

A Letter from the Publisher

Richard Woodbury did not plan it that way, but this week's cover story on the booming, environmentally fragile Rocky Mountain West coincides roughly with his—and TIME's—return to the region. Born in Manhattan, Woodbury worked for newspapers in Denver and Grand Junction, Colo., in the 1960s. Earlier this year TIME marked the Mountain West's growing importance by reopening its Denver news bureau after a 13-year hiatus, and by installing Woodbury as chief. He barely had a chance to unpack his skis before this week's story propelled him on a two-week, 2,500-mile sweep across seven states from the Canadian border to New Mexico. "I had been warned that the region would be unrecognizable to me," he says. "Things like the brown pollution cloud over Denver's skyline, the mind-boggling traffic in Jackson Hole, the rising crime rates. But I was just as surprised by the things that had not changed: the eerie desolation of a high-country road in Wyoming, the majesty of the Teton mountains, and especially the open warmth of the West-erner. I left behind me a string of meal invitations and bottomless coffee cups."

Gavin Scott, TIME's San Francisco bureau chief, spent 17 days on the Rocky Mountain trail. He liked Boise best, he



Woodbury with oil rig in Colorado

says, "mostly because of the people, who are contented but not complacent, but also for the clean air, picturesque rivers and forests. Boise residents live there not by chance but by choice." Correspondent Michael Moritz trekked through Tucson, Santa Fe and Salt Lake City before winding up at Arco's Black Thunder mine in Wyoming. He watched in awe as "shovels the size of freighters dumped coal into trucks the size of houses." In Washington, D.C., Correspondent Gary Lee interviewed Congressmen and other powerbrokers active in the frontier states.

The writer of the story was Jim Kelly, who spent a week driving around the Western states. A native New Yorker, Kelly dropped in on Steamboat Springs, Colo., where he had been a camp counselor ten years ago. "I found it nearly unrecognizable because of all the new housing developments," he says. "But elsewhere you can drive for hours and see hardly a soul." Los Angeles Bureau Chief William Rademakers, who will soon be leaving the U.S. to become senior correspondent in Europe, picked up a memento of the West's vast distances during his many long days reporting the story: a \$5 speeding ticket in Montana. The friendly patrolman told him, "If you want to drive fast, just keep \$5 on your dashboard. We don't take checks."

John C. Meyers

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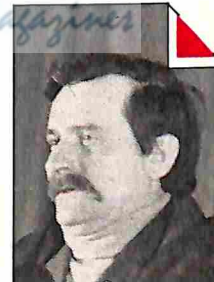
Cover: Illustration by Lou Brooks.



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FEB81 CRL 99053093T 55 65 67
MRS O A CARLSON
BOX 53
MN44

NEW YORK MLS MN 56567