhoff.*

back. We made it to this place where there was still an intact building material and a painted wall. Somebody had been there maybe in a hundred years but nobody recently. Those are the kind of experiences that make San Juan County so exciting because you can have a sense of discovery. At Mesa Verde, there are asphalt parking lots, there are rangers, there are interpreters, and there are interpreters' signs. In San Juan County, Utah, you can explore and find things by yourself. It's one big outdoor museum.

*Marilyn Holiday:* I remember my father saying that there was a place called the Poncho House in the Mexican Hat area. It had lots of Anasazi ruins. He and

his cousin's sister used to sneak over there while they were herding sheep. When they got caught they got a whipping, because those places were sacred. Later on if they got sick they were told, "That's because you shouldn't be playing around those ruins." They say the spirits are still there even though you do not see them. If you damage anything, you are hurting them and you will be cursed. The way to prevent that was to stay away from the ruins in the first place. We always wanted to know what was there. We'd go have a look around and would play among the ruins. But we never took or destroyed anything.

**Gary L. Shumway:** Corn Cob Hollow was a symbol of our great fascination. We spent a lot of time up there finding wonderful beads, earrings, pendants, and arrowheads. Being out there in the cliff dwellings of Corn Cob Hollow and the major ruins on the surface up on the Dakota sandstone was a great part of our childhood. There isn't anybody that I've ever taken there that hasn't felt a fascination and a special spirit in that place, whether they're religious, superstitious, or couldn't care less. I have a feeling that good people lived there for many generations and put their hearts into it and loved it. When they finally left, realizing that they would probably not be back, I think they left a blessing that other people would feel that it was a special place when they came—nothing greater than that. I think that spirits surround different places.

**Marcia Hadenfelt:** I can remember my husband taking us on a backpack trip. We were trudging down. We sat down for lunch and looked at a few things. We said, "Where's the place we're going to camp?" He said, "I told you, we'll camp at this ruin I mentioned." We were eating our lunch and looking. Everything was gorgeous. All of a sudden, we looked up and realized we were sitting at that ruin. It blended in. You develop the ability to sit down or walk and look around and go, "Aha! There's the rock art or ruin, the archaeology that we wanted to see." You begin to realize that you need to walk slower. The landscape is incredible, and the bonus to the landscape is the prehistory of the area.

**Kelly Laws:** It's neat to go stand in a house where not many people have been. Some of these houses are not easy to get to. They weren't very big people, but they packed hundreds of rocks that were probably half their weight. They raised their family on a ledge five hundred feet straight up. How did they keep their kids from falling off the ledge? You walk down the street today and see that people have different tastes. They did, too. You can see it in the way they fixed their yards up or finished their houses with different craftsmanship. Someday I hope to meet those people and tell them, "I was in your house one day."

## HISTORY

*I suppose that if a particular family is in an area,  
that somehow a love and an appreciation  
for that area gets passed on.*

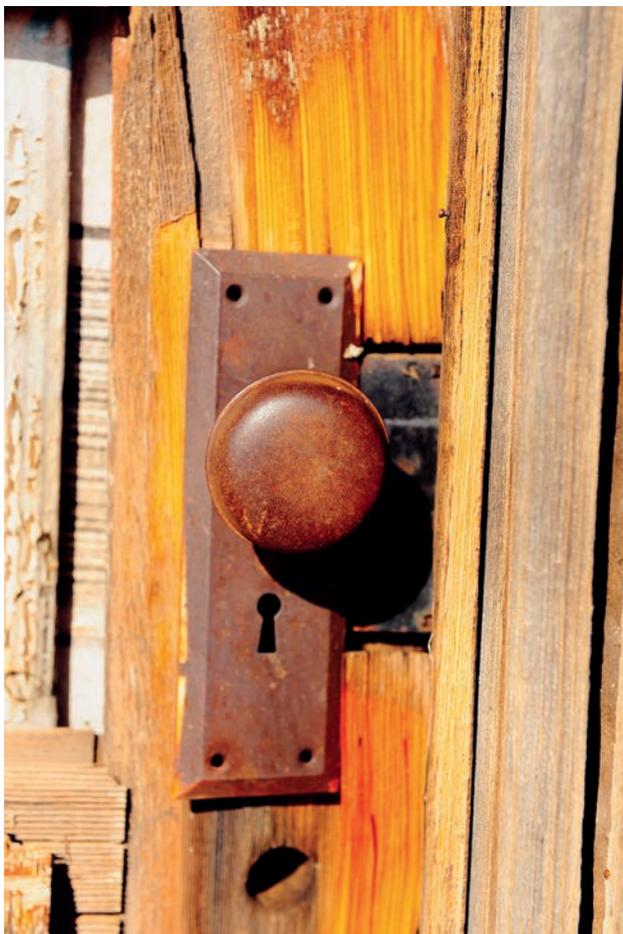
*—Gary B. Shumway*

**Janet Wilcox:** The more you know about the history of the area, the more it means to you to go to those places. Whether the people were miners, hunters, or trappers, all the places have meaning, and to see them is special. Hole-in-the-Rock was one of the first things that I learned about. I hadn't ever been there, but I knew a lot of the stories. Last year, I was asked to collect little biographies for the youth to use as they prepared for a trek. I ended up with about a hundred short profiles. My understanding of Hole-in-the-Rock was magnified. When I had a chance to walk down the Hole-in-the-Rock and imagine what it would have been like a hundred years ago, I saw what an awful, horrible, terrible task that was. It created a deep appreciation for those people's sacrifices, struggles, and the importance of religion in their lives. What has become of this area is because of who they are. That's one of the layers that interweaves into the land. It's not just a place to look at, to take pictures of, or to go hunting in. It means much more than that because there are names and events associated with it.

**LaVerne Tate:** There are certain canyons where the seepage comes down to a place you can climb to. Greenery grows all along those coves. In the spring a little purple flower comes out with a long stem. The whole cove is just covered with them. We would always go down in the early spring and pick cliff flowers. I've done it for seventy years. This year we got plenty of flowers, but we tried not to take more than our share. A lot of the people in Bluff, especially the older people, like to go down and pick cliff flowers.

**Baxter Benally:** My mother said, "What are you going to do when you become a man?" I said, "I don't know." She said, "I hope you come back. My son, come back. There's a lot of imprint here. There are lots of memories of you kids playing around on the rocks here. Bring your wife or your girlfriend or whoever back. I want you to come back and live here."

**Jim Blankenagel:** We enjoy going to old roads where people used to go. One has quicksand bogs, steep rocks, sand, and willows that we need to be able to work our way around. It takes skill in jeep driving and a whole day to be able to go through and enjoy it. It's a lot fun. It was used by the Hole-in-the-Rock Gang as a hiding area because it's so remote. They have old cabins there. It's fun to see the history of how people tried to make a living on the land.



*Doorknob of George Lyman's home of long ago. Photo by Kay Shumway.*

*Joe Finn Lyman:* If I can ever find an old pioneer trail, it's the most euphoric feeling, especially if I think I'm the only one who knows where it is. I've become infatuated with the history of roads and trails in this country, going back to the early days when the mesa was first settled. My cousin and I found an old crossing below the highway. We thought, "What's it doing here? Why did they build it?" All of a sudden, these old trails became alive. That's where they crossed originally when they couldn't go up around the head of Devil's Canyon because of the snow. There were no caterpillar bulldozers. They were hand-built. There were a few places where they blasted the rocks and then cribbed it up by hand to get

across Devil's Canyon. I've found little sections of these trails. We get our life from these histories, our forebearers, and their sacrifices. When you go out and find these old trails, it brings it all together in a really meaningful way.

**Aldean Ketchum:** The Ute would call Westwater Táváci Yáqu Metu Paah, meaning "the west canyon where the sun would go down." The Blue Mountain, the Ute people call the Pachénakwa Karuv, meaning "it's like a sponge that holds the water." You can see the Bear Ears behind me. The Ute people called that the Kwiýágatei Nikagutch, which is a significant part of the Ute culture, the bear, and how he gave us the dance that we still do today.

**Robert McPherson:** There's a very elderly medicine man named John Holiday. I knew that he was very knowledgeable. I said to him, "I'd like to spend a day with you traveling around Comb Ridge and have you talk about what it means to the Navajo." I knew he was going to be good, but I had no idea how good he actually was. He had lived there off and on for a number of years in his youth. He knew a lot of the people. We were driving by places where there were just a few hogan sticks sticking up. He could tell me, "This is who used to live here. He used to do this. We hunted coyotes right over here."

**Gary L. Shumway:** My dad told me he was down on the San Juan River as a boy and was sitting quietly in a little overhang. He saw an old Navajo that must have been quite nearsighted. He rode his horse across the San Juan River and then started off on this trail. When the old Navajo got right up to where he could touch my dad, he turned around on his horse and sat there looking back over the country. Then he started singing a long, plaintive, slow, low, Navajo song. Then he looked there for just a minute and said, "Huckon Shi," meaning "Okay, I need to be on my way," and turned around and started on up the trail, never even knowing that my dad was right there by his side. Dad felt like he'd had a communion with another person who loved this country as much as he did.

**Charlotte Palfreyman Smith:** People like my grandpa, Gary L. Shumway, understand that the land isn't unknowable. If I was stuck out there, I would probably die. But once you learn how to find water and what formation will hold ore, you can make a living out there; you can survive, despite the land's harshness. If you understand the land, it becomes beautiful and fascinating to you. Most people in San Juan County have a feeling of connection with their forebearers—the people who originally figured out how to live there. They didn't have people to tell them, for the most part, how to survive. The current San Juan County residents value the knowledge that came from their ancestors and try to keep it alive. In a way, every American shares the heritage of San Juan County and the surrounding area because we have all built upon the shoulders of all types of pioneers.

## SCENERY

*There's beauty here that a lot of people can't see.  
They look at it and see desert.  
I look at it and see the tremendous life.*

*—Jim Blankenagel*

*The outdoor experience puts you in touch with nature  
and gets rid of all the clutter in our lives. There are lots  
of places in San Juan County where you can feel that.*

*—Janet Wilcox*

**Lynette Stevens:** In this area the elevation changes dramatically. In the winter we can ride horses down south, and in the summer we can ride up north. We pretty much ride all year round.

**Sunny Redd:** We pull the houseboat out of the water on Lake Powell in December. I've been down there when it snowed four inches on the red rocks. The blue water is like glass. There's not a ripple anywhere. It's magical.

**Kelly Laws:** When you sit and look out across the San Juan River towards Monument Valley, you almost feel like you're in a sacred place. It's beautiful. You cannot look out across it and not have some thoughts about God, the creation, and His wonders and majesty.

**Joe Finn Lyman:** When I was a kid I didn't realize how beautiful this country was, because I was raised here. I didn't know any different. The trips we would take out across the country were on little dirt roads. It was rough, slow, hot, dry, dusty, and tedious. As I became older, I realized what a special place this is. It has a spirit. The whole land comes together in a remarkable way and provides a tremendous environment because of the land, its resources, and its beauty.

**Lynn Stevens:** We enjoy riding in Hammond Canyon because there are a large number of big chimney rocks, totem pole-looking things, and caves that are there by nature. Some of them stand like big smokestacks on a factory totally by themselves with no other rocks within a hundred feet of them. How did they survive the erosion, yet the others didn't? They almost look like they grew up from the bottom of the ground like a large tree stump. It's fascinating. People that aren't familiar with sandstone formations are quite impressed with all that.

**Robert McPherson:** This is one of the most photogenic places in the universe. There's so much variety. In a half hour from Blanding, I can be down in a nice desert. In another half an hour, I can be in an alpine setting above tree line. There are all kinds of places, whether you're talking about Anasazi sites or rock formations.



*Photo by Oliver Harris.*

**Hardy Redd:** When I was a kid growing up, I looked at the land as very harsh and not friendly. I've changed a little bit, but it's still in the back of my mind that this is a harsh desert environment. Occasionally I will catch myself thinking when I'm driving out on Hatch Point or through the red rocks, "That really is beautiful," like it's a revelation to me at seventy years old.

**Robert Redd:** When I was in the second grade, the colors on the mountain were terrific. I traced the outline of the peaks on my paper and then began coloring. I used red, yellow, and brown. It was a mess when I got done. I was very disappointed that my representation of the fall colors on the La Sal Mountains didn't come close to what it really was. Fifty years later, I was sitting in a movie theatre when the screen opened and there was an evening silhouette of a mountain. I was uneasy. Then I recognized that it was the La Sal Mountains that I had grown up with. I was living in Virginia, not prepared to see my mountains again, but my subconscious recognized it. I'd missed the West more deeply than I'd realized.

**Gary B. Shumway:** There's a quality of light here that you don't find in other parts of the country or the world. Here you don't have the diffusion that takes place in Southern California as the sun's rays have to break through layers of smog and pollution. There's an edge to things.

**Oliver Harris:** I took two of my boys down to some lagoons south of town to look at the ducks. A big flock of ducks lifted off the north lagoon and flew down to the south lagoon. We went down to the south and crept over the bank, and they flew back to the north. I took one of the little boys and put him next to the

lagoon and put weeds on him so the birds couldn't see him. The other little boy and I went back around to the north lagoon and came up over the bank. There must have been a couple of hundred beautiful ducks with all their different colors. They flew up again and landed in front of this little boy. I was so thrilled for him to get to have that experience to be in awe of all the beautiful birds.

**Gary B. Shumway:** Growing up in Southern California it was almost impossible to get away from anybody or to have any solitude. I would come to this area partly for the peace, quiet, and solitude that a person could find. I had my little routes. I'd go up toward the mountain first and enjoy being up there. I would drive up over the mountain and fish. I would bring my .22 and find some safe place to shoot at things.

**Gary L. Shumway:** My high school years were tumultuous ones. My whole body and being was reeling and rocking with emotions. I would come home and was very drawn to getting my .22 and turning to old dog Spot and saying, "We're going out into the trees." As I got out into the woods, all of these dreads and emotions would drain out of me. All of a sudden, life had meaning. Things were happening the way they were supposed to. Squirrels in trees were barking the way squirrels were supposed to bark, and prairie dogs with their holes were calling to me. There was a feeling of peace and calmness that was a very important part of my life.

**Lynette Stevens:** If I had a map right in front of me, I could look at it now and really understand the country. Before, I'd go out somewhere and wonder how these canyons connected. It's taken years for my mind to get the puzzle pieces all together.

**Oliver Harris:** Mostly I've hiked in this country for the peace, the utter stillness. The only sound could be a raven.

**Lynn Shumway:** There was a young man from back East who worked in a small cubicle. He came in to the Visitors' Center and asked if I knew a place where he could sit on a rock and meditate. He told me he worked long hours every day, six days a week. He felt like that was all his life was. He flew into Salt Lake City, and the further away he got from the crowds of people, the better he felt. I sent him out to one of my favorite places, Muley Point, which is off of Highway 261 in Southeastern Utah. It's two thousand feet above the San Juan River. You can see points of interest from all four-cornered states, including Monument Valley; the Carrizo Mountains in Arizona; Shiprock, New Mexico; and the Sleeping Ute in Colorado. It's very peaceful out there. He told one of my coworkers that when he went out there, he could not believe how beautiful it was and how good he felt being able to breathe the air and to sit there by himself and to not be disturbed. He felt like he was finding out who he was. He was experiencing life. He quit his job, because seeing the great outdoors here, he thought there was more to life than what that little cubicle had to offer.

## WORK

*Our roots are in the land just as much as a tree's are.  
That's our anchor. All wealth comes from the land.  
—Joe Finn Lyman*

**Kelly Laws:** I look at some of these old roads that were made in the 1950s with old equipment. I shake my head and think, “The old boy that made this road had to drive in a pickup for fourteen hours to get here. He didn’t go home every night. He stayed here and ran his piece of equipment all day. Some of this country gets pretty hot in the summer, up to 110 degrees. At the end of the day, he had no place to take a shower. If his machine broke down, he had to fix it himself. He stayed there all week long until he ran out of fuel and food. Then he’d have to take another fourteen-hour drive home over rough dirt roads.” You get out to the end of one of these roads and all of a sudden, here’s a uranium mine. Somebody went out there and tried to make a living after they had found a little bit of ore.

**Gary L. Shumway:** When I was a very little boy, my dad and my Uncle Glen decided that my cousin and I could handle the responsibility of herding our cows. They explained to us that along the public road leading south from Blanding and on the hills to either side, there was abundant, free grass. The cows always loved it. There wasn’t too much to the job. We had to make sure that, one, they didn’t get out into an alfalfa field or they’d eat too much and bloat; two, that they didn’t get run over; and three, that a coyote didn’t get them. I vividly remember being there and feeling like we were doing something valuable. But also it gave us lovely freedom to be out there in that great, beautiful land in the springtime and summer. The clouds were so beautiful: nice, puffy, cumulous clouds that formed lots of interesting shapes like giants and big, huge ships, airplanes, and submarines. It was so enjoyable for me to smell the fresh scent of the open country and sagebrush after a rain.

**Val Dalton:** My family moved five times a year. We’d sleep out on the ground underneath rocks. I’d kick snow off my bed to get up in the morning. My wife cooked for the guests when we did the “city slicker” experience, which was like in the movie *City Slickers* except a lot more real. Whatever we were doing, the guest did. If we were irrigating or working on a ditch on a mountain to put water in reservoirs, they did it. If we were moving cattle, they did it. If we slept in tents or under rocks with pack horses or with vehicles, they did it. We lived out on the land. It was hard work, but the guests always said that it was the most memorable vacation they ever had. That’s why they came back.

**Joe Finn Lyman:** In the winter of 1952 the residents of Blanding broke through the mountain with the tunnel. I was a junior in high school that next summer when I worked with another kid and some Navajo men pulling the rail out of the



*Old Wind Mill at the mouth of Hammond Canyon on Ute Indian land. Photo by Kay Shumway.*

tunnel that had been used in the construction process. For some reason, those guys got so excited: they drove up over the top of the mountain, got a Caterpillar, pushed the little dam out that was holding water back and turned the Indian Creek water into the tunnel. We were in there working and the water started coming about up to our knees and we came out. You would have to have been part of the history of that project to imagine the feeling of seeing that water. That was the first water that came through the tunnel. That tunnel has given existence to the livelihood and life of our community. Without it, we wouldn't exist.

*Oliver Harris:* Once, my mining partner and I drilled around, loaded explosives, lit the fuses, and walked down around the corner to wait for them to

explode. I forgot my lunch pail in there, but I wasn't about to go back and get it. It exploded and messed up my lunch pail. I did some body and fender work on it. I took some dynamite fuse and looped it through two or three times to make a new handle. In those days it was just junk. But now I think of how neat it would be to have it. Recently, a kid up the street said, "I saw that lunch bucket in the dump." I think he was lying to me, but I climbed all through that dump. There were beer cans by the jillions. It was just like an Anasazi midden, but from modern people.

**Kay Shumway:** My dad had been out on Elk Mountain and looked a distance of some thirty miles at Shay Mountain. He thought he could see a place over there that was likely to have uranium, just by the formation. He learned all of this country because of his trapping. When vanadium and uranium became useful, he said, "Let's go there." Uncle Glen and his son, Tim and I hiked into Shay Mountain from Indian Creek. It was straight up and took us all day to get there. Sure enough, there was uranium ore showing on the surface. We staked our claims and walked back. They were recorded in the county recorder's office as belonging to Lee and Glen Shumway. It was theirs to use to extract the minerals, make a living, and produce economic development.

**Kelly Laws:** There are places that are better for farming and better for everything, but you get this red dust in your lungs and it's pretty hard to ever want to get out of this country.

**Winston Hurst:** When I was a kid, I couldn't hike very far without running into an Indian ruin or an old surface site that had pottery. I was always tremendously fascinated by that because it represented this mysterious past. Our history lessons in school and church tended to be about ourselves. But none of that accounted for all this stuff that was under my feet all the time. It was everywhere and not understood by anybody. By the time I was twelve, I was toying with the idea of being an archaeologist. I wasn't sure what that meant except that you got to study old stuff and tried to learn about ancient people. My archaeological career came out of my earliest experiences on the public land.

**Robert Redd:** We were moving a little bunch of cows in January or February into Beef Basin. The cowboys had gone ahead with the herd that they'd gathered off of Salt Creek Mesa, and I was coming with the groceries and their beds. It got dark on me, and I was still seven or eight miles from camp. It was one of those nights that were really cold. I was by myself and the temperature was dropping. I realized I had to walk in order to be warm enough to be okay. I walked along and there was Beef Basin, spread out in front of me. I knew it well. I knew where some of the Indian ruins were. It was just me and nature, and nature had the better hand at that moment. I was not in charge. I was hanging on and hoping for the best. I knew where the camp was. I was going to be there in an hour and a half—no big deal. But the bitter cold and being fifty miles away from the nearest electric light made it a poignant experience. I, representing humanity, seemed much less dominant at that moment.

## THE FUTURE OF SAN JUAN PUBLIC LANDS

**Robert Redd:** There's a strong feeling of kinship with Hole-in-the-Rock. Features of the landscape have been the curse and blessing to these settlers. They have endeared themselves to us, and we're still connected going back a hundred years. It would be nice if we didn't just have pictures and memories of these places, but if we could actually go back and feel some of these same feelings and connect with nature in a personal way like the old-timers did.

**Sunny Redd:** I live in an area with clean air. We have pure water that comes from a spring on the mountain. There aren't a lot of people that can say that about where they live.

**Janet Wilcox:** I think we should keep the smoke out of our land here as much as we can. Of course there are forest fires sometimes, but it's nice to live in an area where the sky is so blue and there's hardly any pollution other than what we create ourselves when we're burning weeds.

**Jim Blankenagel:** To me, improvement is going in and cleaning up those washes—putting some water barricades in them and getting rid of a lot of the sagebrush. There was very little sagebrush when the cattle barons first came to this area. Now there's a lot. Sagebrush control can be a very effective tool in restoring the land to a pregrazing state. The most efficient way to manage the land is through ruminance by cattle, sheep, and goats. Staying off the land is not necessarily the right thing to do. Multiple use is a better way of managing than no use.

**Lynn Shumway:** My father-in-law mined for pretty close to seventy years. Many of those roads were open when he was a kid. I want my kids and grandkids to be able to go down some of those same roads in life like he did.

**Andrew Gulliford:** This fall there were rumors that there was a slot canyon off of the back of the Citadel. As we dropped through the slot into the lower area, the ruins were like they used to be. There were huge amounts of pot shards and some broken pots as big as your hand. There were original timbers that the Anasazi hadn't finished putting up on roofs. There's magic there. It's always been there. Whether that can still be there in fifty to a hundred years depends how fast we can learn to leave things alone.

**Marcia Hadenfeldt:** Public lands represent a way to protect something of value to the entire nation. It could be the factory history of Boston, or it could be the prehistory of where we are now and the landscape that goes with it.

**Oliver Harris:** The land has a way of reclaiming itself. I think people make too big a deal out of impact on the land. Even now when we're driving, I tell people, "See, we used to live out there." It was a camp job. That mine dump over there is



*Cow Canyon, Bluff, Utah. Photo by Kay Shumway.*

getting hard to see. In a hundred years, it will take someone with a keen eye to be able to pick out that muck dump that was so big at one time.

**Lisa Mecham:** Sometimes you have to balance: are you taking your children to a place where you can preserve nature or where you can have fun? You have to choose your places because you want to protect the environment, but you also want your children to be able to do things and run free and wild. There are certain public lands that you can do that on. At Wilson's Arch, they can go up the whole mountain. We would hope that our using the land wouldn't destroy it.

**Gary B. Shumway:** The public land is very much like I remember. The one difference is that perhaps the feeling of ruggedness has diminished. In my teenage years it had more of a wild, untamed edge to it. Beyond that, my experience with it is actually even better because I'm older, more mature, and have more freedom. I can choose where I want to go to photograph or to fish.

**Gerri Swift:** We loved to go up in the mountains and find our own little niche in the woods. We'd always find a place to camp where there was no one for our children to bother or to bother us.

**Jim Blankenagel:** What the CCC camps did back in the 1930s was a wonderful thing. They put in reservoirs, blocked washes, and did a lot of work that enhanced the ability of the land to be of use to mankind.

**Lynn Shumway:** I would like to see the area be kept pretty much as it is. I'm not a person that likes a pathway lined with little rocks with signs telling me, "This is this kind of tree right here." I don't need that to have a good time or to understand where I am. Part of the excitement of this area is being able to discover it on your own.

**Bruce Shumway:** We take off a lot of times on the weekend and go and see new areas. We haven't seen it all yet, even after fifty years. In San Juan County you don't have to go to the same place time after time.

**Kelly Laws:** This county is big, vast, and rough. If I had to go see everything I've seen in my lifetime on foot, I would probably have seen one-tenth of what I have seen. Even so, I probably have not seen twenty percent of what's there to see.

**Janet Wilcox:** In the future I would like the land to look about like it does now. It's always nice to make improvements within the city, and I do think the roads that we have access to now need to be continually made accessible so we can get to the places we've loved. I hope some of the places that were closed for legitimate reasons might be opened again. I would hope that especially the things that are adjacent to communities will be made available, not that they have to be commercialized, but it's nice when there are ways to get to them.

**M. Dale and Donna Slade:** We have talked about in the past that what we think will preserve the land is for people to be educated about it—not to segregate it off and not let anyone see it, but to educate people more about the importance of it. That way it will be protected rather than trying to make a fence around it and keep everybody away from it.

