

LIVING IT UP IN ASPEN: POST-WAR AMERICA, SKI TOWN CULTURE,  
AND THE NEW WESTERN DREAM, 1945-1975

by

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A thesis submitted to the  
Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of History

2006

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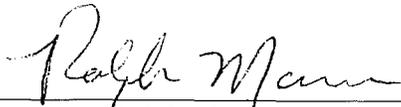
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Living It Up in Aspen: Post-War America, Ski Town Culture, and the New Western Dream, 1945-1975.

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Ralph Mann

Aspen offers a case study of the American obsession with denying and evading the presence of social class. Based primarily on personal letters, memoirs, oral histories, and newspaper clippings, this dissertation looks at the ways in which Aspenites argued over and shaped the meaning of their town from 1945 to 1975. In chapters that examine why people came to Aspen, their work, their housing, their play, and also why many Aspenites eventually left, I question how the projecting and masking of social class evolved in Aspen and why that matters in the broader story of change in postwar America. Newcomer Aspenites shaped the town as an escape from the middle class. They often masked their intentions by presenting themselves as small town westerners, as pioneers on a frontier of freedom and fun with a clear sense of who belonged in their town. While Aspen itself changed as it grew, particularly by the 1960s when technological advances made skiing easier and safer just as condominiums made it possible for an increasing number of absentee owners to obtain properties in town, Aspen's chief demographic trait continued to be that it was populated largely by the transient young, mostly privileged. In this respect, Aspen the ski town—or an offspring community such as Telluride, the ski town—was no different than Aspen, the mining town, or Telluride in its mining heyday.

## **Acknowledgments**

Although I cannot list here and thank every great teacher I've ever known, suffice it to say that this dissertation is one end result of my having been influenced for more than two decades prior to pursuing a Ph.D. by a number of great teachers at McCallie, Sewanee, and at the University of Montana. Thanks especially to Steve Bartlett, the late Bob Bailey, Kemmer Anderson, Bran Potter, Tom Roy, Don Snow, and Dan Flores.

At the University of Colorado, Ralph Mann has mentored and advised me for many years. In addition to being one of the nicest men I will ever know, Ralph's knowledge of American historiography is paralleled in few places. He has inspired me to try my best to be not only a scholar but also a caring teacher. Ralph's legacy is the multitude of students who adore him and respect him for his humility and for his work ethic. Thanks also to my other readers: Mark Pittenger, Peter Boag, Tom Zeiler, and John Stevenson. Special thanks also to Fred Anderson, Virginia Anderson, Brian DeLay, Susan Johnson, Susan Jones, and to Gloria Main. The classes I took from you, and/or the conversations we have had over the years were a delight.

As with any graduate student, I also owe thanks to my fellow students from Montana and Colorado, and to a number of students and faculty at other universities. Thanks especially to Wendy Rex-Atzet, Lincoln Bramwell, Kyle Bulthuis, Mark Carey, Brad Cartwright, Jean Christensen, Constance Clark, Diana DiStefano, John Enyeart, Jared Farmer, Hannah Gosnell, John Grider, Julia Hobson-Haggerty, Tom Krainz, Todd Laugen, Matt Lustig, Christian McMillan,

Bill Riordan, Gerry Ronning, Amy Scott, Diana Schull, Steve Dike-Wilhem, and Diana Williams. I owe a special thanks to Annie Gilbert Coleman and Jon Coleman, both of whom interviewed countless Aspenites in the mid-1990s. This project would be much weaker without their efforts. In addition to the interviews, all of which are archived at the Aspen Historical Society, Annie and Jon have shared ideas, comments, and opportunities with me that have helped me professionally in a number of ways. I also owe David Wrobel a special thanks. David was the commentator at two of my conference panels and his ideas and his scholarship helped mold this project from the start. Finally, thanks to Scott Miller, graduate guru for the History Department at CU. Scott's hard work, his sense of humor, and most importantly, his friendship, made graduate school so much easier than it would have been had he not been there.

I received a number of fellowships during graduate school. Thanks to the History Department's Distinguished Dissertation Fellowship, the Bean Fellowship, to the Boulder Historical Society's Meier Fellowship, the Colorado Mountain Club's Kindig Fellowship, to the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at Brigham Young University, and to the Pacific West Cancer Scholarship fund.

I owe a special thanks to the wonderful women at the Aspen Historical Society, including archivists Sarah Oates and Anna Lookabill Scott, and Executive Director Georgia Hanson. Thanks also to all of the people I interviewed, and with whom I corresponded, for opening up your homes and your minds to me and for sharing your thoughts and memories.

To the friends who helped house and feed me and offer otherwise important support during my research and writing, I am grateful. Thanks especially to Matt and Jenny Jones, Beth Hessler and David Folds, Tracy and Benjy Jacobson, Emmett Stovall, and to Rebecca Workman. Thanks also to Charles Scoggin, M.D., who not only turned me on to every great breakfast joint in Boulder over the years, but who also paid at each place, every time.

Most importantly, I need to thank my family. To borrow from the historian Louis Warren, when he thanked his parents in the acknowledgments to *The Hunters Game*, I'd like to thank the Robert F. and Sara H. Richey Educational Fund for the staggeringly large fellowship you have provided me. If not for the constant support of my parents, none of the thanks that precede or follow this one would be possible. You have provided me with life-changing opportunities, but more than that, you have shown me that the most important thing a parent can do is to teach their children to dream big and to work hard.

Thanks also to my sister-in-law, Samantha, for taking care of my brother, Kevin, who never ceases to amaze me with not only his interest in my work, with his own creative ideas for it, but also with his convincing and contagious optimism that everything is always going to come up as championship quality roses. To Stuart and Joanna, Stuart, Jr., Keo, Clara, and Lyons, thanks for everything in Telluride and beyond. Thanks also to Barbara and Keeling for your unflagging support. When your daughter married me, I am one hundred percent certain neither one of you had any idea what she was getting into.

This whole project is dedicated to my wife, Sarah. Anyone who has ever tried to create something at home, whether it be a batch of cookies, or a manuscript such as this one, with the lovely chaos that follows three small children wherever they go, understands what Sarah and I have accomplished here together. Sarah has served me as a research assistant, as an editor, and as my chief sounding-board. Most importantly, through our first ten years of marriage, through all of which I was a graduate student, Sarah has remained my most ardent supporter and my best friend.

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## Introduction

America is a land of masking jokers. We wear the mask for purposes of aggression as for defense, when we are projecting the future and preserving the past. In short, the motives hidden behind the mask are as numerous as the ambiguities the mask conceals.<sup>1</sup>

Ralph Ellison, 1958

Ralph Ellison noted that masks allow for contradictions. As with much of America and the American West, Aspen, Colorado's history is full of mask-wearers or pretenders, and it is therefore a place riddled with contradictions. At once rugged and gentrified, rural and urban, rich and poor, and both loved and despised, Aspen throughout its history provides a rich case study of the ambiguities found in biographies of place. This dissertation concerns itself with what happened in Aspen during the first three decades after a corporation built the world's longest chairlift there in 1945. An examination of the town's history in this period is essential to understanding the changes that occurred in the high country of Western America after World War Two. While Aspen offers a model for studying the social and cultural histories of ski resorts from Montana to New Mexico, the history of this small town and of the many people drawn to it illuminates even bigger issues and ideas in twentieth-century American life. Above all, Aspen offers a case study of the national desire to deny social class or mask it whenever possible.

Understanding and defining class in American history is always challenging, due in part to Americans' willingness to think of the United States as a largely classless society or as a society where most people may be lumped together in a

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph Ellison, "Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke," in John F. Callahan, ed., *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison* (New York: Modern Library, 1995), p. 109, as quoted in John Leland, *Hip: The History* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2004), p. 75.

massive, vaguely defined middle class.<sup>2</sup> Class in Aspen after 1945 can be particularly confusing because of the masks newcomers to the town wore while there. Aspenites lived, worked, and played in ways that blurred the traditional categories of class, such as the Marxian “bourgeoisie” and “proletariat,” whereby an elite owning class lorded over wage earners. In Aspen, members of the American elite, the men and women with considerable personal or family wealth, often played at, or pretended temporarily to be of a lower class. They carried out this act, in part, by engaging in anti-Weblenian acts of *inconspicuous consumption*, whereby material evidence of class or wealth was often inverted. Yet the inversions—an old miner’s cottage or a log house for a home, a job as a waitress, a battered army surplus Jeep, a tattered ski coat—allowed for knowing winks among elite newcomers. In short, being a ski bum offered privileged Americans and elites in Aspen a way of remaining privileged and elitist while pretending to be the opposite. Why did they do this? Although former Aspenite Peggy Clifford (as discussed below) defined herself and her fellow newcomer locals in elitist ways, calling oneself “elite” or drawing attention to oneself as elite in America is frowned upon and rare. In his entry for the term in *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Tony Bennett writes, “In ordinary usage, however, elite and its companions—elitism and elitist—have few

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<sup>2</sup> In Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris, eds., *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 39, John Clarke’s entry on the word “class” is useful: “The idea of class distinction persists in a variety of social evaluations of people and things—being classy, having class, distinctions between different classes of traveler in planes, boats, and trains, and so on. It is this sense of a class system of privilege and deference that is evoked in the claim that the USA is a classless society. Other meanings of ‘class,’ related to the unequal distribution of wealth, income, and power, may nevertheless be relevant to understanding the USA and other societies.” Jack Metzgar, “Politics and the American Class Vernacular,” in John Russo and Sherry Lee Linkon, eds., *New Working-Class Studies* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005) pp. 189-261, argues that simply defining America’s “middle class” as being made up of a “professional middle class” and a distinctly different, larger “working class” could have important political implications as politicians would be required to use more precise definitions than they currently employ.

unequivocal champions. Their connotations are almost invariably pejorative, even when used by elite members...The reasons for this are complex: elites sit ill with democratic values in public opinion, and cultural elitism always finds a ready put-down as simple snobbery. The term also carries connotations of undeserved reward, power, and influence."<sup>3</sup> Most Aspenites disguised their elitism by their dress, their housing, their devotion to play over work, and most importantly, by talking about taste instead of class. As architectural scholar Michael Benedikt has noted, the intricacies of "taste" became in modern America the complicated signifiers in class consciousness by late in the twentieth century. Benedikt wrote:

Thorstein Veblen, noting wealthy Americans' proclivity for 'conspicuous consumption' at the turn of the nineteenth century, did not predict the subtlety with which the class game would come to be played at the end of the twentieth, while Karl Marx's description of 'class struggle' as the engine of social evolution seems, since the Depression anyway, no longer to apply, having long since transmogrified into issues where class is not mentioned.<sup>4</sup>

The subtleties to which Benedikt referred played out in Aspen as in few other places, and the subtleties took on a distinctly Western American bent. When they played the roles (Benedikt's "class game") that they played, particularly that of the "ski bum," Aspenites declared their superiority to the rest of America in both subtle and not-so-subtle ways. One of the not so subtle locals from the period described herself and others in Aspen as "highborn WASPS in flight from our old, rich American families. We were also in flight from America, which we found crude, materialistic and backward." She spoke of the tourists who skied only on vacation as "a different

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<sup>3</sup> For Tony Bennett's entry for "elite" in *New Keywords*, see pp. 99-101.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Benedikt, "Class Notes," *Harvard Design Magazine*, Summer, 2000, p. 2.

species—more to be scorned than admired.” The tensions between Aspenites and visitors, she explained, offered “a class war—with a twist.” Often from privileged backgrounds, evidenced by their wealth, by the colleges they attended, and by their social networks, Aspenites after the war compared themselves and their town to a less tasteful America beyond their hideaway in the Rockies. They spoke of the charms of living as “pioneers” in an Old West mining center reborn as a ski town. They also described their hard work as grunts who never forgot the importance of play in maintaining their freedom and youth. In describing themselves in these more subtle and ambiguous ways, newcomer Aspenites usually meant that their new lives in the West allowed them to evade the expectations society held for them elsewhere. More importantly, they also spoke of Aspen—again, sometimes explicitly, but usually in oblique ways—as a small town where they might distance themselves from what many of them saw as a burgeoning and distasteful middle class “gray flannel” culture of consumption in America’s cities and suburbs. While the middle classes, defined loosely as the large slice of society on a pie chart between the rich elites and the poor, bought new cars, built bigger homes, dressed in suits, played golf, and mimicked aristocrats of old in other ways across America throughout the postwar decades, Aspenites redefined what it meant to be elite and privileged in the ways they lived, worked, and played in the American West. Between 1945 and 1975 Aspen ski bum culture offered an elitist response to what many people there described as a tasteless America.<sup>5</sup> The idea of Aspen as an *anti-tasteless* agent for change in America reflected an *anti-corporate* consciousness felt by many elite locals. The chief enemy

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<sup>5</sup> Peggy Clifford email to author, April 8, 2006.

of many elite Aspenites, then, became by the early 1950s the Aspen Skiing Corporation, and later, by the 1960s and into the '70s the land developers.

Placing Aspenites over the years into neat categories or well-defined social groupings is virtually impossible, yet I must attempt from the beginning of this study to define some key terms regarding various groups. I work closely here from the model provided by labor historian Jack Metzgar in his article, "Politics and the American Vernacular," which takes the basic colloquial speech schematic of American class structure, "poor/ middle /rich," and replaces it with a more nuanced model that allows for the working class to be included in the middle while remaining distinct from the professional managerial types: "rich/ professional middle/ working class/ poor."<sup>6</sup> When I refer in this text to "oldtimers" and "newcomers," I am referring respectively to people who came to Aspen before 1945—before Chicago capitalist Walter Paepcke's money and influence—and to the people who came to town after the war as Aspen evolved into a resort town. Because both oldtimers (also sometimes referred to as "natives," even though many were not native born) and newcomers were "locals" (anyone who lived in town) and "workers" (anyone who worked in Aspen), I usually preface those terms with either "newcomer" or "oldtimer" in order to be as clear as possible. At other times, the terms "elite," "privileged," "middle class," or "working class" serve the same purpose because, with a few exceptions, most newcomers were elite and privileged (defined below), and were sometimes rich, while most oldtimers were of the middle classes or were poor. But there were degrees in every categorization, and this is where terms get

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<sup>6</sup> Metzgar, pp. 197-98.

slippery. Generally, when I say that someone was “privileged,” I mean that he/she was a newcomer who had attended a well-established state college. The elite were often wealthy, educated at the finest prep schools and at prestigious colleges, usually in the Ivy League or otherwise private and northeastern. They were connected socially in tight networks of power. The privileged, on the other hand, were upper middle class professionals or from those types of families. They sometimes made their own way by their talents. They usually did not have immense amounts of family money available to them. A key to understanding this group is to understand what they generally were not: they were not from the second half of the middle class in America—the working class. My Aspen class diagram, although crude and allowing for exceptions, looks like this:

newcomer elites and privileged/oldtimer middle class and working class

One of the most important terms I use is “ski bum.” From the 1940s through the early 1960s, this term was often a synonym for “elite” or “privileged,” but it was a generational term, meaning that it applied usually to men and women aged in their twenties and perhaps early thirties. Older elites—the type of men, for example, who served on the board of directors for Paepcke’s Aspen Skiing Corporation or his Aspen Company—would not have referred to themselves as ski bums (if they skied), but simply as skiers. By the 1960s, as more and more people began to ski, the term “ski bum” evolved from being a term that referred to elites to being a term that might comprise elites, the merely privileged, and even the descendants of middle and

working class oldtimers who took up the sport of skiing. Ski bum became a term that described anyone who lived in a ski town and skied to the exclusion of all other interests.

The subject of class in Aspen's story during the years under review here is complicated even further by the age demographics of the town's population. Aspen's young people masked class to a much greater degree than did older generations. One of my chief points is that although Aspen changed physically as more people moved there between 1945 and 1975, the social and cultural worlds of the locals remained remarkably similar because Aspen was often a way station for young people with similar backgrounds. Clearly, the broader contexts in which Aspenites operated changed over these thirty years, particularly in the 1960s. Yet Aspen's situation as a place of escape and fun, largely for college graduates with dreams about the transformative powers of the American West, has allowed me to explore the idea that Aspen's history was shaped to a great degree by the demographic reality that relatively few adults remained there into old age. According to census data, the number of people 65 years and older living in Aspen and Pitkin County dropped gradually from nearly 15% in 1940 to less than 3% by 1975. At the same time, from 1940 to 1970, the largest adult cohort grew increasingly to be dominated by men and women between the ages of 25 and 34.<sup>7</sup> When I refer to the "young" in this study, I am generally referring to this age group. The transience of young-adult ski bums,

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<sup>7</sup> The population census data here and hereafter derives from the U.S. Census Bureau, Population Characteristics for 1940-2000. In 1940, 1960, 1980, 1990, and in 2000, the Census Bureau published age characteristics for Aspen specifically, while in 1950 and 1970, it published data for Pitkin County only. By 1970, when Pitkin County's population included more 25-29 year olds than any other age group, the die was cast. In 1980 and 1990 the age group including 25-29 year olds remained Aspen's largest. In 2000, the Bureau reconfigured age classifications and Aspen counted more 25-34 year olds than any other age group.

with an ever rotating “freshman” class each winter season, helped lead to important changes in the town. Ironically, considering that Aspen served as an elite refuge from a middle class “tasteless” America, when non-elite Aspenites began to make money in Aspen with their service industry businesses, chiefly in selling real estate, elites in the 1940s through the late 1950s usually did not go on the attack. Such actions would have belied their own masked roles as working class ski bums. By the growth spurts of the late 1950s and the early 1960s, however, some Aspenites began attempting publicly to rein in examples there of poor taste, such as neon signs and condominiums. By the time young people took over Aspen’s political scene in the early 1970s, attacking middle class American values of consumption became less subtle and more direct. The masks in Aspen remained in place, but they were easily pulled aside when people argued. When their local government pushed through a Growth Management Plan in 1974, Aspenites lived on the Western American frontier of legislated “good taste.”<sup>8</sup>

This dissertation examines the ways Aspenites argued over and shaped the meaning of their town. While historians have studied extensively the imagined and the mythic American West, tourism, and the ski industry, this is the first study to focus exclusively on the development of a ski *town* culture. Here is a “biography” of

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<sup>8</sup> Again, I turn to *New Keywords* for an excellent summary of the connections between taste, culture, and class. In the entry on “taste,” p. 341, Gay Hawkins discusses the argument of Pierre Bourdieu’s book, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), which is applicable to the idea of ski town culture and specifically to ski bumming in Aspen. In summing up Bourdieu, Hawkins writes, “The dominant classes’ capacity to claim their cultural preferences as the most legitimate, as superior, as the heartland of good taste, was based on the mobilization of cultural capital. Cultural capital involves knowledge of and competency in high cultural codes. It is acquired through the education system and family and is fundamental to the display of an aesthetic disposition. This disposition involves the use of abstracted and highly formalized cultural valuing systems and an interest and pleasure in cultural forms that is distanced from any sense of practical need.”

Aspen exploring its history, including how class tensions shaped Aspen's culture in its first thirty years as a ski town from 1945 to 1975. In chapters that deal with why people came to Aspen, what they did for work, how they housed themselves there, how they played, and why many of them eventually left the town, I explore how the projecting and evading of social class worked in Aspen and why it mattered.

Chapter One explores the question of why people came to Aspen in the first place. Although some came to make a living, most came because it was a small town and a particularly compelling relic of a highly idealized Western American past. The town's natural setting in a stunning Rocky Mountain landscape, its Victorian sense of antiquity, and its pedestrian-oriented scale offered to newcomers in the 1940s through the 1970s what seemed to most of them simpler and more authentic ways of living than they had experienced in the places they previously called home. At least that is what they said. Embedded heavily in the language of Aspen's largely elite and privileged newcomers (including some non-resident tourists) lay a rhetoric about simplicity that originated in and revealed deep anxieties about the cultural leveling of class in postwar American society. Yet, as this chapter reveals, class denial in Aspen in the first decade or so of the ski era was less obvious than it became by the early 1960s. The reason for this is that some of the town's early movers and shakers masked very little. These people, exemplified best by Aspen Ski Company founder Walter Paepcke, tended to be older members of the establishment and they were relatively explicit that Aspen was a place for them, the elite. Eventually, however, young people in Aspen coded that same message in new, blurred ways as they shaped and reshaped a hip ski bum identity with youthfulness as a central component.

Chapter Two probes the nature of work in Aspen during the ski era. Although many of the so-called “ski bums” in Aspen eventually built established businesses and some grew wealthy (or wealthier than they were when they arrived), each generation tended to emphasize in their memories and reminiscences the work they did in their early years in town as free-spirited, youthful grunts. Through hard work—waiting tables, pounding nails, building lifts and moving trees and earth to make ski runs, driving taxi cabs and working as bellhops, ranch hands, ski instructors, or even as miners—Aspenites built identities (at least as they saw themselves) as rough and rugged westerners. By their own estimations, they were as different from Sloan Wilson’s man in the grey flannel suit as white, well-educated Americans—and most Aspenites in the years under study here fit that description—could possibly be in the postwar decades.

In Chapter Three, I examine how Aspenites housed themselves in ways that reflected their conceptions about authentic living. In the late 1960s, baby boomer hippies flocked to Aspen and continued a long-established tradition that had begun there throughout the 1940s and 1950s when young men and women lived in tents, in their cars, or in ramshackle miners’ cottages. In their living arrangements, Aspenites felt that they were able to experience a bygone era, a simpler time. As they built new log cabin homes or other types of dwellings reminiscent of settlers on a heavily mythologized nineteenth-century frontier, Aspenites began to refer to themselves in ways that made it clear that they saw their town as a twentieth-century antimodernist “pioneer” settlement. Aspenites used their built environment to construct identities as down-to-earth, yet there remained in those same ways of living plenty of evidence

that ski bums were the select few. When an entirely new form of housing—the condominium—was introduced in Aspen in the 1960s, Aspenites complained that the new buildings were of “poor design” and “poor taste,” both coded terms for describing the middle classes who came to Aspen in larger numbers beginning in the 1960s.

Through their modes of play, particularly in skiing, Aspenites made it clear who belonged in the town and who did not. At the same time, they tended to celebrate the connections between youthful whimsy and a sense of “freedom” that stretched beyond the ski slopes. Chapter Four explores the idea, hinted at in earlier chapters, that Aspen’s mission as a center for play served to create in the town a cult of youth. Once real estate agents in the 1970s began to link together the idea that owning property might help someone to “ski like a native,” to play as a young local, and to become Western in the process, Aspen grew even more popular with outsiders wanting to be insiders.

The fifth chapter examines why people left Aspen in the three decades under review in this study. After acknowledging that both miners and skiers tended to be transient, I point out here that even as Aspen grew in population and grew in stature as a cultural landmark in the American West, the town continued to be populated by young people with few elders remaining in the community. Aspen was often a transient place that people remembered later as a stage across which they passed on the way toward the larger acts in their lives. Aspenites also shaped the broader region. By the late 1960s and into the 1970s, some people thought of Aspen as ruined, either as a refuge or as a place providing economic opportunity. They moved

to new Colorado ski towns. In Telluride, for example, many Aspenites attempted to reinvent Aspen anew.

Although scholars have dealt extensively with class, with antimodern movements in America, with Cold War era domestic life, and less extensively with the rise of recreational tourism in the West or with histories of the dynamics between various “birth cohorts,” or generations, this study attempts to deal with all of these issues together. In using the primary resources historians typically use, I have told Aspen’s story thematically as opposed to chronologically. Ultimately, this is yet another version—a history—of a story about status and money and the search for simplicity that has captured Americans’ imaginations for well more than a century. This study deals with idealized places, with how places are imagined. When people lived it up in Aspen, they were taking part in a ski town culture that had been shaped in important ways by dreams about what the west meant in the past, the present, and the future.

## **Chapter One/Arriving**

The central tensions in Aspen's history after World War Two may only be understood within the context of class relations between elites and the middle class in America during the same period. The historian Lizabeth Cohen has called America in these postwar years the "consumers' republic." As the economy boomed and new ways of living sprouted to life in the suburbs, there emerged in America for the first time an affluent middle-class majority who saw their ability to consume tied intimately to their ideas of what freedom meant.<sup>9</sup> The tensions in Aspen existed because of a rift between middle class people who came there to try to get rich and the already-rich who came there to avoid the striving middle class in the first place. The privileged were drawn to Aspen after World War Two because the town helped them to escape what they saw as a tasteless Middle America full of paved roads, cars, cookie cutter houses, and other forms of tacky consumerism. Aspen stood for many of the privileged as the antithesis of Cohen's consumers' republic. In describing their reasons for coming to Aspen and shaping it in new ways, the upper classes were sometimes explicit about their intention to create a place of escape from the middle class. More often, newcomers in the town attempted to mask their intentions from the outside world by situating themselves in an Old West-inspired idyllic small town. There they were the pioneers on a frontier of freedom and fun, and the images associated with these loaded terms helped elites to create a coded language about who belonged in Aspen and who did not. But the postwar newcomers did not step into a vacuum when they drove over Independence Pass or crossed the bridge above Castle Creek and entered Aspen. Aspen was the home in 1945 to hundreds of people with

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<sup>9</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

widely divergent backgrounds. In the story that begins this chapter, the account of how an Aspen barber named Jim Moore first came to town, we see quite clearly that the ambitions of some Aspenites living in the town before and after the war stood in stark contrast to the hopes of more privileged ski bums who saw the town as a refuge from ambition.

Just as some people arrived in Aspen masking their affluent status, others arrived hoping that the town might offer social mobility whereby they might move into a higher class. Yet less privileged Aspenites such as Moore were not the only ones who wanted to make money in Aspen. Men like Darcy Brown, a wealthy native who had gone off to Yale for college and then moved back to town, were involved by the late 1930s in promoting skiing in Aspen. Walter Paepcke, the Chicago businessman, the founder of the ski company, and the most visible leader among the postwar outsiders in Aspen, rarely made a bad business move. He pinched pennies hard while micro-managing his Aspen investments. Although pundits and politicians argued by the late 1960s that Aspen had been ruined by “money,” and particularly by the “greedheads” at the ski company, by realtors, and by absentee owner “tourists,” the Aspenite dream of a selective utopia had always collided with the Aspenite dream of making money.

Along the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains northwest of Denver lies the town of Longmont, Colorado. In the autumn of 1936, the talk in one of the town’s barbershops included something most other barbershop crowds in Colorado at that time rarely, if ever, discussed: the old mining town of Aspen, roughly 120 miles away

as the crow flies, deep in the mountains to the south and west. Jim Moore, one of Longmont's barbers, generated the talk about Aspen among the haircutters, the clients, and the hangers-on who sat around jawing and reading local newspapers and dog-eared magazines. Moore planned to go to Aspen and be his own boss at a barbershop in the town's once-famous grand hotel. Although he might not have told the barbershop crowd his full plan, Moore wanted to settle down in the mountains and then come back to Longmont and marry the Swedish farmer's pretty daughter who worked at the Woolworth's down the street. He would take her up to Aspen and start a family. Some of the customers at the shop most certainly thought young Jim a fool for planning to head to a town in the middle of nowhere, where most of the remaining heads of hair—in the eyes of a barber viewing his livelihood—had seen thicker days. Any mention of the blue-eyed blonde down at the five and dime might have initiated knee-slapping laughter. But Jim Moore was determined and driven. After a friend who once worked with the Forest Service near Aspen informed him about the town's need for a barber, Moore's actions bespoke his ambitions. While courting Alberta Lund, he also courted the American Dream.

The Forest Service man certainly mentioned that a fellow had stirred up interest in Aspen since July, talking about ski courses, a lodge, and even an entire ski *village* with a *tram* to carry skiers and sightseers. Some deep pockets from the East were involved in the venture and it seemed like a sure bet, hard times or not. The news that Aspen needed a barber came along about the same time that Moore and others in Longmont would have seen the blurbs in the papers, or heard mention on Lowell Thomas's radio program, of a place called Sun Valley. It was the railroad

tycoon Averell Harriman's ski resort, built from scratch, and it was about to open up and bring Hollywood stars and the merely rich to rural Idaho (on Harriman's Union Pacific railroad) in time for a snowy Christmas. Perhaps, Moore reasoned, opening a shop in Aspen would be a sound business move if the ski deal went through. Aspen might be the next Sun Valley—or it might be even better. Some of the men around Longmont and in the barbershop would have doubted the chances for the success of a scheme such as Sun Valley, railroad money or not. Times were tough, they would say, and there are only so many movie stars and rich ski slide fanatics in the world. Moore had heard the naysayers before. He had probably heard them back in Arkansas when he set off for Colorado at the beginning of the Great Depression. Regardless of all the talk and possibly even of some self-doubt, Moore got up one morning, just as thousands of young men and women would eventually do throughout the mid-twentieth century, and he began the journey to a place that changed his life forever. He went to Aspen, Colorado.

Most of the people who flocked to Aspen after World War Two did not share Jim Moore's working-class roots. They were often people, usually in their twenties and thirties, who had attended prep schools and elite colleges where they might have rubbed shoulders with the likes of Averell Harriman, who attended Groton and Yale. Aspenites often came from well-to-do families in or near big eastern and midwestern cities. Chicago's elite was particularly well-represented. Many of Aspen's first ski era newcomers, or "ski bums," as they liked to refer to themselves, were from the upper classes and would never have considered a career that involved sweeping piles of other people's hair into a dust bin at the end of the day. The privileged usually

arrived in Aspen for very different reasons than Moore did, but like him, they saw in the place some form of opportunity. While Moore saw the chance to have his own shop and to be his own boss, to move solidly into the middle class, others were drawn to Aspen for a multiplicity of reasons, many of which overlapped. People came to ski and enjoy the mountains. Others saw in Aspen the chance to live in a small town as opposed to a large city or suburb. A significant number seemed drawn to a mythic Western American experience in Aspen where they could play the role of the pioneer in a setting that invoked a supposedly simpler way of life in America's past. Others saw in Aspen's playfulness the possibility of drinking regularly from a Rocky Mountain fountain of youth. Most importantly, a number of newcomers saw in Aspen opportunities to shape a community that stood in stark contrast, they said, to much of the rest of postwar America's repressive cultural politics that seemed to cater to the middle class. At the intersection of all of these opportunities was a meeting place: Aspen. It represented a brand of Cold War era antimodernism where people inhabited a small town and where youthful play allowed them to create a different way of life than existed anywhere else in America. Most importantly, Aspen provided ripe ground for the American obsession with denying and masking class to take root and shape what would become the most iconic place in the high country of the American West.

Jim Moore arrived in Aspen to cut hair, to make a living and to build a life. As he packed up his Model A Ford in the fall of 1936, he might only have guessed at the events that the day's travel would help to set in motion. In the morning and into the afternoon, as he white-knuckled his way along the high country's rough roads,

over towering passes, and down the main drags of several historic mining towns such as Georgetown, Frisco, and Leadville, Moore traversed a landscape that over the next fifty years would change as drastically as any rural environment in America. The social, cultural, and environmental changes that would come to the high country were rooted explicitly in the class dynamics that unfolded after World War Two in Aspen and other high country towns as skiing and western tourism became associated with elites.

Moore drove across mountain roads littered with the debris of a busted late-nineteenth-century mining industry. Within only a few decades the federal government would bisect the same terrain with a super-highway, whereby cars could travel safely up to seventy miles an hour and go through long tunnels bored underneath the mountains. Much of the mining infrastructure would remain, rusty and crumbling into the hillsides, well after the construction of Interstate 70 and well after the development of air travel made the region easily and readily accessible from distant places. Beginning in the 1940s, Colorado's mountains would become well known for a type of "lifestyle" that helped to reshape the contours of the high country economically, socially, and environmentally.<sup>10</sup> Moore would play a part in that reshaping after he became one of Aspen's first real estate agents and began moving in different social worlds. In his wildest dreams in 1936, however, Moore could not have visualized the magnitude of the changes to come in Colorado, in Aspen, or in his

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<sup>10</sup> For a broad overview of the growth of tourism in the modern West, see Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998). For discussions of the growth of tourism and the ski industry in the Rockies, specifically, see Annie Gilbert Coleman, *Ski Style: Sport and Culture in the Rockies* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004); and for tourism in Colorado, see William Philpott, "Consuming Colorado: Landscapes, Leisure, and the Tourist Way of Life," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2002.

own life over the next half-century. He could not have known with any certainty, for example, that Colorado and Aspen would become world famous as the epicenter for an explosion in skiing; that he would eventually open Moore's Court, a twenty-seven bed motel on the strip of Highway 82 through Aspen known as Main Street; that he would sell to the actor Gary Cooper and countless others expensive properties in the town; that he and his wife would live in a home set among beautiful blue spruce trees and raise three children there, all of whom would become ski racers; that one day the family would donate land to the city of Aspen for its schools, land for a community swimming pool, and land for open space to be used by cross-country skiers and other recreationists; that after nearly fifty-five years of marriage to the blue-eyed girl from the Longmont Woolworth's, he would be buried on the side of a hill in Aspen's Red Butte Cemetery. What Jim Moore knew in the fall of 1936, as he began his first drive to Aspen, was that the little town needed a man who could wield a pair of scissors and a straight blade without drawing blood, and that apparently someone in Aspen planned to build a ski lodge.

At the end of a long day of driving, Moore made his way along Aspen's pot-holed Main Street to the Hotel Jerome, which sat at the corner of Mill Street at an elevation of almost 8,000 feet above sea level.<sup>11</sup> By 1936, Aspen and the Jerome had seen better times. In the 1880s and '90s, the town was one of the richest silver-mining camps in the world. Men made fortunes there and threw money around to prove it. When former Macy's department store executive and local mining mogul Jerome B. Wheeler constructed the brick and sandstone hotel and named it after

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<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Alley, "Senior Profiles," n.d., in Organization: Pitkin County Senior Citizens file, Aspen Historical Society (AHS); Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "They Helped Make Aspen What It Is," *The Aspen Times*, November 25 & 26, 2000, p. 1-C.

himself in 1889, some of the residents of Aspen claimed, probably with a good measure of truth, that it was the finest hotel between the West Coast and Denver's Brown Palace. In addition to its fancy dining room, its billiards and smoking rooms, its magnificent bar, and its luxuriously appointed steam-heated suites, the Jerome boasted more than three hundred electric lights at a time when the majority of the *towns* in the region had none.<sup>12</sup>

When Moore walked into the lobby of the forty-seven year old hotel, it had been thirty-five years since Jerome Wheeler declared bankruptcy and eighteen years since his death in Colorado Springs.<sup>13</sup> Yet Aspen and the hotel, although somewhat disheveled, were far from dead. The owner of the Jerome by that time was native-born Aspenite Laurence Elisha, son of a Lebanese immigrant named Mansor Elisha who came to town in 1894, sold newspapers on the street corners, and eventually bought the hotel for back taxes in 1911. When Mansor died in 1935, Laurence took control of what had become a residential hotel. It was Laurence who had asked the Forest Service man if he knew of any good barbers down on the Front Range who might be willing to open a shop in the Jerome, where a number of the town's school teachers, retirees, business operators, and even the doctor and his wife paid a monthly rent and received their meals. In the summers, when a handful of the older miners who spent their winters living in the hotel returned to their claims and their log cabins on Smuggler Mountain or in Little Annie Basin, the Jerome housed tourists seeking to

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<sup>12</sup> Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *Aspen: The History of a Silver-Mining Town, 1879-1893* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 168-69.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

escape hot, lowland areas for much of the summer in a beautiful, cool mountain climate.<sup>14</sup>

The years between the mining bust that followed the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act in 1893 and the construction of the Aspen Skiing Corporation's chairlift in 1946 have come to be known as Aspen's "quiet years." After the construction of the chairlift, newcomer Aspenites often referred to the town during this "quiet" period as having been a "ghost town." Such ski-era terminology allowed ski bums to shape images of themselves and of the town as rugged. After all, reviving a "ghost town" called for Herculean efforts by hard workers who were gambling on their futures. In that lie, however, was a greater truth: in calling Aspen a ghost town, skiers said more about themselves than they said about the actual nature of the place. In reality, Aspen in 1936 was more robust and cheerful than one might expect from listening to newcomer skiers after 1945.<sup>15</sup> The town's service industries, including the governmental agencies in the Pitkin County courthouse, the schools, the hardware store, the mortuary, a gas station, several restaurants and bars, a hospital, Aspen's fraternal organizations, as well as its limited mining operations, supported many of the county's 1,700 or more residents. Roughly seven hundred of these people lived in what the census takers called "Aspen city," the county seat. In

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<sup>14</sup> Kathleen Krieger Daily and Gaylord T. Guenin, *Aspen: The Quiet Years* (Aspen: Red Ink Inc., 1994), pp. 228-37.

<sup>15</sup> Although Aspen's few ski era historians mostly dispute the idea of Aspen as a "ghost town," journalists have used the term so much over the years that the image has settled thickly over the common perception that many long-time Aspenites have of the town's history. For examples of the use of this term over the years in the mainstream national media, see John Jay, "A Ghost Town Becomes A Ski Resort," *Harper's Bazaar*, January, 1947, n.p., clipping in Box 97, F8, Walter P. Paepcke Papers, University of Chicago Special Collections (WPP), and Mark Seal, "For Love of Aspen," *Vanity Fair*, March, 2003, pp. 312-332. Aspenites who lived in the town before 1945 often refute the "ghost town" label with relish. "If it was a ghost town," one old Aspen native said, "I was one of the ghosts." See Jim Sheeler, "Home Is Where the Heart Is," *The Denver Post*, June 10, 2001, p. B6.

addition, summer tourism in the pre-war years counted as a steady industry for Aspen. Not only did the Jerome house tourists seeking milder summer temperatures, but a number of former Aspenites—many of whom lived in Denver during the winter months—returned to the town in the summer and occupied their old homes which had been built in the 1880s and 90s. D.R.C. Brown, Jr. (known as Darcy) moved permanently back to town in 1940 and served as president of the Aspen Ski Club, then eventually as president of the Aspen Skiing Corporation. Brown, whose father was one of Aspen's earliest and eventually one of its wealthiest residents, recalled summers filled with fishing, picnics, pond swimming, and horseback riding.<sup>16</sup> As a child and adolescent in Aspen during the 1910s and 1920s, Brown did not deny his social class at all because to do so would have been silly. Everyone in town knew that his father had made one of Aspen's greatest mining fortunes and kept much of it intact at the bank he owned downtown. For Brown, and for poorer people with less leisure time at their disposal, Aspen served as a summer retreat and as a place for family reunions. People without historic family ties to Aspen also visited. Frank and John Dolinsek recalled that in the years prior to World War Two many tourists came to town to hunt and fish. Buzz Cooper remembered that both the summers of 1940 and 1941 were very good years for his family's fishing-cabin rental business. As early as 1933, the Cooper family, who operated Aspen's Cooper Book and Stationary store, managed a string of simple cabins near town. When their guests needed a break from chasing trout, the Coopers gave them tours of the nearby ramshackle

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<sup>16</sup> Daily and Guenin, pp. 117-25.

mining villages of Independence and Ashcroft.<sup>17</sup> Early in Aspen's history as an escape for tourists, then, much of the appeal lay in its charms as a dusty relic of the Old West past.

About the time Jim Moore pulled into town in the fall of '36, the new model for Aspen tourism was beginning to take shape a few miles west of town. Out on Castle Creek, as many as twenty men worked at the construction site of the Highland-Bavarian Lodge. Highland-Bavarian was the brainchild of several men, including Tom Flynn, who had stimulated discussions in town about skiing since at least mid-summer. Flynn spent much of his childhood in Aspen as the son of a mining engineer. Ever since he had left the town at age seventeen, eventually moving to southern California, he had dreamed of showing off the beauty of Aspen to the world. Flynn's ambitious striving for social mobility must not be discounted in Aspen's story. In 1935 he met Olympic bobsled champion Billy Fiske, a wealthy man who worked in the investment banking business and ran with a Hollywood crowd. The two of them formed a partnership to build the lodge on Castle Creek and to develop lift access to the skiing on the mountains behind it.<sup>18</sup> An initial partner was Paul Nitze, who had worked with Fiske in New York City. Highland Bavarian folded at the start of World War Two after Fiske became the first American soldier killed while serving as a pilot for the British Royal Air Force. These events, of course, lay in the future in 1936. By Thanksgiving Day, just a few weeks after Jim Moore pulled into town, the *Aspen Times* announced "Winter Resort Plans Are Revealed; Aspen May

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<sup>17</sup> John and Frank Dolinsek interview, August 4, 1995, by Judith Gertler, AHS; Stirling "Buzz" Cooper interview, May, 1995, by Jon Coleman, AHS.

<sup>18</sup> Skip Grieser and Paul Nitze correspondence, 1984, in Box 24, Folder 1, Paul H. Nitze Papers, Library of Congress (PHN).

Become Leading Snow City in Entire United States.” “Our citizens must realize,” the newspaper argued, “that an undertaking of this sort will be one of the greatest things that can ever be dreamed of, not only for this immediate vicinity, but for the state as well.”<sup>19</sup> Such boosterism probably made for excited talk in the barbershop at the Jerome.

By late November, Moore had read and heard enough of the boosterism and had seen enough of Aspen to believe that his future and Aspen’s were indeed one and the same. After returning to Longmont for Thanksgiving to see Alberta, Moore drove back up to Aspen and jumped feet first into community life. The week before Christmas, nearly one hundred locals met in the courthouse to form a winter sports club, which eventually became known as the Aspen Ski Club. The group would promote skiing in the town and would eventually make it, according to the *Times*, a “better place in which to live.” Put this way, skiing and increased tourism held the possibility for incredible transformative power in the community. The list of club contributors included “James Moore Jerome Barber Shop” as a business with “confidence in Aspen’s possibilities as a winter sports area.”<sup>20</sup> Within ten days, Moore was back in Longmont. By that point, the men in the Longmont barbershop and others along the Front Range may have seen the sizable December 12 headline in the *Rocky Mountain News*: “Million-Dollar Winter Sports Development for State Revealed.”<sup>21</sup> Jim told Alberta that he was not going back to Aspen without her, and

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<sup>19</sup> “Winter Resort Plans Are Revealed,” *The Aspen Times*, November 26, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> “Winter Sports Club Plans Are Well Underway,” *The Aspen Times*, December 17, 1936, p. 1. For the list of contributors to Aspen’s ski club, see Ski Facility Lift file, AHS.

<sup>21</sup> Ken Lightburn, “Million Dollar Winter Sports Development for State revealed: Aspen Project Already in ‘Proving Ground’ Stage With Financing Assured,” *Rocky Mountain News*, December 12, 1936 (n.p., clipping in Aspen History All Eras [Manuscripts, Tales, etc.] file, AHS).

the two were married in the living room of her parents' farmhouse. The next day, they drove to Aspen. "I thought," Alberta Moore said years later, recalling the moment she looked out of the window of their room in the Jerome, "I had come to the end of the world." She told her husband that she would give Aspen, which she called "the dump," two weeks. Sixty-four years later, she was still there.<sup>22</sup>

When elites in Aspen years later downplayed and denied social class while trumpeting their ideas about good taste, their ideas rippled throughout the community. Working people like the Moores celebrated their upward mobility with restraint and with tastefulness, and for this reason, newcomer Aspenites revered them and even held them up as model citizens. The Moores gave land to the community and Alberta volunteered at the town's famous charity Thrift Shop, where the sale of used designer jeans and ski wear benefited the local hospital. The Moores, who entered town in a Model A Ford, eventually did reconfigure their own standing in a town with so many elites. By 2000, Alberta Moore had two automobiles. One car, a Cadillac, reflected years of hard work and was a reminder that the Moores came to Aspen because economic opportunities existed there for them before the tourism boom. The second car, a more down-to-earth Subaru, showed Moore's level-headedness as a resident of a high country ski town.<sup>23</sup>

When Louise Deane, matriarch of Aspen's T Lazy 7 Guest Ranch, died in the 1990s, Elizabeth Paepcke (universally considered as one of the founders of modern Aspen) said, " 'Lou was the mother of it all.' " Implied in the word "it" was Aspen's

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<sup>22</sup> Hayes, "They Helped Make Aspen What It Is," p. 1-C.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

status by the late twentieth-century as one of Western America's tourist meccas. Yet, considering Deane's background as an actress from Memphis, Tennessee, "it" represented something more complicated. Whether she realized it or not, when Paepcke alluded to Deane as "the mother of it all" she underlined Deane's ability to make her own Memphis and Chicago backgrounds fade in a cloud of dude ranch dust. In becoming the operators of an Aspen guest ranch, Lou and her husband, Had, wore an early mask of the "authentic" Western working class in Aspen.

Deane arrived in Aspen with Had in 1938. Harold "Had" Deane's grandfather came to town in the 1880s as a lawyer for a mining company, married an opera singer attempting to pass through town, and eventually became a Pitkin County judge. A hardscrabble mining or ranching family this was not. Although Had was born in Aspen, his own father died young, and Had's mother took him to Chicago, where he attended school. In the summers, Had returned to Aspen and lived with his grandparents, the judge and the aged opera singer. In Aspen, he enjoyed the same things Darcy Brown loved about the town in those pre-war years. Deane fished, rode horses, and swam with his local boyhood friends in the lakes and rivers about town. By his late teens, Had worked occasionally as a guide, leading tourists on horseback into the mountains. Here was a "western" scene worth noting: a kid from Chicago leading tourists on pack trips into the Maroon Bells. In time, Had entered the business world and became vice-president of a Chicago-based silica company. By the age of 26, he realized that he was finished with big city life and his job in Chicago. As Lou remembered years later, Had decided that he was moving "out West, and looked for someone to marry who also wanted to get away. That was

me.”<sup>24</sup> In 1938, the Deanes bought their working ranch just outside of Aspen. They raised horses and grew vegetables while enjoying the scenery. Years later, the T Lazy 7 evolved into a guest ranch operation as many of their city friends visited during vacations.

The Deanes did not come to the rural mountain town for economic opportunity. They came because Aspen offered an escape from high rise office buildings and the apparent boredom involved in the silica trade. The Deanes came to Aspen in the late 1930s because of what they described as their desire to “get away,” to experience a different way of living than what Chicago offered them. Their experience in coming to the town was quite different from Jim Moore’s. It is noteworthy that Deane was a corporate executive and not a barber, and that his wife was an actress and not an employee at Woolworth’s. In remembering “the mother of it all,” Elizabeth Paepcke did not mention Alberta Moore, who arrived in Aspen two years before Lou Deane. Nor did she mention Darcy Brown. Moore came from a different background than did the Paepckes and the Deanes. Brown, although wealthy and educated in the east, had roots in the town. By calling Lou “the mother of it all,” Elizabeth Paepcke meant that when the Deanes moved to Aspen they were on the cutting edge, or the frontier of a new way to signify class in America. By “getting away” from the city to the rural West, elites from outside of the region after World War Two helped to reinvent the region. Lou Deane had gotten away from the middle classes to live it up in Aspen before everyone else.

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<sup>24</sup> See Lou Deane’s obituary in *The Aspen Times Daily* in BIO: Deane, Louise Glover, AHS; and “Lou Deane and the T Lazy-Seven,” in Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, *The Story of Aspen* (Aspen: Aspen Three Publishing, 1996), pp. 70-71.

For the Deanes, and for a number of other important Chicagoans (including the Paepckes) in Aspen's future, Aspen became an Arcady where they would "get away," as Lou Deane explained. Other city dwellers also saw Aspen as an escape from urban life. Joy Maxwell Caudill recalled coming to Aspen for the summers as a child in the 1930s and early 1940s. Her father, a Denver businessman, liked to fish, and Joy and her sister enjoyed horseback riding. Later, after her father's service in World War Two ended, the Maxwell family decided to move to Aspen permanently. "We didn't come for the skiing," Caudill said of the family's arrival in 1946 before the opening of the chairlift known later as Lift One. "We came for the mountains," she said, "it was small, you knew most everyone and they knew you. There was a great sense of community."<sup>25</sup> After a childhood of summers spent in Aspen, college at Yale, then work in Denver, Darcy Brown made his lasting move to the town in 1940, five years before Walter Paepcke laid eyes on it. Years later, Brown framed his move as a chance to break away from the grind of the business world he experienced in Denver as an employee of the Continental Oil Company. "In those days," he said, "you didn't get time off from work. You worked 8:00 to 5:00, five days a week, and 8:00 to 12:00 on Saturday. We still owned the house here." While other Americans may have felt similarly to Brown about their jobs, he had the money to do whatever he wanted to do. Brown moved his wife and children into the old family home in downtown Aspen and went into the cattle business with his brother-in-law to the north of town in Carbondale. While he dabbled privately in oil exploration across the region and owned cattle, Darcy Brown and his brother, Fletcher, became very involved with the Aspen Ski Club. Fletcher served as the club's fourth president and

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<sup>25</sup> Joy Caudill interview, July 26, 1994, by Annie Gilbert, AHS.

Darcy as its fifth beginning in October, 1939. When he joined the Navy in 1943, Darcy's wife and three children remained in Aspen and he continued to serve as president of the club in *absentia* until Laurence Elisha, son of a Lebanese immigrant, took over in 1944.<sup>26</sup>

On the eve of World War Two, Aspen was a town with a significant tourism infrastructure already in place. The men and women who led the early transition of the town's economic base from mining and agriculture to tourism were not outsiders. They were Aspenites, or they had longtime Aspen ties. Darcy and Fletcher Brown, Tom Flynn, the Cooper family, and Had Deane all had Aspen roots but had lived elsewhere.

Early skiers who came to town described Aspen in ways that appraised its small size and rural nature as worthy and refreshing attributes. In late 1936, Billy Fiske and Tom Flynn brought Andre Roch, a Swiss mountaineer, to the area to map out ski routes and to guide guests for their lodge that coming winter. Roch experienced a startling introduction to Aspen. During the drive into town late on a December night, Fiske stopped the car, loaded Flynn's rifle, then shot a deer in the road. "We try to hide the blood," Roch wrote later, "as best we can; fines for hunting out of season are high." Fiske, brash in this illegal killing in the middle of the road, probably made Roch nervous. When he saw the south-facing and west-facing ski terrain around the unfinished Highland-Bavarian lodge, Roch must have thought that skiing was out of season, too. Slopes facing those directions are usually sun-baked so that they rarely retain deep snows. However, the town of Aspen, roughly six miles away, was an altogether different story. The "best slopes," Roch wrote, were "those

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<sup>26</sup> Daily and Guenin, p. 124. For a list of the Aspen Ski Club presidents, see Ski Club file, AHS.

running down into Aspen.” He felt that the town’s north-facing, snow-retaining slopes would eventually help “Aspen constitute an ideal center” for skiing. The town itself, he noted, had some “palaces” and other weathered buildings along its dusty streets that could be “bought for thirty dollars or thereabouts.”<sup>27</sup> When Roch used words like “empty” and “completely wild” to describe the terrain around Aspen, some of his European readers may have been intrigued. Later, many Europeans moved to Aspen. Otto Schneibs, a German émigré to America who had coached skiers at Harvard and Dartmouth in the 1930s, published the first edition of his book *American Skiing* in 1939. *The New York Times* and other publications labeled it the most comprehensive look at every aspect of skiing, including equipment, technique, and ski areas, in the nation. Considered one of the greatest skiers in the United States at the time, Schneibs visited the town on several occasions and became friendly with a number of Aspen’s locals, including Midnight Mine boss Frank Willoughby. Willoughby led Aspenites in cutting the steep Aspen Mountain ski course, known as Roch Run, through the trees on the mountain that loomed above town. Some of the audience for *American Skiing* certainly included former skiers from Schneibs’s teams and from other programs in the Ivy League. “Aspen,” he wrote in his first chapter, “is a peaceful little town,” and the mountains around the town meant “peace, quietness and recreation.” On the eve of World War Two, elite readers of Schneibs’s book probably made note of Aspen.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Andre Roch, trans. Ernest H. Blake, “A Once and Future Resort: A Winter in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado,” *Colorado Heritage*, No. 4, 1985, pp. 17-23; published originally as “Un Huver aux Montagnes Rocheuses du Colorado” in *Der Schnee Hase* (yearbook of the Swiss Academic Ski Club), 1937.

<sup>28</sup> Otto Schneibs, *American Skiing* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1939), pp. 18-24. For reviews, see the dust cover to the 1941 edition.

In the same year as the publication of *American Skiing*, Chicagoan Elizabeth Paepcke, a key player in Aspen's future, visited the town for the first time. It is possible that she had heard of the town originally from her brother, Paul Nitze. In her recollections, she said that a Colorado friend who had skied there told her about the town. She fell in love with Aspen in 1939 and described it later as a "wonderful place" she and her husband "could escape to" after the war.<sup>29</sup> Others expressed why Aspen appealed to them as a great escape before and during the war. Elliot Averett wrote to Darcy Brown after his first trip to Aspen in early 1940, saying "Small towns are known for their friendliness to strangers...From the first day of skiing through the last, I constantly felt so at home there." For Averett, who lived in New Jersey at the time and eventually became chief executive officer of the Bank of New York, Aspen's nature as a small town appealed also to his sensibilities as a place of escape from the city.<sup>30</sup> Janet Ela, who grew up in Madison, Wisconsin's upper crust and who worked later in New York as an editor at *McCall's* magazine before marrying an attorney and returning to Madison, came to Aspen for the first time in 1941. She wrote later about the town in explicitly class-oriented terms. "Aspen," Ela wrote, "is not Middleton [sic], U.S.A, and a statistical survey of it would be nonsense to anyone who has ever known its spell." Although Ela said that much of Aspen's appeal to her and her husband before the war was its small-town charm, by referencing the famed Middletown studies by sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd, she provided evidence of something more illuminating for our purposes here. In their studies, the Lynds

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<sup>29</sup> Daily and Guenin, p. 553.

<sup>30</sup> Elliot Averett, Jr., to Darcy Brown, February 19, 1940, in Ski Club file, AHS. For an indication of Elliot Averett's place in New York high society, see John C. Devlin, "Many Gifts Made to Bronx Garden," *The New York Times*, February 4, 1968, p. 65, in which it is noted that Averett chaired a New York Botanical Garden development committee which included a Du Pont and a Rockefeller.

argued that “Middletown” (Muncie, Indiana) offered a classic case study in how classes divide a town and shape its institutions, whether they be neighborhoods, churches, schools, clubs and organizations, or the workplace. For Ela, who was an arts patron and writer, Aspen was appealing because it was “not Middleton,” meaning that it was not divided by class as she saw it. Regardless of “its derelict architecture, fragments of sidewalk and bumpy streets,” Ela said of the early 1940s, “Aspen didn’t feel like a poor or depressed place. It felt solvent, well-fed, healthy, and enormously cheerful.” Ela’s explanation was that the locals, some of whom were immigrants and first generation Americans, such as Mike Magnifico, the Elishas, the Willoughbys, and the Sardys, with whom she became acquainted during two pre-war vacations, were decidedly not “worried about economics.”

Janet Ela’s Aspen served as the opposite of Middletown, U.S.A., for a number of reasons. The first reason was that Ela believed that the people who lived there were more interested in living a certain way than in getting rich.<sup>31</sup> Unlike the middle-class strivers in the Muncies of America, Aspenites avoided tackiness, Ela felt, by not concerning themselves with materialism. In this way, the hotelier Elisha, the miner Willoughby, the Italian immigrant cobbler, Michelangelo “Mike” Magnifico, and the funeral home owner, Tom Sardy, and all of their families, harkened back to a mythic earlier time when small towns were supposedly unbothered by class and ethnic division. Aspenites, Ela indicated, were fine just getting by financially. From her perspective in 1959, recalling an earlier Aspen she had known before the original

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<sup>31</sup> Janet Ela, “Before and After in Aspen,” unpublished manuscript, 1959, p. 1, in Aspen History All Eras (Manuscripts, Tales, etc.) AHS. For Ela’s obituary, see “Arts, Library Advocate Janet Ela Dies at 86,” *The Capital Times* (Madison, Wisconsin), January 2, 1997, n.p., accessed via the web on [www.highbeam.com](http://www.highbeam.com).

chairlift and before the opening of the Aspen Highlands and Buttermilk ski areas, latter-day Aspen's commercialism made it more like the rest of America in its striving. For that reason, Aspen appealed less to Janet Ela after the war than it had beforehand. Ela simplified things greatly. Class divisions had always existed in Aspen and the town was built by men wanting to get rich. Furthermore, entrepreneurs eager to gain financially emerged quickly among the locals she admired. Magnifico, for example, eventually owned the town's first ski shop and later opened a liquor store. Sardy eventually became a business partner with Paepcke in the lumber supply and hardware business.<sup>32</sup>

As the Elases left town, Fritz Benedict hitchhiked into Aspen from Glenwood Springs (after spending the night under a bridge there) for a ski race in the spring of 1941. Also a Wisconsin native, and a former apprentice of Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin West, Benedict thought that he was "in heaven. I knew then that this was where I wanted to live." He described Aspen's natural environment as appealing, but he also noted that there were very few restaurants and hotels, which also appealed to him. It was a small, simple town. After America entered World War Two in late 1941, Benedict eventually joined the Tenth Mountain Division ski troopers. He brought a number of his fellow soldiers to the town from Camp Hale, north of Leadville, "every chance" he had. Benedict was not the only man at the military base to have skied in Aspen prior to the war. George Tecoucich and Frank Dolinsek were native Aspenites who had skied Roch Run as kids on homemade skis. Camp Hale's chief ski boot cobbler and ski mechanic, Magnifico, had lived in Aspen for more than

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<sup>32</sup> See Paepcke's Aspen Lumber and Supply files, Box 94, F2-F10, WPP.

two decades after his arrival from Italy. In fact, *prior* to and after the war, Magnifico operated his combination shoe repair/ski and sporting goods store in Aspen. Other soldiers of the Tenth most certainly knew of Aspen's reputation as site of the 1941 national skiing championships, which the Aspen Ski Club managed to secure for the town.<sup>33</sup>

In Aspen's ski era creation story, the arrival in town of men from the ski troops played an important role. The histories of the Tenth and of Aspen are intertwined in a number of ways. First, the Tenth was a division with elite roots, founded by the same Yalie, C. Minot "Minnie" Dole, who created the National Ski Patrol system.<sup>34</sup> Dole later invested in and helped Walter Paepcke recruit other investors in the Aspen venture. Second, as early as 1940, Tom Flynn went to Washington, D.C., to encourage the War Department to locate a "ski training school" for troops at Highland-Bavarian. Although the Department promised Flynn that the Army would consider the area near Aspen, they eventually chose another site for the Division's base at Pando, Colorado, a few hours drive from Aspen in winter.<sup>35</sup> Finally, some of the Tenth trained on maneuvers near Aspen at various times during the war. In June of 1943, the most famous of the maneuvers involved the Tenth's Reconnaissance Troop, which hiked some thirty miles from Camp Hale to Aspen over Red Mountain, then marched into the bar at the Jerome. Included in this group

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<sup>33</sup> Daily and Guenin, p. 546. Dolinsek interview. For information on Magnifico, see Anne Arneill Downs, "Aspen Expects Big Crowd For Week-End Ski Races," February, 1946, *Rocky Mountain News*, n.p., in Skiing Aspen Mountain, 1946-47 clippings file, AHS.

<sup>34</sup> Dole "founded" the Tenth in that he encouraged the War Department to create ski troops and to allow the National Ski Patrol to handle recruiting, which they did once the 87<sup>th</sup> Mountain Regiment was formed. This is the only time in American history where a civilian agency has played the central role in conscripting soldiers for a military unit. See Minot Dole, *Adventures in Skiing* (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1965) and Peter Shelton, *Climb to Conquer: The Untold Story of WWII's 10th Mountain Division Ski Troops* (New York: Scribner, 2003).

<sup>35</sup> T.J. Flynn to Mrs. Willoughby, November 28, 1940, in Ski Club file, AHS.

of arrivals was an Austrian immigrant named Friedl Pfeifer, who said years later that he knew immediately upon seeing the town for the first time that Aspen would become his home after the war. "Even as the townspeople cheered our arrival," Pfeifer wrote nearly a half-century later, "I was filled more with the beauty of Aspen than I was proud of our accomplishment...I felt at that moment, an overwhelming sense of my future before me."<sup>36</sup> Pfeifer was also filled with visions of Aspen's potential as a ski town. On his leave time following the initial trip there, Pfeiffer went to Aspen often, dreaming of the future. Usually, his wife and their son traveled from Salt Lake City and met him there. Pfeifer was ambitious and he saw in Aspen an opportunity to be on the ground level in developing a new ski area in America. Although he had escaped farm life and Hitler when he left Austria and eventually made his way to Sun Valley to teach skiing, Pfeifer's abilities as a skier helped him move in high social circles by the time he joined the Tenth and laid eyes on Aspen. He taught some of America's richest people how to ski and they socialized with him regularly while on vacation. Pfeifer's first wife, the former Hoyt Smith, came from one of the wealthiest families in Utah. Pfeifer met her at a dance while working as a ski instructor at Sun Valley.<sup>37</sup>

Some members of the Tenth kept homes in Aspen for their wives and children. John Litchfield recalled that one of his superior officers, a Colonel Dorsey, owned a red brick home in the West End.<sup>38</sup> A number of soldiers' wives rented

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<sup>36</sup> Friedl Pfeifer, with Morten Lund, *Nice Goin': My Life on Skis* (Missoula, Montana: Pictorial Histories Publishing, Co., Inc., 1993), p. 111.

<sup>37</sup> Coleman says in *Ski Style* (p.42) that Pfeifer's abilities as a skier "brought to mind images of elite European resorts and a suave, authoritarian masculinity that proved irresistible" to Hoyt Smith. In his autobiography, Pfeifer explained, "To Hoyt, I must have represented adventure and romance away from the world of banking and finance," which were her father's areas of expertise. See Pfeifer, p. 77.

<sup>38</sup> John Litchfield interview, September 29, 1994, by Annie Gilbert, AHS.

houses in town or lived in the Jerome. Sistie Blanning, whose husband was killed early in the war in the Philippines, met some wives of Tenth Mountain men whom she called "Camp Hale girls" in Colorado Springs. They told her of Aspen, and she moved there with them. She recalled raucous "Camp Hale parties" in the Jerome during which men rappelled from windows onto the street, while she and other women slid down the banister into the hotel lobby. For Blanning, who would raise her three orphaned sons in Aspen, the town offered the perfect escape from the horrors of war that she and her family experienced with the death of her husband.<sup>39</sup> For members of the Tenth, Aspen's skiing and its good times offered a necessary respite from the boredom of training or from anxious thoughts about the inevitable trip overseas. The boys got to Aspen however they could get there. In the summer of 1944, for example, Bert Bidwell and some other soldiers hitchhiked to Balltown, south of Leadville, hiked nearly to the top of Independence Pass, camped, and then walked into Aspen the next day. Arriving in town, the soldiers made their way down Cooper Street into the Silver Grill and then on to the Jerome.<sup>40</sup>

The Tenth Mountain Division went to Europe and experienced fierce fighting in the mountains of Italy. As soon as it was clear that the war was nearing its end, one soldier recalled that the talk turned quickly to Aspen. "It seemed," the man wrote, that some of the men "were planning to participate in the development of a major new ski resort complex in an old Colorado silver mining town they'd visited up the Fryingpan River from Glenwood Springs."<sup>41</sup> Indeed, they were. Between 1945

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<sup>39</sup> Hayes, *The Story of Aspen*, pp. 86-7.

<sup>40</sup> Bert Bidwell interview, August 17, 1995, by Judith Gertler, AHS.

<sup>41</sup> William Lowell Putnam, *Green Cognac: The Education of a Mountain Fighter* (New York: The American Alpine Club Press, 1991), p. 89. Putnam's account of the Aspen discussions, written nearly

and 1950, as many as twenty-three Tenth Mountain veterans lived in Aspen. A number of them became some of Aspen's most influential citizens. Tenth Mountain men ran Aspen's ski schools and ski patrol. They owned restaurants, bars, sporting goods stores, and *The Aspen Times* newspaper. One of them eventually married Walter Paepcke's daughter. Their legacies to Aspen and to America's ski industry are immense. After World War Two, Tenth veterans founded seventeen ski areas and directed more than thirty ski schools, where nearly 2,000 division veterans taught.<sup>42</sup> When the veterans described what appealed to them about Aspen in the first place, they certainly mentioned skiing. They also referred to Aspen's size. Litchfield, for example, who co-directed and taught in the Aspen ski school and who also owned what became one of Aspen's most popular and famous bars, The Red Onion, said that he came to Aspen after the war because "it just suited me." He echoed the sentiments of a number of the veterans who came to Aspen when he said that during the war he knew only that he "wanted to get out of the war whole" and then "be in a small town rather than a city."<sup>43</sup> One might assume that the experience of being in the army or fighting in Italy (where he earned a bronze star) explained Litchfield's feelings. But Litchfield had skied at Dartmouth and had taught skiing to and mingled among the influential patrons of Sun Valley prior to the war; when he visited Aspen while at Camp Hale, many of the men with whom he visited the town had similar backgrounds and would have seen the town similarly as a refuge for their own class.

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a half century after the end of the war in Europe, may simply provide an example of a "memory" used for dramatic effect.

<sup>42</sup> Christopher Ott, "Legacy of the ski troops," *Denver Business Journal*, April 24, 1998, on the web at <http://www.bizjournals.com/denver/stories/1998/04/27/story3.html>.

<sup>43</sup> Litchfield interview.

The idea of leaving the big city for a better life in the rural Trans-Mississippi West was a time-honored tradition in American history by the end of World War Two. Thomas Jefferson became obsessed with the far West and thought that the region could serve as the laboratory for his notions of agrarian democracy, as did Theodore Roosevelt, who fled New York City to the Badlands of South Dakota following the deaths of his wife and mother on the same day in 1884. Roosevelt played at being a cowboy for the remainder of his life. Between Jefferson and Roosevelt, the promise of great riches at the diggings in mining camps from California to Colorado captured the imaginations of multitudes. Thousands upon thousands of Americans stricken with tuberculosis came into the region at the *fin de siecle* and later, hoping to regain their health at dry-aired sanatoriums.<sup>44</sup> Historians have framed Aspen's development into a resort town as driven both by plain economics and by benevolent intentions to create excellent skiing and a haven for high culture. Neither approach really explains why Had Deane, Darcy Brown, Joy Maxwell Caudill, John Litchfield, or many more people moved to Aspen. Aspen offered these and others an oasis from an urban and suburban middle class America where they could reinvent themselves and shape the lives they wanted.

Historian Hal Rothman has argued that native-born citizens in Aspen and in other small towns across the West were forced to make a "devil's bargain" in the twentieth-century between remaining in poverty or allowing outside "neo-native"

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<sup>44</sup> See Donald Jackson, *Thomas Jefferson and the Stony Mountains: Exploring the West from Monticello* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981); Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex: The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Random House, 2001); Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2000); Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); and Sheila Rothman, *Living in the Shadow of Death: Tuberculosis and the Social Experience of Illness in American History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

wealth to transform their homes and their lives into playgrounds for the rich and famous. The bargaining in Aspen was more complicated for a number of reasons. To begin, some of the earliest proponents of skiing in Aspen were non-elite locals and not outsiders. Included in this group were miners such as the Willoughbys, the cobbler Mike Magnifico, the barber Jim Moore, and others. In addition, the local wealth of someone like Darcy Brown further challenges Rothman's perspective on locals and outsiders when we consider that Brown was both an Aspen native, an insider, and a wealthy Yale graduate with vast experience operating among movers and shakers in the worlds of finance and business beyond rural Colorado. Aspen's story also questions the assumption that locals made bargains by accepting devilish change. Compared to mining and logging companies, railroads, and other extractive industries in Western American history, the ski industry was, at its worst, only a continuation of a longer story about corporate control of communities. At its best, skiing helped revitalize towns such as Aspen by drawing people there who felt that their new home was special and deserved different environmental treatment than it had previously received. Many people came to Aspen because the town's spectacular setting at the top of a beautiful valley was like nothing most of them had ever seen. When people like Johnny Litchfield packed away their Ivy League diplomas and moved to Aspen to teach skiing or manage a bar (Litchfield did both), they were pulled to Aspen by what seemed to them to be sheer forces of nature. Litchfield's comment about why he came to Aspen is revealing: he "wanted to get out of the war whole" then "be in a small town rather than a city." His explanation about Aspen's

appeal is clearest within the broader context of a larger story about suburban growth and the rise of a new middle class in America after World War Two.

Walter Paepcke, founder and president of the box manufacturer Container Corporation of America (CCA), lived in Chicago but became interested in Colorado due to his wife's lifelong love affair with the Rocky Mountains. Elizabeth Nitze, nicknamed "Prissy" and "Pussy" by her family and called the latter by close friends and family for her entire life, grew sick as a child. Thinking that the Colorado mountain air might help, Elizabeth's mother and her father, a professor at the University of Chicago, took their daughter and younger son, Paul, to Estes Park for a summer. The family eventually bought some land and a house there, and the Nitze children grew to love climbing and tramping around the mountains of Colorado and in the Austrian Alps during their summers.<sup>45</sup> In 1936, Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke bought a 7,000 acre historic ranch at Larkspur between Denver and Colorado Springs. Perry Park, as the ranch was known, became the couple's holiday and summer getaway from the city. For shorter breaks on the weekends, the Paepckes had a farm at Sandwich outside of Chicago. In 1939, Elizabeth and two skier friends visiting Perry Park from Washington, D.C., drove to Aspen to ski. Walter did not join them, but upon her return to the ranch, Elizabeth could say nothing but great things about the old mining town and the surrounding mountains. "It was the most beautiful sight I've ever seen," she recalled years later in reference to the area. "That's when I really fell in love with Aspen." In 1945, as the war ended, one of the Paepckes' close

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<sup>45</sup> Paul Nitze interview, Air Force Oral History Interviews, October 25-28, 1977, Box 117, Folder 4, PHN.

Colorado friends, Eugene Lilly, visited the couple in Chicago and sounded the praises of Aspen again. When Elizabeth reminded Walter of how much she had adored the little town upon her visit there six years earlier, Walter decided to have a look.<sup>46</sup>

The reason Paepcke was drawn to Aspen is important to my argument in this chapter. Just a few months earlier, in February 1945, Paepcke's friend Walter Gropius gave a lecture in Chicago at the Institute of Design titled "Rebuilding Our Communities." Gropius was the founder of the Bauhaus school of design in Germany in the 1920s and chairman of the Department of Architecture at Harvard. Paepcke served on the board of the Institute. When the lecture was published later in a sixty-one page booklet replete with drawings and photographs, Paepcke read it and believed in it wholeheartedly. Gropius argued in the text that America's greatest challenge in the immediate future was going to be what he called "Postwar Community Building." Cities had become chaotic, and humans had become machine-like. Gropius contended that the automobile, the lack of properly-sized homes for the average man, and urban design that lacked space for "social intercourse" contributed to the chaos. "When the pattern and scale of future communities become human again we cannot fail," he wrote. Gropius criticized the lack of communal space in the planned suburban developments of up to 20,000 people, which by 1945 men like William Levitt planned at a great profit in order to resolve the housing crisis for postwar Americans. Gropius said that the "germs of decay lie waiting in this structure, even before it has left the architect's drawing board." Gropius certainly expressed the Bauhaus vision when he spoke of the new

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<sup>46</sup> James Sloan Allen, *The Romance of Commerce and Culture: Capitalism, Modernism, and the Chicago-Aspen Crusade for Cultural Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983; Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2002), p. 115.

developments for the middle class as ripe for decay and needing better design for better living.<sup>47</sup>

Successful postwar communities, Gropius thought, should be modeled after the small towns of the past. The ideal community would have “about 5 to 6 thousand people, living within walking distance of their working places, their shops, schools, community buildings and churches. The radius would be about one-half mile, and pedestrians would have the right-of-way in a well-planned network of foot paths which never cross a traffic lane.” Postwar Americans would also need “active recreation to revitalize their inventive facilities.” Gropius felt that the types of communities he envisioned, with their meeting halls and public spaces, would foster stronger democratic governments. And yet, in order to achieve success, the origins of such communities would necessarily be autocratic. To make his point, Gropius quoted a 1937 U.S. Chamber of Commerce study regarding the problem of blighted urban neighborhoods: The ideal communities “ ‘should be built or rebuilt as completely planned communities and be maintained and operated under a single ownership either through limited dividend companies or through other soundly organized corporations.’ ” In closing, he made a remarkable proposal which tied together at once a patriotic postwar sentimentality with America’s very origins in the Declaration of Independence: “May I suggest that the idea of creating organic communities be placed at the heart of our plans for war memorials? Instead of the usual icy symbols in stone or marble, each state should build—with the help of the returning G.I.— at least one model neighborhood community to honor our war dead.

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<sup>47</sup> For a discussion of the ideas behind Gropius’s founding of the Bauhaus, see Allen, pp. 52-54.

Nothing could better express our desire for peace and the pursuit of happiness.”<sup>48</sup>

Peace, happiness, democracy, freedom—these ideals were rooted in community.

Aspenites eventually followed Gropius’s suggestion. When Aspen opened the world’s longest chairlift in January, 1947, the men of the Tenth Mountain Division dedicated a plaque in honor of their fallen comrades at the top of Aspen Mountain. In the years to come, Aspen became an organic living memorial to the ski troop veterans as dozens of them made the town their home.<sup>49</sup>

Walter Paepcke’s conversation with his wife and with their Colorado friend, Lilly, took place shortly after Paepcke read Gropius. Paepcke’s later actions, including bringing Gropius to Aspen during his own second visit to the town, indicate that Paepcke saw Aspen as an extant townscape with the potential to be everything Gropius thought of as the ideal postwar community. Not only was it an historic small town already laid out in a pedestrian-friendly way, but it appeared that Aspen offered ample opportunities for any number of healthful types of recreation, particularly the sport of skiing, which Elizabeth had already experienced in Aspen firsthand.

Paepcke, figuratively and literally, laid eyes on Aspen before he ever went there. As historian James Sloan Allen has explained in detail, within days of his conversation about Aspen in Chicago with his wife and with Lilly, Paepcke built a

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<sup>48</sup> Walter Gropius, *Rebuilding Our Communities* (Chicago, Institute of Design, 1945). For two thorough discussions of the importance of community planning and, particularly, of suburbanization in American life, see Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) and Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>49</sup> For a description of the ceremonial placing of a plaque at the Sundeck honoring Tenth veterans, see n.a., “Rites at Aspen Held Atop Peak,” *The Denver Post*, January 13, 1947, n.p., in Scrapbook 74.91.4, AHS. In his autobiography, Pfeifer wrote, “In a way, the town served as a memorial to all of them (Tenth veterans) who had marched into Aspen years before.” See Pfeifer, p. 129.

dossier of information about the town and the price of real estate there.<sup>50</sup> Following Gropius's guidelines, Paepcke planned to buy up as much of Aspen as possible and create a model postwar community. One of the great ironies of Gropius's plan was that the creation of something "new" in a pre-existing town required some chicanery. For Paepcke to succeed in Aspen, he would need to avoid creating a speculative real estate market there. If word got out, his planned community could end up costing more than he was willing to pay and attract the wrong kinds of people. But if Paepcke was initially downright deceitful about his intentions to buy up much of the land that he came to own in Aspen, the record indicates that he was more a controller with a vision than a greedy speculator. His overarching plan was to preserve a unique piece of small town America and to create one of Gropius's ideal postwar communities where select men and women like himself could rejuvenate themselves away from the hustle and bustle of cities like Chicago. As he would shortly prove, Paepcke planned for the new Aspen to benefit a select few elite urbanites who were interconnected via social networks. He worried that the plan could be thwarted if word got out and the middle class profiteers moved in with their flashing neon lights. Paepcke wrote a public relations expert with whom he had worked earlier. He explained that his vision of Aspen was to build the town up "in a very attractive way, as was done with Williamsburg in the east...The result might be extremely attractive, novel, and pleasant.' " Where John D. Rockefeller, Jr., had bankrolled the preservation of a slice of early America at Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, Paepcke might preserve in Aspen a jewel of the nineteenth-century American West.

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<sup>50</sup> See Daily and Guenin, pp. 549-559; and Allen, pp. 131-141; and Grieser and Nitze correspondence, PHN.

In addition, Paepcke wrote that he had heard that some Austrian skiers had plans of improving Aspen's already existing crude ski-tow operations. The difference between Colonial Williamsburg and Aspen should be clear: people were actually going to work, live, and play in Aspen, whereas at Colonial Williamsburg actors dressed in period costume only pretended to live, work and play for sightseers on arranged interpretive tours.<sup>51</sup>

Two days after writing the publicity expert, Paepcke had a man on the ground near Aspen. Illinois hotelier Floyd Gibbs had a hard time heading west because the trains were packed with masses of soldiers returning home from victory in Europe, but he reached Glenwood Springs on May 5, 1945. Gibbs sent a letter to Paepcke and stapled to it a small clipping from the *Rocky Mountain News*: "Skier Friedl Pfeifer Wounded in North Italy." An Aspenite in Glenwood, Gibbs wrote Paepcke, told him that "a couple of years ago, Pfeifer was trying to buy houses and land around Aspen, for what purpose he did not know, but presumed he planned on living there after the war. So, there must be fire where there is smoke. You will hear more from me later."<sup>52</sup> A few days later in Chicago, Walter Paepcke spread across his desk Gibbs's firsthand written accounts of the town, including photographs of the Jerome and other properties. By the end of the month, Paepcke had visited Aspen and started the process of buying dozens of buildings and hundreds of empty lots.<sup>53</sup>

Paepcke's reports from Gibbs, combined with his first visit to the town several weeks later, reaffirmed his initial impressions about Aspen as a place that might meet

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<sup>51</sup> Allen, p. 133. For the history of Colonial Williamsburg, see Anders Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002).

<sup>52</sup> Floyd Gibbs to Walter Paepcke, May 5, 1945, Box 98, F11, WPP.

<sup>53</sup> Allen, pp. 134-135.

Gropius's challenge for an ideal postwar community. Paepcke was without question shrewd in the dealings that permitted him to gain control of many properties in Aspen. For example, he kept the town's judge, William Shaw, on retainer as his legal counsel in Aspen even after Paepcke sent out Chicago attorney Sam Mitchell to oversee his purchases. As a local and as a county judge, Shaw was invaluable to Paepcke. Shortly after Paepcke left town following his first visit in late May, Shaw sent him a summary of the properties in which Paepcke hoped to gain title. Shaw said, "Aspen is going to be the Golden haired boy if we can satisfy your needs here and I sincerely hope so." A week later Shaw wrote to assure Paepcke that he was working as quietly as possible so as to not arouse suspicion. "This work is done by me," Shaw wrote, "as I don't want my stenographer to snoop."<sup>54</sup> Shaw was quite aware of Paepcke's "needs" in keeping secret his plans for Aspen. Paepcke obtained some pieces of land with fuzzy titles because of his relationship with the well-connected Shaw. One example was Paepcke's acquisition of the Hoaglund Ranch, which became the home to the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, founded by Paepcke in 1950. "If we can quietly get around Hoaglund through the commissioners," Shaw wrote him early in 1946, "that will be the best way out if you are interested." Paepcke gained title to the ranch.<sup>55</sup> In the fall of 1945, a Texas man, noting that he had seen something about Paepcke's Aspen "enterprise" in *The Denver Post*, wrote to Paepcke that he owned what was known as the Cornwall House in Aspen and would sell it for \$1,000. Paepcke replied that the house was a wreck and that he would need to tear it down. He would pay \$500 for the lot. Paepcke bought

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<sup>54</sup> William Shaw and Walter Paepcke correspondence, Box 98, F11, WPP.

<sup>55</sup> Shaw to Paepcke, January 15, 1946, Box 99, F1, WPP.

the house, and instead of tearing it down, he spent \$5,000 remodeling it into a showcase Victorian.<sup>56</sup> Other native Aspenites recalled that they realized too late that Paepcke was “underhanded” in his techniques at gaining title to properties. Peggy Cooper Rowland said that her mother sold the Cooper family home with the understanding that it was the only house Paepcke planned to buy. In addition, the agreement of sale stated that Peggy would be able to retrieve the furnishings inside the home. Later, she found pieces of her family’s furniture at the Hotel Jerome and for sale in an antique store.<sup>57</sup> What Peggy Rowland saw as “underhanded,” Gropius may have explained away as Paepcke’s necessary autocracy.

Although his actions were sometimes unscrupulous and although Paepcke certainly never planned to lose money in any of his ventures, it was not his chief goal to make a fortune in Aspen. He was a man who once arrogantly said, “ ‘ The world has forgotten who was the richest man of Queen Elizabeth’s era, but will never forget Shakespeare.’ ”<sup>58</sup> With Aspen, Paepcke wanted to make better an already beautiful and charming place. It was to be his masterpiece, a postwar getaway where urban sophisticates could experience small town life, including the rubbing of elbows with colorful and authentic western small-town characters.

Two of the people Paepcke first invited to Aspen to have a look around were Gropius and Herbert Bayer, also a Bauhaus artist and one of Paepcke’s favorite designers. After Gropius came to Aspen in the summer of 1945, he told Paepcke that he “felt elated like a boy coming to your miraculous place and could not get enough

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<sup>56</sup> R.R. Tate and Paepcke correspondence, October, 1945, Box 98, F15, WPP; “The Aspen Company Construction Costs From March 1, 1946,” in Box 89, F11, WPP.

<sup>57</sup> Peggy Rowland interview, May, 1995, by Jon Coleman, AHS.

<sup>58</sup> Clipping from *The Cincinnati Times Star*, April 15, 1950, in Box 97, F11, WPP.

of roaming around.” He saw immediately that Paepcke had an ideal place in which to experiment with building the type of community he had envisioned in his manifesto. He described Aspen as one of the “great American scenes.” “My love for this country,” Gropius wrote Paepcke, “has noticeably grown in Colorado.” He then recommended a master planner, one of his former students, for Aspen. He added, “I am of course very willing to keep an eye on any work...because I have seen the place, I have a certain vision, regarding the major trends of replanning it, as to what could be done.”<sup>59</sup> For Gropius and for Paepcke, Aspen’s unique Western setting—as a place where promise lived—seemed ideal for creating a model postwar American community.

Bayer was equally enchanted by Aspen, eventually moving and spending most of his life there. It was Paepcke who convinced Bayer and his wife, Joella, to move to Aspen. He wrote to the latter, “I am sure it will be fine for both of you to get out west where you can relax and at the same time have plenty to do to keep you busy, without being driven as hard as you have been as we all are in these so-called attractive cities.” Paepcke felt that both Gropius and Bayer could provide a tasteful and efficient “master plan” for Aspen that could retain its small town allure and, at the same time, help it grow as a retreat for select tourists handpicked by Paepcke and his friends and associates. Good planning and design had been a driving philosophy for Paepcke at Container Corporation of America. With Aspen, he preached the merits of proper planning and design at every opportunity. For example, in early 1946, when he wrote to E.E. Jackson, an Aspen real estate agent and member of the informal planning commission that Paepcke had helped to organize on his first visit,

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<sup>59</sup> Walter Gropius to Paepcke, September 6, 1945 and September 20, 1945, Box 97, F7, WPP.

he enclosed a copy of *Rebuilding Our Communities*. Paepcke explained that Gropius's ideas could alleviate the worries of any Aspen investors or visitors concerned about seeing "a filling station, shooting gallery, hot-dog stand or livery stable on their front doorstep."<sup>60</sup> Tacky tourist attractions appealed to tacky people, Paepcke believed, and Aspen needed to be careful not to turn away the elites Paepcke found to be "attractive." He wanted to create in Aspen a place where people with good taste—often urbanites from the East and Midwest with Ivy League pedigrees—might gather together.

Within a few months of Paepcke's first visit to town, news of his plans leaked. A number of un-invited investors were immediately drawn to Aspen. By the end of the summer of 1945, Shaw wrote Paepcke that six to ten Texans a day were coming into the county treasurer's office. They asked about properties with delinquent taxes, which they wanted to buy as investments. In September, Floyd Gibbs, who had moved to town to help in managing Paepcke's holdings, informed the boss that he had rented a house to a Texas couple for the coming winter. Some of the Texans were long-time summer visitors to Aspen. That same month, Paepcke noted in a letter to an old miner named Billy Tagert that a Texan interested in one of the town's grandest old homes (The Stallard House, owned by Paepcke) had spent the previous seven summers there. While Tagert pleaded with Paepcke to allow him to buy the house before allowing it to fall into the hands of a "rank outsider," Paepcke replied that he planned to sell the property to the Texan, named Elliot, who he thought "was not an un-likeable chap." Either the Elliot deal fell through or Paepcke never planned

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<sup>60</sup> Paepcke to Herbert Bayer, May 22, 1945, Box 96, F9, WPP; Paepcke to Joella Bayer, March 8, 1946, Box 96, F10; Paepcke to E.E. Jackson, February 5, 1946, Box 99, F1, WPP.

to sell in the first place. The Paepckes owned the Stallard House until selling it to the Aspen Historical Society in 1968.<sup>61</sup>

In October the injured Tenth Mountain soldier and ski star Friedl Pfeifer completed his convalescence and made it back to town. By the time he began preparing a new rope tow for the coming winter, the word on Aspen was certainly out. In November 1945, *Business Week* ran a photo of the town with a caption that read "Readying for Another Rush." The article announced that Paepcke had bought twenty houses in Aspen and that a number of his "Chicago friends are reported interested financially in the plan, as is the Denver & Rio Grande Western which runs a spur into Aspen."<sup>62</sup> By December, the local paper noted that the County Treasurer was spending so much time calculating penalties and delinquent tax interest on properties—some of them not paid since 1888—that he had to hire extra help.<sup>63</sup>

Many of the people who began arriving in Aspen in the winter of 1945-46 had skied there before, and had hoped and planned to return. Certainly, others came because they saw dollar signs. In an early 1946 newspaper article titled "Money Fever is Running In Aspen Again," the writer noted that real estate men from as far away as Florida were in town scouting investments.<sup>64</sup> Others came expressly because Walter Paepcke asked them to investigate and to consider investing in his project of developing a retreat in the mountains. As he solicited prospective buyers into both the Aspen Company (the real estate side of the venture) and the Aspen Skiing

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<sup>61</sup> Shaw to Paepcke, August 14, 1945, Box 98, F12, WPP; Gibbs to Paepcke, September 25, 1945, Box 98, F15, WPP. W.C. Tagert and Paepcke correspondence, September, 1945, Box 98, F14, WPP.

<sup>62</sup> *Business Week*, (November 17, 1945), n.p., Aspen Skiing/Culture Era (Clippings 1946-1950s) file, AHS.

<sup>63</sup> N.a., "Tax Sale To Be Held January 9<sup>th</sup>," *The Aspen Times*, December 13, 1945, p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> Jane Nes, "Money Fever is Running in Aspen Again," *The Denver Post*, March 17, 1946, p.1.

Corporation, Paepcke made it clear that he was interested in certain types of individuals. In his letters to possible investors, Paepcke, a Yale graduate, often pitched the project by describing the list of “attractive” investors already committed. For Paepcke, an Ivy League background and other indicators of class were important. In addition, even though he did not ski, Paepcke clearly saw skiing ability as a signifier for elite status. To a Philadelphia stockbroker and insurance executive named Cummins Catherwood, for example, Paepcke noted that Robert H. Collins, of Omaha, Nebraska, was “a former Dartmouth man and an excellent amateur skier,” and that Thomas A. Connors was “was a hockey player at Yale (1916) and he and his wife and children are all good skiers.” Frank Ashley was a graduate of “Princeton and one of the top amateur skiers of Denver.” Allen Phipps was “one of the sons of the former Senator Phipps of Colorado.”<sup>65</sup> To C.H. Collins, Paepcke said, “I would appreciate it if you would not say anything about this little syndicate, as in order to get a nice group of people together, it seems best to do it by invitation.” The Texans, the Floridians, and other investors had not been invited by Paepcke, but he tolerated them if he found them to be “not un-likeable.” More irritating was the “main competitor” at one tax sale who Paepcke described as the “somewhat vicious...little Italian from Denver named Fevata.”<sup>66</sup>

The reactions of the people to whom Paepcke wrote and extended invitations said a great deal about their own visions for what Aspen might offer. Profits seemed less important than Paepcke’s vision of Aspen as a place of escape for certain types of people, including powerful men from the world of commerce and finance. George

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<sup>65</sup> Paepcke to Cummins Catherwood, May 9, 1946, Box 94, F14, WPP. For Catherwood’s obituary, see “Cummins Catherwood, Executive, 80,” *The New York Times*, February 14, 1990, p. B5.

<sup>66</sup> Paepcke to W.C. Tagert, September 15, 1945, Box 98, F14, WPP.

Moore, a Wall Street businessman, enclosed a check in his letter to Paepcke. "Never mind any dividends," he wrote. "We have already had \$5,000 worth of fun contemplating the good times we will have in Aspen." "If I could get a new heart and lop off a few years," C.H. Collins replied to Paepcke's invitation, "I would most certainly join you in the Aspen adventure...From 1915 to 1925 I was in Aspen many times. Many, many tons of ore came from there to my zinc plant in Leadville. I felt the charm of the old town then. I never lost it....I envy your Aspen adventure." *New Yorker* editor and Aspen native Harold Ross wrote to Paepcke and explained that he had a friend who was contemplating a permanent move to Aspen with the hopes that the simple life there might cure his ulcers.<sup>67</sup> For Bob Collins, the Omaha resident and Dartmouth man who invested \$25,000 in the companies, Aspen was a nice town, and he had ideas about how to shape it even more to his liking. When he sent Paepcke a list of other possible investors prior to the 1946-47 winter season, he wrote, "I know them all to be Christians, which brings up another point that rather concerned me the last day I was in Aspen. On Tuesday morning in the Coffee Shop, ninety percent of those present were of the affiliation Mr. Hitler was trying to eliminate. I think we should be very careful in screening guests this winter. There is nothing more obnoxious on a ski hill than a pushy member of the chosen clan."<sup>68</sup> Collins's anti-Semitic vision of a better Aspen may or may not have differed from Paepcke's idea of the perfect town. There is no reply to the Collins invective against Jews in Paepcke's records. Collins's attitude underlines the fact that everything in Aspen was not

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<sup>67</sup> Paepcke and C.H. Collins correspondence, February, 1946, Box 94, F13, WPP; George Moore to Paepcke, March 19, 1946, Box 94, F15, WPP; Harold Ross to Paepcke, May 21, 1946, Box 94, F14, WPP.

<sup>68</sup> Robert H. Collins to Paepcke, September 10, 1946, Box 98, F4, WPP.

perfect and that much of the tension involved notions of class and belonging. For one of Aspen's chief early investors, class and ethnicity intertwined in a familiar trope about the "chosen clan" whose members he did not want included in the club.

In his book, *Hip: The History*, John Leland argues that what is hip is usually co-opted by corporations. "One of hip's paradoxes," he says, "is that even as it professes antipathy to the market, it takes the shape the economy needs it to." One of the striking things about skiing and ski bums in this period is the degree to which this statement is not particularly adaptable. Aspen was created by a corporation first and a hip ski bum culture developed there later, after the corporate infrastructure of lifts, lodges, hotels, restaurants, and boutiques was in place.<sup>69</sup> The simplest answer for how this occurred is that the *idea* of the ski bum/ mountain town resident and what he or she represented needed a place to germinate. In short, images of skiers originally involved classic tropes of eliteness, but those images evolved relatively quickly into coded forms and led to what I will refer to below as the "ski bum shift," whereby privileged skiers developed new identities not just as skiers, but as ski "bums."

As Tenth Mountain veterans and others trickled into town during the end of the first postwar winter in 1946, Aspen's future seemed obvious to some. As one *Denver Post* reporter put it in March, Aspen would "become a name famous the world over for a place where men may forget for a few days the tribulations of the workaday world." Accompanying this same article, a photo taken from high on a mountain showed the town, its streets and buildings blanketed in snow. "The doll-village appearance of the town," the caption read, "has been likened to the appearance of small hamlets in the French and Spanish Pyrenees." The article and

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<sup>69</sup> Leland, p. 153.

photographs made clear that Aspen was a place where people from the city could forget their troubles (associated with the “workaday world”) and concentrate on having a good time in a remote “small hamlet.” Throughout the postwar 1940s, newspapers, magazines, newsreels, and films made it very clear that Aspen was a special and unique place because of its remoteness and because of the types of people who lived there and visited regularly. In Aspen, those elites crafted an image of simplicity.

In January of 1947, Aspen received unprecedented attention in the national press upon the opening of the world’s longest chairlift. *Time* and *Newsweek* covered the event. News of the lift’s dedication made hundreds of newspapers across the nation. Hal Boyle’s articles for the Associated Press painted the picture of an important work in progress. One headline, which masked nothing pertaining to class, read “Millionaire Trying to Build Ideal Town.” Paepcke, Boyle wrote, “set about rebuilding dilapidated Aspen into an ideal town where people could ‘live a happier and more complete life.’ ” In quoting Paepcke about the living of a more “complete” life, Boyle did not mean that Paepcke was redesigning Aspen for the people who had been there for generations. He was building an “Ideal Town” for people of his own class. In one of his boldest public statements about his desire to draw only “attractive,” sophisticated people like himself and his wife to Aspen, Paepcke said, “ ‘ ...I’m interested sociologically in providing more than a place for movie stars to ski. I would like to see us avoid the tourist tripper who litters the scenery with orange peelings and sardine cans.’ ” “ ‘ You can do that,’ he said, ‘ in a small community...I am interested in a design for living.’ ” Boyle claimed that Aspen’s population had

jumped from 700 to 1,200 in the year and a half following the war, but that Paepcke never wanted the town to exceed four to five thousand people (Gropius's magic number). For many readers of America's newspapers in which this Associated Press story ran, their first image of Aspen was that it was a "small" "ideal" "community" for "millionaires" who eschewed any association with the "tourist." In connecting the dots between movie star skiers and day trippers tossing litter out of their car windows, Paepcke suggested at once that Sun Valley, which Paepcke saw as Aspen's chief rival, had been invaded by the masses. Another Boyle piece, about an "old miner" who felt that the ski boom was less exciting than the mining days, seemed to make every newspaper from Florida to Montana. The article linked Aspen's mythical past as a roaring mining town with its mythical present as a skier's paradise. It put into print the idea that the town was a small wonder, somehow both stuck in time and forward-thinking. The article was also deceptive. The "old miner" was not a burrowing, pick-ax-wielding, white-bearded old-timer living in a log cabin. He was Harry Brown, Darcy's well-off uncle, who had leased the surface rights for a number of Aspen Mountain mining claims to the Aspen Skiing Corporation.<sup>70</sup> In this case, an Aspen oldtimer, a "miner" who remembered the nineteenth-century past was really a well-off man playing with established images of what it meant to be western. In later years, Aspenites posed in similar ways when they masked their own backgrounds.

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<sup>70</sup> See *Time* and *Newsweek*, January 20, 1947. For Hal Boyle clippings, see Scrapbook 63.154.1, AHS. It is highly unlikely that Aspen's permanent population in 1947 was 1,200. The 1940 census enumerated 777 Aspenites, while the 1950 census claimed 916. It is likely, however, that Aspen's "population" fluctuated wildly by season and even within seasons. At an event such as the opening of Lift One, the town's numbers would have swelled magnificently and any outside reporter would have had a difficult time getting a clear answer on how many people actually lived in the town. For a discussion of the Browns and their early involvement in leasing their surface rights for skiing, see Philpott, pp. 48-50.

When they played at being members of a distinctly western working class, Aspenites felt empowered to both praise and critique their town.

Another image cultivated early by the press, usually in the status-obsessed newspaper society columns, was that of Aspen as a party town. Party stories helped to promote the idea of Aspen as an escape for elites where good times reigned supreme. The society pages of regional and national newspapers, as well as stories in national magazines, explained that part of the Aspen experience included living it up in the bars and at parties all over town. After the grand opening of the chairlift, one Chicago reporter wrote that the “Chatter on the ‘Aspirin Special’ ” was “Not All About Exploits on Skis.” She told of Elizabeth Paepcke’s weekend farewell cocktail party, which carried into the early morning hours and apparently caused some travelers to need aspirin for their hangovers. A *Collier’s* feature one year later opened with a photograph of a beer-swilling, raucous crowd inside the Red Onion. “Here on winter evenings,” the author wrote, “the booted, wind-burned skiers predominate...in a faintly steamy atmosphere...[with] huge steins of beer, their cigarette smoke beclouding the already dim light from the old Victorian chandeliers.” This article worried Walter Paepcke, as did the newsreel of the grand opening for the new lift. In a letter to Ski Corporation stockholders in December, 1947, almost one year after the grand opening, Paepcke lamented that he had been portrayed among the “‘hoopla’ ” in the newsreel as a man “in the somewhat undignified role of greeter and hale fellow in bar scenes.”<sup>71</sup> The images of Aspen as a raucous party town

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<sup>71</sup> Adeline Fitzgerald, “Chatter on the ‘Aspirin Special’ Not All About Exploits on Skis,” January 16, 1947, *Chicago Sun*, n.p., clipping in Box 97, F8, WPP; Evan M. Wylie, “Ghost Town on Skis,” February 7, 1948, *Colliers*, n.p., copy in SKIING Aspen Mtn. 1948-1949 file, AHS; Paepcke to stockholders, December 16, 1947, Box 99, F7, WPP.

indicate that the town was not as quiet and simple as some people described it. Paepcke worried about the town's media image, not because he thought the image was a lie, but because it sent the wrong message about what he wanted Aspen to represent. Parties were fine, as long as they were discussed in a Chicago society column, but once national magazines or newsreels projected the "undignified" images of young people in a smoky bar, Paepcke became concerned that what he imagined as "unattractive" people might come to town. Despite Paepcke's fears, most of the people who came to Aspen early were to his liking. Yet, importantly, there existed among them a generational divide. While Paepcke's cohorts saw Aspen as a place for relaxation in a sophisticated mountain setting similar to Chautauquas of old, their children tended to see Aspen as a bohemia for loafing and playing. In this way, the young elites gave Aspen a cachet that was very different from the cachet attributed to Aspen by their parents. In time, the attitudes of the children helped lead to the ski bum shift.

Among the young veterans returning from war, many of those who found their way to Aspen came from privileged backgrounds. Besides Tenth Mountain men, a number of other veterans made the move to Aspen, including several women who had flown airplanes as part of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs).<sup>72</sup> Much of what Aspen offered to these people was both illustrated and reinforced in the Aspen Company's own newsletter, the *Aspen Leaf*, which often featured "attractive" young men and women in its pages and explained how they came to town. As a mouthpiece for the real estate division of Paepcke's investment in Aspen, the newsletter

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<sup>72</sup> Two WASP veterans, Ruth Humphreys Brown and Betty Hass Pfister, were eventually inducted into Aspen's Hall of Fame. See Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "Brown, Pfister and Frost to be inducted into Hall of Fame," n.d., *The Aspen Times*, n.p., clipping in Organization: Aspen Hall of Fame file, AHS.

emphasized that visitors to Aspen were elite. In the first issue, for example, Miss Sarah Chapin of affluent Grosse Pointe, Michigan, was shown putting on sun tan lotion. The *Aspen Leaf* noted that Chapin had been in Aspen visiting a fellow former WASP friend from the war.<sup>73</sup> The same issue noted that one-time Yale pole-vaulter Keith Brown “gave an elegant cocktail party at the Flora Dora annex during his stay here.” In a familiar version of a story that would be told again and again by Aspenites explaining how they ended up living in town, the first issue of *Aspen Leaf* also mentioned that four female guests from St. Louis “couldn’t bear to leave and so got jobs and stayed on.”<sup>74</sup> In case issue number one did not make it clear enough, subsequent issues of *Aspen Leaf* continued emphasizing that the town was an idyllic getaway for urban bluebloods. As portrayed by the magazine, Aspenites and summer visitors not only played tennis, drank cocktails, and attended symphonies, but they also rode horses, swam and fished in mountain ponds, studied wildflowers, and attended rodeos. Aspen’s mountain beauty allowed people to enjoy the amenities that urbanites enjoyed in the city while in the rugged, rural American West, surrounded by men and women with familiar backgrounds. Visitors to Aspen, then, could play at being Western without ever having to sacrifice the advantages their status afforded them. In fact, being Western in the Aspen sense of the word allowed the truly elite to wink at one another about what being “Western” or being an “Aspenite” really meant.

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<sup>73</sup> The *Aspen Leaf* would have assumed that readers in 1947 knew automatically that WASP stood for Women Airforce Service Pilots. Part of the sporty, rugged WASP women’s duties during WWII involved delivering new planes from factories to various air fields across the United States. They were glorified on the cover of *Life* magazine as tough yet cute American girls helping to whip Hitler and the Japanese while keeping their hair in pig tails. For all things WASP related, see [www.wasp-wwii.org](http://www.wasp-wwii.org). The photo of Chapin, an attractive and tanned blonde wearing a sporty wool sweater and a large-faced aviator style watch, projected the image of the attractive, athletic woman that would appear again and again for the next fifty years in Aspen ads and promotional literature.

<sup>74</sup> *Aspen Leaf*, Vol. I, No.1, May, 1947, pp. 1-3, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library (DPL).

A Herbert Bayer-designed brochure from the late 1940s summed up this idea with images of a smiling woman riding the ski lift, surrounded by columbine, horses, a trout, the Maroon Bells, and a cowboy. Below the chairlift, in the center of the brochure, was the requisite green aspen leaf that came to be synonymous with the town. In *Aspen Leaf's* third issue, under "Jerome Jottings," a column that told of visitors to the Hotel Jerome, readers learned that several branches of the Stanton family had visited town earlier in the summer of 1947. "The Messrs. Stantons spent Fourth of July weekend here and then returned to the grind in Chicago, leaving their mother, wives and one child each to stay and enjoy the coolth [sic] of Aspen's summer."<sup>75</sup> The next issue included a photo of Chicago's Hume family, some of whom also spent the summer in town. The mother Hume, youthful, in pig-tails, and with a puppy in her lap, sits on the front porch of an old house. She is surrounded by her three young sons, two of whom are dressed in sneakers and blue jeans. Her balding husband, in a coat and bow tie, looks as if he has come straight from the office in Chicago. "Mrs. Hume and the children," *Aspen Leaf* noted, "live in one of the remodeled Victorian houses where Mr. Hume joined them for an August visit."<sup>76</sup> Aspen provided the women and children, both youthful, a safe escape from the hot summer bustle of the big city where the men toiled at the grindstone.

For the ski legend and filmmaker Dick Durrance, a Dartmouth graduate, and his wife, Miggs, Aspen's appeal when they moved there in 1947 included their notion that Aspen "was a wonderful place to raise a family." They described their children walking from home to the small school, the lack of automobile traffic, and Aspen's

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<sup>75</sup> *Aspen Leaf*, Vol. I, No. 3, August, 1947, p. 3, DPL.

<sup>76</sup> *Aspen Leaf*, Vol. I, No. 4, September, 1947, p. 2, DPL.

unpaved streets.<sup>77</sup> As a symbol, Aspen's dirt streets held powerful sway. Men and women from cities nearly always mentioned the lack of pavement or concrete on the town's roadways. Two early Aspen films by the Durrances bolstered their own impression of the town as a haven for privileged urbanites seeking a small town life. *Aspen In Winter* (1948), a promotional piece produced by the Skiing Corporation, depicted Aspen as a "village" where "everything has been thought of." Scenes showing children ski racing with Easter egg baskets and shots of women sunbathing on the roof of the Jerome offered various slices of paradise. The Warner Brothers' short *Snow Carnival* (1949), narrated by Gary Cooper, utilized several ski/dream sequences that depicted Aspen as a place with calypso singers (part of the carnival theme) crooning to beautiful women and men coming from the ski hill. "Here in America," Cooper says at the close of the film, "a lot of us are finding out that skiing is not just a sport, but...well, I guess you'd call it a kind of fraternity...a joining together of people who share the wonderland of winter." That wonderland was carnivalesque as it inverted images of the powerful at play. In Aspen, Gary Cooper, one of Hollywood's greatest stars, joined an exclusive "fraternity." Cooper told one magazine reporter that the wonder of Aspen was that it provided him with " 'the perfect hideaway' " because in Aspen no one bothered him. There, the article argued, the "Coopers have found the place where they belong." According to a desk clerk at the Jerome, Aspenites saw Cooper and his family not as celebrities, but as fellow locals enjoying Aspen. The privileged there would not bother Cooper or play the role of worshipers because their own coded notions of superiority would not allow it.

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<sup>77</sup> Miggs and Dick Durrance interview, August 18, 1993, by Jeanette Darnauer, AHS.

Bothering Cooper would be akin to littering the landscape with orange peels and sardine cans.<sup>78</sup>

By the 1950s, Americans were aware of Aspen and what was required to fit in there. For example, the anonymous “ATTRACTIVE COUPLE, too long in the city pent,” who ran a classified ad in *Ski* magazine in 1950 and wished to “help someone with ski and/or summer resort,” did not need to go into detail about the significance a place such as Aspen held in their imaginations.<sup>79</sup> One of the predominant themes in published newspaper and magazine stories about Aspen was that many of the people who lived there had made a deliberate choice to live differently than Americans in the big cities and their suburbs. These images led to a shift in perception about who inhabited Aspen. A glossy magazine article about Stuart and Isabel Mace provided an excellent example. Titled “This Is the Life!,” the article chronicled the family’s move to the Ashcroft area, where they built a lodge they named Toklat—an Inuit word meaning a valley carved by a glacier—and raised and trained sled dogs. “They built their home in one of America’s most beautiful regions,” the article begins, “and they’ve found a new and better life for their family.” This better life included “contentment, security and the satisfaction of worth-while accomplishment.” First and foremost of these accomplishments, the article made clear, was the Maces’ “greatest satisfaction in seeing their youngsters grow up happy and healthy.”<sup>80</sup> For war veterans like Mace during the early 1950s, the Aspen area was a place that

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<sup>78</sup> Tom Carlile, “Gary Cooper’s Mountain Hideaway,” *Modern Screen* (1948), n.p., clipping in Box 94, F17, WPP.

<sup>79</sup> Classified advertisement, *Ski* magazine, March 15, 1950, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> *Aspen In Winter*, Dick Durrance, prod., (Aspen: Aspen Skiing Corporation, 1948), film library, AHS; *Snow Carnival*, Dick Durrance, prod., (Los Angeles: Warner Brothers, 1949), film library, AHS; Don Saunders, “This Is the Life!” n.d., n.p., in Mary Powers scrapbook, AHS.

expressed Walter Paepcke's and Walter Gropius's "desire for peace and the pursuit of happiness" through the medium of a model community.<sup>81</sup> The article did not express something Mace explained years later when asked why he moved to the Aspen area from Boulder: life in the latter, including his job, his neighbors, and zoning laws which he felt were illegal in the quickly growing college town near Denver, was "getting to him."<sup>82</sup> When the masses closed in, Mace headed for higher country.

In 1980, Peggy Clifford recalled that when she arrived in Aspen in 1953, she felt herself "superior to America" and that the town seemed to her to be a perfect mixture of Greenwich Village and Greenwich, Connecticut. Hers were statements ripe with unbridled elitist sentiments. In the aftermath of Hiroshima, Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech and Adlai Stevenson's presidential election loss to Eisenhower, and against the backdrop of McCarthyism, Clifford claimed that she needed to run away from a country she felt above intellectually. "I wanted no part of America," she said, recalling her move to Aspen. At the same time, she wanted to be part of an idealized version of a better America. After spending several post-college years in New York City, Clifford recalled that she watched her friends in the city get "buttoned up and settled down." She said goodbye to that world and headed for Aspen because she "wanted a life." "I had convinced myself," she wrote, that Aspen, which she first heard about from one of her college professors who had attended a celebration in

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<sup>81</sup> Gropius, p. 61.

<sup>82</sup> Stuart Mace interview, November 8, 1991, by Mike Kobey, AHS.

Aspen of Goethe's birth, was "an anomaly, the final outpost of freedom and originality in a gray-flannel nation."<sup>83</sup>

When she arrived, Aspen did not disappoint her. The town seemed, she said, "somehow out of time." Not only was it different from the city physically, but Aspen's lack of pretension embodied the idea that "character matters more than money or power or anything."<sup>84</sup> For Clifford, settling down meant no life, no freedom. Following this line of thought, Clifford's views were reminiscent of her contemporaries, the Beats. Aspen satisfied her because there were other elites like her who lived in a way that seemed "out of time." Even though people like the Durrances and the Maces saw Aspen as a great family town and may have appeared somewhat "settled down," they were not also "buttoned down."<sup>85</sup>

For years, as far back as the mining days and certainly as far back as Had and Lou Deane or Joy Maxwell Caudill, people had come to Aspen in search of something other than what large urban areas offered them. They mentioned Aspen's small town feel or the natural beauty of the area; it was a hideaway from the urban world of serious jobs or crowded, busy streets; a great place to raise a family; a refuge from seriousness. I noted above that for some Aspenites, these heartfelt expressions indicated a kind of coded language about class tensions in America. Aspen was a

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<sup>83</sup> In 1949, Paepcke led the effort to hold a bicentennial celebration of the birth of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in Aspen. The celebration garnered considerable press coverage, especially when Dr. Albert Schweitzer arrived from Africa for his first and only visit to the United States. The Goethe celebration led to Paepcke and other participants founding the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies in 1950. For more on the Goethe event and the founding of the Aspen Institute, see Allen, pp. 153-234.

<sup>84</sup> Peggy Clifford, *To Aspen and Back: An American Journey* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), pp. 2-9.

<sup>85</sup> Leland, p. 149, quotes Barbara Ehrenreich: "In the Beats, she noted, 'the two strands of male protest—one directed against the white-collar work world and the other against the suburbanized family life that work was supposed to support—come together into the first full critique of American consumer culture.' In place of work and family, which link to the past and future, they chose the immediacy of pleasure and motion."

wonderland for many reasons, some of which Gropius had quantified with his discussion of pedestrian-scaled “neighborhoods” with community centers and with his acknowledgment that recreation led to a healthy life. When Clifford wrote about Aspen’s timelessness and its character, she reflected similarly upon the place itself and the people who populated it. She saw a very idealized version of Aspen. She mentioned the lack of paved streets, the irrigation ditches, the downtown that measured only three to four blocks in length. Aspen appealed to Peggy Clifford for other reasons, too. Her attraction to Aspen was rooted explicitly in something deeper than its charm. Postwar America had lost its grasp of right and wrong, she said. In the process, her own idea of what made a democracy—being involved in the political process of a community—was buttoned up and stored away when Americans wrapped themselves in the smothering gray flannel of middle class propriety and looked after their own self-interest at the expense of the broader communities they inhabited. Although she did not mention Gropius, Clifford felt that America had become what he had argued against when he said that the rebuilding of properly planned communities for young veterans was vital to “future democratic living.”<sup>86</sup> Aspen and its playful young offered hope to Peggy Clifford that the town hall spirit of a lost America still existed. The privileged would lead the way by re-inventing themselves and small-town living in Aspen while rejecting the values of the middle class masses.

Beginning in the late 1950s people started to discuss Aspen in new ways. Whereas the town’s earliest arrivals certainly talked about the advantages of small town living when they explained why they came, later Aspenites and observers of

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<sup>86</sup> Gropius, p. 22.

Aspen tended to put the town's place in the nation and in the world into schemes of broader significance. In 1952, the year before Clifford arrived in Aspen, a Chicago newspaper columnist attending an Aspen Institute forum titled "Freedom and Tyranny" wrote that the conversations in Aspen were more important than the conversations taking place the same day at the Republican Party's national convention in Chicago. In discussions which took place on a lawn underneath the sunshine-filled Aspen blue sky, Sydney J. Harris wrote that a gathering of the heads of several corporations, college deans, labor leaders, and writers decided that politicians did not talk about "real issues." Harris continued to suggest that the possibility of a dictatorship in America "lies in the public's willingness to let others do their thinking for them." He concluded by concocting a remedy that reflected his passion for Aspen. "The only real safeguard against this is not the national convention but the neighborhood forum; not the demagogue on the radio but the democrat in the town hall," he argued. Three weeks later Harris wrote another article from Aspen titled "How Small Town and City Differ." He recounted how the town of Aspen dealt with a mud slide that washed out the flume near Had Deane's ranch which poured water through the town's hydro-electric power generators. "The impersonal machinery of the big city," Harris wrote, where people "expect their community to be run by pushing the proper button, like turning on the light in the living room," did not exist in Aspen. There, he said, "the impersonal machinery of the big city is replaced by a neighbor or a friend—and usually augmented by volunteers" who were willing to wield shovels to clear the flume. "There is a very real sense of community participation in the small town, a feeling of personal

responsibility,” Harris wrote. In just two columns, Harris described Aspen as a small town with community spirit tucked away in the mountains of a larger nation full of mindless drones willing to let big city politicians redefine democracy for them.<sup>87</sup> His assumption that living in Aspen might help redeem drone-like behavior certainly won favor with Paepcke. In his files on Aspen, Paepcke kept a piece of paper with clippings of Harris’s two columns glued side by side. Harris implied that all small towns were like Aspen. He did not comment on the number of elites in the town or mention that Aspen was, in reality, a type of experiment directed by the big-city money and know-how of Paepcke and his associates.

By the late 1950s a significant number of people increasingly and explicitly described Aspen in ways that made it clear that the high status of many residents and the small town’s “simplicity” went hand in hand. Shortly before *Sports Illustrated* featured the town in an article titled “Sophistication and Snow” in early 1958, Merrill Ford moved to town because of a local culture that she said encouraged “good taste.” If ever there was a code word for “elite life,” it is “good taste.” When asked years later what brought her to town in 1957, she noted that she had been to Aspen years earlier to attend a design conference and adored the town because it “was dusty, because the roads weren’t paved. There was not a red light. You sort of walked everywhere and you knew everybody... There were very few places to eat.” The presence of a design conference in Aspen offers a window into the town’s ethos. The gathering of designers in Aspen suggested that there existed there the progressive idea that the world might be made better; yet Ford’s insistence that Aspen’s simplicity

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<sup>87</sup> Sydney J. Harris, “Real Issues Are Seldom Talked About,” *The Chicago Daily News*, July 30, 1952, n.p., and “How Small Town and City Differ,” August 19, 1952, n.p., in Box 97, F14, WPP.

defined good taste suggested that a big city, where there were plenty of red lights, restaurants, and people, exemplified poor taste. Ford told one story that offered both a harrowing account of flight and an illuminating look at the clubby nature of Aspen's sense of community in the 1950s. Before the runway at Aspen's airport had lights, it was illegal to land after dark. Still, people did it regularly. The protocol for getting a lit runway involved "buzzing" the town and rousing Aspenites to drive out to the airport, park their automobiles (often Jeeps) around the landing strip, and light the way for the pilot. "So we come up and we buzz and we buzz, nothing happens," Ford recalled. "We forget that it's Saturday night and everybody is in the Red Onion...what will we do?" Ford and her friend, the pilot of the small plane, remembered that there was a phone booth next to the highway by the airport. They used the light in the glass booth as a tiny beacon, landed on the highway, parked the plane on the side of the road, and walked into town to join the loud party at the bar. "You could do things easily here," Ford said, in reference to the highway airplane landing. "There was no bureaucracy; that was the fun of it." For Ford, who linked Aspen's simplicity and rural nature with its "good taste" and clubby exclusivity, part of Aspen's charm lay in the town's lack of rules. As Clifford put it, the town offered "a final outpost of freedom."<sup>88</sup>

In 1956, Walter Paepcke's right hand man at CCA wrote to the leader of the Chicago Barbers' Union regarding "attaining a barber for the Hotel Jerome." "As I mentioned to you on the phone," Lloyd Gould wrote, "since one of the resident barbers has practically given up his barber practice in favor of real estate activities,

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<sup>88</sup> Merrill Ford interview, July 13, 1995, by Judith Gertler, AHS.

there is a good chance that a new barber might find a very satisfactory permanent location at Aspen...It is an ideal community in which to live.”<sup>89</sup> Two decades after his arrival in Aspen, Jim Moore put the scissors down for good and moved his offices into Moore’s Court, his hotel on Main Street. For years, he had sold real estate from the barbershop, but by the mid-1950s, selling property in Aspen became a full time job for Jim Moore. Increasingly, people wanted a piece of paradise that would allow them the opportunity to live it up in a small town, and Moore was more than willing to help them achieve that.

The town Jim Moore called home in 1956 differed significantly from the town he had driven into twenty years earlier. America was different, too. In the twenty years after 1956, Aspen and America would change again and become something quite different from what Walter Paepcke had imagined for Aspen originally at the end of World War Two when he envisioned skiing as simply one part of his dream town. In Aspen, the changes derived from growth associated with three new ski areas, particularly the development of Snowmass in the late 1960s. Changes also stemmed from important political shifts in the town. Demographic trends in America shaped growth and political changes in Aspen as baby boomers came of age, swelled the town’s population, and took the reins of local politics.

During Jim Moore’s first decades in town, people described Aspen as a small town haven with a “sense of community” that derived from the scale of the place and from an ethos that made it different from much of America. Aspen, as Janet Ela noted in 1959, had not been Middletown, U.S.A. during her early visits in the 1940s. People there, Ela said wrongly, were not concerned with making money. Although

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<sup>89</sup> Lloyd Gould to Frank De Rango, June 8, 1956, Box 91, F4, WPP.

she seemed to say that things had started to change by the time she wrote her account, titled "Before and After in Aspen," Ela did not point any fingers at specific individuals. Her problem with Aspen had less to do with people making money than with people coming there (like Paepcke, whom Ela had taken to task for walking around town looking sad in his city clothing) who did not even ski or enjoy the outdoors. In the 1950s, elites who saw Aspen as a refuge from a middle-class "tasteless" America were more likely to attack others from their social class than they were to attack Aspenites like Jim Moore, the barber selling more real estate than haircuts, or Mike Magnifico, the Italian immigrant who was, in fact, trying to make money in his ski shop and later in a liquor store. By the early 1960s, however, Aspenites began attempting publicly to rein in examples of "poor taste." By the time young people took over Aspen's town hall in the early 1970s, attacking middle class American values on display in Aspen became less subtle and more direct. As I noted earlier, the masks in Aspen came off.

At the same time, throughout the remainder of the 1950s and into the 1960s, Aspen's role as a place set apart from the weary urbanized world continued to become clearer in both the literature of the town's institutions and in the popular press. For example, the Aspen Institute's Health Center advertised in the early 1960s that Americans needed Aspen and the facilities of the center as never before. "We live in a time of tension, insecurity, and dynamic change," a brochure announced. Aspen's abundance of restorative sunshine, coupled with the idea that *men* "have always looked to the hills for spiritual uplift," made Aspen the perfect place to pursue happiness. The peculiar brochure, full of photographs of partially clad or completely

naked men receiving massages, hydrotherapy, sauna baths, or experiencing the curious “ ‘Iron Virgin’ shower,” seemed to indicate that partial or complete nudity in the company of other men would relieve stress and heal “the chronically harassed” as long as it took place in free and easy Aspen.<sup>90</sup> A *Saturday Evening Post* article in 1962 listed some of the overworked men who visited and became regulars in Aspen at the time. They included Attorney General Robert Kennedy and his family (J.F.K. never visited), Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, Federal Aviation Administrator Najeeb E. Halaby, Supreme Court justices Hugo Black and William J. Brennan, Jr., Adlai Stevenson, and innumerable other “Soul-weary organization men.” At the same time that Aspen acted as a “hideaway” to powerful American men, it also continued to serve as a refuge for the same types of young men and women who had come there since 1945. The *Post* found that Charla Winn, a 23-year-old blonde who had dropped out of Cal-Berkeley to work as a barmaid in Aspen, liked the town “itself” as much as she liked the skiing. Aspen, the article quoted Winn, was a place where she could “walk home from work at two in the morning with perfect safety.”<sup>91</sup>

The idea of Aspen as a safe place in America gained increased resonance locally and nationally as the Cold War heightened. People spoke again and again about having front doors without keys, but they also talked about a sense of safety from the world’s dangerous events. Clifford wrote of how she and her friends avoided thinking about the implications of the Sputnik launch in 1957 by sitting around a woodstove, as if Aspen’s timelessness—represented in that old fashioned heating

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<sup>90</sup> Aspen Health Center brochure, 1960s, in Recreation: Miscellaneous file, AHS.

<sup>91</sup> Robert L. Whearley, “Aspen: Ski Heaven,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, March 3, 1962, pp. 16-22.

device—shielded her from the changing outside world. Even when they made references to a frightening or tense outside world, locals emphasized their lack of ambition as their chief draw to Aspen. In a poem titled “Parties,” one ski bum wrote years later that, more than his fear of atomic annihilation, he came to Aspen in the early 1960s to escape his parents’ social world: “No ambitious aims or social fuss/ forced the need to lead resulting from/ parents warning us off failure, plus,/ disconnected, we forgot the bomb.” One Vietnam draft-resistor said although most people came to Aspen to have fun, the town still came to symbolize avoidance of the war. For some, the town’s image as safe haven emboldened them to defy the larger national establishment, many of whom vacationed in Aspen! In January, 1967, for example, Aspenite Nathaniel James published a letter in *The Aspen Times* stating that he was “willingly and openly disobeying” the draft. By March, he turned himself in to the FBI after a federal warrant was issued for his arrest.<sup>92</sup>

Young people in the late 1960s flocked to Aspen, but they were not always welcomed by an older generation of locals. Although the youngsters, often referred to as hippies, represented a continuation in Aspen’s ski era history of people coming to escape a Cold War world they found fearful, hippies faced a resistance that the new arrivals in the 1940s and 1950s did not face. When the the Vietnam generation of young people arrived, some members of the World War Two generation wanted to close the doors on them. Bert Bidwell, the Tenth Mountain veteran who had once walked over Independence Pass in order to enjoy Aspen during World War Two,

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<sup>92</sup> Clifford, *To Aspen and Back*, p. 70; Stuart Kinkade, “Parties,” in *Aspen Bummin’: Aspen Ski Bum Stories From the Sixties In Verse* (Self-published, 2000), p. 24; Kirk Johnson, “In the Class of ’70, Wounded Winners,” *The New York Times*, March 7, 1996, p. A20; Cover photo and caption, *The Aspen Times*, April 6, 1967, p. 1A.

bragged about soaking with a garden hose the “Berkeley hippies” who sat on a wall near his sporting goods store. Bidwell embodied a middle-class American perspective on the youth, but his attitude was not shared by some of the town’s elites. After his fellow Tenth Mountain veteran Bil Dunaway defended the hippies in the newspaper, Bidwell said that Dunaway was “a liberal and he just couldn’t understand why I would do something like that to these people.”<sup>93</sup> Bidwell’s action was just one of several by a group of businessmen in Aspen that led to what became known as the Hippie Trial of 1968. In the trial, Aspen attorney Joe Edwards, who had moved to town from Houston the previous year, sued the city of Aspen and its police department, claiming that several young men’s constitutional rights were violated when they were thrown into jail on vagrancy and hitchhiking charges. Edwards won his case and became a hero to a cross-section of folks in Aspen, including many of the old ski era “pioneers” who shared with the hippies a distrust of and a disgust for Middle America. Edwards then ran for mayor. What is most remarkable about Edwards’s campaign is that he spoke about Aspen with the passion and experience one would expect of a lifelong native, even though he had been in town less than three years. He talked of a need “to rekindle the neighborliness, to recapture the small town atmosphere, to revive the good spirit that Aspen used to have.” Edwards called for a return to the sense of community that Aspenites had talked about for more than twenty-five years. He was distressed, he said, by the notion that “rather than character...money is suddenly becoming the measure of success.” If elected mayor, Edwards said that he would fight to keep “Aspen as a town, not a commodity” and to retain “the small town atmosphere that you love and that brought me here.” Edwards,

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<sup>93</sup> Bidwell interview.

who lost the election by six votes, failed to recognize that tensions had always existed in the “atmosphere” of small towns, including Aspen. He also failed to realize that money had long been a measure of success for some locals there and that Aspen had been a commodity from the start.<sup>94</sup> After all, the changes that drew most residents to Aspen after World War Two were made possible by Paepcke’s development of the Aspen Skiing Corporation and the Aspen Company. His campaign reminds us that by the late 1960s, the elites in Aspen tossed aside their masks and spoke openly about the associations between “poor taste,” money-making, and the supposed loss of Aspen’s small town charm.

## **Chapter Two/Working**

Some of the greatest examples of class denial and class masking in the United States during the first postwar decades took place when newcomer elites and privileged ski bums went to work in Aspen. By working menial jobs, such as waitressing, digging fenceposts, operating ski lifts, or pumping gas, newcomer locals reinvented themselves and the image of the town. In creating a fictionalized “working class” identity, they not only attempted to legitimate living in play-town Aspen, but they encouraged the abandonment of “ambition” as others had defined it for them in the places they called home before heading to the town. Ski bums spoke explicitly about throwing away suits and ties and becoming carpenters or bartenders, or assuming countless new roles and jobs in the West. This chapter looks at class

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<sup>94</sup> Scott Condon, “Looking back at the birth of growth control,” *The Aspen Times*, October 5-6, 1996, p. 6A; James P. Sterba, “Aspen Becomes Arena in Struggle to Limit Its Growth,” *The New York Times*, July 4, 1974, p. 39; Joe Edwards campaign letter, October 31, 1969, in Bio: Edwards, Joe file, AHS.

masking in the workplace in Aspen, but it also explores the frictions between older elites like the Paepckes, who masked very little when it came to social class, and younger ski bums pretending to be the working class. In addition, this chapter examines the differences in attitudes about work between oldtimer Aspenites and newcomers. Many natives gladly entered the tourist-driven service economy that skiing created and they strove for upward mobility. Meanwhile, newcomers often subverted the whole idea of service work done well, and instead sought jobs that allowed them to reinvent themselves as a new breed of westerner for whom work became secondary to play.

When the Aspen Country Store held its grand opening on Thanksgiving Day, 1947, three hundred people signed the guestbook and enjoyed cheese, crackers, tea and cider. They mingled with one another amidst the old-fashioned jars filled with penny candy, the tables and the glass cases packed with dry goods, and the walls covered with assorted antiques, including long wooden skis from an earlier era. Many of the shop's visitors that first day undoubtedly saw the town's newest business as the proprietors intended them to see it: as a place filled with what co-founder Joan Trumbull described as "old atmosphere." Despite the store's newness, the eclectic merchandise and the decorative props (including a Franklin pot-bellied stove and a cracker barrel) helped carry shoppers back into both real and imagined pasts. Shopping in the Aspen Country Store allowed customers to enter what the store's name indicated existed there: the *country*. The store's merchandise also helped Aspenites to reinvent themselves. According to one writer, Trumbull and partner

Maude Banks “scoured Colorado’s cellars and attics” in order to create their store’s look and to gather some of their merchandise. By digging into the region’s dusty past, which was literally on display in the Country Store, shoppers in Aspen could now touch and even purchase what they interpreted as part of an older West. They could buy their western props just blocks from the world’s newest and most dazzling ski lift, with its bright coat of orange paint. One magazine described it as “an orange as bright as the buoyant hopes of Aspen’s new settlers” standing against the green and brown earthy hues of the mountain or against winter’s snow.<sup>95</sup> Customers navigated what a magazine article described as the store’s “authentic atmosphere” of “pleasant confusion.” By the time they reached the brassy antique cash register, shoppers may have felt that the Aspen Country Store sold a heavy dose of nostalgia along with its ski caps and its “western clothes” such as Levis, gingham shirts, “Indian mittens,” and Stetson hats.<sup>96</sup> For many of the customers, finding this variety of products mixed together in one place made perfect sense. This was adventurous Aspen, where skiing and a near obsession with the mythic western past came together as nowhere else in 1947.

For Trumbull and Banks, the Aspen Country Store not only filled a niche in Aspen’s small retail trade market, but it also provided them with meaningful work as operators of their own business. In helping people to look “western,” or to look the part of an Aspen “ski bum,” Trumbull and Banks used their customers’ desires for self-reinvention to gain real economic opportunity for themselves. The two seemed

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<sup>95</sup> Wylie, p. 24.

<sup>96</sup> See Phil and Joan (Trumbull) Wright interview, November 5, 1986, by Ruth Whyte, AHS; and n.a., “Young Careers: Country Store Keeping,” *Vassar Alumnae Magazine*, October, 1949, in Box 97, F10, WPP.

to understand that by helping the privileged newcomers and tourists to mask class through the purchase of a pair of Levis or a particular type of ski cap, they could make out well financially. After spending their first Aspen season in 1946-47 as waitresses at the Sundeck, the young women were ready to leave the privations of wage labor for the autonomy of the self-employed. Although Trumbull remembered her job at the mountaintop restaurant as part of a time when she “had a ball,” she needed a better job in order to stay on in Aspen. Like hundreds of workers during the following decades, Trumbull quickly grew bored dishing up soup and carrying trays of sandwiches. Other than wanting new work to relieve boredom, Trumbull also wanted to make more money. Fortunately she had a good idea, solid retail experience, and a trustworthy, equally adventurous business partner in Maude Banks.

The two women had met in the safe confines of Vassar. In 1944, they departed school together and joined the Women’s Army Corps (WAC). That spring they prepared for a journey that eventually landed them in India. While working there in administrative support positions, they flew occasionally on transport planes over the Himalaya into China. Banks recalled that her family had been disappointed. “This decision,” she wrote years later, “to leave a conventional lifestyle for unknown adventures has never been regretted.” Banks noted that she and Trumbull worried while in India that the end of the war would mean a “mundane existence” once they returned home. This “mundane” and “conventional lifestyle” that Banks and Trumbull avoided was described later by their contemporary Betty Friedan (a graduate of Smith) in her 1963 bestseller *The Feminine Mystique*. According to

Friedan, women felt a malaise because their own identity was lost in that of their husbands and children.<sup>97</sup>

Trumbull and Banks serve as examples of women who avoided life in the suburbs by heading west. Their work in Aspen indicates that privileged women (cohorts of Friedan) there experienced unusual freedoms. In the summer of 1946, the duo rumbled together in a cloud of dust over Independence Pass and down into the increasing bustle of postwar Aspen. They hauled a “small houstrailer” behind them as they explored Western America. Aspen provided both women with opportunities to continue the adventurous lives they began when they left the safety of college and joined the WACs. Banks described their postwar journey as having several components: “heading west never to return” to their homes in the east, “ski bumming” and “ski racing” (both women were expert skiers), opening “The Aspen Country Store,” and “acquiring husbands.” Banks married Tenth Mountain veteran Ben Duke in 1949 and eventually moved with him to Denver. She sold her share of the store to Trumbull and her husband, Philip Wright: a native of Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, a veteran pilot in the Army Air Corps, and a former prisoner of war. The Wrights, to whom we will return in Chapter Five, managed the store until 1972 when they opened a fishing lodge in Montana.<sup>98</sup>

The vocational lives of Joan Trumbull Wright and Maude Banks Duke illustrate some important points about the enigmatic nature of labor in Aspen after 1945. First, like most of the newcomers, when Banks and Trumbull came to town,

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<sup>97</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1963).

<sup>98</sup> Wright interview. The store, which relocated later to a new space, still exists in downtown Aspen as Pitkin County Dry Goods. For Banks’s comments, see her handwritten recollection in BUSINESS: Aspen Country Store file, AHS. See also the obituary of Philip N. Wright, Jr., at [www.psiu.org/fr/memoriarchive2.html](http://www.psiu.org/fr/memoriarchive2.html), retrieved February 10, 2005.

they took jobs that they might only have taken in Aspen. Vassar graduates with worldly wartime experiences probably would not have returned home to Trumbull's Concord, Massachusetts, or to Banks's affluent New York City suburb of Far Hills, New Jersey, and considered it acceptable to wait tables at even the most exclusive lunch spot. In Aspen, however, Trumbull and Banks joined two other Vassar friends who worked at the Sundeck. The four alumnae rode the ski lift up to work and skied down to town at the end of the day. Like others in Aspen, the women worked jobs that their parents saw as beneath their educations and social status. What made these jobs acceptable for the newcomers were some of the same qualities that made life as WACs acceptable for Trumbull and Banks: they were, ostensibly, temporary employments that came with an element of adventure and even glamour attached to them. But another element of work in Aspen requires examination. For most of the newcomers, Aspen was far from home in the rugged interior West, and it was first and foremost a place for escape, relaxation, and fun. Living and working there helped elite and privileged men and women to redefine themselves and mold new identities. When Maud Banks remembered her years in Aspen, it was important for her to note that she had become a resident of the West there, and had never returned to New Jersey. For newcomers like Banks and Trumbull, jobs were initially less important than the fact that they were in Aspen in the first place. They were getting paid to play in, experience, and become part of the West. In this way, eastern college-educated waitresses at the Sundeck were able to draw on specific kinds of imagery that helped them to mask social class. The newcomers constructed masks with a pastiche of images, including those of the fun-loving ski bum and of the

“working-class” western pioneer. These masks helped newcomer Aspenites to affirm to their families and peers back home that their Aspen work was worthy, because work was only a means to an end in a play town where people lived adventurous lives.

Trumbull’s and Banks’s work trajectories illustrate a second important point. Newcomers like Trumbull who decided to stay long-term in Aspen were rarely able to make it financially without the help of family money. Working a job for hourly wages and tips rarely if ever provided someone in Aspen the opportunity to own a home there.<sup>99</sup> Very few people, especially those from privileged backgrounds such as Trumbull and Banks, continued to work for others at entry-level jobs for long periods after they came to town. New Aspenites like Trumbull often found that family money was an important source of help in making the transition from wage labor jobs to work that allowed them to survive financially. Even after this transition, however, many Aspenites continued to refer to themselves as ski bums and defined themselves as locals largely based upon the types of jobs at which they had first labored. The ski bum jobs helped people to navigate the rites of passage that allowed them to become “locals” in the new Aspen. For example, Trumbull’s long success as owner of the Aspen Country Store derived in part from having grown up around a similar business. Her father, Franklin H. Trumbull, a Harvard graduate, owned the well-known Country Store in historic Concord. He helped his daughter and Maude Banks to get started by offering copious amounts of advice about the nature of retailing in a town with a tourist-driven economy. He also provided some of their seed money, and he

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<sup>99</sup> While working at the Sundeck, Trumbull and Banks were provided housing in the maid’s quarters at the Hotel Jerome. As was often the case in Aspen, their desire for better housing arrangements most certainly played a part in their drive to become business owners.

deftly negotiated the Aspen Country Store's initial rental agreement with its landlord, Walter Paepcke.<sup>100</sup> Understanding the country store business, and having her father to draw on for help, Joan Trumbull left waitressing to become a store owner in less than one year. The transition was easier for her than it may have been for someone without her particular resources. Yet when she recalled her first season in Aspen decades later, Trumbull emphasized that she was one of the "original ski bums" and one of "the original hippies." Such culturally-loaded terms made it clear in her mind that her path to success in Aspen followed a period of free-spirited, youthful pioneering. By the 1980s in Aspen, "original ski bum" and "original hippies" served the town's earliest ski era arrivals as verbal masks with knowing winks regarding social class. The original ski bums like Trumbull shared with the later hippies a distrust and dislike of the middle class.<sup>101</sup>

Finally, the work of Trumbull, Banks, and other newcomers helps to bring into focus the labor experiences of the numerous oldtimer Aspenites who remained in town well after 1945. The natives' work and their philosophies about it sometimes differed from those of the newcomers. Throughout the period of study and later, for example, members of a few old Aspen families called for a return to a mixed economy that included mining. Other Aspenites fell in the middle. Some locals like Jim Moore, for example, were neither newcomer ski bums nor oldtimers, but business-minded individuals with middle class aspirations who embraced skiing as an economic opportunity. Like the newcomer Moore, most Aspen oldtimers were quick to embrace and adapt to the new, more robust economy. They benefited from the

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<sup>100</sup> See F.H. Trumbull and Paepcke correspondence, July, 1947, Box 90, F4, WPP.

<sup>101</sup> Wright interview.

growth in jobs and the better quality of life that many experienced in the decades following World War Two as the town moved away from extractive industry and headed increasingly toward recreational tourism as its economic base. As I discussed in the first chapter, old Aspenites had dealt with tourists and visiting skiers for nearly a decade by the time of the creation of the Aspen Company and the Aspen Skiing Corporation in 1945. Many of the oldtimers became leaders in the town's ski and tourism industries. In a twist that illustrates how newcomers and their children complicated ideas about class and about who was truly western and local, one of Aspen's most ardent ski-era supporters of a return to mining was the son of newcomers. I refer here to the tragic story of Stefan Albouy. In 1951, Albouy's parents moved to Aspen from Atlanta, Georgia. They opened a restaurant called Gourmet West, and later operated other fine dining establishments in town. From the time Albouy was a child, he was fascinated with Aspen's mining heritage, often digging small tunnels in his backyard and exploding mounds of dirt and rocks with firecrackers. By the 1970s, he gave tours of local mines, and he and several other men—including at least one self-described ski bum—actually dug for ore in the Smuggler claim. After years of disputes with the city, county, federal authorities, and environmental groups over the development rights to several of his properties, Albouy committed suicide in a wooden shack next to the Smuggler in 1994. Upon his death, Aspen's mayor said, "He was a great guy. A bit of a rascal, but a colorful old-time resident."<sup>102</sup> Albouy was not an elite, but with parents who moved to town

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<sup>102</sup> See Margaret Albouy's obituary, *The Aspen Times*, June 20, 1991, p. 16-A; Pauli Hayes, "Smuggler Mine: A Peek at the Past and Present," *The Aspen Flyer*, February 10-16, 1984, n.p., in BIO: Albouy, Stefan; Jay Parker interview, May, 1995, by Jon Coleman, AHS; Tom Braden, "A Man Deep Into The

from Atlanta to become restaurateurs in the ski era, he was not exactly a typical working-class Aspen miner, either. His parents were similar to Jim Moore, in that they came to Aspen looking for a good business opportunity. Partly because he was born in Aspen, but most importantly because of his work, Albouy became “a rascal” and “a colorful old time resident.”

Soon after the opening of Lift One, the types of jobs, the predominant attitudes regarding work, and the ways of life on display in Aspen became well known among skiers around the world. In the development of the definition of a “ski bum,” writers explained explicitly that the term described elites playing a game. As early as 1947, newcomer Aspenite Delphine Carpenter wrote in a *Ski* magazine article titled “I want to be a ski bum” that the term was one “of endearment and often used with envy.” The expression described “anyone who seems to have been trained for other work, someone who has money enough to do as he pleases or some girl who should stay at home and marry that bright young banker—when all of these turn up week after week, year after year, spending most of their time in something connected to skiing—they are Ski Bums all.” In an article the next year with the provocative title “Ski Bums Wait Table, Ogle Heiresses,” *SKI* claimed that there were several types of ski bums but that the common denominator among all of them was their desire to have fun. The expression on the face of a skier making turns on the side of a mountain, the magazine said, was one “to be envied by the Yogi contemplating eternity. And all of this is in the name of fun, the fun of getting up and sliding

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Mining Life,” *Aspen Daily News*, June 7, 1994, p. 1, and Janet Marshall, “Albouy Dead,” *Aspen Daily News*, June 7, 1994, p. 1.

down.” *The New York Times* described Aspen’s ski bums in 1951 as tanned and carefree youth who had given up college and the rat race for a life of amusement. “These youngsters,” Ira Henry Freeman wrote, “wash dishes in the boarding houses, grease cars in the garages, wait on table, tend bar, iron clothes, make beds, drive taxis, operate switchboards. Working only enough to maintain themselves, they insist upon time off to ski.” Six years after her original article on ski bums, Carpenter wrote yet another analysis of the ski bum for *Ski* magazine in which she succinctly described the bum’s work ethic. The job, she wrote in 1953, “must not interfere in any way with his ski time, but if he can get a job for three times what his work is worth and do half of that expected of him he will take it, show up for a few days, make a few bucks and then concentrate on skiing.”<sup>103</sup>

Carpenter’s matter-of-fact view of wealthy bums who worked little and played hard stood in stark contrast to the attitudes of middle-class strivers elsewhere in America. By the middle of the decade, salaried-workers in America outnumbered wage-workers for the first time in the history of the nation. Many of these white-collar workers felt that successful businesses should follow “common standards of behavior” to assure their survival.<sup>104</sup> This philosophy would have found many adherents among Paepcke’s workers at the Container Corporation of America. In 1957, an employee complained to Paepcke’s chief accountant in Chicago about “the personnel situation” and the lack of any standards of behavior for workers in Aspen.

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<sup>103</sup> Delphine Carpenter, “I want to be a ski bum,” *Ski* magazine, March, 1947, p. 13, 33; Art Moffat, “Ski Bums Wait Table, Ogle Heiresses,” *Ski* magazine, November 15, 1948, pp. 6-7; Ira Henry Freeman, “Aspen Expects Two More Months of Spring Skiing,” *The New York Times*, March 25, 1951, p. 91; Delphine Carpenter, “The Ski Bum... Who Was He?,” *Ski* magazine, March 1953, p. 12.

<sup>104</sup> George Brownwell Tindall and David E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, Vol. Two (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), pp. 1337-38.

He wrote that the town had a “permanent problem” due to bad employees such as his assistant, Ivan Fletcher. Fletcher fit Delphine Carpenter’s description of the ski bum well by insisting upon skiing a certain number of hours each week. During his first week, the accountant (named Cranny) noted that Fletcher had worked one and one half days. “I was told,” Cranny wrote, that “ he (Fletcher) was skiing the rest of the time.”<sup>105</sup> Former corporate secretary Pat Neal would have understood well Fletcher’s lack of zeal for office work and his enthusiasm for skiing. She wrote that she had “divorced” herself “from office routine, a steady income, a promising future: I have passed under the magic wand of the ski resorts and have been transformed into a ski bum. And I love it.” After quitting her job in Pennsylvania, Neal moved to Aspen, which she described as having the feel of a college town full of boys. Her multiple boyfriends in Aspen encouraged Neal to take a job at the Sundeck. “First of all,” Neal wrote, “they explained it didn’t matter what you worked at as long as the job furnished bodily sustenance, a roof and ample time to ski.” She took the job, noting that “The amount of food that can be consumed in nibbles is almost fantastic.” For Neal, heading west to a new life involved leaving a particular type of job behind. “Once,” she wrote, “I was a gal who sat peaceably at her typewriter, obeying the dictates of a kind but totally unsympathetic boss, who detested skiing.” After taking the job at the Sundeck, Neal said that she became a ski bum straightaway. In light of her job as a secretary, Neal’s transformation into “ski bum” allowed her to mask her own middle class identity as a white collar worker and infiltrate the high-altitude domain of America’s most selective social classes.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Ti. Cranny to Lloyd Gould, March 15, 1957, Box 91, F10, WPP.

<sup>106</sup> Pat Neal, “How to be a Ski Bum,” *Ski*, January, 1958, pp. 45-6.

Walter Paepcke did not ski, but he was not a boss who detested skiing. He encouraged investors by writing of the elite skiers who had already bought stock in his enterprise. He saw the sport as somewhat of a necessary evil in the economic reality of keeping the town of Aspen afloat through the winters, so that it might serve as a welcome retreat for urban sophisticates such as himself in the summer season, which he most enjoyed. Friedl Pfeifer recalled an episode that reflected Paepcke's attitude regarding skiers and the Skiing Corporation. When Pfeifer solicited the company directors for roughly \$100,000 in the summer of 1946 to build the Sundeck, Paepcke said, in support of the idea, "Gentlemen, the hard thing to do is get into a house of ill-repute without being seen. Once inside, you might as well spend the night."<sup>107</sup> In comparing skiing to prostitution, the non-skier Paepcke made it clear that he was supportive but less than thrilled with the financial burdens involved in building his utopia.

Paepcke's statement reflected his growing frustration after the summer of 1946. He spent an enormous amount of personal time and money transforming the mining town into a resort. The degree to which Paepcke concerned himself with the day to day minutiae of managing the Aspen Company and the Aspen Skiing Corporation (usually via telephone, letters, and telegrams to Aspen from his CCA offices in Chicago) was remarkable. Whether making sure that particular brands of Scotch were stocked in the Jerome's bar or that an individual guest received a specific room, Paepcke's fingerprints were all over everything in Aspen from 1945 until his untimely death in 1960, after which his original vision for Aspen faded

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<sup>107</sup> Pfeifer, p. 140.

significantly.<sup>108</sup> Keeping that vision alive was never easy, for it was an expensive dream and the normally astute businessman lost a considerable amount of money trying to keep both companies afloat while supporting his dearest love, the Aspen Institute. As early as May, 1948, Paepcke wrote to his brother-in-law, Paul Nitze, and complained that he felt “forsaken in the wilderness” in trying to get any help from stockholders and directors in managing the finances for either company. In the first year and a half after the Aspen Company’s founding it had accumulated a deficit due to operating losses of \$131,000. Paepcke, in no uncertain terms, blamed much of the problem on the lackadaisical attitudes of both his fellow board members and his employees on the ground in Aspen. Regarding the corporate leadership, Paepcke told Nitze, “when some of the Skiing Corporation directors are in Aspen they are usually so busy skiing that it is not too easy to get as much of their time as I think desirable.” Paepcke also wrote to Nitze that the manager of the Jerome fell short “in matters of hard hitting operating controls and organizational discipline.”<sup>109</sup> It did not help matters that Aspen’s entire reason for existence in winter was to be a playground. Paepcke was painfully aware that for most workers in Aspen who made skiing their top priority, jobs fell far down on the list. By the late 1950s, years after Delphine Carpenter glorified the ski bum work ethic in a national magazine for skiers, Paepcke noted that one worker’s plan to buy a season’s ski pass carried “with it the

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<sup>108</sup> For the discussion of Scotch brands, see Paepcke to Charles O. Bishop, September 14, 1947, Box 92, F2, WPP; for one of many examples of Paepcke’s meddling in guest accommodations, see his letter to Bishop, October 25, 1946, Box 92, F1, WPP. In one particularly illuminating example of Paepcke’s attention to detail, he actually had a background check done on a man who wrote him inquiring about the possibility of opening up a veterinarian practice in Aspen. After providing Paepcke with an excess of information, the investigator wrote that he “drove past Dr. Miller’s place yesterday afternoon, and it appeared that the property, including the grounds was well kept.” See W.A. Dhonau to Lloyd Gould and Paepcke, August 25, 1959, and Paepcke to John W. Miller, D.V.M., Box 102, F3, WPP.

<sup>109</sup> Walter P. Paepcke to Paul H. Nitze, May 8, 1948, Box 177, Folder 8, PHN.

implication that there is the hope or the intention to cut into working time in order to ski.”<sup>110</sup> He encouraged the skier’s boss to discourage the purchase of the pass. In a town where many workers’ chief reason for moving there was to ski, discouragement might only go so far. Although he seemed to understand well the philosophical underpinnings of ski bums and their work ethic (or lack thereof), Paepcke never knew quite how to control them or the barter economy in which they operated at his own company’s expense.

Aspen’s ski bums often bragged of their ability to steal or trade their employers’ merchandise for their own personal benefit. Their actions accounted for untold losses to the town’s businesses and played a role in the under-the-counter economy which became part of life for many ski bums. Creating and maintaining the ability to trade goods and services for personal gain bolstered newcomers’ claims to an insider’s local identity. In other words, bartering reflected the idea that one was a pioneer simply trying to survive on the frontier of fun in Aspen; and as in other frontiers, the pioneers covered one another’s backs. Menial laborers resisted work discipline through subversions of labor that included loafing on the job and bartering. By offering a free tune-up of a pair of skis here, a free beer there, an occasional plate of food to eat or couch space on which to sleep, ski bums helped each other. Newcomers felt no remorse about their wily actions of using or trading stolen goods. Joan Trumbull, for example, filched just a little bit from several restaurants each day in order to feed herself during her first year in town. She told of how she managed a cheap breakfast at the Jerome and a free lunch as an employee at the Sundeck. She gave away lunches at the restaurant on the mountain in order to guarantee dinner for

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<sup>110</sup> Paepcke to Robert W. Craig, December 4, 1957, Box 95, F19, WPP.

herself in town later that night. "So we'd give them free lunch," she said, referring to employees at the Red Onion such as Pete Seibert. Trumbull explained how Seibert and others skied to the Sundeck each day around noon, "and then we'd go into the Red Onion and they'd give us free hamburgers and free beer...all winter long...we just had a ball...We never paid for anything."<sup>111</sup> In the early 1950s, an Aspen Company memo noted that "Unnecessary complimentary accommodations for 'friends'" was one of the chief problems which hampered the Jerome and kept its books in the red. According to the memo's writer, the company faced an array of serious concerns, including drunken employees, workers smoking cigarettes on the job and "expressing crude personalities in front of the guests," and employees who were "Considerate of guests only when tips imminent." According to the memo, the biggest problem was petty theft, including theft by workers in management positions. The "'taking' of Hotel by management," the memo argued, "gives employees the idea it is fair game for them, too."<sup>112</sup>

The locals' sense of entitlement in the "taking" of liberties with company time, money, and property befuddled and upset Paepcke, the board members, and the outside managers whom they brought to town. They spoke of the men and women in their employ at Aspen as they might have discussed unruly children who had run away in the family sedan with a stack of blank checks. One manager, for example, wrote Paepcke in 1954 regarding the work habits of a local ski bum. "I wish I could understand some of these people," Col. Henry Dutton wrote, "but I really don't.

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<sup>111</sup> Wright interview.

<sup>112</sup> N.a, "General Comments" memo, n.d., Box 92, F10, WPP.

Bearing in mind, however, that he is a skier enlightens me to some extent.”<sup>113</sup> The non-skier Dutton, who served as the Aspen Company manager for several years in the 1950s, knew that Paepcke felt similarly about many ski bums; however, even the company officials who skied found the newcomer locals perplexing. Board member and Denver attorney William Hodges, who came to Aspen for skiing most weekends, certainly had a better grasp of ski town culture than most other out-of-town company directors. On one occasion, Hodges showed that the writer Delphine Carpenter may have been correct when she argued that references to ski bums were laced with envy. In 1949, Hodges complained to Paepcke about the expenses that ski racing star and company employee Dick Durrance accrued while traveling around the country promoting Aspen. He noted that Durrance had charged for a radio in his hotel room at one stop, and had ordered in meals while sending out laundry. By the tone of Hodges’s complaints, one might assume that the attorney laundered all of his shirts in hotel sinks and never ordered room service while on the road. “What I really didn’t like,” Hodges wrote Paepcke, “is the fact that his wife went along...and we are stuck with the hotel bill for both of them.” He then noted that Durrance had \$70 worth of local bills in Aspen “which he makes no effort to pay.”<sup>114</sup> Getting employees to pay their bills at the various establishments owned by the company caused rifts with more than one local. In the summer of 1948, the Aspen Company notified Pfeifer and his wife, Hoyt, that their charging privileges at the Jerome would be suspended until they paid a bill totaling more than \$500. Hoyt’s haughty reply made it clear that she was offended that the company dared attempt to collect money from her for the Pfeifer

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<sup>113</sup> Col. Henry R. Dutton to Paepcke, May 17, 1954, Box 92, F12, WPP.

<sup>114</sup> William Hodges to Paepcke, February 9, 1949, Box 94, F18, WPP.

family charges at the Jerome, which she referred to as a "Third class hotel." "It will give me great pleasure in the future," she wrote,

to ignore your bill whenever it is sent to me. It will also give me greater pleasure in the future to inform all the guests, whom I know, that I can no longer entertain them at the hotel since I no longer have any credit there. This will be especially amusing since the only reason you have been able to operate in the winter is because my husband's name is connected with Aspen. Oddly enough most people come here to ski rather than to see the beauties of the hotel jerome [sic] or of Mr. Paepcke.

On display in Hoyt's letter was the searing attack on the non-skier Paepcke and the not so subtle point that skiers in the town worshiped her husband, one of the best skiers in America at the time. But Hoyt also displayed a complete lack of deference toward Paepcke that indicated deep intra-class antagonism. Hoyt's father, a Salt Lake City banker, was never pleased with her marriage to an Austrian ski instructor and it is likely that he refused to help the couple financially. In a registered letter to Friedl Pfeifer, Paepcke demanded payment as well as an apology for Hoyt's comments. Pfeifer replied that neither a payment nor an apology would be forthcoming. He claimed that he was flat broke and that he could not apologize for his wife because her opinions were not his own. Pfeifer was probably telling the truth about being broke, which may explain the vitriol of his wife's letter.<sup>115</sup> Although Paepcke, Hodges, and others may have seen the Pfeifers and other local heroes as unruly children, the absence of the money men from town (where they visited but did not live permanently) limited their authoritative voice. Considering the local fame and considerable local power of ski stars such as Durrance and Pfeifer, it is a wonder that

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<sup>115</sup> See Hoyt Pfeifer, Walter Paepcke, and Friedl Pfeifer correspondence, August, 1948, Box 8, F1, Elizabeth H. Paepcke Papers, Special Collections, University of Chicago (EHP).

bartenders, waitresses, and other Aspen employees of Paepcke's ever asked them to sign charge slips in the first place.

In the minds of many newcomer locals and among many visitors, ski instructors and members of the ski patrol were the royalty of Aspen's work force from the beginning. Their celebrity status was rooted in the nature of their work. They were professional skiers in a town devoted to the sport and to the cult of avoiding an office job. The origins of their fame were also tied to the Aspen Skiing Corporation's press releases, which advertised that some of the instructors and patrolmen were veterans of the heroic Tenth Mountain Division.<sup>116</sup> Ski instructors and ski patrolmen held positions as authoritative teachers, experts, and rescuers. Skiers viewed them as the stars of the slopes at Sun Valley, Alta, and other ski areas prior to the initiation of Aspen's re-development in 1945. After the war, ski troop veterans were identified closely with Aspen and especially with the ski school and the patrol there. The directors of the first Aspen ski school—the triumvirate of Pfeifer, Percy Rideout, and John Litchfield—were all veterans of the Tenth. Other veterans of the division served as instructors, such as Pete Siebert and Andy Ransom, or were ski patrolmen, such as Leonard Woods, William “Shady” Lane, Curt Chase, and Bob Parker. Tourist Janet Ela visited Aspen in early 1947 and described the “ex-Camp Hale mountain troop boys” as “a very specialized type of ski bum, Ivy League expatriates, elegant even in their sloppy clothes, and extremely verbal.” Ransom, she

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<sup>116</sup> Albin Dearing's “Memorandum on Aspen,” a press-release from 1945, began “THE ROCKIES.....a new frontier for winter sports pioneering” and emphasized the ties between the Tenth and the development of the town. A copy of Dearing's piece may be found in Box 99, F5, WPP. By 1966, when the *The Denver Post's Sunday Empire Magazine* ran a feature article titled “The Men of the Magnificent Tenth,” which said of the division, “Trained in Colorado, proven in Italy, the ski troopers came back to the Rockies to build a new industry,” skiers across Colorado and much of the rest of the country knew that the Tenth and its veterans were founding fathers and leading citizens in Aspen, Vail, and other ski towns visited by thousands of tourists each year.

continued, was “the most blatant bum of them all.” Although he struck her as insolent and wild, she was moved by his professionalism once he got on the snow. After watching Ransom’s expertise as an instructor before his students, Ela noted that he “had extraordinary gifts as a teacher.” Janet Ela’s sharp eye seemed to detect exactly what men like Ransom were up to, “elegant even in their sloppy clothes,” as they played a game that revolved around class stereotypes.<sup>117</sup>

Instructors certainly served as some of Aspen’s brightest personalities and were some of the town’s most celebrated residents. Visiting celebrities wanted to rub shoulders with them while in Aspen. Gary Cooper and his wife regularly dined with instructors such as Pfeifer and Fred and Elli Iselin. One newspaper society column noted that Pete Seibert, who traded the Red Onion’s hamburgers for free lunch at the Sundeck and shared a small hotel room with another ski instructor, joined one of Mrs. Cooper’s dinner parties at Aspen’s earliest fine dining restaurant, the Four Seasons Club. Gary Cooper immersed himself even more deeply in the local realm by actually working on the mountain during his vacations. Brothers Frank and John Dolinsek told of how Cooper blended in so well that he often relieved them of their duties as lift attendants and seated unknowing passengers himself. After playing the part of a local and masking his own status by working as a lift operator, at night Cooper sometimes played goalie for the ski instructors in their heated hockey games against the ski patrol.<sup>118</sup>

While some instructors had raced internationally, including in the Olympics, others were simply great characters who mastered not only their profession but also

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<sup>117</sup> Ela, p. 19.

<sup>118</sup> Dolinsek interview. See clippings regarding the Coopers and their associations with ski instructors in the Powers scrapbook, AHS.

the art of self-promotion. Fred Iselin, a native of Switzerland who served as Pfeifer's right-hand man and eventually directed the ski school at Aspen Highlands, was comfortable in many roles. He wrote for *Playboy* magazine, starred in a playful children's film, *Little Skier's Big Day*, and posed for a child-friendly poster illustrated by Garth Williams, in which Iselin was surrounded by skiing bunny rabbits. Iselin and his wife, Elli, were different from the Ivy Leaguer ski instructors Janet Ela described as "elegant even in their sloppy clothes." The Iselins were not reinventing themselves; they were trying to make a living. When not teaching skiing, they managed a travel agency out of the Hotel Jerome and later opened Elli's, a boutique for ski clothing on Main Street.<sup>119</sup>

Pfeifer recounted stories of an Aspen where old drunken miners hitched their horses outside of the bar, and he also remembered that Aspen was "too rugged" for his wife. Hoyt found it inconvenient when she had to drive 40 miles to Glenwood Springs to buy a pair of nylon stockings. Hoyt eventually left Friedl, filed for divorce, and took their children to Salt Lake City. Although Pfeifer lived well, his life was certainly different from the life of many of his fellow skiers who sustained their lifestyles with family money. He recalled asking one friend how he made his money, and the man replied, "My daddy sells toilet seats." Like Pfeifer and Iselin, European ski instructor Klaus Obermeyer "lived from day to day trying to make ends

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<sup>119</sup> See Fred Iselin and A.C. Sectorsky, "Fun and Fashion on Skis," *Playboy*, November, 1958, p. 67. Fred Iselin, prod., *Little Skier's Big Day* (1956). A video copy of this film is in the film library at AHS. The Garth Williams poster of Iselin may be viewed on the web at [www.vintageskiworld.com](http://www.vintageskiworld.com). Williams, the famous illustrator of such classic children's books as E.B. Whyte's *Stuart Little* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1945) and Whyte's *Charlotte's Web* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1952) and lived in Aspen during the 1950s and is buried there. He may have borrowed the idea of surrounding Iselin with bunnies from an earlier poster (also viewable at [vintageskiworld.com](http://vintageskiworld.com)) from the 1930s of Hannes Schneider surrounded by skiing rabbits at St. Anton, Austria. "Elli of Aspen: an Aspen legend," in Hayes, *The Story of Aspen*, pp. 112-13.

meet so that I had enough to eat.” Other ski instructors—the privileged Americans—were in Aspen to have fun, and worried less about simply getting by. While working, their first priority was to play on skis. For example, Jim Roush, an Amherst College graduate who instructed in the late 1950s, refused to teach every day of the week so that he might go out and ski for fun without the hindrance of students.<sup>120</sup>

In 1958, the Aspen ski bum was idealized in *Ski Town!*, a work of adolescent fiction by Don Stanford. The novel takes place in the imaginary town of Bullet, Colorado. The fictional characters are either thinly-veiled Aspenites or outsiders who intersect with them. The plot revolves around several tensions. One storyline follows the conflict between a young tourist, Richard, and his father, who has suggested skiing lessons for his reluctant son. From Washington, D.C., Richard first sees Bullet as a boring town in the middle of nowhere, and he can find absolutely no value in skiing. He is eventually won over by the sport and the town’s charming ski bums. Another part of the book’s plot underscores the friction between ski bums and rich people in town who view them as ne’er-do-wells, a sentiment expressed on occasion in the non-fictional Aspen by some of Paepcke’s business associates. Finally, yet another piece of the narrative follows the trials and tribulations of a local high-school senior who does not want to attend college, but wants to create a future for himself in Bullet.

Bullet, the reader learns, is a premier ski center that was resurrected from its ghost town oblivion by a Philadelphia “industrialist,” a Paepcke-like character named Kiefer. Kiefer’s partner, owner of the Colorado Palace hotel, is a “fat,” non-skiing,

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<sup>120</sup> Pfeifer, pp. 131-32; 170; Klaus Obermeyer interview, September 4, 1986, by Ruth Whyte, AHS; Jim Roush interview, July 11, 1994, by Annie Gilbert, AHS.

cigar-chomping man named Garfield who wants to rid the town of ski bums. “No more ski bums and amateur help,” Garfield says at one point, regarding his employees, “and losing restaurant trade so the kids can go out and play all day.”<sup>121</sup>

The Pfeifer character, a European director of the ski school known in the book as The Maestro, is presented as enigmatic, yet respected. The novel’s unlikely hero is Mason Pryor, a working-class native Texan with a drawl so thickly exaggerated in the text that his dialogue is at times almost agonizing to read.<sup>122</sup> Pryor is new to town, straight from the United States Army, where as a sergeant, he taught soldiers how to build igloos and survive in the freezing temperatures of Alaska. Unlike most of the other ski bums in town, whom the reader learns are “*between things*” such as school and marriage, “Sarge” Pryor moves to town with the dream of becoming a lifelong resident as a ski instructor and, eventually, a lodge owner. Sarge is upwardly mobile because he must be in order to survive. Along the way in the book, he becomes the common thread that ties all of the stories together. He introduces Richard to the joys of both skiing and small-town living. By the end of the book, Richard, who had come to town after being kicked out of several prep schools, has decided after watching Sarge and coming to respect everything about him that his own “days of misbehavior were over once and for all.” In addition, after studying Bullet’s fun-loving ski bums,

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<sup>121</sup> Don Stanford, *Ski Town!* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1958), p. 31.

<sup>122</sup> A typical example of Pryor’s southern accent: “‘ Mah name’s Prah, Miss Hutchins. Ah want to ask yo’ pahdon, ma’am. Ah reckon Ah lost mah haid this mawnin’...’” (p.151). Another character in the book, a woman known as Jelly Bean, hails also from the South. Her drawled-out description of her fellow ski bums introduces to the story the idea of the well-funded ski bum: “‘...some of the kids heah don’t actually *have* to work. They could some of ‘em afford to ski all winter—they’ve got plenty of money. Some of ‘em. But they work anyway, because it’s not so much fun when you’re not working for it, you know? You get tired of just keepin’ yourse’f amused, know whut Ah mean’” (p. 11). The author, a native of Chattanooga, Tennessee, used Aspen as the setting for an earlier book, *The Red Car* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1954), which told the story of a boy, also a character in *Ski Town!*, who helps bring sports car auto-racing to Bullet.

“Richard was eagerly planning on a ski bumming season between school and college, year after next.” Sarge also punches out Garfield’s spoiled son, a Stanford University student named Lew who skis recklessly and talks constantly of ski bums as scum. Sarge then steals Lew’s girlfriend, Marge, who happens to be the daughter of a cash-strapped lodge owner. Additionally, Pryor informs his new girlfriend’s brother, Digby, who does not want to go to college, about the option of joining the Army and getting assigned to the Cold Weather Mountain Training School in Alaska. When Digby tells his mother of his plans, not only does he come across as more masculine than Lew and some of the other college snobs in the book, but he also presents the option of joining the army as a sensible plan for training him to come back to Bullet to pursue a life akin to Sarge Pryor’s. “I’m a practical type,” Digby tells his mother, “and all I want to know is something I can *use*.”

And the campuses are cluttered up and crowded enough as it is today. People like me shouldn’t be *allowed* to go to college...For some people who are going after some kinds of careers, yes. For me, uh-uh! I’m going to teach skiing and run a ski lodge and lead a nice, simple, uncomplicated life in this nice, simple, uncomplicated town. Once I’ve got myself an education and a little experience and a look at some romantic faraway places like Alaska, that is. And I’ll be earning my living with my muscles, Mother, including the muscles between my ears. I’m just not the professor *type*, Mother! (188).

The most vivid points made by the characters in *Ski Town!* concern the nature of the Bullet residents’ work. The author dedicated the novel to “Bartie Bartlett, my favorite ski bum,” and from the first few pages, the book makes clear that ski bums are wonderful yet often misunderstood people. The antagonists in the book are the Garfields, who represent the corporatization of Bullet and dislike ski bums even though they rely on them. Not all elite college students are seen as bad in the book—

only the ones like Lew Garfield who do not understand that Bullet and ski bum life are about simplicity and hard work. In one particularly illuminating scene, the author Stanford reflects the awe held for the ski bums he met while conducting “research” for the novel in Aspen. Several local high-school kids discuss how lucky they are to have grown up in the town. “When you think of how hard the ski bums work,” one student says to a group of friends in a diner below street level, “to get what we have just had handed to us—! Look at Mary Kay:

that girl’s a Phi Beta Kappa from Radcliffe, and she’s got a peach of a foreign-service job coming up next June, and she slings hash in this cellar from four o’clock until midnight just to get in a winter’s skiing—*and* then gives up half her skiing time to the Ski Patrol! (57).

Later, Digby extols the great qualities of ski bums to Marge, partly to defend men like Sarge against the rants of her boyfriend, the obnoxious Lew Garfield. “Where would we be without ‘em?” Digby asks.

And where would you meet a nicer, happier, decenter, more congenial group of hard-working examples of all the virtues of mankind! Gee! Of all the people in the world it would be tough to find something to dislike about, I’d think ski bums would be about the toughest (194).

In Digby’s view, ski bums had life figured out in several ways. Not only did they sacrifice making big money for the fun of skiing and living the ski town life, but they served their communities and their countries. In the heart of the late 1950s Cold War era, a period in which a fictional character came to Bullet via the Army and a fictional Radcliffe grad waited tables before joining the foreign service, author Don Stanford’s ski bums were the types of people who might make the world a better place. They

were able to do this, according to Stanford's clichéd telling, because they worked hard (even at inconsequential jobs) and had fun enjoying the fruits of their labor. They were not Soviet-like robotic cogs living dreary lives of all work and no play. Instead, ski bums in *Bullet* were fun-loving men and women who loved their country and worked hard and played hard. Theirs was an ideal American way of life personified. It was also a world where an enlisted man who worked hard and a Radcliffe grad who played the ski bum game perfectly became heroes against the spoiled rich kid who did not work in or live in the town permanently.

While the glorification of Aspen's ski bum way of life grew throughout the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, more people were drawn to the town as a center of simplicity and as an escape from the normal grind of life and work in the city. In Aspen, one could have the ideal living and working situation, working hard but having immeasurable fun at the same time. Aspen's story, in both fiction and non-fiction, became a celebration of living a perfectly balanced life. By 1955 and the release of Sloan Wilson's novel *The Man In the Gray Flannel Suit*, which explored ethical questions faced by a war veteran working to support his family in a corrupt American business world, Aspen appeared as a refuge.<sup>123</sup> In early 1956, for example, Mrs. Jack Lovell, a secretary at a San Francisco law firm, wrote to Paepcke regarding her family's planned move to Aspen. "I secured your name," she wrote Paepcke, "from the article of the October, 1950 issue of the SATURDAY EVENING POST. This article is on file at our house and has been read and re-read several times." It was time, Lovell said, to move the article from the "dream file" and into reality.

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<sup>123</sup> Sloan Wilson, *The Man in The Gray Flannel Suit* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1955). In 1956, Gregory Peck starred in the film version. See Nunnally Johnson, dir., *The Man in The Gray Flannel Suit* (Los Angeles: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 1956).

“Although we have never seen Aspen,” she wrote, “we know that it is the one place in America that we must live...and now with this glowing article at hand and the 1954 Aspen Chamber of Commerce brochure—well, we are ready.” She explained that she and her husband, a commercial artist, were poor. “Your doors,” she asked, “are not closed to poor people, are they?” Lovell offered one idea for financing their move to Aspen: selling their car, because they felt that they could survive in Aspen with bicycles, a sled, and skis. After noting that she and her husband would work any jobs possible to provide for themselves and their nine-year-old son, Lovell explained that they were “honest, clean, decent people who just want to get a little living out of life, to be able to spend some time with each other—and well—just live. We know that living in Aspen would be a wonderful life for a boy who wants not more, not much more, than a house of his very own with a dog, some snow and a sled.” Lovell, a “poor” secretary, bought Aspen’s myth hook, line, and sinker. Paepcke eventually discouraged her from making the move.<sup>124</sup>

It was no wonder that Lovell thought of Aspen as a paradisiacal escape for her family after reading and re-reading the article on Aspen in the October 14, 1950 issue of the *Post*. Like many popular magazines in the period, *The Saturday Evening Post* did two things very well: it presented communism as the world’s greatest disease and offered glimpses of America’s greatness as the cure. The same issue in which the piece on Aspen appeared offered other articles exploring “The Epic of Bloody Hill,” about a skirmish between Americans and Communist enemies in Korea, and “Will Berlin be Another Korea?,” in which one Soviet says that, “We have no time for

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<sup>124</sup> Mrs. Jack Lovell and Walter Paepcke correspondence, 1956, Box 101, F4, WPP. No Jack Lovell appears in the Aspen city directories following 1956. See the City Directory collection, AHS.

theaters, night clubs and hotels or similar edifices of decadent cosmopolitanism.”

The previous issue of the magazine included a long article about a “Red Conspiracy in the London Dockyards.” The *Post* issue following the Aspen story, with its Norman Rockwell cover illustration of the coin toss at a high school football game, praised small town life in America. Readers learned in the issue of “U.C.L.A.’s Red Cell: Case History of College Communism,” and of “The Venomous Doctor Vyshinsky,” the Soviet foreign minister to the United Nations who was quoted as saying that he had no time for “wine nor women nor song...Only work, work!” Aspenites offered a drastically different view of life than did these caricatures of Communists. Their town served as an answer to any questions about which system—Soviet or American—was better. In Aspen, one could work and play with equal gusto.<sup>125</sup>

The *Post* article that mesmerized Lovell opened with several large color photos including the ski mountain, a view of the town taken in summer from Red Mountain, a shot of horses and horse-drawn carriages on Main Street, old-timers lounging on the post-office steps, the pool at the Jerome, and a photograph of Paepcke watching a ski race. The article emphasized that in Aspen one might live a simpler yet at the same time a cosmopolitan life. Housewives in Aspen, the author wrote, often prepared a dish with a recipe that began with ““First, go out and kill a deer.”” Aspen’s greatest quality was the benefits it offered to tired city dwellers. “One veteran employee of a Midwestern business firm,” the article claimed, “won an

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<sup>125</sup> For the respective quotations by Communists, see James P. O’Donnel, “Will Berlin be Another Korea?,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, October 14, 1950, p. 163, and Edgar Snow, “The Venomous Doctor Vyshinsky,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, October 21, 1950, p. 19. See also Ernest O. Hauser, “Red Conspiracy in the London Dockyards,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, October 7, 1950, p. 36.

essay contest, conducted by his employers, on Why I Like My Job, and the next day used the prize money to buy a one-way railroad ticket to Aspen.” Steelworkers, investment brokers, and artists had moved to town and decided that they would rather live in Aspen on less money than live in the big city. As the *Post* noted, the town was a “mountain Lorelei,” which lured people with its beauty and charm.<sup>126</sup> Although the article critiqued Paepcke for his often heavy-handed approach in making decisions without much local participation, some readers were intrigued by Paepcke’s “conviction that Aspen can become a goal for people all over America who are seeking both physical and intellectual refreshment.” For Mrs. Jack Lovell and family, Aspen and its way of life certainly became a goal to which they aspired. Yet Paepcke’s encouraging words in print, which made Aspen sound as if it were open to all Americans, vanished altogether when he replied to Lovell.

Paepcke’s reply to Lovell offers a wonderful glimpse into his exceedingly congenial nature as a businessman (he was, after all, a very busy person to be answering such a query). It also provides a perfect example of how Paepcke discouraged non-elites who wrote to him about the town. Paepcke wrote to Lovell shortly after receiving her letter, noting that housing was expensive, that year-round jobs were rare, and that “Walking or bicycling around town in a blizzard or when it is extremely cold could be very rugged.” For Paepcke, Aspen was not a place to experience ruggedness. “Of course there are quite a few people who live in Aspen,” he said, “and who have

very low incomes, but perhaps the husband is doing road building or digging ditches, shoveling snow or hiring out

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<sup>126</sup> See Joe Alex Morris, “The Cities of America: Aspen, Colorado,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, October 14, 1950, pp. 26-7; 171-2, 174, 176, and 178.

as a farm hand on some of the local ranches, and the wife, in addition to taking care of the home, may be working as a waitress or a bar tender in some of the taverns or doing other rather uninteresting work during the peak seasons and having very little in the way of job opportunities in the off seasons.

Paepcke's answer probably startled the woman who had read on numerous occasions his upbeat "conviction that Aspen can become a goal for people all over America who are seeking both physical and intellectual refreshment."<sup>127</sup> Whether Paepcke deliberately misled Lovell may be questionable. Certainly both oldtimer and newcomer Aspenites often worked "uninteresting" jobs. What Paepcke failed to mention was that a sizable number of them had gone to Vassar, Dartmouth, or other prestigious colleges and did not plan to tend bar indefinitely. None of the city directories for Aspen following 1956 lists a Jack Lovell family.

Many others wrote both Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke with questions about moving to Aspen, and the answers they got depended on what the Paepckes could decipher from their letters about the writers' social class. For example, an insurance salesman, probably typically middle class, from Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, told Walter in 1958 that he would give his "eye teeth" for an opportunity to live in the town and to work for him. Paepcke did not know the man and did not offer a job in his reply. Regarding the inquiry of another unknown man, Paepcke wrote a discouraging letter emphasizing that surviving financially in Aspen was no easy task because of the "dead seasons in the spring and fall." In 1964, a young secretary at a television network in California wrote to Elizabeth. After stating that she had read about Mrs. Paepcke in *The Aspen Times* while visiting the town, Karen Batista said,

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<sup>127</sup> Lovell and Paepcke correspondence.

“The town itself is a dream and LIVE PICTURE come true! The people (whom I hardly know) seem so themselves and true that we feel this is a place to get to know or become a part of.” Ironically, of course, many of the people in the town were playing with the truth, for they often were privileged people who had created new identities as working-class ski bums. Batista and a friend planned to move to Aspen in November, partly to escape “crowded freeways, beaches, hot deserts and ugly smog,” and needed jobs in order to make it in the town. They wondered, like the others who wrote to the Paepckes, if their readers might offer any useful advice for gaining employment (or perhaps even offer them a job!). Elizabeth’s reply was harsher than Walter’s might have been had he been alive: “First of all,” she wrote, “November is without doubt the worst month of the year in Aspen...dreary and cold....my advice is to have a job in hand before you make the move unless you have an independent income.” Here again was another example of a woman like Lovell who seemed to have bought into the idea that Aspen was for her. Yet, unlike Lovell, Batista came to Aspen despite Paepcke’s discouraging words.<sup>128</sup> For their own friends or for people who were clearly from the upper classes, the Paepckes offered answers that indicate that they saw little room for poorer people in Aspen. To a Chicago investor in the Aspen Company, Walter encouraged the man to send his son to town. “I really think it has excellent possibilities for an energetic and bright young man,” Paepcke wrote in 1952, “provided he has a little of the pioneering spirit and is not too dependent upon bright lights. Judging from his very attractive mother, I think he might fit in beautifully...” To one of her boarding school classmates from

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<sup>128</sup> The 1965 Aspen City Directory lists Karen Batista as living in Aspen and notes that she worked as a secretary for architect Sam Caudill. See City Directory collection, AHS.

Virginia's Foxcroft School, a woman who had written Elizabeth to say that the daughters of two friends were "both crazy to get out to Colorado" and would work as waitresses, maids, or at any other job in order to live in Aspen, Elizabeth replied that she received such inquiries regularly. "To all of these people," Elizabeth wrote, "I write the same thing: that there are plenty of jobs to be had in Aspen for someone who really wants to work and where the skiing is merely a recreation in off hours; even the ski instructors have to work terribly hard." To her Foxcroft friend, Elizabeth provided the names of people to contact regarding jobs. Clearly, if one knew Elizabeth Paepcke, there were "plenty of jobs." If one did not know her, her advice was to stay away unless one had a job lined up or had plenty of "independent income," an elite euphemism for "family money."<sup>129</sup>

As harsh as their words may have sounded for some people, the Paepckes offered good advice. Aspen *was* an expensive and often difficult place to live and work for people without a bankroll. People often grew tired of the service-industry jobs there. After all, washing dishes, scrubbing floors, or waiting tables in a beautiful mountain town often became mind-numbingly boring for men and women who had previously labored elsewhere at jobs less back-breaking and more intellectually stimulating (or who had never worked at *any* job before). Even Pat Neal, the woman who wrote of leaving behind her office work for the ski bum life and a job waitressing at the Sundeck, wrote her glowing account in hindsight. She explained at the end of her *Ski* magazine article that after her fabulous winter with "the boys" of

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<sup>129</sup> William O. Kletzin and Walter Paepcke correspondence, 1958, Box 92, F9, WPP; Walter Paepcke to I. N. Hagan, September 8, 1952, Box 100, F5, WPP; Karen Batista and Elizabeth Paepcke correspondence, 1964, Box 23, F5, EHP; Elizabeth T. Thompson and Elizabeth Paepcke correspondence, 1960, Box 50, F6, EHP.

Aspen, she was back home in Pennsylvania. Contemplating her life the previous winter, she was trying to decide whether or not to move back west in 1958. As wonderful as Aspen had been for helping her to escape stale office air, the high altitude Sundeck was no sure bet as a career option.

For others, women particularly, Aspen's allures—fun, ample sun, snow, and possibly romance—were not enough to hold them very long. The experiences of several Aspen women in the first postwar decade serve as a reminder that although Aspen was off the beaten path, women there faced some of the same obstacles in the work place as they would have faced anywhere. Paepcke received several letters from women complaining that their bosses were “hard hearted” or incapable of treating men and women equally. One woman complained of being fired after refusing the sexual advances of the Jerome's manager, noting that the man was “responsible for a turnover of at least 85 employees during the time of his incumbency.” Paepcke lied outright to the woman in his reply, saying, “Many years ago I had to adopt a policy of not interfering with the organizational procedures of those in charge in Aspen.” In fact, as noted earlier, Paepcke rarely missed a detail regarding the organizational procedures in Aspen. One month following his letter to the woman who had left town feeling sexually harassed, Paepcke wrote to the very man of whom she had complained and praised the company policy that allowed airline stewardesses to get complimentary rooms and food discounts at the Jerome. “Of course, these girls,” Paepcke wrote, “especially the more attractive ones, talk to thousands of passengers.” He noted that although many men with whom he had discussed the subject of Sun Valley considered Aspen to have better skiing, food, and

accommodations, most of them returned to Sun Valley because of the “babes” who visited there. Paepcke was determined to fill his hotel, gratis, with attractive women whenever possible. “I am inclined to think,” he concluded, “that this is a worthwhile and rather inexpensive way of spreading enthusiastic reports about Aspen, both its winter and summer activities.”<sup>130</sup> In light of the broader context—“babes” and free hotel rooms—one wonders about the extent of the activities Paepcke had in mind. Most importantly, this example indicates that Paepcke had in mind for some women, generally middle class secretaries and stewardesses, very different roles than the roles he assigned to Vassar alumnae such as Joan Trumbull and Maude Banks of the Country Store.

Like Trumbull and Banks, many women came to Aspen by negotiating with Paepcke or his company, and they worked to stay there. Virginia Horne and Virginia Chamberlain, for example, “cured” their “ski fever” by leaving their jobs as instructors at the University of Illinois to open their log “dream home” on the grounds of their Prospector Lodge hotel in Aspen. Visitors to the town often were fascinated by the fact that so many well-educated women worked at jobs normally reserved for working-class men. One Chicagoan told of taking a jeep ride to the top of Aspen Mountain during the summer of 1951. She included in her list of notables along for the ride “our charming driver, Miss Flossie Prounis, Vassar college graduate and holder of a master’s degree in geology from Columbia.” She then pointed out that

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<sup>130</sup> See Kathleen Denzel to Walter Paepcke, July 16, 1947, Box 90, F4, WPP; Dorothy Sullivan to Walter Paepcke, May 19, 1954, Box 100, F11, WPP; and Jeannette Teape-White and Walter Paepcke correspondence, September/October, 1953, Box 97, F1, WPP. Walter Paepcke to Colonel Henry R. Dutton, November 14, 1953, Box 97, F1, WPP.

Prounis was “one of three college women making taxi driving an art” in Aspen.<sup>131</sup> Natalie Gignoux, owner of the Little Percent Taxi Company, was a graduate of Wellesley. She nearly left Aspen after her first season for what she called a “real job.” Just before packing to leave town, she took a temporary job which led to a position in the Jerome arranging taxi service for guests. After realizing that the one man in town with a cab was doing a poor job, Gignoux bought his business in 1950. Within a few months, she made as much as the previous owner had made in an entire year. By the time she sold the business in 1962, Gignoux owned more than a dozen cars, including several jeeps for summer touring. Gignoux organized and led one of Aspen’s greatest community accomplishments in “The Great Jeep Lift” of 1954. When the lift broke down and was out of commission for five days, tourists and their dollars began trickling out of town. She organized a caravan of 35 locally owned jeeps to transport skiers to the top of the ski runs via a plowed road up the back of Aspen Mountain. The locals and their jeeps carried 2,500 skiers to the top of the mountain. As one writer put it, under the leadership and hard work of Gignoux, “Aspen managed to turn calamity into community success.”<sup>132</sup>

Terese David was another Aspen businesswoman whose entire life story after the start of World War Two seemed to be about turning calamities into success. David was born in London in 1908 and lived in Paris after marrying. When war broke out in France and her husband stayed to fight, David and her two children boarded a ship as part of a children’s convoy in 1940. They crossed the ocean to the

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<sup>131</sup> Virginia Horne and Virginia Chamberlain, “We Cured Our Ski Fever,” *Ski*, December 15, 1950, p. 17; Herma Clark, “When Chicago Was Young” column, *The Chicago Tribune*, August 10, 1951, n.p., clipping in Box 97, F12, WPP.

<sup>132</sup> Natalie Gignoux interview, September 16, 1986, by Ruth Whyte, AHS. See also, W.L., “The Week the Lift Quit,” *Ski*, November, 1954, p. 49.

United States, where David got a job teaching French at a boarding school in Delaware. After the war's end, David's husband rejoined the family, and they moved to California. In 1950 the couple divorced. That year, Terese David came to Aspen for a short vacation with her son, who was a classmate of Paepcke's daughter Paula at the University of Chicago. The 42-year-old divorced mother of two decided to stay in the Rockies. She started Aspen's Pied Piper Pre Ski School, which she operated in the mornings. After the school closed in the afternoon, she managed a boutique where she sold clothes that she had designed and sewn and others that she imported from Ireland, Mexico, and other exotic locales. David's skills as a seamstress and as a teacher, her likeable personality and demeanor, and her energy won her many friends in Aspen. She regularly led sewing parties where locals could trade their time sewing for credit towards goods in the store; she also loaned money to struggling young local families.

David's success as a shopkeeper also resulted from hard work and an impressive business savvy. For example, in 1957 David adopted a take-no-prisoners attitude when she re-negotiated her rent with the Aspen Company's manager. She demanded lower rent or extensive renovations for her shop. She wrote to Paepcke the same day, mentioning her intolerable situation regarding rent, and then thanking him for one of the Institute discussions she had heard the previous summer, noting that "through your wonderful program this summer I realized that I did not have to take it any longer. You see what those things do for Aspen citizens!" She concluded by saying that the program at the Institute, wherein great thinkers led discussions of books exploring the human condition, "made me suddenly feel like Somebody and

made me decide that I just would not ever let anyone push me around again.”

Paepcke liked David very much, and must have conceded on lowering her rent.

Three years later, in 1960, David wrote Paepcke a note of thanks for his years of investment in Aspen. “Aspen really is my home and you are the person who has made it what it is,” David wrote. “It is not just the beautiful natural surroundings,

but the people who come here... When I first came to Aspen, I never thought that I could enjoy life again. I had lived for my husband and children, now I was divorced and my children were in college and life seemed so empty. I do not think that any other place could have done, for me, what Aspen has. I found a place here and many young people who needed, and still need someone to help them over the rough spots. From the nickname of “The Pied Piper” I passed to “Mama David.” Soon it will be “Grandma David” as the young people whom I befriended become parents. I have quite a picture gallery of my “Grandchildren,” quite apart from my own two.

Although David’s pre-school closed after Aspen’s public school system began offering kindergarten classes, her Terese David of Aspen clothing boutique, in the little white house on Main Street with the recognizable red and white awning, remained open from the 1950s until she died in 1984.<sup>133</sup> David serves as an example of someone who complicates Aspen’s social groupings. Not a pretend “working-

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<sup>133</sup> Numerous clippings on David may be found in BIO: David, Terese, AHS, including n.a., “Things ‘just happen’ to Terese David,” *The Aspen News*, November 39 [sic], 1967, p. 17; Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, “Terese David,” *The Aspen Times*, December 4, 1975, p. B-1; Eva Hodges, “Aspen fits designer’s life,” *The Denver Post Contemporary*, July 12, 1981, p. 15; n.a., “Aug 3 proclaimed Terese David Day,” *The Aspen Times*, July 29, 1982, p. 8-A; and her obituary, “Terese David, known as the Pied Piper of Aspen, dies,” *The Aspen Times*, December 27, 1984, p. 6-A. For David’s rent negotiation letters, see Terese David to Walter Paepcke, and Terese David to Mr. Saul, September 14, 1957, Box 101, F10, WPP; and for the long quotation, see Terese David to Walter Paepcke, April 1, 1960, Box 27, F2, EHP. David thought very highly of the Paepckes. In an undated account of some of her most memorable moments in Aspen, she wrote that Walter Paepcke had once offered his own lawyer’s legal services when the Pied Piper Shoe Company wanted to sue her for using that name. Paepcke told David that he did not like it when big companies tried to push little businesses around. David also recalled Elizabeth Paepcke’s beauty and intelligence. A copy of this untitled, undated memoir, is in Box 3, F5, EHP.

class” ski bum and not purely a striving middle-class entrepreneur in the mold of Jim Moore, David lay somewhere between this latter categorization and wealthy elites such as the Paepckes. Most importantly, her work helped David to reinvent herself after her divorce and to situate herself as a matriarchal figure in the town. As “Grandma David” she seemed to be both a middle class entrepreneur and a benevolent member of Aspen’s privileged group of newcomers.

Aspen businesswomen such as Trumbull, Horne and Chamberlain, Gignoux, and David, all of whom came from upper middle class or upper class backgrounds, spent years in town building solid reputations for their businesses while honing their abilities to provide the goods and services Aspen needed. Women like these and their male business-owning counterparts in town were the exceptions to the rule for the majority of the people who passed through Aspen. They stayed in town for years and created careers for themselves in a place that most people saw as a way station on their journey to some other place in life. Countless men and women came to Aspen between 1945 and the early 1970s, worked menial jobs, then left after a few months or a couple of seasons. Former presidential candidate and Vermont governor Howard Dean, who spent the winter of 1971-72 in Aspen, offers an example of a one-season ski bum. “It was a great time to be a kid and do something relatively fun,” Dean told *The Aspen Times* thirty years later. After graduating from Yale in 1971 and receiving a draft deferment for a bad back, Dean came to Aspen. He washed dishes at the Golden Horn Restaurant and poured concrete at various construction sites. “It was just a bunch of guys,” said one of Dean’s ski buddies from the period, “who decided

they wanted to take some time off before they grew up.”<sup>134</sup> Most of those “guys” never had to face questions from the media about why their backs could withstand skiing moguls and pouring concrete but not fighting in Vietnam.

If Dean had remained in Aspen, however, he would have been among friends. Many members of Aspen’s first generation of ski bums came from upper-middle-class and upper-class backgrounds and had the educations to prove it. The same was true of later generations. Two of Dean’s fellow Yalies were John Bennett and Andy Stone, both of whom arrived in Aspen on a “psychedelically painted school bus” in the early 1970s. Bennett recalled working “various odd jobs, including digging foundations for a downtown building,” and Stone recalled digging fencepost holes and pumping gas at the local Chevron. Unlike Dean, Bennett and Stone decided to and were able to stay in Aspen. By 1973, Bennett and Trinity College graduate Michael McVoy “scraped money together” and bought the Aspen Bookshop. Bennett eventually became Aspen’s mayor and served as a vice-president at the Aspen Institute, both jobs that indicated how his time digging foundations offered a temporary respite in his trajectory from Yale to positions of power in Aspen. Stone worked his way toward becoming co-publisher and editor of *The Aspen Times*. McVoy eventually became an Aspen-based investment manager. Bob Braudis moved to Aspen in 1969 from Manhattan, where he worked as an analyst for Dun & Bradstreet. After two years in town, he committed himself to Aspen by tossing all twenty of his three-piece suits into a dumpster. In this symbolic gesture, Braudis

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<sup>134</sup> For a recap of Dean’s August 15, 2002, interview with *The Aspen Times*, as well as an analysis of the political fallout later concerning the implication that Dean somehow manipulated a draft deferment, see slate.com’s page on the web at <http://slate.msn.com/id/2087543/>. See also Steve Lipsher, “Aspen recalls Dean’s stint as ‘70s ski bum: Flashbacks range from dishwasher to ‘loser’,” *The Denver Post*, January 29, 2004, p. A-1.

threw away an important part of his former identity and through his new work, he became an Aspenite. He worked for seven years as a bartender, and then he took a job as a sheriff's deputy. In 1986, he became Aspen's blue jean-wearing sheriff.<sup>135</sup> The stories of these men and others indicate that digging fence posts or tending bar were temporary jobs. More importantly, it was not serendipitous that their backgrounds at prestigious colleges or on Wall Street, much less their ability to "scrape together" money when needed, helped them eventually to stay in Aspen.

Well after they stepped into their establishment positions, Aspen's long-term and short-term ski bums, from Joan Trumbull to Howard Dean, emphasized when reminiscing the working-class jobs that they held when they first came to town. By the 1960s, however, other newcomers (perhaps the middle class or privileged but non-elite) set themselves apart from the locals who had attended prestigious colleges and/or come from wealthy families. These ski bums made it clear that they came to Aspen without the advantages of many of the upper classes. For example, "ski bum" G.G. Roberson underlined in a letter to the editor that he and other ski bums " might be ragged, dirty or torn. But! It's because we WORK. Again, we were not born with silver spoons, we have worked to build OUR town."<sup>136</sup> Roberson certainly knew that some ski bum workers were born into wealth. He may have been born into privilege, as well, but could have had less money than some of the other men and women hanging out with him at the Red Onion after a day of work and skiing. In 1962 he probably knew men and women in Aspen like Pfeifer's friend, who said that he

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<sup>135</sup> For stories about Bennett, Stone, McVoy, and Braudis, see Lou Bendrick, Scott Condon, Jeremy Heiman, Oleh Lysiak, Melissa Schmitt, and Robert Ward, "The hippies of Aspen: Where are they now," *The Aspen Times*, March 28-29, 1998, p. 1-A. See also Allyn Harvey, "Still sheriff after all these years," *The Aspen Times*, March 30-31, 2002, p. 13-A.

<sup>136</sup> G. G. Roberson editorial, "Ski Bums Reply," *The Aspen Times*, December 21, 1962, p. 16.

“made” his money when his father sold toilet seats. Other ski bums recognized that there were divisions and classes among the ski bums. Delphine Carpenter said as much in 1947 when she described one type of bum as “someone who has money enough to do as he pleases” and another as someone “trained for other work.” In 1969, Aspen ski bum James Paul had worked his way from busboy to sommelier over a ten year period at one of the town’s finest restaurants. When he told a New York reporter that he “was not born with a silver tate-vin, or chalice in his mouth,” readers would have understood that many Aspenites had been born into such privilege.<sup>137</sup>

Peggy Clifford might have argued that James Paul, the sommelier, was an aberration. In her 1980 memoir of three decades in Aspen, she put the situation of someone like Pete Seibert into perspective. Seibert was the Dartmouth graduate who traded lunches for dinner with Trumbull and Banks in the late 1940s, dined with Gary Cooper and his wife, and eventually became one of the founders of Vail. “The waiter who brought you your dinner in the Red Onion,” Clifford explained, “might be your dinner partner the next night. In fact, there were no menials. There were simply young people pretending to be menials for a while. It was a game that some tourists and some employers never understood.”<sup>138</sup> Clifford told a story about one ski bum in the 1950s that reflected well the idea of Aspen as a place for elites and the privileged in America to come and reinvent themselves. “If the fugitives had a hero,” she wrote, “it was Tom Weld.” Weld worked on the ski patrol in the winter and as a carpenter in the summer. He “wore cut-off overalls with tools hanging out of every

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<sup>137</sup> Pfeifer, p. 170; Carpenter, “I want to be a ski bum,” p. 13; for the sommelier’s comment, see Craig Claiborne, “Ski Bum to Bus Boy to Sommelier: Success Story, Aspen Style,” *The New York Times*, February 13, 1969, p. 40.

<sup>138</sup> Clifford, *To Aspen and Back*, p. 32.

pocket...drove a beat-up red pickup truck, lived in a rented room.” He also dated beautiful women, including one of Paepcke’s daughters. Clifford noted that Weld’s game indicated “a kind of hesitancy that signified an unreadiness or unwillingness to accept either the responsibilities or the privileges of his rank.” Weld came from a rich, old-money Boston family. According to Clifford, he graduated from Harvard. When his family finally pressured him into getting a “proper job,” Weld went to Nevada and worked as a geologist in a mine, where he was killed in an accident six weeks after leaving Aspen. “All of Aspen mourned its lost prince,” Clifford said, “and blamed America for killing him.”<sup>139</sup> Yet, *all* of Aspen may not even have known Weld, much less mourned him. While Weld and other ski bums often played at being menials, dressing in working class garb and driving battered trucks by choice, some native Aspenites were authentically part of a working class of miners.

Mining operations, however small, existed in Aspen between the decline of silver in the 1890s and through the development of skiing after World War Two. A Midnight Mine truck carried Elizabeth Paepcke and other skiers to the top of Aspen Mountain during her initial visit to town in 1939. Some Aspenites suggested that mining would again be a dominant factor in the town’s economy after 1945. These suggestions were made largely by a handful of the oldest locals who remained skeptical about the merits of a tourist-based economy in the first few years following the ski boom that began in 1946.<sup>140</sup> In 1950, twenty-three Aspenites worked in some

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>140</sup> For examples, see Morris, “The Cities of America: Aspen, Colorado,” p. 174; and Luke Short, “Nightmare in Lace Pants,” *The Denver Post Empire Magazine*, n.d., p. 12, in BIO: Glidden, Fred (aka Luke Short), AHS; and Eva Hodges, “Miner Visions Aspen As Top Pay Roll City,” *The Denver Post*, n.d., n.p., in Powers Scrapbook, AHS. The Hodges article (which mentioned Aspen’s popularity as a ski resort) noted that John Herron, from an old mining family, felt that the Anaconda Copper Mining Company’s interest in Aspen’s lead and zinc could push Aspen’s population from 1,000 to 5,000.

capacity at mining.<sup>141</sup> A significant number of them were undoubtedly involved in the operations of the Midnight Mining Company, which produced over one million dollars of ore between 1929 and 1953. After that time, prices for metal and the costs of operating the mine on the backside of the ski mountain made the operation unprofitable.<sup>142</sup> In addition, by 1953, the mine workers had other options for jobs in Aspen.

Most of Aspen's native youngsters saw the writing on the wall regarding mining and skiing, and they adapted to the new economy accordingly. The Willoughby family, operators of the Midnight, were very involved in skiing as early as the late 1930s. Frank Willoughby helped cut Roch Run and served as one of the first presidents of the Aspen Ski Club. Red Rowland, the son of a miner who grew up in Aspen, worked on and off for the Midnight. He also worked on a water diversion tunnel near Aspen and did occasional work on ranches in the valley before leaving town in 1939 for more consistent work in Denver. He and his wife returned to Aspen in 1946, and Red took a job with the Skiing Corporation. He remained for the next thirty years and rose within a few years to the position of general manager of the mountain, which meant that he was in charge of all lift operations. When he retired in 1976, Rowland's title was "vice president—engineering." Red's wife, Peggy, recalled later that many oldtimers of Red's generation worked for the Skiing Corporation.<sup>143</sup> John and Frank Dolinsek, who worked under Red for many years, grew up in Aspen in the 1920s and 1930s. They recalled their father barely getting by

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<sup>141</sup> *County and City Data Book*, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1952.

<sup>142</sup> Untitled and undated manuscript pertaining to the Midnight mine, in BUSINESS: Midnight Mining Co. file, AHS.

<sup>143</sup> See "Red Rowland and the ski lifts," in Hayes, *The Story of Aspen*, pp. 92-93; Rowland interview.

as a mine lessee, as a gardener for Darcy Brown's aunt, as a laborer on local ranches and farms, and as a worker ten days per month on county relief road projects. These two native Aspenites, both of whom had never been beyond Leadville or Glenwood Springs before joining the Army and Navy during World War Two, looked at skiing and tourism as "the only hope for Aspen" after the war.<sup>144</sup> Angie Maddalone Caparella, daughter of an Italian miner, recalled being so poor in the 1920s and 1930s that she wore dresses made from old flour sacks. Her brother Chuck, the baby in a family of ten, was born in 1932 and came of age in Aspen as skiing took off. In high school he worked as a bellhop at the Jerome and skied daily. He eventually won a ski racing scholarship to the University of Denver. After leaving college, he came back to Aspen and worked for the Skiing Corporation. "We were so poor when I was a little kid," Maddalone recalled, "I decided in my mind I wasn't going to put up with that. I wasn't going to be poor." Skiing allowed Maddalone to avoid the poverty he and his sister had known as the children of a miner. He eventually directed the construction of lifts at all of the corporation's ski areas, including at Breckenridge in Summit County.<sup>145</sup>

Other native Aspenites who never worked for the Skiing Corporation benefited economically because of the jobs created by increased tourism after World War Two. Albert Bishop was born in Aspen in 1915. After his service in the military, he came home and bought into a grocery store with Henry Beck. They operated Beck and Bishop's for twenty-three years until they sold out to their accountant. Bishop continued working as a butcher in the store for thirteen more

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<sup>144</sup> Dolinsek interview.

<sup>145</sup> For Angie Maddalone Caparella and Chuck Maddalone profiles, see Daily and Guenin, pp. 307-26.

years, even after it was sold to the City Market chain. When asked what he thought of the changes brought to Aspen after 1945, Bishop and his wife agreed that prior to large-scale tourism, Aspen was in bad repair. Whereas many newcomers recalled that part of Aspen's charm in the early days was reflected in its dusty streets (by now a vivid western trope put to good use by Aspenites), natives Albert and Pearl Bishop specifically saw unpaved roads as a sign of neglect and backwardness. After the influx of outside money, Albert said, "People were able to fix their houses up and paint them, the streets were paved, businesses were brought in. All of the brick buildings downtown were renovated and cleaned up. It was a growing time and everybody enjoyed it I'm sure...Everybody was happy with it." The Bishops also recalled that their children had easier lives in Aspen than they had growing up there a generation earlier in the long wake of mining's bust. Both of their children became excellent skiers, graduated from college, and went on to professional careers in other parts of the United States. Aspen, according to the Bishops, improved when tourism grew. In 1995, fifty years after the creation of the Aspen Company and the Aspen Skiing Corporation, Albert Bishop said, from his home in downtown Aspen, "I think our life is very easy now."<sup>146</sup> For Bishop, an oldtimer, changes such as paved roads in Aspen were good; for some newcomers, those same changes were heartbreaking indicators of Aspen becoming more like the places they had left behind when they headed for the mountains.

It would be naïve to assume that every native Aspenite found the changes to his/her town to be as wonderful as Albert Bishop thought that they were. For example, native Peggy Rowland felt that Paepcke had been "underhanded" in his

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<sup>146</sup> Albert and Pearl Bishop interview, July 14, 1995, by Judith Gertler, AHS.

acquisition of some properties in town. Louiva Stapleton experienced what she called a “very rough” childhood in Aspen in the 1920s and remembered Aspen as always being in a state of economic depression prior to 1945. Still, she had her issues with growth and change even after her life took a turn for the better. In the 1950s, when she held a job as a maid at the Hotel Jerome, she felt that some of the newcomers were hard to handle. “It was just an influx of people that thought they were a lot better than you,” she said, “you know coming in and taking over.” Still, Stapleton admitted readily that the life she and her family lived in the ski era was good.<sup>147</sup>

Between 1947 and 1972, Aspen’s retail establishments grew from 27 to 226 and retail sales increased from approximately \$ 1,000,000 to more than \$ 41,000,000. During roughly the same period, from 1940 to 1970, the county’s population increased by 236% and the total number of people employed increased 417%.<sup>148</sup>

These numbers and the anecdotes reproduced in the previous paragraphs illuminate some of the social and cultural changes Aspenites, newcomers and oldtimers alike, experienced while working in Aspen from the 1930s through the postwar years.

While newcomer ski bums often appropriated rhetoric and even dressed and drove cars to reflect the idea that they were working-class pioneers in the West, working-class natives continued to ski, and some developed into world-class skiers. One of the facts that the numbers do not reflect, but that most of the stories do, is how big a role the everyday act of skiing played in the social and cultural changes brought to the town. Nearly every native who raised kids in Aspen during the ski era used words such as “great,” “better,” and “wonderful” to describe his/her children’s lives when

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<sup>147</sup> Rowland interview; Louiva Stapleton interview, August 2, 1995, by Judy Gertler, AHS.

<sup>148</sup> *County and City Data Book*, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1947, 1952, 1956, 1967, and 1977.

Aspen became a ski town. When Louiva Stapleton noted, for example, that her son skied on the U.S. National team, one wondered just how important the sport of skiing was in eventually creating a cohesive group of locals in Aspen, where sport blurred class lines and relationships. Peggy Rowland's own actions may shed some light on such a question. After she had raised four children, the Aspen native took up skiing later in life. She took pride in noting that she skied regularly at Buttermilk Mountain at the age of eighty. She felt safe there, she noted, because her daughter worked as the Assistant Director of the ski patrol.<sup>149</sup> Like Rowland's daughter, many natives gladly entered the tourist-driven service economy that skiing created, and they gained higher status because of it. Meanwhile, newcomers often tried to reinvent themselves by performing "working-class" jobs and creating identities tied with that work. The common denominator for both groups was their ability to proclaim themselves "locals."

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<sup>149</sup> Rowland and Stapleton interviews.

### Chapter Three/ Living

Aspenites housed themselves in ways that provide a particularly useful window into the complexities of class tensions in the town during the first thirty years of the ski era. When it came to living in Aspen, particular types or styles of housing indicated “good taste” (a subtle measure of class) while others did not. In the ways that they lived, Aspenites often acted out anti-Veblenian acts of *inconspicuous* consumption when they celebrated housing situations that emphasized living on a frontier or roughing it. Homes made of natural materials indigenous to the West served as appropriate examples of how to live in Aspen and allowed locals to camouflage the town’s role as a refuge largely for the privileged. By the 1960s, with the rise of condominiums in town and later with the development of a large resort eight miles outside of town at Snowmass Village, an area filled with pre-fabricated condominiums, the American middle class culture of consumption gained a stronger foothold in Aspen than it ever had before. The privileged in Aspen, led largely by young people masking themselves as “poor” but tasteful hippies, gained control of local politics and attempted to carry out a plan to curb growth and to legislate taste.

Finding a place to live in Aspen has never been easy. Aspenites in the mining era and in the so-called “quiet years” recalled that decent housing was scarce. The Hotel Jerome’s role as a boarding house by the 1930s helps illustrate the nature of housing in the town by the Depression, when quality free-standing buildings were

both hard to attain and difficult to maintain.<sup>150</sup> By the time skiers began arriving in larger numbers after the war, it was very clear to Walter Paepcke and established Aspenites that housing residents and visitors would be both an immediate and a longer term problem. Front page pleas by the publisher in *The Aspen Times* implored locals, many of them aged miners or the widows of miners, to convert unused bedrooms into rentable spaces for guests. In the winter of 1946-47, business leaders projected that Aspen would need to be able to sleep upwards of four hundred guests in private homes over the course of the ski season.<sup>151</sup> Implied in the request was the idea that some oldtimer Aspenites might play the role of the housekeeper for skiers in turning their homes into boarding houses.

Much of the town's nineteenth-century physical infrastructure had crumbled for more than half a century following the demonetization of silver in late 1893. Hundreds of abandoned miners' homes and other buildings were dismantled by locals for use as firewood, burned to the ground over the years by arsonists, or had fallen into such disrepair that by 1946 many of Aspen's buildings needed extensive work to become habitable.<sup>152</sup> Because America had just fought a war that demanded great natural resources, rebuilding Aspen for tourism on the scale that a spectacular new ski lift might demand was no easy task. To complicate matters, various state and federal housing authorities made sure that scarce building materials—such as wood, nails, shingles, plumbing supplies, concrete, and window glass—went first to the projects

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<sup>150</sup> See untitled clipping, March 29, 1951, on Lula Bowler in BIO: Bowler, Lula file, AHS.

<sup>151</sup> "Aspen Needs Housing To Care For Visitors," *The Aspen Times*, April 4, 1946, pp. 1-2.

<sup>152</sup> Aspen's history before 1945 is well documented in Rohrbough, through primary documents in Daily and Guenin, and in Annie Gilbert Coleman, "'A hell of a time all the time': Farmers, Ranchers, and the Roaring Fork Valley during 'the Quiet Years,'" *Montana: Magazine of Western History*, Spring, 1997, pp. 32-45.

aimed at helping the millions of G.I.s who were returning home from World War Two to confront severe housing shortages.<sup>153</sup> The rules made good sense. The refurbishment of old hotels and sagging Victorian-era mansions that were to be used as boarding houses for tourists in out-of-the-way Aspen was not a top priority for either Colorado's building suppliers or its carpenters, plumbers, and roofers. In addition, Denver and Colorado Springs offered more work and greater potential profit for both suppliers and laborers in the construction trades. Getting the necessary materials, tools, and the skilled workers required to put up new buildings and to fasten older ones back together became one of Aspen's biggest challenges. Working-class men with backgrounds in the construction trades were not drawn in great numbers to Aspen in 1946. Paepcke became so eager for supplies and skilled workers at his chief restoration project that year, the interior of the Hotel Jerome, that he had an oak forest timbered at his weekend retreat in Illinois. He then shipped the planks to Aspen, where they were used to shore up the Jerome and to construct the dance floor in the hotel's Blue Room.<sup>154</sup> But there were ways around federal regulations regarding building materials, especially when a small town had so many veterans excited about building new lives. John Litchfield recalled that he used his status as a veteran to get on a priority list for rare porcelain commodes. He then gave

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<sup>153</sup> America's postwar housing shortage is put into its proper social, political, and cultural context in Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* and in Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside*.

<sup>154</sup> Platt Rogers to Paepcke, Sept. 19, 1946, Box 90, F2, WPP: "For some time now it has been completely impossible for us to anticipate any condition that is apt to come up covering the purchase of materials. The past two weeks have brought drastic measures from the Housing Authorities and we have not been able to get anything for any of our projects except those designed for G.I. housing, for which there has been issued a priority." The Aspen Company's work in the Jerome used a number of materials acquired in Chicago and shipped west. For example, Paepcke bought the dining room furniture for the hotel from Marshall Field's when the store closed its men's grill. The tiles in the Jerome bar came from the Brown Palace after the Denver hotel refurbished its own floor. See "The Aspen Ski School and a New All-Year Resort," *Hotel Monthly*, February, 1949, p. 34, Box 97, F10, WPP.

the toilets to the Aspen Company so that they might use them in the homes that the company was refurbishing in town. In return, Litchfield gained access to the skills of company carpenters who helped him with fixing up his own home and with the Red Onion refurbishment. “We all pitched in,” Litchfield said regarding his quasi-legal acquisition of the toilets, “and did what we could.”<sup>155</sup>

Although dozens of Aspen’s earliest postwar newcomer residents were veterans, it is not quite clear how many of them other than Litchfield took advantage of their ability to obtain rare construction materials for building or for repairing homes in Aspen. What is clear is that for many of the new arrivals after the war, crude forms of housing and blue collar jobs allowed people to shape identities as locals and as “ski bums.” Steve Knowlton, a veteran of the Tenth who moved to Aspen soon after his return from Italy, called himself “Aspen’s first ski bum.” Although his Harvard-graduate father may have disapproved, Knowlton lived in a station wagon on the side of a muddy street. Later, he moved into a small room above the downtown ski shop where he worked as a custodian. He was one of the first of many newcomers from privileged backgrounds who used their housing situations and jobs to disguise and deny their social class.<sup>156</sup> Others played up the image of the ski bum as vagabond. An eastern skiing publication in January, 1948, published a photograph of future ski film director Warren Miller eating a meal

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<sup>155</sup> Litchfield interview. On the front page of the February 6, 1946, *Rocky Mountain News*, in “Two hotels for Aspen,” head Aspen Company construction man Robert Hurst said that he had “a crying need for carpenters—preferably young men discharged from the service.” In light of Litchfield’s arrangement with Hurst, one wonders if the builder used other veterans in order to obtain supplies not accessible to non-veterans. By March of 1946, Hurst ran sizable ads in the Denver papers calling for brick masons and finish painters. See Scrapbook 86.32.1, AHS.

<sup>156</sup> Steve Knowlton interview, October 19, 1994, by Annie Gilbert, AHS. See also Knowlton’s obituary, “Steve Knowlton Skied to Live and Lived to Ski,” *Rocky Mountain News*, November 8, 1998, p. 10-S.

outside of the small trailer that he and a friend hauled behind an automobile. The caption noted that by working odd jobs and living in the trailer, the two “ski enthusiasts” were able to save money. An accompanying article gave other hints to skiers looking to get around Aspen on the cheap and create ski bum identities at the same time.<sup>157</sup> Some abandoned the idea of a trailer and simply remained in their cars. Alan Lewis, a ski patrolman throughout the 1950s, recalled that Tom Weld, the Harvard graduate from an elite Boston family, removed the backseat of his sedan, installed a woodstove with a chimney pipe protruding through the trunk, and lived that way on Aspen’s side streets for at least one entire winter.<sup>158</sup> Class masking accelerated in Aspen as magazines told skiers how to get around the town cheaply by sleeping in strange places.

The majority of ski bum residents in Aspen lived on top of one another in tumbledown houses or in apartments with revolving doors for the comers and goers who were constantly dropping in and out of town and blurring the lines between residents and tourists. Aspen ski bum homes gained names almost immediately. There was the House of Joy, full of joyful veterans aiming to finally have some fun after years at war. The Gray House “leaned way over and looked like it would topple down” and housed both men and women who all shared a single bathroom. It was so crowded that one young man dragged a cot into the coal bin and made the shed into his own private quarters. Although we may never know the name of this person or his class background, the chances are good that he never lived in a coal shed until moving to Aspen. The Teacher House, predictably, was home to the town’s young

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<sup>157</sup> N.a., “Skiing on Your Budget,” January, 1948, in SKIING: Aspen Mountain 1948-1949 file, AHS.

<sup>158</sup> Alan Lewis interview, October 31, 2003. Tapes and notes in possession of author.

female school teachers. Other newcomers lived in the grand old rambling boarding houses owned by longtime Aspenites, such as Mabel Beckerman's cat-friendly Columbine Lodge. Living in the same boarding houses where miners once lived helped young Aspenites in the early years of the ski era to masquerade as pioneers on a new frontier in the West. A significant number of ski bums, similar to Knowlton, lived at their places of employment.<sup>159</sup> Other young Aspenites simply moved from house to house in what seemed to be nearly constant fits of packing and unpacking. Magne Nostdahl, an Olympic skier from Norway, lived in seven different places throughout town in one year alone. Natalie Gignoux, a Wellesley graduate, claimed to have moved 18 times in her first 18 months in town during the late 1940s. She recalled that she and some other women were in one house less than a week before they accidentally burned it down. The sense of excitement and danger involved in ski bums simply finding a place to live recalled faintly the hardships of pioneers in Hollywood westerns, where gaining a foothold at the homestead often involved ducking flaming arrows that cut the dark of night.<sup>160</sup>

Visitors to town often found lodging difficult to procure, just as Paepcke and some Aspenites had feared. Two Denver couples visiting town for the festivities surrounding the opening of Lift One in January, 1947, rented a private railroad car for the ride to Aspen. Once in town, they had the car pulled onto a side track near the station. As a Denver paper reported, the private car helped the "socialites" solve "the housing shortage in crowded Aspen."<sup>161</sup> While not quite roughing it, sleeping in a

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<sup>159</sup> Hayes, *The Story of Aspen*, p. 96.

<sup>160</sup> Gignoux interview. See also Magne Nostdahl quotation in "Vox Populi," *The Aspen Times*, December 13-14, 1997, p. 7-A.

<sup>161</sup> Virginia Packard, "The Smart Set," *The Denver Post*, January 13, 1947, p.12.

parked Pullman did allow the couples and the newspaperman from the city who wrote about them to project a pioneer-like ingenuity. Another weekend in 1949, Charles Paterson appeared in town with a friend and found no room at any inn. After resorting to knocking on doors of private homes, like rural travelers in earlier centuries, the duo found no room to sleep on any sofas or floors either. They eventually wandered into an unlocked fraternal organization's meeting hall, where one man slept on the billiards table and the other on a window seat. The next night they were able to rent space on a couch at a bunkhouse.<sup>162</sup>

Other ski bum visitors to town deliberately slept in odd places to save money. Filmmaker Dick Barrymore told of working the front desk in the winter of 1956-57 at the rustic Prince Albert Hotel, where one young man slept for months in the maid's linen closet before he was detected as an interloper who did not actually have a room in the hotel. In telling the story, Barrymore celebrated the bravado of such an act. When he later returned to town to shoot segments for his ski film, "Ski West Young Man" (1961), Barrymore and his wife slept in their car and attempted to stay warm by plugging an electric blanket into an extension cord wired directly to the well-lit "Welcome to Aspen" sign.<sup>163</sup> All of these stories shared in common the image of roughing it. In naming his film "Ski West Young Man," an adaptation of Horace Greeley's call in the nineteenth century for young men to "Go west," Barrymore altered one of the region's great sales pitches while presenting himself as a pioneer on a new frontier.

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<sup>162</sup> Charles Paterson interview, June 28, 1994, by Annie Gilbert, AHS.

<sup>163</sup> See the program for "Ski West Young Man" in BIO: Barrymore, Dick file, AHS.

Aspen's housing situations became important parts of the stories told about the town by both Aspenites and outsiders throughout the 1940s, '50s, '60s, and later. Both groups often described the town as frontier-like and presented the housing situations as reflections of the pioneering spirit that so many newcomers relished. At the same time—as they lifted the corners of their masks—elite Aspenites often made it clear that the town was cosmopolitan and urbane. Moving into a miner's "cottage," a rambling Victorian, or into a newly built distinctly "western" home allowed newcomers to experience what appeared to be a bygone era in Aspen without having to forego things like new appliances in the kitchen or lively bars and good restaurants in the town. Newspaper and magazine articles about Aspen often focused on the town's houses and the living situations in ways that reflected this idea. One national magazine article went so far as to call the ski era newcomers "colonists," yet the lead photograph for the story showed an attractive young woman chugging beer from a bowl-sized mug at Johnny Litchfield's Red Onion bar. The image of Aspenites in the photograph mirrored a prevailing one of the traditional, mythic West: frontier challenges and tensions might be eased by the revelry at the saloon, where the behavior of raucous ladies who cared little for society's norms was on fine display.<sup>164</sup> Yet, the picture was much more complicated. Although the imagery reminded the viewer of some western pioneer tropes, the writer's use of the word "colonist" may have hit the mark better. The youngsters in the picture had taken over, colonized what native Aspenites would have remembered as Tim Kelleher's bar. The ski bums were the center of attention now, holding court in a bar owned by a Tenth Mountain

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<sup>164</sup> See Wylie, p. 52, where the author says, "Paepcke and his colonists continue to bubble with other ideas about Aspen's future."

man with a degree in Economics from Dartmouth. The images that Aspenites presented and that the national media noticed were important. Focusing on Aspen as a remnant of the mythic Old West allowed newcomer Aspenites, some of whom wrote and sold the articles to national magazines, to avoid talking about class tensions between themselves and oldtimers.

A reporter in 1947 said that the “little village” of Aspen reminded her of an illustration from a book on fairy tales. To accompany the article, the *Denver Post* published the reporter’s own painting of one of Aspen’s simple homes.<sup>165</sup> It was hard to imagine the same writer painting (instead of photographing) a home in, say, a Denver suburb such as Littleton. But perceived simplicity and the fairy-tale village life resonated with Aspenites and the writers who visited them. In an article titled “Ghost-Town Aspen...lives again,” another writer in 1947 told readers that local architect Fritz Benedict was building log cabins for sale on Red Mountain, that Sistie Blanning had converted a woodshed behind her house into “a skiers’ refuge” for rent, and that the town’s old ice-house, with sawdust-packed walls, had been converted to housing for “ski bums who are short of cash but willing to bring along their own sleeping bags.”<sup>166</sup> These types of housing were not only western-sounding, they were distinctly of Aspen in that all offered refuge for skiers needing affordable, practical, yet pioneer-like housing.

Newcomers Stuart and Isabel Mace claimed in a magazine article that theirs was “the life.” In discussing the Maces and the construction of their mountain home just outside of town, the story’s author emphasized that the Maces were pioneers

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<sup>165</sup> Anne Arneill Downs, “Pleasure Boom in Pitkin County,” n.d., *The Denver Post*, n.p., in Clippings 1946-1950s, AHS.

<sup>166</sup> Elizabeth Forbes, “Ghost-Town Aspen...lives again,” *Ski Illustrated*, March, 1947, p.19.

building a log cabin in the wilds of the West. The home was built from native materials gathered in the surrounding mountains, including red sandstone, marble, and spruce and aspen logs. Accompanying photographs showed Stuart and “Old-time prospector” Joe Sawyer looking at an ore sample; another showed Isabel in a flannel shirt and denim jeans astride the roof, hammering at shingles, while Stuart cut away at something in the background with a hand saw. They were pioneers building their own home in the high, remote mountains, where grizzled men still dug for silver and gold. Nonetheless, other photographs showed Isabel loading a dishwasher in an up-to-date kitchen, the kids playing around the house, and Stuart looking at a flower through a microscope. Clearly, the Maces’ pioneering lifestyle did not deny them either safety, modernity, or intellectual pursuits. In Aspen’s postwar history, the Maces and their home, Toklat, exemplified well how young people, often from privileged backgrounds, created new identities in Aspen. From Toklat, the Maces ran dog-sled trips and taught environmental education courses. Stuart took on the look of a “mountain man,” growing his hair long and growing a beard. Although not necessarily elites wearing masks, the Maces were, like other Aspenites, far more advantaged than their personas suggested. Isabel’s father was a lawyer and one brother eventually followed him into the family law practice. Another brother, Samuel Hays, attended Swarthmore and Harvard, then pioneered the study of American environmental history while teaching at the University of Pittsburgh. Stuart, a Denver native, was far less privileged than his wife. He grew up in a working and middle-class neighborhood and his stepfather worked as a machinist. Still, Mace eventually made it to Iowa’s Grinnell College, where he met Isabel.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> See Don Saunders, “This Is the Life!,” n.d., n.p., in Powers Scrapbook, AHS. The Maces’ lodge,

Writers used similar expressions about pioneering and the use of “natural” products in describing the homes of Aspen’s most well-known locals and visitors. In 1950, Gary Cooper became the first movie star to build a home in Aspen. His house combined images of modernity and pioneering antiquity or quaintness, by then the familiar style for Aspen. It was built of native stone and redwood and was situated next to a “natural lake just a few minutes walk from downtown Aspen.” In the same newspaper article, which showed a photograph of Cooper’s ranch-style Aspen home, the reporter noted that Fritz Benedict was designing a writing studio as an addition to the “small Victorian” owned by the novelist John Marquand. Here was evidence that celebrities knew how to build Aspen homes that helped them to blend in.<sup>168</sup> That same year, during the 1950 skiing World Championships in Aspen, Denver’s *Rocky Mountain News* ran pictures and descriptions of a number of homes in Aspen that juxtaposed the modern and old. The paper called the town “Walter Paepcke’s enchanted village.” Denverite George Robinson’s home, a “modern brick” structure that slept twenty, stood in relatively stark contrast to the small miner’s cottage owned by Ruth Humphreys Brown (Darcy’s second wife). Brown’s bungalow, known as “The Pink House” because of its color, was “a decorator’s dream,” according to the *News*. The Paepckes’ own Aspen home was a large 1889 brick Victorian known as Pioneer Park. The name fit well for the couple who have long been thought of as

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Toklat, was less the product of the surrounding forest and more the result of Mace’s clever use of recycled materials he gathered in and around Aspen. The red sandstone used in the construction of Toklat was lifted from the ruins of Aspen’s Washington School (an elementary school) after it burned to the ground. Mace acquired the outside logs of the lodge from a bankrupt coal mine in Glenwood Springs. See Mace interview. I gathered Mace’s childhood information from the 1930 federal census rolls. See Colorado, Denver, 1930 U.S. Census, Population Schedule, Micropublication T626, roll 235, page 63A. Washington: National Archives. Accessed on [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com).

<sup>168</sup> Jane True, “Celebrities Move to Aspen: Artists, Actors Find Haven,” *The Denver Post*, n.d., in Powers Scrapbook, AHS.

Aspen's first family in the ski era. Elizabeth eventually painted the home pink, thus giving it the additional nickname "Pussy's Pink Palace." This last name for the house was reminiscent of the name for a bordello and suggested that Aspenites sometimes lifted their own masks with self-mocking humor. Not only did locals joke about their chief benefactors living in a "palace," they also joked that the same palace was a more than suggestive of Aspen's role as a place for people looking to have fun. The palace was also akin to a house of mirrors where elites could live it up while presenting themselves as rugged western "pioneers" at the same time. It contrasted nicely with the home of the Paepckes' daughter, Nina, who married former ski patrolman and Dartmouth graduate Lenny Woods. Their "modern chalet-like home of pine logs," as the newspaper described it, was built by Woods and his friend Andy Ransom in 1948.<sup>169</sup> A photograph of Lenny and Nina inside their home turned up in a German-language magazine article about Aspen. The picture showed the long-legged skier Woods stretched out before a stone fireplace. An abstract painting hung above a wooden mantel, where an antique pistol rested. In that tableau alone one got the sense that for elites like Nina Paepcke Woods and her husband, Lennie, Aspen represented a new cultural identity where the Old West and the modernist sensibilities of the Bauhaus met. Visually, the home seemed to live up to the joking description ascribed to it in a handout at the Paepcke-Woods wedding: an "impregnable fortress or block house that might be needed in case of the return of warlike Ute Indians to Aspen."<sup>170</sup> Although intended as a gag, the description also indicated that the

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<sup>169</sup> For photographs and descriptions of Aspen homes see the clippings from *Rocky Mountain News*, January 8, 1950, p. 9-A, in Scrapbook 93.32.1, AHS.

<sup>170</sup> N.a., n.p., "Weltmeister an der Brullenden Gabel," in Box 97, F12, WPP; "Perry Park Wedding Gazette," Box 2, F14, EHP.

Paepckes were quite clear that their daughter's home was an idealized representation of a mythologized western home in the very real twentieth century American West.

A *New York Times* reporter in 1951 seemed to prefer the new homes in Aspen, "some made of whole peeled logs, with big picture windows," over the town's older buildings. The original buildings, the writer argued, were "ugly brick structures of Victorian design entirely unsuited to the wilderness landscape." In other words, the buildings erected in Aspen when it was still a mining camp in the 1880s seemed less authentically Western than did the homes built by Yale graduate and Denver attorney George Robinson (also a major stockholder in the Aspen Company) and the ex-Dartmouth ski racer Woods.<sup>171</sup> This comment by the *Times* reporter suggests that within six years of the founding of the skiing corporation and the invasion of Aspen by skiers, the denial of class in the town reached an important point. Some of the homes of Aspen's newcomers, particularly homes built with logs, allowed them to lay claim to a new brand of western-ness in the high country "wilderness" of the Rockies. It is important to note here that the full-time local Woods's pioneer-styled log home was quite different from the modern brick home of Robinson, the part-timer Denverite.

New and modern or old and quaint, real estate in Aspen by the 1950s was serious business. In 1951, barber and real estate man James Moore listed one 22-acre "mountain estate" with two homes, gardens, a pond, and tennis courts for more than \$80,000. Moore, who was Gary Cooper's realtor, was ahead of his time in printing a sophisticated brochure devoted to the property, which he distributed to real estate

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<sup>171</sup> Ira Henry Freeman, "Aspen Expects Two More Months of Spring Skiing," *The New York Times*, March 25, 1951, p. 91.

firms in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Palm Beach, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. The cover photograph on the brochure showed a lake by the Maroon Bells; the inside of the advertisement contained interior and exterior photographs of the homes and their beautifully landscaped grounds at Aspen.<sup>172</sup> This was not a house that young ski bum locals would likely consider buying even if they had the money. The market for this house lay outside of Aspen. This early example of a 1950s trophy home in Aspen helps illustrate a salient point: Moore went after outsiders to sell the type of house which promised him a rich commission. By 1956, a writer for *The Christian Science Monitor* noted that a dozen new “expensive mansions” with swimming pools, greenhouses, and other trappings had been built on Aspen’s Red Mountain, the 600-acre area bought by Fritz Benedict immediately after he returned from the war in Europe. While the town’s architects had previously disagreed on whether Aspen’s style should follow the “chalet” or “modern” model, the reporter noted that they had resolved things by combining the two styles in Benedict’s development. She described one house with a “cinemascope view of town, valley, and mountain tops,” and then noted that so many of the new faces in town (including, presumably, some of the owners of the new homes on Red Mountain) belonged to Texans that one church in town had observed what it called “Texas Sunday.”<sup>173</sup> There is no evidence from the 1950s that Aspenites were upset by the presence of so many Texans, by Moore’s sophisticated advertising of a “mountain estate,” or by Benedict’s building of “mansions” on Red Mountain. For Aspenites playing a game whereby discussions of class, taste, and money were avoided, masked, and muted,

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<sup>172</sup> See “Beautiful All-Year Mountain Estate” brochure in BUSINESS Real Estate file, AHS.

<sup>173</sup> Ann Bartos, “Aspen Scores High For Cultural Activities,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June, 1956, in SKIING Aspen Mountain 1955-59, AHS.

complaining of Texans or of real estate men and architect/developers may have been seen as tacky in its own right. This would eventually change and would lead to Aspenites by the 1960s thinking in new ways about development and about strategies for controlling growth and for maintaining housing for locals.

Throughout many of the stories that deal with housing in Aspen between the 1940s and 1970s, Benedict played some sort of role. The former Frank Lloyd Wright apprentice was Aspen's best-known architect during his lifetime, and he was one of Aspen's masters at ducking the issue of class and denying the town's status as a refuge for elites. In 1975, he recalled his salad days, just after the war, when he was itching to build and sell "log cabins" (which sounds very different from "expensive mansions") on Red Mountain. In no uncertain terms, Benedict painted the image of himself as a settler and as a pioneer. He mentioned his milk cow, his chickens, his big garden, and the overpopulated deer that became easy fare for his table. He avoided discussion of his own privileged background as a student at Taliesin West by talking about how everyone in Aspen was simply trying to eke out an existence in the early days, and of how he was forced to walk to town because he had sold his car to pay for his land. Putting his subsistence life in the 1940s and 1950s into the language of his interviewer in 1975, Benedict said, laughingly, "'It was kind of a hippie thing.'"<sup>174</sup> Nowhere did Benedict attempt more strongly both to deny social class and to celebrate it simultaneously than in his designs. Benedict's homes were the quintessential models for how Aspenites lived both in the past, amidst what they often imagined as pristine nature, and in the second half of the twentieth-century. A 1961

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<sup>174</sup> Adele Dusenbury, "It seemed so remote and such a gamble," *The Aspen Times*, July 31, 1975, p. B1.

newspaper story titled “Under the Sod” told of elk and horses grazing their way across the grass-covered roof of the modern home that Benedict, his wife Fabi, and their five year-old daughter shared on the east end of town next to the Roaring Fork River. The half-buried house was at once clearly inspired by Wright’s work at Taliesin West, but also reminiscent of the dwellings constructed by both Indians and Anglo pioneers in the American West of an earlier era.<sup>175</sup> Made of indigenous material, the home had a waterfall that used water diverted from an irrigation ditch and sent cascading over an outdoor stone wall. Benedict’s big garden from the Red Mountain days had been downsized to a “neatly kept vegetable patch” in a courtyard. The home had a thoroughly modern kitchen. Twenty years later, Benedict sold the sod-covered home and built a house one writer described as a place that could be “a cave for bears” or a “rabbit hole.” The home’s entrance tunnel made the writer feel as if she were walking into a mountainside. Having built into the side of hill not far from the original sod home, Benedict said that the homes he designed were meant to merge architecture and the landscape. He then imagined a future home that “would look even more like a cave...with shag rugs, built in furniture, and Indian rugs on the walls.” These last accoutrements were, of course, not something one found in most caves in nature. But “Indian rugs” had a particular significance when used as interior decorations on the walls of Aspen homes. The design and ornamentation of living spaces in Aspen helped newcomers there to deny their own privileged backgrounds and to present themselves as indigenous rural and rugged westerners without sacrificing the shag carpets or any other modern conveniences of urban living.

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<sup>175</sup> For a discussion of the type of training and the designs students such as Benedict studied under Wright at Taliesin East and West, see Louis Davidson Gottlieb, *A Way of Life: An Apprenticeship with Frank Lloyd Wright* (Mulgrave, Victoria, Australia: Images Publishing Group, 2001).

In the context of Aspen as an old western town with a modern twist, both the imagined future home with Indian rugs and Benedict's two built homes indicate that he was interested in replicating a sense of living in a natural setting reminiscent of a bygone era. Yet, as the *New York Times* reporter in 1951 had suggested with his comment that Aspen's older buildings were not suited for the "wilderness landscape," buildings in the town's bygone era may have been less "natural" than the newly created log homes and cave dwellings created by newcomer Aspenites. Benedict's buildings indicated the "good taste" of his clients—that they understood Aspen and wanted appropriate designs for their Aspen homes. For example, Benedict's "waterfall house" on Castle Creek was built into the side of a sandstone hill, which allowed exposed quarry rock to form the walls of some rooms. When recalling his original design for Aspen's Wildwood School, which has also been described as cave-like, the architect said that he was shooting for a "fairy tale atmosphere."<sup>176</sup>

Benedict's daughter used the term "magical" to describe the Aspen in which she was raised. "Aspen then was such a wonderful little town," Jessica Benedict-Gordon said in 1995 when recalling Aspen in the 1960s. She recalled that in her childhood she and her family or friends "would hitch up the pony cart and go down to City Market or over to Grandma's house...it was a small community, it was very charming, a very easy place to grow up in." In the memorial service program celebrating their mother's life in 1997 (Fritz passed away in 1995), the Benedict children confirmed that in their minds their father had been successful in helping to create in Aspen a special "fairy tale atmosphere." "As the children of Fritz and Fabi,"

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<sup>176</sup> See Joanne Ditmer, "Under the Sod," *The Denver Post*, July 30, 1961, p. 18; Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "Benedict's house in the hill," *The Aspen Times*, March 11, 1982, reprinted in Hayes, *The Story of Aspen*, pp. 264-65.

the Benedict children wrote, “ we were blessed to grow up in a fairy tale. Our small town home was a menagerie of animals in an absolutely picture-perfect setting.” Although one might imagine from her description of using a pony to reach her grandmother’s house that Benedict-Gordon’s “Grandma” was a relic of Aspen’s Victorian era, she was not. The story of traveling across town to her grandmother’s house took on the aura of a fairy tale complete with veiled characters. When we consider that the grandmother, Fabi Benedict’s mother (also the mother to Fabi’s half-sister, Aspenite Joella Bayer), was the avant-garde artist Mina Loy, who moved to Aspen from New York City in 1953 at age 71, Benedict-Gordon’s pony cart becomes a useful prop in helping her deny the privileged status of her family while emphasizing their westernness as Aspenites.<sup>177</sup>

An important part of Aspen’s image through the 1950s and into the early 1960s was that it was a great place to raise children. By 1970, when Clifford wrote that children “lead Huckleberry Finn lives in Aspen,” few would have disputed her.<sup>178</sup> Yet, describing the lives of Aspen’s children in this way offered another path toward denying and hiding class in the town. Saying that children in the town led Huckleberry Finn lives did not mean that they, like Twain’s character, had drunk fathers, were forced into a foster home by the court system, or ran away from home after faking their own murders. What Clifford meant, and what few would have disputed, was that Aspen’s children of privilege like Jessica Benedict led adventurous lives in a rural small town. In this sense, Aspenites were able to raise their children in

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<sup>177</sup> Jessica Benedict-Gordon interview, May, 1995, by Jon Coleman, AHS; Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1996); Fabienne Benedict memorial service program in BIO: Benedict, Fabi, AHS.

<sup>178</sup> Peggy Clifford and John M. Smith, *Aspen/Dreams & Dilemmas: love letter to a small town* (Chicago: Swallow Press, Inc., 1970), p. 30.

the ultimate suburb, a Huck Finn-like raft of safety in an otherwise urban river at flood stage. Nearly every recollection of an Aspen childhood during the era makes reference to the town's pedestrian, or small town nature. A number of people referred to playing around the old mines or to the annual sheep drives through the middle of Aspen in the summer when the animals were moved from down valley ranches to their summer pastures above town. Others recalled the irrigation ditches which were certainly a new part of a city's built landscape for any transplanted easterner. One woman who moved from New York City as a child recalled that she and other children in Aspen drank straight from the town's ditches when they became thirsty while playing kick-the-can in the streets.<sup>179</sup>

Aspen's kid-friendly nature was made apparent by both the press and by Aspen Chamber of Commerce promoters who emphasized the town's rural yet sophisticated livability. In short, Aspen's promoters wrapped the town's children in Huck Finn imagery for a reason. Official advertisements throughout the 1950s noted that Aspen was "America's Most Complete Ski Community," meaning that one could live an adventurous way of life (with children and adults playing out western fantasies) without having to let go of good schools, nice homes, or plentiful restaurants and nightlife. One 1952 ad in a ski magazine listed Aspen's various businesses under the phrase "A GOOD PLACE TO SKI—A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE."<sup>180</sup> These proclamations often were supported by photographs of children

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<sup>179</sup> Appropriately enough for the discussion about images of and the memories of children in Aspen, Steven Mintz argues in *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004) that Americans tend to view childhood as an adventurous and carefree time when in reality children often face challenges as daunting as those faced by Huck Finn and other Mark Twain characters.

<sup>180</sup> See *Ski* magazine, November, 1952, p. 2, and October, 1955, p. 13.

playing and of young adults working around homes that were always presented as rugged and western, yet very comfortable. In a glossy magazine article titled “Young Pioneering In Aspen,” an opening photograph showed three of the Morse boys sledding joyfully on the snow-covered walk in front of their family’s “rambling old ranch house.” When the family first moved into the home in 1947, the article noted, they found dead sheep between the house and the barn. “Undiscouraged by this bit of Western realism,” the writer explained, the Morses got to work renovating. They brought “something of the flavor of their own New England and successfully transplanted Colonial furniture and bright chintzes.” Here were Aspen “pioneers” practically acknowledging their status with a house that was western on the outside but had a New England interior. Photographs of the kitchen—full of “country charm with efficient modern equipment”—and of other parts of the house included children in nearly every scene. The Morse mother and father were raising their kids in what the article’s author described as “the casual outdoor Western manner.” On the inside, however, the Colonial furniture and the bright chintzes reminded the children and their parents of their origins far away from bits of “western realism” such as dead sheep.

Profiles of other young Aspenites reinforced the idea that “pioneering” required building or refurbishing a home there. The photographs of Fritz Kaiser’s home showed a cabin of wood and stone that was full of antlers, books, and Indian rugs. Kaiser’s wife, Millie, poured the cement, one caption explained, while Fritz piled the rocks to make the cabin’s beautiful fireplace. The fireplace, like much of the house, was made of “native” materials. Use of the word “native” in describing

the homes they built helped Aspenites who were not western to fit themselves into the Rocky Mountain landscape and to make sense of where they belonged as new “pioneers” in the region’s history. The somewhat crude house of Dick and Jo Ann Cooper featured a symbol of the pioneering West as one of the small home’s key architectural features. Two photographs showed the couple preparing and installing an old wagon wheel as a part of a circular window into the side of their house. Finally, the article mentioned the omnipresent Benedict. A photograph of the Red Mountain barn he had converted into a hall for square-dancing—complete with a wonderful view of the ski runs on a distant Aspen Mountain—indicated that old and new forms of pioneer recreation and entertainment often melded easily in the very buildings that Aspenites inhabited.<sup>181</sup>

The most celebrated and one of the most distinctive housing situations in Aspen belonged to the people who lived in the apartment below the Sundeck Restaurant at 11,300 feet atop Aspen Mountain. Their stories focused on the imagery of pioneering hardship in rugged terrain as well as on the benefits of that way of life. The octagonal Sundeck, designed by Herbert Bayer and constructed of glass, wood, and stone in 1947, was a modernist structure with a natural feel. The fort-like structure’s concave roof collected water and melted snow for use in the restaurant, reinforcing the idea of self-sufficiency on the frontier. Two of the earliest managers of the restaurant were Howard and Jean Awrey. A 1952 article showed a photograph of Howard chopping wood for use in the restaurant. The author explained how Awrey spent much of the summer preparing his pile of firewood for the winter and hauling to the top of the mountain the 50,000 gallons of water skiers consumed (in addition to

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<sup>181</sup> N.a., “Young Pioneering in Aspen,” n.p., in Box 97, F12, WPP.

what the concave roof collected in the form of snow) during the ski season. “Many people ask the Awreys,” a *Ski* magazine article noted, “if they don’t get lonely, living all alone in their redecorated eagle’s nest... Well, they don’t. There is the clear clean air, the abundance of mountain sunshine and the health and well-being that go with these things.”<sup>182</sup> Although many Aspenites may not have wanted to live at the Sundeck themselves, they certainly liked the image of two people living like eagles atop the mountain in a “nest.” Stories and photographs of the Awreys chopping wood and hauling water at altitude helped other Aspenites down in town create rugged images for themselves that helped them to conceal their status as elites.

By 1956, when the Wirth family occupied the restaurant, skiers across America knew children lived at the Sundeck. The film *Little Skier’s Big Day* (1956), which opened with an aerial view of the Sundeck, starred six-year-old Susie Wirth, daughter of Paul, the restaurant’s manager, and his pregnant wife, Hanna. The story revolved around a day in the life of Susie. Each morning she left her home and skied three miles down Aspen Mountain to her elementary school in town. One morning, Susie got sidetracked and skipped class to ski with two colorful expert skiers played by Fred Iselin and Jean Tournier. Along the way, during what Susie called “the most wonderful day of my whole life,” she fed her pet rabbit “Snowball” near the restaurant, encountered a porcupine on the slopes, saw a horse-drawn carriage move along a snow-covered street at the bottom of the mountain, encountered a cowboy sheriff (complete with a tin star on his vest) in town; she had a popsicle, watched a parade and then a ski race, and eventually headed back to the mountain and followed Iselin and Tournier as they did somersaults and zoomed acrobatically down various

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<sup>182</sup> N.a., “Top of The World...,” *Ski*, March, 1952, pp. 32-33.

ski runs. At the end of the day, Susie rode the lift back to her home on the mountain. *Little Skier's Big Day*, which was shown on a large screen at Grand Central station in New York, was a vision of a child's dream day in what appeared to be a winter wonderland, where cowboys, popsicles, and skiing with zany grown-ups trumped going to school.<sup>183</sup>

Not long after the release of the film, Susie's mother gave birth to her third daughter, Heidi. The *Denver Post* ran a photograph of the mother and baby under a story that described the birth of Aspen's "' most-awaited' new citizen" as "one of the strangest emergency trips on record." After going into labor at 2:00 A.M., Hanna Wirth boarded the chairlift next to the Sundeck and rode down through the night into town, where Heidi was born. Her journey recalled the heroics of midwives or doctors on horseback in an earlier era, who rode through the night to help birth a child. Wirth's case was even more remarkable because she traveled through the night *to the doctor* from her remote house on Aspen mountain. By 1961, after the birth of the Wirths' fifth child, a boy named Paul, Jr., another Denver newspaper article focused on the Wirths' unique living situation. One photograph showed young Susie, on skis readying to head to school in town, with a pack on her back labeled "Sundeck Mail," a reminder of the skiing mail carriers in the mining days. Another photograph showed the oldest daughter, Anna Marie, waxing her skis on a table in the restaurant after hours. Waxing her skis, the caption noted, was " a regular part of Anna Marie's

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<sup>183</sup> *Little Skier's Big Day* was written by Garth Williams. The film was funded by the H.J. Heinz Company. Early in the film, Susie said hello to a lift operator who loaded boxes of ketchup, pickles, and other Heinz products onto the chairlift to be delivered to the Sundeck. See H.J. Heinz Co. promotional material related to the film, Box 101, F6, WPP. See also, Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "Aspen caught on during the 1950s," *The Aspen Times*, October 15, 1987, p.7-C.

homework.”<sup>184</sup> The Wirth family’s way of living associated a new type of frontier imagery with Aspen. They lived at altitude and were separated from a town accessible in winter only by lifts or skis. When Paul Wirth served up a cheeseburger and a cup of coffee to a skier on top of the mountain, his existence at the Sundeck, right down to the building’s fort-like shape, recalled that of the trader at the safe frontier outpost in a western novel or movie. An Aspen postcard of the Wirths’ home and business, titled “‘From the past to the present’—at the Sundeck on Ajax Hill,” presented the space as both modern and as part of the mythic Old West. By allowing the viewer to see the restaurant, with skis resting against the building and with mountains as a backdrop, through holes torn in old newspapers, the postcard suggested that the past and the present came together at Aspen’s fort-like Sundeck.<sup>185</sup>

As the discussion of housing in and around the town of Aspen earlier in this chapter makes clear, the Wirths and their living quarters at the Sundeck also represented the idea that Aspenites housed themselves in exceptional ways compared to other places. Again, the various stories about the Wirths allowed Aspenites, such as the Paepckes at Pioneer Park or their daughter in her modern log abode, to present their own fancier homes as something out on the new frontier of fun in the American West.

By the 1950s, the price of living in Aspen was no small matter. In 1953, Anne Davis, the editor of the *Aspen Flyer* newspaper, bolstered her request for a raise to her chief financial backer, Walter Paepcke, by noting that rent was her biggest

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<sup>184</sup> See Cal Queal, “Posting the Empire,” n.d., in SKI FACILITY: Restaurant file, AHS; and Dorsey Woodson, “They ski to school,” *The Denver Post*, February 19, 1961, n.p., in BIO: Wirth family file, AHS.

<sup>185</sup> The Sundeck postcard, designed by Herbert Bayer, is in the BIO: Herbert Bayer file, AHS.

expense. In imploring Paepcke for a raise, Davis noted that she was only able to get by in Aspen because her father helped her out financially.<sup>186</sup> Although many ski bums in Aspen likely drew on family money to make ends meet, others were not so fortunate. Tage Pedersen, a skier who immigrated to Aspen from Denmark and worked as a physical trainer at a fitness center, recalled that half of his income after he moved to town in 1956 went toward renting a small cabin for his family. "It's never been easy to move to Aspen for people without means," Pedersen said years later, suggesting that the countless people who talked about Aspen as a paradise were rich enough to move in and live there relatively stress-free. After several months in town, Pedersen rented a poorly insulated home for \$60 per month. Eventually, he built a house in town, he said, only because Tom Sardy, owner of the Aspen Lumber and Supply Company, gave him the building materials on credit. Pedersen recalled that Sardy's loans helped to finance the construction of homes for a number of poorer locals. Perhaps Sardy's motivation in helping people to build homes in Aspen reflected both his good-natured personality and his business acumen. Selling construction supplies on credit was better than selling no supplies at all. His lines of credit may also have reflected Sardy's desire to have more people live in Aspen so that they might eventually die there. Sardy also owned the mortuary. Pedersen, who described his own financial state during the 1950s as one of living in "poverty," said, "I don't look back at the good old days in Aspen, because life was not that easy."<sup>187</sup> He experienced a different Aspen than many others for whom life there was easier and who disguised their class while managing to live well. Indeed, census data from

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<sup>186</sup> Anne Davis to Paepcke, March 30, 1953, in Box 13, F1, WPP.

<sup>187</sup> Tage Pedersen interview, July 25, 1994, by Judith Gertler, AHS.

1950 and 1960 support Pedersen's claims that housing was rare and expensive during the period when he moved to town. In 1950, for example, 37% of all "dwelling units" in Pitkin County were vacant. Of these 296 homes or apartments, only eleven were for rent and one was for sale at the time of the census. These "vacant" units most likely belonged to absentee owners. Of the occupied units, 65.5% were "owner occupied." For renters, roughly 35% of the populace in 1950, median gross monthly rent was \$64.11 versus a state median of \$39.25. By 1960, only 26% of the housing units in the county were vacant. Of these 251 units, seven were for rent and twelve were for sale. Tellingly, only 37% of the units in 1960 were owner occupied. As the number of renters grew (a percentage that increased between 1950 and 1960 from about 35% to 63%), so did rent. Although the 1960 census did not calculate median gross rents, it did indicate how many people paid within a particular price range. More than a quarter of Aspen's renters paid \$120 or more per month in rent. For comparison, 7% of Boulder's residents paid within the same range. The most important statistical change between 1950 and 1960 was median home value. In 1950, the median value of a home in Pitkin County—\$4,811—remained well below the state average of \$7,151. By 1960, the median value for a home in Pitkin County rose to \$19,000 compared to a state median of \$12,300. Throughout the 1950s, home prices in the Aspen area rose, the percentage of renters against owner-occupiers rose, and the vacancy rate dropped even as the number of units increased. In summary, all of this meant two things: the cost to rent living space in Aspen exploded; and renters, who had always been present but mostly silent in Aspen, began to argue for affordable housing and against development.<sup>188</sup> Much of the remainder of this

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<sup>188</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Housing*, 1950. Vol. 1, General Characteristics, Part 2:

chapter examines how a renting class of Aspenites, best described as young people from privileged backgrounds who were not yet fully established, fought over the next decade for affordable housing. By drawing on the already well-established image of ski bums as pioneers, by painting themselves as important members of a threatened working class in Aspen, and by occasionally referring to themselves as the racialized other, Aspen's renters and their sympathizers set the stage for local political campaigns by the late 1960s that eventually helped to reshape Aspen's town government and the town's affordable housing options.

Controlled growth served as one of the guiding principles for Walter Paepcke in molding Aspen to his or, rather, to Gropius's design. From the start, Paepcke sought a planner for the town and preached to Aspenites the importance of avoiding tackiness (such as the hot dog stands and shooting galleries he mentioned in his letter to one local in 1946) at all costs. Many old-timers and newcomers alike shared his vision. In the mid-1950s, western writer Fred Glidden—known also by the pen name Luke Short—architects Fritz Benedict and Sam Caudill, and others decided that “poor design” for Aspen was represented all too clearly in the town's large and flashy neon signs and billboards. Fifty or more billboards lined Highway 82 leading into town from Glenwood Springs, and a proposed welcome sign into Aspen depicted an eighteen-foot-high cowboy on skis. In a tone reminiscent of Paepcke himself, the anti-sign group felt that signs not only threatened Aspen's scenic beauty and its land values but that the obnoxiously abundant signs “paved the road toward a honky-tonk

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Alabama-Georgia (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Housing*, 1960. Vol. 1, States and Small Areas, Part 2: Alabama-Connecticut (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963).

economy.” In other words, Aspenites could write about cowboys and dress like them, but a skiing cowboy sign might welcome undesirable people into Aspen. In 1956-57, the group hired Boulder planner Trafton Bean as a consultant and pushed through zoning regulations limiting signage along the county’s roads and in Aspen proper. Their actions were so ground-breaking that the story garnered a long article in *The New York Times* in which the author referred to the anti-sign group as Aspen’s “minute men.” To get through their proposal, the article noted that “the original minute men treated sign owners in Aspen’s pleasant bars and preached to them the commercial advantages of a sign-less resort area in a nation of sign-weary people.” Their argument to sign owners was that if the signs were torn down, the right kind of people would continue to come to Aspen and spend their money. Otherwise, the town would be paving the way toward that honky-tonk economy and its less desirable spenders.<sup>189</sup> Aspen’s appeal for some by the end of the 1950s was clear to local journalist Peggy Clifford. “In the fifties,” she wrote later,

as ‘massness’ spread across America like a noxious fog, Aspen shone like a gallant beacon...the product of a time warp, and that time warp had been artfully improved until it had become the product. America came to Aspen in the way that people travel across the country to see houses in which they were once young and happy.<sup>190</sup>

Clifford was right in that many people who came to Aspen in the 1950s were longing for something different and were attracted to a nearly sign-less or tastefully-signed spot in a sign-weary nation. By purging obnoxious signs, Aspenites masked the commercial aspects of the town in the same way they masked class: less was more.

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<sup>189</sup> Marshall Sprague, “Aspen’s Billboard Miracle,” *The New York Times*, Mar 2, 1958, p. X26.

<sup>190</sup> Clifford, *To Aspen and Back*, p. 78.

Less signs led to more money from more “desirable” types of spenders in the eyes of men like Paepcke and Benedict. Less obvious, more subtle signs of “good taste” attracted more privileged people to the town. Clifford was also right in pointing out that Aspen was an “artfully improved” “time warp.” By the 1950s, Paepcke and the Aspenites who followed him had largely succeeded in making of Aspen a Williamsburg West. What Clifford did not say was that Aspen was created by the privileged and influential, that the art in their improvements involved building facades to blur the idea of what it meant to be elite in America.

Compared to what happened in later decades, growth and change around Aspen in the 1950s seems relatively unremarkable. Although the town’s population increase was steady in the first fifteen years of the ski era, it exploded after 1960. Between 1940 and 1950, Aspen’s population grew by a grand total of 139 people, which represented roughly an 18% increase. Much of this growth undoubtedly took place after 1946; however, because Pitkin County’s population actually declined by more than 10% during the same period, it is safe to say that the Aspen area was clearly not vastly larger in 1950 than it was before World War Two. Between 1950 and 1960, the population of Aspen increased another 20%, so that between 1940 and 1960 the town’s population increased from 777 to 1,101 (an increase of 42% over twenty years). It is important to note here that census data in a place such as Aspen might never accurately gauge how crowded that place feels. Tens of thousands of men and women have probably lived in Aspen since 1945, while only a small percentage has actually been enumerated by the federal government. After 1960 things changed significantly. Between 1960 and 1970, the city’s population more

than doubled to 2,437 (121% growth in a decade), and the county's population grew from 2,381 to 6,185 (a 160% increase). During this time, Aspen experienced more than five times the growth it had experienced in each decade since 1940, while the county's population grew at an even greater rate. Most of the newcomers were between the ages of 25 and 34.<sup>191</sup>

Population growth alone would have altered life in the 1960s for the men, women, and families who had moved to Aspen in the previous fifteen years. Combined with a new pattern of housing development in the 1960s, population growth brought changes to Aspen that few might have imagined just a few years earlier. The new pattern of development came in the form of mutually-owned apartments, also known as condominiums. In 1961, state and federal legislation made it possible for mortgage bankers to insure condominiums. Prior to 1961, condominiums were too financially risky for both developers and buyers. Once the law changed, condos sprouted in downtown Aspen, many of them built by non-locals as sure money-makers. By the summer of 1965, building permits in Aspen pushed the \$8 million mark as investors built "luxury apartments" with alluring names such as Aspen Alps, Aspen Park Meadows, Timber Ridge, and The Alpenblick. If the privileged in Aspen did not see the condos as an indication that America had discovered their hideaway and attached status to Aspen, the condominium named Fifth Avenue may have provided another clue. Clifford and others were shocked by the building boom, and perhaps even more shocked by the bourgeois nature of builders who capitalized so distastefully on Aspen's success by attaching "elite" sounding names to buildings while selling units to equally distasteful owners. She

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<sup>191</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population, 1940-1970*.

wrote that “Out-of-town developers were the first people to openly challenge the assumptions that Aspen was somehow beyond heavyweight commerce, and that the small scale and spaciousness of the town were inviolate.” As Aspen’s biggest and newest buildings blocked views and literally put some old houses in their shadows, Aspenites began attacking the middle-class American consumerist values they had supposedly come to Aspen to avoid. Life in Shangri-La seemed less perfect after the advent of the condo reshaped Aspen’s housing patterns and made it possible for the new “tasteless” rich to buy their way into Aspen.<sup>192</sup>

Prior to the legislation enabling the condominium boom, elite Aspenites expressed alarm about growth and change in the town. For example, Fritz Benedict was outraged in 1960 when he sold a piece of property to a builder who planned to erect three buildings on the lot. Benedict explained to the county commissioners that he had sold the land to a developer named Hans Cantrup with the stipulation that one single family dwelling be constructed there. Benedict claimed to have known nothing of Cantrup’s actual plans until he saw a James Moore real estate advertisement in the newspaper offering multiple units for sale on the property. The commissioners told Benedict that they could do nothing to stop construction, so they suggested that he sue Cantrup. Here was an example of Moore’s and Cantrup’s upward mobility colliding with Benedict’s elitist vision and cracking the latter’s mask in the process. Benedict wanted money from the sale of the lot to Cantrup, but he also wanted only one house built there: perhaps a log “mansion” or a sod-roofed house like the homes

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<sup>192</sup> George Johnston, “Mass of Pleasure Seekers Spark Aspen Building Boom,” *The Denver Post*, August 15, 1965, p. 87. Clifford, *To Aspen and Back*, p. 96. As early as 1957, Aspen issued building permits worth less than \$200,000 total. By 1962, that number reached \$900,000. See “Economic Survey: Roaring Fork Valley,” in PITKIN COUNTY History file, AHS.

he built on Red Mountain. In his protests to the county commissioners, Benedict's attitudes about who belonged in Aspen were clear: developers were okay as long as they were, like him, "tasteful" in their designs.

In March, 1960, the City Council voted to allow the construction of a four story hotel on Main Street in order to collect additional tax revenues. Despite a building height regulation in town, their decision led one local to decry the mentality of "Anything for a fast buck." "Anyone who has traveled even briefly in other Colorado resorts can see the results of such an attitude," argued Waddy Catchings, referring to the "fast buck" mentality. Later, an Aspenite named Ivan Abrams wrote that although he hated the idea of a tall building and although he "would like in every possible way to help keep Aspen from becoming a modern haggard-eyed rat-race trap," he did not think it was possible "to legislate taste." After calling several new motels (all of which he described as low in height) "execrable and hideous abortions," Abrams called for immediate changes to the town's zoning ordinances.<sup>193</sup> Abrams's call for legal action linked class, taste, and politics together in Aspen as never before, because he camouflaged what was really a class argument against motels (which linked Aspen to the middle-class "rat race," as condominiums would later do) as an argument about "taste."

Abrams eventually experienced growth and change directly. In 1962, an Aspenite named Freddie Fisher complained about Bank of Aspen's plans to expand into his front yard. This was one of many letters Fisher would write to the editors of Aspen's newspapers over the next five years. According to Fisher, just as Abrams

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<sup>193</sup> See Catchings's letter to the editor and "Commissioners Questioned About Riverside Houses" in *The Aspen Times*, April 8, 1960, p.11. Ivan Abrams's letter to the editor appeared on page 15 in the same issue.

had “put his imagination to work building a pond named Walden...some cat with no imagination comes along and builds a bank—(of all things) smack dab on top of Ivan’s project...Moral: ‘The long green has it over the short green.’”<sup>194</sup> Fisher’s lesson, with its image of Thoreau’s paradise being trampled by greed, and his hip reference to the bank as a “cat,” most certainly played well with Aspen’s ski bums. Although Thoreau did not build “a pond named Walden,” many ski bums in 1962 knew what Fisher was trying to say about a little sliver of paradise being changed. By that point, Fisher was a local hero because of his working class demeanor and his published sarcastic attacks on Aspen’s high society crowd.

In that same year, newcomers were elected to important positions in town government for the first time since the ski era began its blossoming after the war. “Bugsy” Barnard, one of the town’s doctors, became a city council member, and beer heir Harald “Shorty” Pabst became mayor. “It was the first time,” Clifford wrote regarding Pabst’s election, “that newer residents had tried to work their will on Aspen politically, and they won easily.” Upon winning, Pabst wanted some changes and he upset a number of people who liked Aspen the way it had seemingly always been. He put in a sewer system, improved the town’s electric system, and paved roads. According to Clifford, Pabst was an unabashed elite (although he “looked like a cowboy”) who wanted to make it clear that Aspen was not a place for everyone. Some Aspenites, including the more folksy and down-to-earth Barnard and Fisher, drew their battle lines “when Pabst,” according to Clifford, “stated flatly that Aspen did not want ‘the hot dog crowd.’” Clifford did not explain why Pabst led the charge

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<sup>194</sup> Freddie Fisher editorial, “About Imagination,” *The Aspen Times*, August 10, 1962, reprinted in Su Lum and Barbara A. Lewis, eds., *Fisher the Fixer* (self-published in Aspen, 1973; 1974), p. 22.

to spruce up Aspen if he wanted to keep middle class tourists out. Pabst's son offered an interesting explanation. Nick Pabst recalled that his father argued *against* the paving of Independence Pass, a summer road leading into Aspen from the south, because better roads into Aspen "would put Aspen on 'the hot dog circuit.'" In other words, Pabst may have wanted Aspen to be exclusive and hard to reach, but nice for the people like him who could afford to move there and reinvent themselves.<sup>195</sup>

Pabst's chief opponent on the editorial pages was Freddie Fisher, who was the kind of character about whom novelists can only dream. In the 1930s and '40s his swing jazz band gained national popularity and fame by touring the country, making records, and appearing in numerous movies. After a heart attack and a failed attempt to escape Hollywood for the rural life on an Oklahoma farm, Fisher moved his family to Aspen and opened a general fix-it shop. Somewhere between the silver screen and the old silver-mining town, he supposedly lost most of his money. It is unclear why he chose to come to Aspen in 1952. At the time, Aspen was well-known for at least two things: skiing and partying. Fisher did not ski, but he was known to enjoy a drink. He quickly became famous for his night-prowling in the bars, for the occasional jazz gig with his clarinet, and for his daily forays to the city dump. Fisher became known in Aspen as "king of the dump." His dirty second-hand work clothes, his legendary ability to fix anything or invent the seemingly impossible, as well as the junk-filled yard behind his shop gave Fisher virtually instantaneous fame as one of

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<sup>195</sup> Clifford, *To Aspen and Back*, pp. 92-93. Pabst's son also addressed his father's own reinvention in Aspen: "He wanted his own life. He was proud of the connection and the family, but I think...part of the reason he moved to Colorado was that he wanted to be an individual, apart from the legacy." See Reid J. Epstein's remarkably well-titled obituary, "Pabst was brewery heir and rancher; Grandson of beer titan found his own identity in Colorado," in *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 13, 2005, p. 5.

Aspen's most colorful characters. In providing the town with a visible "working class" face, the former musician who had appeared in numerous films and made records before becoming the "king of the dump" helped Aspenites mask class and play the role of the downtrodden.<sup>196</sup>

In the 1960s, Fisher became one of the earliest and sharpest critics of changes in Aspen pertaining to growth. His plumbing situation might have been a factor in shaping his opinions. When Fisher moved to Aspen in 1952 with his wife and children, their home had a backyard privy but no indoor plumbing. Their life certainly had a pioneering feel to it, especially on a cold winter's night, but it was a life they made by choice and not by necessity. They were not alone. According to the 1950 census, 77 Aspen homes still used an outhouse in the second half of the twentieth century. Although Fisher never publicly addressed the issue of plumbing or reasonably-priced decent housing for the town's workers, he was instrumental in the later political fights in which debates over affordable employee housing shaped local platforms. His attacks on Pabst marked Fisher as a key figure in the evolution of class-based rhetoric later used by ski bums in their fights for affordable housing in the late 1960s.

The ski bums loved Fisher. One particular skier who nearly worshiped him was ski patroller Charlie Bolte. Bolte became one of Aspen's well-known pamphleteers during the rapid growth in the 1960s when he printed an occasional mimeographed newsletter titled "THE CONTROVERSIAL OF ASPEN, high in nonsense, COLORADO." "THE CONTROVERSIAL" read, in style and substance,

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<sup>196</sup> See the photographs of Fisher in Lum and Lewis. Freddie Fisher obituary, *The Aspen News*, March 30, 1967, p. 28.

very similarly to Fisher's countless letters to the editors of Aspen's newspapers. Where Fisher spoke through analogies such as "the long green" and "the short green" and made references to Thoreau, Bolte was more forthright. "The true spirit of Aspen," he wrote in one edition, "is dying; it is becoming common." After praising Aspen's attributes as a small town where "the natural environment" was conducive "to intense activity and contemplativeness to the poetry of life," he warned that Aspen's soul had become "chrome Jeep." In comparing the town's soul to a fancy façade of the rugged utilitarian four-wheeled-drive vehicle locals loved, Bolte said that Aspen was slowly disappearing into "the conquering, materialistic fog, a fog through which few people can any longer see the deep blue infinite above, a mountain side of aspens shimmering in the wind and sun, nor a dog lying in the street." The town, Bolte cried, was "assuming the spirit of a big city." Bolte's own housing situation assumed the spirit of a Thoreauvian shack, fifteen of which he built, in various spots around Aspen, from wood that he carried in his arms or dragged behind him as he skied down Aspen Mountain. For his ability to house himself in shacks built with his own hands, for his abilities as a hard-drinking and hard-working ski patrolman, and for his colorful character, many Aspenites loved Charlie Bolte. He represented the image they wanted the world to have of them, and he made it easier for privileged Aspenites to embrace and assume a similar identity. When he died at age 74 in 2004, one Aspenite wrote of him in a way that recalled Jack Kerouac's descriptions of characters based on Neal Cassady or Gary Snyder:

Charlie was my friend, and he gave many inadvertent dharma lessons by example of his roguish existence... The last time I saw him he was rounding the corner on Ute Avenue, driving a presentable Lincoln stretch limo

that he'd converted into a live-in vehicle for his wanderings between cabins. His dog took the air out of the extremely [sic] rear window.<sup>197</sup>

Like Kerouac and the Beats, many of whom attended Ivy League schools but wrote about and tried to live akin to the down and out, Aspenites by the 1960s used working class and race rhetoric as tools in local social and political arguments.<sup>198</sup> In 1962, for example, a self proclaimed "ski bum" wrote a letter to the editor of *The Aspen Times* lambasting Aspen's establishment for attempting to clean up several bars frequented by "undesirables." "Ski bums," a local named G.G. Roberson wrote, "are accepted here as are the colored *finally* in the South... We might be ragged, dirty or torn. But! It's because we WORK. Again, we were not born with silver spoons, we have worked to build OUR town."<sup>199</sup> By 1965, Fisher argued publicly on the editorial pages with Aspen's mayor Pabst, then endorsed the town doctor and councilman "Bugsy" Barnard to replace Pabst by saying that the folksy doctor would make the race "a Red Onion versus Institute campaign." In writing this, Fisher acknowledged that real tensions existed between Aspen's brazen elites, mostly part-time residents, at the Institute and the locals at the Red Onion.<sup>200</sup> Although patrons at the Red Onion saloon may have enjoyed a beer after a day of skiing and working, one was more likely to find Mayor Pabst across town, ensconced in conversation at a cocktail party with other movers and shakers at the Aspen Institute.

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<sup>197</sup> See "THE CONTROVERSIAL," n.d., in Bio: Bolte, Charlie file, AHS. Also, see Tim Cooney, "Remembering Charlie Bolte, Aspen's Original Burning Man," *The Aspen Times*, September 30, 2004, n.p., archived on the web at [www.aspentimes.com](http://www.aspentimes.com).

<sup>198</sup> For more on the Beats and their clearly expressed desires to write and talk like the black jazz musicians they revered and to mimic the style of jazz in their written work, see Chapter Six, "The Golden Age of Hip, Part 2," pp. 137-160, in Leland.

<sup>199</sup> Roberson, p. 16.

<sup>200</sup> Freddie Fisher editorial, "FF on Mayors," *The Aspen Times*, October 8, 1965, reprinted in Lum and Lewis, p. 106.

Lost upon Roberson, apparently, was the fact that the Red Onion patrons were privileged too; but they were generally younger, which helped them mask their status by playing the ski bum. In his diatribe, Roberson attempted to link ski bums to the contemporary and historical situations of blacks in America. Ski bums, he said, worked for “slave labor wages.” They should “follow the footpaths of Abraham Lincoln” and fight those who “drink scotch” and want ski bums in Aspen “to follow under the harness” of their desire. I have not been able to ascertain Roberson’s race or anything else about him. For the record, according to census data from 1960, Pitkin County’s population of 2,381 included 15 men and women classified as “Negro” and two as “Other.” The remaining 2,364 residents fell under the rubric of “White.” Roberson based his argument on his conceptions of “ski bum” life and work. My point here is that the lives and writings of locals like Fisher and Bolte offered Aspenites models for how to shape their own political expressions. In what was probably a remarkable example of race-masking and class-masking brought together, the ski bum Roberson performed what John Leland has referred to when he described “hip” as any version of putting on blackface in America. In describing the Beats, Leland illuminates our understanding of Aspenites like Fisher, Bolte, or Roberson: “Instead of admiring black culture from the spectator box, they saw themselves as one with it...blowing their own jazz and living their own marginal existence, as alienated from white America’s attentions as the narrator of Ellison’s *Invisible Man*.”<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Characteristics, *Eighteenth Census of the United States*, 1960. Leland, p. 150.

Upon Fisher's death in 1967, Bil Dunaway, Tenth Mountain Division veteran and editor of *The Aspen Times*, wrote of him, "In an age when status is acquired by white cuffs and clean hands he was happy to find something at the town dump he could repair and, until recently, would fix almost anything for anybody."<sup>202</sup> Fisher's obituary, which stated that he was "probably Aspen's best known resident," reinforced the idea prominent among locals by that time that Aspen was a town of contrasts.<sup>203</sup> Fisher was the antithesis of the selfishness and greed exhibited by builders of tasteless condominiums, but he was also the antithesis of the Institute type of Aspenite. Aspenites celebrated Fisher because he represented the idea that the "working man" (Roberson's "slave") was Aspen's real local with a rightful voice concerning public issues. As if to reinforce this notion of authentic locals adopting a working class culture, in the same issue of the paper that included Fisher's obituary, one local woman defended a friend's right to keep horses, old jeeps, and a school bus on his property in town. The "junkyard," she wrote was "a Community Protest Project" for a man who cared little about money in an Aspen that seemed increasingly greedy. "Our quaint little town," Katie Lee wrote, "is slowly being swallowed up by the Great Big Green."<sup>204</sup> For Lee, the local man with the junkyard was tasteful because he did not care about money. Meanwhile, the rest of America, consumed with consumerism, had invaded Aspen.

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<sup>202</sup> Bil Dunaway, "Aspen Will Miss Him," *The Aspen Times*, March 30, 1967, reprinted in Lum and Lewis, p. 9.

<sup>203</sup> "Freddie Fisher rites at Community Church," *The Aspen Times*, March 30, 1967, reprinted in Lum and Lewis, p. 151.

<sup>204</sup> Katie Lee, "Deane's junk" letter to the editor, *The Aspen Times*, March 30, 1967, p. 12-C.

Many of the youth who came to town in the late 1960s saw Aspen as a paradise compared to the places from which they came. Locals who grew up in the town saw it similarly. Nathaniel James, a great grandson of the philosopher William James, lived in Aspen's picturesque West End after his parents (he described his mother as a "skier and a pacifist" and his father as an artist) moved there from New England in 1954. "It was the perfect sized town," he said. "As kids, we were able to move around at will, everybody knew everybody else...Aspen was stuck up at the end of the valley and was very unlike where other people came from." James recalled that he and his family either walked or biked almost everywhere they went in town, even though his parents owned an old military surplus Jeep. The Jameses were tasteful artists and thinkers with a chrome-less four-wheel-drive of which Charlie Bolte would likely have approved.<sup>205</sup>

James eventually journeyed away from Aspen to explore other great American places of escape. Between 1964 and 1967, after several stints in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood and at Joan Baez's Institute for the Study of Non-Violence in the Carmel Valley of California, he decided that the war in Vietnam was immoral. Upon his return to Aspen he resisted the draft very publicly and was arrested by the FBI in 1967. A federal court forced him to enlist in the Army or go to prison. He completed basic training, advanced infantry training, and after receiving the assignment to become a helicopter door gunner in Vietnam, James deserted.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Nathaniel James phone interview, December 10, 2004. Notes in possession of author.

<sup>206</sup> After several appearances in federal court in Denver, James was offered two options: five years in Leavenworth, or a non-combat position in the Army. As he said, "prison was not an option for me." When he was assigned the door gunner job, James knew that the Army had backed out of the deal he and his lawyers had made in court, so he deserted.

James recalled that most people in town supported him and his beliefs when he decided to defy the draft and later deserted. But Aspen was no perfect deserter's haven. It is significant that when James walked away AWOL from Ford Ord, California, he eventually made his way back to a tent in the mountains above Aspen. He did not live in the downtown and flout authority. Instead, family and friends hiked provisions in to him for more than three years while he hid from federal authorities. James said that while hiding he became a "mountain man," dressed in homemade leather clothing and moccasins. He cooked outdoors by his tent. He described himself in a way that combined traits that many Aspenites always saw in themselves: they were independent (even with help from friends and family), rebellious, pioneering sorts, living in ways that kept them close to nature in the American West.

A number of youngsters in James's generation eventually came to town to hide out and to escape going to Vietnam. Unlike James, however, they were less vocal about their decisions to avoid the war. James told of drugs, light shows and other events in town that he experienced before his arrest, which reminded him of the scene in the Haight. People in Aspen, he noted, were not interested in marching in the streets unless they were involved in a seasonal parade. Tellingly, when some young locals decided to protest the war, they burned down a new house under construction at Snowmass. The home belonged to Secretary of Defense Robert

McNamara. One wonders if locals would have burned McNamara's home if it had been an old Victorian in town, down the street from Pioneer Park.<sup>207</sup>

Aspen was about fun, and an important part of the town's story as a fun center always included descriptions of how people housed themselves. A 1965 article in *Life* magazine, for example, told of "surfers" and "skiniks" (beatniks with a ski habit) who lived piled together in a "rickety one story shack," driven by a "no sweat" attitude of living only for the moment."<sup>208</sup> Another ski bum, Judy Haas, saw the town no differently. She recalled that Aspen's hippies were less motivated by national or international politics than by lifestyle choices, such as living in tepees and cabins that put them in touch with nature. Julie Wyckoff lived in her Volkswagen van but still felt connected to the area's natural environment. She parked her VW in a long row of other vans and more than one old school bus along the Midnight Mine Road on the back of Aspen Mountain. She recalled that the bus campers had campfires and cooked communal dinners of fish caught in local streams. "Life was simple and lots of fun," she said. Wyckoff later lived in a cabin without electricity, where she cooked on a wood burning stove. During his summers in Aspen, Michael McVoy credited his ability to live in a lean-to near a creek to his experience as a student at the National Outdoor Leadership School. Another man slept in an old barn until he was arrested for vagrancy. All of these self-proclaimed hippies saw the ways they lived in Aspen similarly to the generations that arrived before them. Housing oneself in

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<sup>207</sup> Robert S. McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, 1995) and Hunter S. Thompson, Douglas Brinkley, ed., *The Proud History: Saga of a Desperate Southern Gentleman, 1955-1967* (New York: Villard, 1997).

<sup>208</sup> Robert Bradford, "Aspen's Awful Problem—Surfers on Skis," *Life*, March 12, 1965, p.44.

Aspen, whether in 1946 or 1966, allowed men, women, and children to disguise themselves as pioneers on a new type of Western American frontier.<sup>209</sup>

Some of the older Aspenites were not so amused with the lifestyles, the look, or even the presence of the long-haired variety of new pioneers to town in the 1960s. As described earlier, G.G. Roberson compared white ski bum workers to southern blacks during the Civil Rights movement. Although his tirade against the establishment in Aspen indicated that tensions existed between various strata of locals as early as 1962, several years would pass before the frictions pushed the boundaries of in-town politics and created headlines beyond Aspen. The divisions were hard to trace, but they were both generational and class-driven. Aspenites from privileged backgrounds, regardless of their age, tended to side with the young, while middle-class business proprietors complained of them and even harassed them. In short, there was an ideological alliance between the hippies and many of Aspen's elite "ski bums" because they both rejected the middle class. In 1975, for example, Fritz Benedict could describe to a newspaper reporter his life in Aspen during the 1940s as "kind of a hippie thing" and many readers would have understood that he was connecting two generations along ideological lines.

After the publication of the *Life* piece in 1965, some locals actually said that the youth in town were emphatically not problematic and that the magazine had simply sensationalized the antics of a few young drunks passing briefly through town. In a statement that must have made the anti-sign "minute men" like Fred Glidden cringe, the town's police chief said in response to the *Life* article that the youth in Aspen were not nearly as much of a problem for him as were the permanent residents

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<sup>209</sup> Bendrick, et al., p. 1-A.

and their crazy ideas. “Like traffic accidents,” Louis Henning said, “that’s our biggest problem. We’ve got no street signs downtown. Some of these people have an idea they want to keep Aspen the way it was 50 years ago.” He then explained that tourists looked for street signs instead of where they were driving, causing wrecks.<sup>210</sup>

As with earlier arrivals in the ski era, the young people who became known nationally as “hippies” by the late 1960s certainly loved fewer signs and Aspen’s largely pedestrian nature (even if it meant watching out closely for reckless tourists). But unlike the original ski bums in the 1940s, who were usually subtle in their critiques of broader society and in their methods of masking class, hippies brought with them to Aspen in the 1960s a more forthrightly hostile version of class denial. One local hippie publication, *Solid Muldoon*, argued that humans needed to rid themselves of materialism by getting back to nature. “It is as simple as getting rid of all the cars,” an essayist wrote. “Tear down these stupid steel and concrete jungles we call cities.” The implication was, as in the past, that cities were the root of all evil and that a small town like Aspen served as a model for what was right in America. As hippies poured into town, however, encounters with some locals increased. In the summer of 1967, the *Solid Muldoon* quoted Bert Bidwell, Tenth Mountain veteran and owner of the outdoor gear store known as the Mountain Shop: “You can’t clutter the town with a bunch of pigs and retain the same quality merchandise. What you need to do is to get a public bath. Scrub ‘em, shave ‘em, give ‘em a haircut and send ‘em off to Viet Nam.” “This is the bigotry and blind hate,” Pat Garvey of *Solid*

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<sup>210</sup> Leonard Larsen, “Ski Resort Life Is Loud But Not Loose,” *The Denver Post*, April 4, 1965, p. 87.

*Muldoon* wrote of Bidwell's comment, "that must be exposed and somehow treated before we can live together in peace."<sup>211</sup>

Restaurateur Guido Meyer showed his disgust with the new transients across the street from Bidwell's shop. Meyer made it clear with a front window sign at his Swiss Inn—"NO BEATNIKS ALLOWED"—and also with his restaurant's matchbooks, which read "No Hippies," how he felt about the latest newcomers to Aspen. Nathaniel James recalled that everyone in town taunted Meyer because he was so easily excitable and was good cheap entertainment. He became especially irate when a band of hippies printed up a batch of "EAT AT GUIDO'S" t-shirts and walked the streets. After claiming that the FBI had arrested one of Guido's dishwashers the previous year as one of their ten most wanted, *Solid Muldoon* jabbed at Meyer with lyrics for their own song, "Hey, Mr. Guido," to be sung to the tune of Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man," which became a hit after The Byrds recorded it in 1965. The Aspen version, sung from the perspective of a hippie-hating murderer wanted by the FBI, included such memorable lines as: "Hey Mr. Guido/I am in the state of grace/There's no sandals on my feet/And there's no moustache on my face/Right away you know how straight I am/ 'cause you're a clever guy/You can tell an honest dishwasher/By lookin' in his eye."<sup>212</sup> From the sarcastic viewpoint of *Solid Muldoon*, Meyer was a fool for worrying more about how his workers looked than about what ghosts lurked in their backgrounds.

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<sup>211</sup> Pat Garvey, ed., *Solid Muldoon* No. 2, June 12-18, 1967, in LITERATURE: *Solid Muldoon* file, AHS.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.; Dick Johnson, "Hip, Hip, Hooray Just Isn't Aspen's Thing These Days," *The Denver Post*, July, 1969, p. 52; James interview; and Gary Ferguson, *The Great Divide: The Rocky Mountains in the American Mind* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004), p. 233.

In 1968, tensions between the hippies, Meyer, and other businessmen turned much more serious than signs and lyrical counterpunches. On July 1, a "citizens' letter" informed the City Council that its signers felt that their "health, moral well-being and business welfare" were "endangered by the large influx of undesirable transients into the Aspen area." They asked for stringent enforcement of hitchhiking and vagrancy laws and for enforcement of laws meant to keep animals out of restaurants and grocery stores, and to keep employees in those businesses well-groomed. *The Aspen Times* retaliated with a pro-hippie editorial which said,

less frightened residents have pointed out that having long hair, or a beard, or odd clothes was no crime by itself. Nor is it a crime to be dirty, or smelly, or poor, or to sit in the sun with nothing to do. Acts only can become crimes, not states-of-being...and Aspen itself would suffer if the frightened ones were allowed to panic the police into forgetting these facts.

Shortly thereafter, several hippies were arrested and brought before the town's Police Magistrate, who happened to be Guido Meyer. He sentenced one 19-year-old to 90 days in jail for hitchhiking, and two others, aged 18 and 20, for vagrancy. Meyer's actions upset many locals, 250 of whom gathered and passed the hat so that a young lawyer named Joe Edwards could file the necessary paperwork and begin the infamous Hippie Trial. Smelling trouble, the City Council removed Meyer from his duties, claiming that he "lacks the knowledge of the law necessary to function as a municipal judge, fails to inform defendants of their Constitutional Rights and has failed to be impartial." Finally, Edwards and Paul Bender, a Philadelphia lawyer and former U.S. Assistant Solicitor General, filed an injunction against the town. As one newsletter put it, they wanted to end harassment "of non-conformists in Aspen and to

declare Aspen's vagrancy ordinance unconstitutional." They also filed a civil action suit against the city and police officials for "seven self-styled hippies on their own behalf and on the behalf of others of their class." Here was a clear example of an alliance against Aspen's middle class forged between the hippies and two privileged people who saw themselves as old ski bums. After two attempts to repeal the vagrancy law failed, the City Council finally voted to abolish the controversial measure. Although they were described by the newspaper editor as dirty, smelly, and poor, some of the young Aspen hippies were likely only dirty, smelly, and poor momentarily. They offered an extreme example of what had been in Aspen a long line of people playing a game whereby they pretended to be something they were not. A key element to their game was how the hippies housed themselves.<sup>213</sup>

After the Hippie Trial, Edwards and a number of the young men and women of Aspen who felt that they were living a "non-conformist" lifestyle began clamoring for a number of changes, chiefly community-supported employee housing. In a town meeting titled "Future of Aspen Seminar," sponsored by *The Aspen Times* and the local radio station KSNO, more than 300 people showed up. Housing was a dominant discussion topic. Before arguing that the only people who liked condominiums were the people who built them, Aspen artist Pat Smith said, "we find

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<sup>213</sup> The entire Hippie Trial affair is summarized extensively in the December 10, 1968, Aspen Valley Improvement Association newsletter, Box 175, F3, PHN. Aspen was not the only community in the Mountain West where hippies and locals fought during the 1960s and 1970s. In *Utopian Vistas: The Mabel Dodge Luhan House and the American Counterculture* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), Lois Palken Rudnick describes "The Hippie-Chicano Wars" that took place around Taos, New Mexico, by the summer of 1970. In addition to signs in the windows of local businesses (for example, "' Keep America Beautiful: Take a Hippie to a Carwash'"), Taos hippies experienced physical violence. A 1971 article in *The New York Times* noted that Colorado was one of the chief destinations for young people wanting to hitchhike across the U.S.. The article mentioned that Aspen and Boulder were major gathering spots for the young drifters but that police crackdowns, particularly in Boulder, had garnered the attention of the American Civil Liberties Union. John Kifner, "They Use the Thumb to Roam the Land: Young People by the Thousands Hit the Road," *The New York Times*, August 8, 1971, p. 33.

it difficult to express the abstract idea of what Aspen is all about. Thus, it's hard to agree on what Aspen's image should be." Although Smith failed to note that condo buyers presumably also liked their purchases, the artist did make a good point about changes in Aspen being related to the town's image. Was Aspen first and foremost a community or was it a tourist town owned by outsiders? The answer was that it was both, and had been so ever since the day that Walter Paepcke decided to raise the money to build a \$250,000 ski lift.<sup>214</sup>

One month after the town meeting, in an opinion letter titled "Aspen Tourists Only," a local writer imagined an almost Orwellian future in which all wage workers were eliminated because the town was gobbled up by new developments and sidewalks to accommodate the hordes of visitors. "The tourists would own the town," the author envisioned, "...so that Aspen will be a tourist town, filled to the brim with non-residents." After his sarcastic rant, the critic asked a question, directed at local politicians: "So what are you going to do about employee housing?"<sup>215</sup> Within one week locals met again, in a second "Future of Aspen" town meeting, and talked about the specifics of employee housing, concluding that zoning laws downtown needed to be changed to permit high-density buildings for workers.<sup>216</sup> The chief problem confronting Aspenites was that developers were building hotels and condominiums without factoring in where the employees needed to serve all of the guests were going to live. Related to this problem, employers continued to find employees willing to do whatever it took to live in Aspen regardless of the cost. In early 1969, for example, Joan Lane, the same woman who had decried "bigness" and

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<sup>214</sup> N.a., "If we blow it now...", *The Aspen Times*, October 31, 1968, p. 4-C.

<sup>215</sup> N.a., "Aspen Tourists Only" opinion letter, *The Aspen News*, November 21, 1968, p. 4.

<sup>216</sup> N.a., "200 attend second Aspen seminar," *The Aspen Times*, November 28, 1968, p. 7-C.

Aspen's new image, wrote a newspaper article that never attempted any sort of journalistic objectivity. Lane clearly had an agenda. She was described by Clifford as "Mrs. Thoreau" because she and her husband had built a home in Aspen of scavenged materials. Lane wrote about finding a woman living in a laundry room at a Snowmass lodge, and about meeting countless young men and women who were either paying nightly rates for beds in Aspen dorms, or paying exorbitant prices to live four to a room without a bath. Trailer parks, "a miserable answer in most cases," she noted, were fast becoming a living option for Aspen locals after so many building owners in the town had risen "greedily to the occasion" when it came time to house workers.<sup>217</sup>

Relations seemed to worsen between the hippies and Aspen middle class entrepreneurs in the summer of 1969 after someone set off several dynamite explosions and blew the door off the hinges at a bar with an M-80 firecracker on July 4<sup>th</sup>. Although the sheriff arrested a non-hippie construction worker and set a curfew for 2:00 A.M. (an odd hour, it seemed, if the idea was to keep people from getting crazy), Guido Meyer pointed his finger at the longhairs. "The Communist party is behind all of this," Meyer told a reporter. "When the Communists ruin our young people, they can take the U.S. from within...Dogs are cleaner than hippies." One of the "dogs" Meyer refused to serve in his restaurant was a Boulder resident visiting Aspen fresh from a tour in Vietnam. He dismissed Meyer with a nonchalance one might expect from someone who had dealt with weightier issues. "If he wants to be narrow-minded," the war veteran said, "that's his problem." Another hotel owner,

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<sup>217</sup> Joan Lane, "Aspen Worker Housing Hard To Come By," *The Daily Sentinel* (Grand Junction, Colo.), January 12, 1969, n.p., in PITKIN COUNTY Housing file, AHS.

who claimed that his business was off fifty percent, suggested that townspeople upset by transients boycott businesses that catered to them. Others thought such talk was sheer foolishness. “As far as the hippie movement goes,” commented jeweler and old Freddie Fisher friend Kurt Bresnitz, “these are voices which should be heard.” Bresnitz, an Austrian who had been persecuted by the Nazis during World War Two, said, “You can’t throw all the people in the same pot.” Other newcomers from the 1940s certainly agreed with Bresnitz and Bil Dunaway, the editor of *The Aspen Times*. Later, when Joan Trumbull Wright and Fritz Benedict, by example, referred to themselves as “hippies,” they indicated that by the 1970s they were aware that the hippies were akin to (and perhaps literally) their offspring who were playing a less subtle version of the game they themselves once played a generation earlier as Aspen’s pioneer ski bums. Although some business owners such as Bidwell and Meyer argued that tourists did not like the hippies, some tourists would have disagreed. One visitor noted that the hippies made Aspen a city of young, gentle, happy people. The tourist did not speak of dirty, smelly, or poor longhairs. She may have understood that the hippies were simply young people playing a game, and it was a game that shaped Aspen in ways that appealed to her as a visitor.<sup>218</sup>

Housing issues escalated after the 1967 opening of a new ski area and hundreds of condominiums in Snowmass Village, just outside Aspen. Ski bums exhausted the already meager supply of available rooms in the area, so they continued to camp, often illegally—in their tents, tipis, yurts, weathered shacks, cars, and

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<sup>218</sup> D. Johnson, “Hip, Hip, Hooray Just Isn’t Aspen’s Thing These Days,” p. 52.

vans—on public lands or city streets.<sup>219</sup> Some of them, like Peter Louthis and Robert Justman, who came to Aspen with more than twenty others from their Bucknell University class of 1970, were lucky enough to bunk together in one of the few remaining mining-era homes in town. Louthis, who had abandoned Bucknell two weeks shy of graduation and skipped his ROTC pre-induction physical, dropped his last name temporarily and went “underground” as a carpenter in Aspen in order to avoid Vietnam. Justman, also a carpenter, thought that he would stay in Aspen one year. According to a reporter, “after his second day on the job, he knew he would never go to law school or business school or do anything requiring suits and ties.” His work allowed for a personal transformation.<sup>220</sup>

Even though many people camped, lived communally, or worked as hard laborers by choice, the imagery of people living in near squalor and working blue-collar jobs was politically significant in Aspen because the young people needed ammunition in their fights against the Bert Bidwells and Guido Meyers of the town who thought about Aspen in terms of its profitability. In 1970, the writer Hunter S. Thompson ran for sheriff of Pitkin County. He had moved to the Aspen area several years earlier after the success of his book *Hell's Angels: The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs* (1966) allowed him to buy a home in the Woody Creek area outside of town. During the campaign Thompson called himself and his followers “freaks.” The previous year, he had worked on the Edwards campaign, which lost the mayoral bid by six votes. They had twin agendas.

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<sup>219</sup> Hayes's book, *The Story of Aspen*, profiles numerous ski bums. Nearly every story includes at least some reference to how the person housed him/herself at one time or another. Most references provide an image of roughing it. See particularly the entry “tipi living, tipi working,” p. 267.

<sup>220</sup> K. Johnson, “In the Class of '70, Wounded Winners,” p. A20.

“Aspen,” Thompson wrote, “is full of freaks, heads, fun-hogs and weird night people of every description...Most of us are living here because we like the idea of being able to walk out our front doors and smile at what we see.”<sup>221</sup> For many of the freaks, the greatest smiles came from seeing ski runs dropping dramatically down the face of Aspen Mountain and into town. Thompson, who turned thirty-three a few months before the election, got most of the younger “ski bum” crowd to register to vote in Aspen for the first time by making a political issue out of how his constituents were supposedly forced to live. His rhetoric made it clear that much of Paepcke’s utopian dream was dead and that the ski corporation and Aspen’s other profiteers were the enemy. Thompson told of how the ski bums were “hired on as carpenters, waiters, bartenders, dish-washers.” They “occupied most of Aspen’s so-called ‘low cost housing’—first the tiny midtown apartments, then out-lying shacks, and finally the trailer courts.”<sup>222</sup> Thompson wanted “to change county government for those of us who want to live here...to keep the place from being sold out from under us.” The young people needed a say in local politics so they would not lose out in the rush for Aspen housing.<sup>223</sup> He was their voice. When Thompson tried to make sense of Aspen’s housing issues, he used racialized language reminiscent of the outspoken ski bum Roberson eight years earlier. Thompson wrote:

The pattern never varies: a low-rent area suddenly blooms new and loose and human—and then fashionable, which attracts the press and...an influx of bored, upward mobile types who dig the menace of “white ghetto” life and whose expense-account tastes drive local rents and street prices

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<sup>221</sup> Hunter S. Thompson, “The Battle of Aspen,” *Rolling Stone*, October 1, 1970, pp. 31-32.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>223</sup> “Shrieval [sic] candidates speak...,” *The Aspen Times*, October 15, 1970, p.7-B.

out of reach of the original settlers...who are forced, once again, to move on.<sup>224</sup>

Even though Thompson lost the election by only a few hundred votes, his use of the term “ghetto” for the place where Aspen’s “original settlers” lived carried political significance for the future of local government and of local housing. The young ski bums were organized as never before. They knew that they carried a powerful message: as a town with a tourist-based economy, Aspen could gain nothing by losing any of its lower-waged workers due to a lack of housing. Most of Aspen’s high-profile visitors were not attracted to the image of Aspen as a place where the celebrated ski bum lived in slums. Dilapidated miners’ homes, like those that ski bums had occupied in Aspen for years—with their connotations of a pioneering, romantic, Old Western, frontier past, littered with woodstoves and cramped camaraderie—were one thing, but the terms “ghetto” and “trailer courts” and the images of the types of people who inhabited those places carried entirely different meanings.

Within the next few years, Aspen became a battleground as never before for debates about land development and employee housing.<sup>225</sup> By 1974, the town’s mayor was a 29 year old ski bum named Stacey Standley. With a political slate that reflected the impact of Hunter Thompson’s push for freak power four years earlier, Standley’s town government prepared its fabled Growth Management Plan.<sup>226</sup> The

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<sup>224</sup> Thompson, “The Battle of Aspen,” p. 32.

<sup>225</sup> See Peggy Clifford’s Chapter Seventeen, “The Pleasure of Business,” in *To Aspen and Back*. See also Grace Lichtenstein, “Ski-Bum Shortage Shakes the Resorts,” *The New York Times*, January 16, 1978, p. C8; and Molly Ivins, “A Lack of Ski Bums Creates Labor Shortages at Resorts,” *The New York Times*, February 8, 1979, p. A16.

<sup>226</sup> James P. Sterba, “Aspen Becomes Arena in Struggle to Limit Its Growth,” *The New York Times*, July 4, 1974, p. 21.

gist of the plan was that it required developers to compete for a limited number of development rights. It included a key caveat. If they submitted proposals that included affordable housing units, they received extra credit in their contests for building permits. Almost immediately, more than half of all the housing units built in Aspen were classified as “affordable.” They were rent-controlled and deed-restricted for Aspen residents—those carpenters, dishwashers, and other workers who met income restrictions and minimum local residency requirements.<sup>227</sup> Less than a decade after Thompson’s campaign, Aspen had in place a wide-reaching affordable housing program. Not only were developers required to bid for the right to build on their own properties, but the county donated land for housing projects. The Housing Authority acted as mortgage broker for low-income buyers, and the county government exempted employee housing projects from the payment of local taxes.<sup>228</sup> With subsidized housing, Aspenites admitted publicly that some people in Aspen had less than others and that class differences existed in the town. With public-assisted housing, the idea developed in Aspen that changes in the nature of the community were tied to changes in the nature of new leadership at the skiing corporation. By the 1990s, sixty percent of Aspen’s full-time residents lived in government-subsidized housing, making the town one of the most celebrated and unlikely centers for welfare housing in America.<sup>229</sup>

In the same year that he ran for Sheriff, Thompson’s close friend Peggy Clifford published a book titled *Aspen/Dreams and Dilemmas: love letter to a small*

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<sup>227</sup> Amy L. Margerum and David Tolen, “Aspen’s affordable housing program helps create community,” *Nation’s Cities Weekly*, February 6, 1995, p. 14.

<sup>228</sup> “Housing actions, potential summed up,” *The Aspen Times*, December 20, 1979, p. 7-D.

<sup>229</sup> Margerum and Tolen, p. 14.

town. It was dedicated to the old “king of the dump” Freddie Fisher, “whose courage, honesty, and humor meant so much to Aspen and to us and whose memory burns so bright.” Clifford’s book offered a brief history of the town, profiled various Aspenites, and gathered their views about change and growth. The collective opinion of most of Clifford’s subjects was summarized well in an ethereal T.S. Eliot quotation from *Ash Wednesday* that she reproduced following the Fisher dedication page: “Wavering between the profit and the loss/In this brief transit where the dreams cross/The dreamcrossed twilight between birth and dying.” According to Clifford’s appropriation of Eliot and her analysis and interviews, Aspen’s uniqueness was dying due to the desire of “greedheads,” to use Thompson’s term, to profit from it.<sup>230</sup> She chronicled the Aspen that she knew and that she wanted. Her words and images recalled an earlier period in the ski era when the evasion of class was the goal for people who wanted to escape the expectations of their parents. Beautiful black and white photographs showed old Victorian houses, toothless old men, cowboys, earthy children at play in the mountains, and young hippies cooking over woodstoves. One photograph of an old house with a VW parked in front seemed to sum up everything Clifford was trying to say. A sign on the aged brick miner’s cottage said “BAN THE BOMB, FREE THE DOGS, CHAIN THE PEOPLE.” Deane Billings, the man whom Katie Lee had defended a few years earlier for his Fisher-like junk pile and who in earlier years actually played bass in jam sessions with Fisher in Aspen’s bars,

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<sup>230</sup> Thompson used the term “greedhead” in his introduction to Clifford’s *To Aspen and Back*, p. xiv. Earlier, during his 1970 campaign for sheriff, Thompson created a fictitious character named Bill Greed, an out-of-town developer, who represented everything Thompson and his followers wanted to defeat. See Anthony Ripley, “‘Freak Power’ Candidate May Be the Next Sheriff in Placid Aspen, Colo.,” *The New York Times*, October 19, 1970, p. 44, which features a photograph of Thompson in front of a portrait of J. Edgar Hoover.

discussed with Clifford his work habits and the construction of his “rammed earth” house. Before coming to Aspen, he had completed graduate study in chemistry and had taught at Louisiana State University and in Denver. In Aspen, Billings worked as a ski instructor, carpenter, plumber, and gas station attendant. By the time he bought the \$600 lot on which to build his house, Billings was out of money. “I didn’t have fifteen cents for a pound of nails,” he said to Clifford in explaining why he built a house out of mud.<sup>231</sup> Billings refused to allow the telephone company to dig up his yard for an underground telephone line, then claimed that he would never have another phone in his house as long as he lived. His status as a rugged westerner seemed intractable considering that Deane Billings lived in a mud house without a phone and with a yard full of junk just below the slopes of the nation’s most famous ski mountain.

While some of the nation’s youth (and some of the earlier generation such as Billings) played out their desires on the streets and in the woods about Aspen, a number of America’s greatest power brokers discussed those very youth in seminars at the Aspen Institute. In September, 1969, in an “Aspen Alumni Session” titled “The Challenge of Youth—Ideals In Conflict,” one of the participants took notes that ended up in the papers of Paul Nitze. He was the brother to Elizabeth Paepcke, and the chief stockholder of the Aspen Skiing Corporation. He was also the former Secretary of the Navy and former Deputy Secretary of Defense. There is no record of Nitze attending the seminar, and the origin of the notes is unclear. One of the striking elements of the six-day discussion was how clearly many of the “youth ideals” the participants discussed played out under their noses in Aspen. One

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<sup>231</sup> Clifford and Smith, p. 126.

wonders if the businessmen and political leaders attending the session might not have considered taking a field trip up the Midnight Mine Road to one of the fish fries at the bus encampment. The men discussed such issues as the Vietnam draft, environmental degradation, "the overhanging sense of nuclear doom," and the search for a "new life style" that questioned "the value system of Capitalism" as some of the "roots and causes" for youth revolt. They did not talk specifically about youth in Aspen. Like the younger generation in Aspen, the men at the Institute brought race into the discussion when they linked what they called the "gradual formation of a youth class" and race together. A one-line summary of a key theme in the discussion leaves one longing for a non-existent tape recording of their talks: "The Quintessence of the Sickness and the Danger- -the Blacks." When discussing violence among the youth, the Aspen Institute alumni did not discuss white kids: for example, the Aspen construction worker who had used dynamite a few months earlier, forcing the police to establish a curfew on Independence Day. They focused on Stokely Carmichael, before noting that their own generation needed "to mediate the backlash developing as a result of the growing protests of blacks and youth." Finally, in their miasma of dire questions regarding the fate of America, the men at the roundtable discussed an idea that seemed to tie together at least two generations attracted to Aspen and the small-town way of life there over the previous decades. "Can humanism and freedom," the men wondered, "survive in a huge, industrial, technological, organized society?"<sup>232</sup> Walter Paepcke, the founder of the Institute, who died in 1960, would have answered yes to that question, but he probably would have added an important

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<sup>232</sup> N.a., notes on Aspen Alumni Session seminar, "The Challenge of Youth-Ideals in Conflict," September 14-20, 1969, in Box 182, F6, PHN.

caveat. He would have said that in order to live humanely and freely in an industrialized, technological society, people needed places of refuge. People needed Aspen.

At the time of that discussion in late 1969, some Americans viewed Aspen as a relatively safe haven in a larger chaotic world. In the twenty-five years after 1945, the images of Aspenites as postwar pioneers in a new-West version of frontier living had filled newspapers, magazines, and films. Most importantly, Aspenites expressed the idea when they described their experiences living there. Aspen provided a place where people could house themselves in ways that appeared to be vastly different from the options available to the rising middle classes in the pre-fabricated suburbs of a sprawling postwar America. In addition, the small town appeared to be a place where questioning the status quo was as natural as Colorado's bright sunshine. Although Aspen's rebels may not have outnumbered its more conventionally-minded citizens, the rebels won important concessions for themselves as Aspen began to grow quickly in the late 1960s. Locals stressed their pioneer-like authenticity through their anti-modern lives and emphasized their identities as a working class by peppering their arguments with racialized rhetoric. By the early 1970s, Aspenites began building one of the largest per capita subsidized housing systems in the country, creating in the process a town significantly different from the utopia imagined by Gropius and Paepcke in 1945.

#### **Chapter Four/Playing**

In the ways they played, particularly as skiers, Aspenites dodged and denied the role of social class as a significant force in their town. Not only did locals celebrate the "ski bum" in order to mask their own status as privileged, but they regularly mocked and belittled the leaders of the ski corporation, and the non-resident visitors, who were the patrons on whom the company relied. Locals saw themselves as the best skiers, the true Aspenites capable of pursuing an adventurous, youth-oriented, particularly western, and romantic life where money and "success" as defined by the outside world supposedly did not matter. Locals spoke often of how skiing helped them to attain a sense of "freedom" not easily obtainable outside of Aspen. Non-locals were seen as the opposite. Aspenites usually painted them as unadventurous or inept adventurers, or as Eastern, dull, and most importantly, as elites who were concerned first and foremost with money. These descriptions explained why outsiders supposedly could not ski or explore the mountains as well as locals. Not surprisingly, outsiders tried to blend in and play at being local in Aspen, complicating an ever-shifting definition in the transient town of who was and who was not an Aspenite.

Ski bums often failed to recognize the irony in their statements of superiority regarding the ski company and tourists. Not only had many ski bums come to Aspen as tourists before becoming locals, but skiing in Aspen would have been virtually impossible without the technology and the services provided by the Aspen Skiing Corporation in helping to move skiers safely up and down the town's mountains. In addition, a healthy economy in the town depended on the company's ability to draw tourists. One thing that Aspenites did notice and comment on occasionally was their

own capacity to draw tourists to town. According to locals, outsiders wanted to be like them: experts in the mountains, youthful and free from the world's grind in their playful pursuits. When asserting their own magnetic appeal to tourists, Aspenites unwittingly acknowledged the class-masking games in which locals and non-locals were engaged.

Just prior to Thanksgiving in 1976, the actress and part-time Aspen resident Jill St. John posed with another well-known local celebrity for a photograph to publicize a film in which they had worked together the previous winter. In the promotional photos for the newspapers, St. John's co-star, Ralph Jackson, played up his typical clownish character act that everyone in Aspen knew so well. He wore his peculiar hat and held his trademark cigarette holder, either clenching it in his teeth or dangling it between two long fingers. In one photograph, Jackson looked at St. John with what appeared to be a combination of lust and awe, seemingly star-struck by her good looks. The caption noted that the co-star knew Aspen to be the home to beautiful women, but "Oh, my my." In addition, the caption joked that although the *Aspen Flyer's* reporters were "unable to discover this young lady's name, we are convinced she should be in movies." Below a similar photograph, *The Aspen Times* said that "Aspen personalities" Jill St. John and Ralph Jackson had teamed up in a "hot dog skiing sequence" for the film, *When A Town Thought Snow*. They were going to be "among the stars on hand" at the film's premiere. St. John was young, attractive, presumably wealthy, and best known at the time for her Hollywood movie and television roles. Jackson was 68 years old, lived in a shack near the base of

Aspen Mountain, and occasionally made a little bit of money by appearing in ski films and by selling advertising space inside matchbook covers. The qualities that gave him status as a “personality” in Aspen and beyond with legions of regular tourists were reflected in the titles by which people knew him: “Clown Prince of Skiing” and “Aspen’s oldest ski bum.” Jackson’s abilities as a skier and as a jester made him a celebrity in a town devoted to playing and to emphasizing youthful whimsy. His play also helped to deny the power of social class in Aspen. Because Jackson embodied so richly the image of the ski bum (even a clownish version), he became a person for many to exalt while claiming identities that masked their own privileged backgrounds.<sup>233</sup>

Ralph Jackson was a native of Swampscott, Massachusetts, fifteen miles northeast of Boston. He lived a relatively mundane life, working for his father at their printing and book-binding business, until he moved west. In 1941 Jackson left New England to join the 87<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry (the original regiment of what became the Tenth Mountain Division) at age 33. After skiing as much as possible on weekends in the years preceding his enlistment, Jackson saw the ski troops as his great escape to a new life in a new place. He trained in California and at Fort Hood, Washington, but received a medical discharge for a skiing injury. By the end of the war, he had married and divorced and had taught ice skating in Hollywood and in Colorado Springs. When he heard about the plans for the development of a long lift

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<sup>233</sup> See the cover of the *Aspen Flyer*, December 11-17, 1976; n.a., “Gala to premiere ski history film,” *The Aspen Times*, November 18, 1976, p. 3-B. St. John may have been known best at the time as the first “James Bond girl” of the 1970s. She played Sean Connery’s love interest, named Tiffany Case, in *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971). For a description of Jackson’s shack, which was built on mine tailings and supplied with water from an old mine, see Cathy Crum, “Aspen pays tribute to Ralph Jackson,” *The Aspen Times*, August 6, 1981, p. 23-B.

at Aspen in 1945, Jackson came to town, worked odd jobs, skied, and taught skating on a makeshift rink next door to the Hotel Jerome. As he told a reporter years later, he lived “the ski bum routine.” By late 1948, he skied regularly in Aspen wearing a costume that included Bermuda shorts (sometimes with long underwear underneath, depending on the temperature), a string tie, a top hat, and eventually, a long, black sheepskin-fur coat he rescued from the city dump. He looked like the curious combination of a graying Abe Lincoln imitator and a circus clown on skis. Jackson incorporated ice skating moves—twirls, figure eights, skiing on one leg, skiing backwards, and other acrobatic acts—into his skiing. At some point he began skiing with the long cigarette holder in his mouth, always with an unlit cigarette. When anyone asked him if he needed a light, Jackson responded by saying that he was “already lit.” He usually skied with a pair of hollowed-out toy binoculars, which he filled with wine, hanging around his neck. Jackson’s abilities as a skier were apparent to anyone on the slopes. His costume, which mocked a stereotypical elite outfit from an earlier era (from the top hat right down to the cigarette holder), was more complicated. On first glance, Jackson looked like a clown without the make-up or red nose and with skis substituted for big shoes. Yet Aspenites celebrated him for reasons greater than his ability to make their children laugh. As the town-clown face of the ski bums, as their “prince,” Jackson helped some locals in Aspen to deny class as a social construct. Like them, the storyline went, he was poor, but happy and free.

Retaining an aura of youthfulness was terribly important to Jackson. When a reporter in 1967 noted that Jackson was 59, but looked 37, Jackson attributed his

youthful appearance to his daily skiing habit. Any youthful look he projected for the reporter probably had more to do with his clownish outfit. Jackson's weathered face looked every day of his nearly sixty years. In 1971, the Aspen Skiing Corporation presented him with a lifetime ski pass because he had become "a legend to the children of Aspen and to the thousands of visitors each year." The company's press release celebrated Aspen's ability to erase time and make older skiers like Jackson young-at-heart. It quoted Jackson as saying that he was "ageless as the rock of ages." In another interview in 1977, Jackson mentioned that staying young and healthy was his main preoccupation and included following a diet limited to fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds. Upon his death at age 73 in 1981, one neighbor wrote of Jackson's regular visits to a chiropractor and of finding an article in his pile of reading materials titled "Look Younger with Incredible Youth Pill." The promise of a magic medicine for aging skiers, with bodies worn by years of playing hard under a relentless high-country sun, may have appealed to a number of Aspenites. When reflecting upon Jackson's memorial service, one local wrote, "For everyone who cherishes the emancipated spirit of Aspen that Jackson characterized so well, his death was a symbolic passing of something hard to name. Hope, perhaps idealism. Or time." The writer suggested that Aspen's sense of free-spiritedness, usually able to make the young feel invincible and the old feel young again, had been defeated by the physical realities faced inevitably by all human beings. Bad knees, bad backs, and worn hearts did, after all, keep some old ski bums from ripping turns through deep powder as they had in their youth. Despite his costume and his continued attempts to play the games of yesteryear, including his pursuit of younger women, Aspen's oldest

ski bum seemed to have surprised a good number of people by dropping dead of a heart attack.<sup>234</sup>

Ralph Jackson serves as a helpful case study to begin an examination of the significance in Aspen of masking and denying class through play, through the cult of youth, through the pursuit of “freedoms” in all of their various forms, and through the pursuit of a local’s identity. Although the search for eternal youth is an age-old custom that neither Jackson nor anyone else in Aspen invented, the ways in which he and others in the town played after 1945 lend credence to the idea that people searched for and often found in Aspen something hard to come by in other places: the freedom to play and act ageless in what appeared to be a timeless setting. Laying claim to a piece of Aspen or to an identity as an Aspenite helped people to feel that they were a part of something out of the ordinary. As one of the only original newcomers from the 1940s who stayed in Aspen but never moved beyond the ski bum phase of life, Jackson developed into one of Aspen’s most famous and most loved oddballs. He helped to color the town as out-of-the-ordinary in a way that delighted many people looking for a different type of place to visit or in which to live. In Ralph Jackson’s Aspen, it was okay to let play supersede work and to make acting silly an occupation. Jackson’s life also emphasized that it was okay to mock the

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<sup>234</sup> Crum explained that Jackson, a neighbor, had come to her house, saying that he felt “funny” after ingesting twice his nightly dose of cod liver oil, widely understood to be rich in anti-aging antioxidants. For a photograph of Jackson skiing in an early version of his costume, see Virginia Packard, “Ski Season Under Way At Aspen,” *The Denver Post*, dateline December 18 (1948), n.p., clipping in Skiing Aspen Mtn. 1948-49 file, AHS. For biographical information about Jackson, see n.a., “Ralph arrived in the very first winter,” *The Aspen Times*, January 20, 1977, p. 3-C; n.a., “Aspen circa...with Ralph Jackson,” n.p., n.d., attached to his memorial service program; and Crum. For details of his memorial service, see Susan Pettit, “Songs, smiles follow Ralph Jackson,” *The Aspen Times*, August 13, 1981, p. 11-A. All of these articles, several pictures of Jackson in his skiing garb, as well as the January 25, 1971, Aspen Skiing Corporation press release regarding Jackson’s lifetime ski pass, may be found in BIO: Jackson, Ralph file, AHS.

notions of how Americans defined success. At his memorial service, Aspenites celebrated that Jackson never picked up his own tab at a restaurant, never really held a job, and never had any “notable successes.” One of the songs played at the service, *Thank Heaven for Little Girls*, was “most-appropriate,” according to a reporter, because “Jackson’s affinity for the ladies was legend.” Others recalled that Jackson died a “character” with many friends and that seemed to be enough. “There was an air about Ralph,” one neighbor wrote, “that we all loved. He exuded joy and love of life, and most of all freedom.” By turning his back on convention, Jackson personified what many Aspenites loved most about their town, and often, about their own decisions to live, to work (or not to work), and to play there. Yet, in talking about Jackson in vague ways, about his “love of life” and his “freedom,” Aspenites refused to acknowledge that Aspen’s “oldest ski bum” lived by himself in a shack and died a lonely septuagenarian inside the home of next door neighbors he hardly knew.<sup>235</sup>

The memorial service for Ralph Jackson indicated that some Aspenites linked the town’s oldest ski bum to a communal “emancipated spirit,” a sense of “freedom.” Although Peggy Clifford wrote that she had seen Aspen in the 1950s as a “final outpost of freedom” in America, and although political activists, such as Joe Edwards and Hunter S. Thompson had discussed conceptually the idea of Aspen as a bastion of democratic self-determination beginning in the late 1960s, some local and non-local skiers had long used enigmatic descriptions of “freedom” to explain why they liked to

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<sup>235</sup> For the quotation about Jackson exuding “freedom,” see Crum; the Pease and Associates advertisement featuring a photograph of Jackson appeared on the back cover of *Aspen: The Magazine* (December, 1977/January 1978).

ski. In 1948, for example, a New York City lawyer named Julien Cornell wrote about the contentment he felt while skiing near Aspen: “there was a sense of the completeness of our lives at that moment, a feeling of being *en rapport* with reality and at peace with our inmost selves.” Cornell’s focus on living in the moment seems akin to what a Taoist might refer to as a walking—or in this case, a skiing meditation. Others returned often to one word—freedom—to describe skiing’s attraction. As noted by historian Annie Gilbert Coleman, two Aspen women struck a familiar chord in describing why they loved to ski: “Well, I think it’s the freedom,” said Elizabeth Oblock Sinclair, “and the speed.” Sinclair, who grew up in Aspen during the 1930s and skied before the construction of Lift One, spoke of the exhilaration of moving downward through snow. Cherie Gerbaz Oates, another native-born Aspenite who raced for the Aspen Ski Club during the 1950s, said that “There’s a freedom and a thrill that you’re on your own power...it’s like the thrill of a person who’s able to fly.” Gilbert noted that Jay Laughlin said of skiing that there was “no sensation like it...You just soar.” What Cornell, Sinclair, Oates, and Laughlin experienced and attempted to explain was a sport that was and is, at times, certainly akin to flying. At its heart, skiing downhill is an exercise in playing with the invisible forces of gravity. Flying off the ground and through the air, if briefly, can describe the literal action of a skier when descending a mountain, or it may simply offer that same skier a useful metaphor when discussing the day at the bar after the lifts close. While it makes absolutely no sense to run as fast as one can down the fall line of a mountainside in the middle of summer (an action that would eventually result in a terrible tumble for even the most experienced trail runner or mountain climber), once that same pitch is

covered in deep, soft snow, accomplished skiers willingly throw themselves down into it.<sup>236</sup> The “deep ecologist” Dolores LaChapelle, who lived in Aspen and taught school there from 1947 to 1950, has written extensively about why some people love the physical act of downhill skiing. “People devote their lives to it,” LaChapelle wrote, “‘for the pleasure of being so purely played’ by gravity and snow.”

LaChapelle, who has also written about the sacredness of sex and caring for the earth, felt that skiing, particularly in fresh powder, allowed her, like Cornell, to focus on living in the moment; and like Sinclair and Oates, skiing helped LaChapelle to pursue the invigorating sense of flying on steeply pitched mountainsides covered in snow. She saw skiing as “Conforming to Nature’s way,” and compared skiing with friends to mimicking the flight of birds. “Obeying the earth,” LaChapelle said, “results in perfect freedom.”<sup>237</sup> “Now, to begin a run,” she wrote,

all I need to do is point the skis downhill. As they begin moving, I push down with my heels so that the tips can rise just enough for the snow to lift them. As I feel this lift, I respond as I come up by turning the tips ever so slightly out of the fall line to the right. Immediately I feel the snow turning them and then gravity takes over and finishes the turn. At a certain point in this process, I am totally airborne, but then, as I feel myself being pulled down, I cooperate with gravity and again push down on my heels

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<sup>236</sup> Webster’s defines “fall line” as “*Skiing* the line of direct descent down a hill.” For the non-skier to grasp visually what is the fall line on a mountain, think of standing at the top of a hill and rolling a large ball down it. The ball will generally roll or bounce naturally along the fall line, allowing gravity and terrain to shape its natural course. While hikers, trail runners, and most mountain bikers tend to traverse the fall line while descending a hill, expert skiers point straight toward it and descend, checking their speed by turning back and forth across the fall line, for which their skis—like a ball—will turn toward by design.

<sup>237</sup> Julien Cornell, “Magic Mountain,” *American Ski Annual*, 1948, p. 83; Elizabeth Oblock Sinclair interview, July 26, 1994, by Annie Gilbert, AHS; Cherie Gerbaz Oates interview, July 13, 1994, by Annie Gilbert, AHS. Both of these interviews and the Laughlin quotation are referenced in Annie Gilbert Coleman’s introduction to *Ski Style*, p. 2. The first quotation from Dolores LaChapelle, used originally in her book *Earth Wisdom* (Los Angeles: Guild of Tutors Press, 1978) may be found in Dolores LaChapelle, *Deep Powder Snow: 40 Years of Ecstatic Skiing, Avalanches, and Earth Wisdom* (Durango, Colo.: Kivaki Press, 1993), p. 3. The second LaChapelle quotation is from *Deep Powder Snow*, pp. 4-5.

and feel the snow lift the skis once again...Once this rhythmic relationship to snow and gravity is established on a steep slope, there is no longer an "I" and snow and the mountain, but a continuous flowing interaction...I cannot tell exactly where my actions end and the snow takes over, or where or when gravity takes over.<sup>238</sup>

Although she discounted the hard-won skills needed to ski deep powder, or even to ski at all, LaChappelle's descriptions made it clear that skiing was a very free-ing form of play. Not only did it put her in touch with nature, but it also helped her to understand what it meant to be alive. Despite her abstract discussions of Martin Heidegger's "worlding of a world," whereby the "fourfold" of earth, sky, divinities, and mortals are brought together by skis and skiing, LaChappelle's main point is clear enough: the physical act of skiing, particularly in deep powder, holds meanings for some people that defy any simple explanation.<sup>239</sup> While the corporate ski *industry*, as Coleman has pointed out, may have been interested in selling Americans a European-styled alpine experience, some ski bums in Aspen and elsewhere in the Rockies (LaChappelle later lived in Alta, Utah, and then in Silverton, Colorado, where she resides today) came to see skiing as a nearly transcendental experience. For LaChappelle, who attempted to give deeper meaning to what other skiers meant when they used words like "flying" and "freedom" to describe their love for skiing, the awe-inspiring nature of the perfect powder turn carried over into the ski town way of life. "During my three years there [in Aspen]," she explained, "I had a brief taste of

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<sup>238</sup> LaChappelle, *Deep Powder Snow*, p. 33. LaChappelle's most well-known book is *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex: Rapture of the Deep: Concerning Deep Ecology and Celebrating Life* (Silverton, Colo.: Finn Hill Arts, 1992).

<sup>239</sup> LaChappelle, *Deep Powder Snow*, p. 45. Throughout Chapter Two, "Alta, Utah—The Greatest Snow on Earth," LaChappelle explains how her gradual interpretation of Heidegger helped her to understand the feelings that came over her whenever she skied.

true community...Skiing was what we were there for, and that was our life.” In order to be a part of LaChapelle’s Aspen, one needed to ski. Regarding Aspen, she wrote later, “It was all over once people discovered money could be made in skiing.”<sup>240</sup> Although she continued to ski throughout her life, the simplicity of her early days in Aspen retained a special aura for LaChapelle that was connected intimately to the people and the place where she spent three idealistic years after college in her twenties. Much of the aura—the feeling of freedom, flight, and “true community” associated with skiing and skiers—that LaChapelle and others felt in their youth was tied ultimately to the simple fact that they experienced such intense feelings when they were young. As change occurred in their lives and in their communities over time, the rosy lens of time cast a special, beautiful hue on their pasts. LaChapelle recalled a simpler time in Aspen before money mattered there; but money always mattered to the Aspen Skiing Corporation, which was an undeniable force in making Aspen appealing to her in the first place. LaChapelle would likely not have moved there in 1947 had it not been for the skiing that the company’s lift made readily accessible. However, by attacking the idea of making money “in skiing,” LaChapelle painted the corporation and other outsiders who invaded her community as elites with different values than the ski bums.

In his 1971 novel *The High Country Illuminator*, Dan Ford linked the joys of skiing with the community spirit among ski bums in the fictional ski town of Avalon (Aspen in all but name). He also linked those joys with the ski-bum desire to remain

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-16.

young and to resist the power of the ski company.<sup>241</sup> In one memorable scene, the book's two main characters, Linda (nicknamed "Silver Fox") and George ("HCI" or "High Country Illuminator"), cross under a rope line to ski deep powder beyond the official patrolled boundary of the ski area. "Finally," Ford wrote,

he was able to stay in the fall line, turning, turning, ass-deep in powder, working his way to the bottom. Silver Fox was yonder, playing in her own private cloud of snow. Once in a while they crossed over, like sky divers; sometimes they fell earthward together, never so free as now.

Their freedom as skiers, as athletes capable of quickly descending steep mountainsides covered in deep snow, was reminiscent of Dolores LaChapelle's nascent "deep ecology" feelings in describing her forms of flight and connections to the earth when skiing. Their freedom was also something both Linda and George knew was as fleeting as their fun times down in the town of Avalon, where they skinny-dipped, partied, and stuck it to the ski company any way they could. After their magnificent ski run on the backside of the mountain, Linda says, "Sometimes I remember that we're all going to grow old. Like Homer. I don't want to grow old." George consoles her by telling her that she may always live in Avalon, "an island in the sea" where "All trails run downhill, and the wind is always at your back," and where every night the people in town go to a chapel with windows made of colored lights, and they "dance to the music of the lights." When she asks George if there is a corporation in his enticing version of an Avalon where no one grows old, where rainbows complete full circles, and where everyone stands in the pot of gold, he

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<sup>241</sup> Ford, who lived in Aspen in the late 1960s, may have had an ulterior motive for changing the name of Aspen in his story. Webster's defines "Avalon" as "an island of paradise in the west where King Arthur and other heroes are taken after death."

responds, “There’s a Corporation everywhere.” George and Linda, with the help of their friends and an old timer named Homer later burn down the ski company’s headquarters.<sup>242</sup> In this fictional version of life in Aspen, ski bums collaborated with old miners to slow the corporatization of the town.

Ford’s novel reflects, often humorously, the anti-corporate consciousness of many Aspen ski bums. Real tensions existed there by the 1960s between many local skiers and the Aspen Skiing Corporation. Regarding the 1966-67 season he spent in Aspen, Ford explained that “The SkiCo was roundly hated by everyone who worked for it or had to get ski tickets from it, which in the end was just about everyone I knew.”<sup>243</sup> Although Ford only imagined blowing up the ski corporation’s headquarters at the end of his novel, ski bums in Aspen resisted and fought from the start many of the company’s policies, particularly ticket pricing. For example, soon after Ralph Jackson came to town in 1946, he earned the nickname “old one-ride Jackson” because of his ability to cover the punch holes of his one-ride lift ticket with his fingers.<sup>244</sup> By 1954, tourists complained of long lift lines. The minimum weekend wait time often exceeded two hours.

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<sup>242</sup> Dan Ford, *The High Country Illuminator* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971), p. 83.

<sup>243</sup> Dan Ford email correspondence with the author, April 5, 2005.

<sup>244</sup> N.a., “Aspen circa...with Ralph Jackson,” n.p.. Not only did Ralph Jackson ride the lift for free, but he also taught skiing in what became known as the Underground Ski School, whereby he taught lessons illegally (the Aspen Ski School owned a Forest Service permit and Jackson did not) to beginners at a much cheaper rate than the official ski school charged for their lessons. While working particularly with children, Jackson, as reporter Ralph Thornton noted, did not endear himself “to the management.” Although the ski company stated as its motivation for giving Jackson a lifetime ski pass in 1971 that they wanted to celebrate his contributions to Aspen’s “character,” and that they had “always cast a benign eye” on his underground teaching, they may have cut a deal with him to stop his work. After Jackson’s death, when locals in Aspen nominated him for inclusion in the Colorado Ski Museum’s Hall of Fame, the Aspen Skiing Corporation declined to support the nomination and Jackson was not admitted. N.a., “Jackson nominated for Hall of Fame,” *The Aspen Times*, September 10, 1981, p. 17-B. In 1976, Aspen police and company officials physically removed from the lift line Don Lemos, who, like Jackson, had taught lessons as an independent instructor to Jill St. John and

Meanwhile, the ski company considered creating a higher-priced “preferential line.” Paepcke wrote a letter to William Hodges, the Denver attorney who served as the corporation’s president, regarding a preferential line. He complained about the bunkhouses and other cheap lodges in town that allowed for large numbers of young skiers to stay in Aspen and crowd the lifts. The “preferential line,” Paepcke wrote, might “raise a cry of ‘undemocratic’” but it was “after all, in accordance with thoroughly good old American tradition: those who want to go to a World Series Game may stand in line for hours and obtain unreserved bleacher seats.” Paepcke continued his class-infused argument by saying that the Skiing Corporation needed to come up with a plan in order to avoid “a public fee golf course type of customer or Winter Park skier...” Here was an argument that made it clear, as other comments had in years past, that Paepcke had an elitist’s vision for Aspen and the types of people who recreated there. Bob Collins, the same man who had complained years earlier to Paepcke of too many Jews in Aspen, wrote to Hodges that while in Aspen in 1954 he noted a new “problem”:

In spite of the fact that we now employ one man exclusively to watch lift tickets, the old racket of trying to ‘gyp’ on tickets continues. I had the pleasure of being entertained by one of our directors, and while at his party three of the young ladies present were boasting of their prowess in getting on the lift without tickets. I am sorry to say that in the group of eight of us that came to Aspen from Pasadena, two of our crowd boasted of the fact that they had also ‘beat our ticket-watcher to the punch.’ This business of beating the lift out of tickets seems to be sort of an amateur sport—honor and honesty, though, don’t seem

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others. The company cited a federal ruling from five years earlier—the year Jackson received his lifetime pass—which emphasized that working as an independent ski instructor was illegal. For more on the Lemos affair, see Steve Lang, “Aspen Officials close gate on freelance ski instructor,” *Rocky Mountain News*, March 5, 1976, p. 8.

to enter the picture. If this sort of thing went on among acquaintances of mine, it is no doubt quite prevalent among other patrons of the lift. I am afraid that the people we have watching for tickets are too gullible and too susceptible to the wiles of the female, for it is in the female that I observed most of this practice arose.<sup>245</sup>

The scenarios Collins described indicate that outsiders, such as the “young ladies” at the party and his friends from Pasadena, may have been mimicking locals like Ralph Jackson in attempting to “gyp” the ski company. In its most complicated form, their action in the lift line indicated that outsiders sometimes acted similarly to locals, who themselves were stealing rides on the lift. In a simpler explanation, as Collins indicated, lift operators who allowed for free rides may have been trying to win favor with out-of-towners just as they certainly won favor with locals.

Within months of Collins’s fly-on-the-wall observations for the corporation and his letter to Hodges, more tensions surfaced between locals and the Aspen Skiing Corporation. Hodges wrote to Aspen town doctor Robert “Bugsy” Barnard, a local representative on the corporation’s Board of Directors, and informed him that Aspenites would no longer receive discounted season ski passes or “resident” rates on daily tickets. Although the company might not be able to limit outright theft by skiers seeking free lift rides, it could cut its losses by abolishing lift ticket discounts for locals. In his letter to Barnard, Hodges noted that few of the resident season pass holders had lived in Aspen before 1946 and the influx of newcomers. Although his

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<sup>245</sup> For examples of letters criticizing the lift line situation in Aspen by the early 1950s, see Hoyt Post Steele to The Aspen Skiing Corporation, December 30, 1953, and Peter Bayer to Walter Paepcke, February 20, 1954, Box 95, F2, WPP. Steele got Paepcke’s attention by noting that hundreds of Aspen’s greatest fans were becoming discouraged by the ridiculously long lift lines. He asked a simple question: “Should we go to a less wonderful spot—say Sun Valley where lift lines are only 20 minutes long?” For the quotations used above during the discussions about how to fix the lift line problems, see Paepcke to William V. Hodges, Jr., March 13, 1954, and Robert H. Collins to Hodges, March 18, 1954, Box 95, F2, WPP.

comment might suggest that oldtimers received free tickets, they did not. Hodges questioned why locals should get a cheaper rate for skiing simply because they lived in or near the town for the ski season. Part of the reasoning for abolishing the discounted passes, Hodges said, was that the company wanted "to eliminate this constant dispute over 'who is a resident'" in what he labeled as a town largely full of transients. Among the many factors which Hodges failed to consider was the role of transients in the workforce. Without many of the non-native ski bums seeking cheaper and plentiful skiing as locals, the businesses in Aspen would have a harder time finding employees. Local newcomer Henry Stein, after noting that he had read the letter to Barnard, replied with invective. Stein scolded Hodges, saying, "My quarrel with you is not about rates but about your ill advised lack of respect and affection for this community." He reminded Hodges of the hard work and personal sacrifices (including at least one blown engine in a local's Jeep) during the 1954 Jeep Lift, when locals had driven skiers to the top of the ski area after the lift had broken. Stein wrote that although he disliked Hodges's rude and abrupt way of approaching the subject, he understood the reasoning behind the raising of locals' lift rates. "The exceptions to this, of course," Stein continued, "are the school children whose special low daily rates should be a matter of pride and publicity to the corporation." The debates about lift prices entered public discussion at Chamber of Commerce meetings around the same time. Papecke wrote to Hodges, saying that people in the community were upset. He suggested that they raise prices but not as high as originally planned.

Three years later, in 1957, tensions between locals and the corporation increased. After Lift One broke down again, Dr. Barnard wrote to the chief

stockholder, Paul Nitze, and called for the removal of Hodges and a few other Denverites whom Barnard felt had a “strangle-hold on the Aspen Skiing Corporation.” Barnard, who was elected to the company’s Board of Directors in 1954 after a group of Aspenites pooled their money and bought 11,500 shares of Skiing Corporation stock, argued strongly that locals in the company town deserved a larger say in how the company operated. “This group,” Barnard said in reference to the Denver men, “in no way owns a controlling interest, yet it exercises complete control over the Corporation’s management activities.”

Although Walter Paepcke had certainly agreed with company directors like Hodges and Collins about ticket pricing and resident rates, when he dealt with members of the community, Paepcke displayed skill and tact in negotiating the tricky terrain between outsiders and locals. He was a masterful communicator, often capable of smoothing over problems that the more fiery attorney Hodges had initiated. For example, in 1952, Aspenite John Herron began renegotiating the lease terms for the surface rights of his Aspen Mountain mining claims (over which Lift One passed) with the Skiing Corporation. In his renegotiation, he asked for year-round lift passes for himself and his family. Hodges wanted to withhold the passes but feared that Herron could bring a law suit and have the lift removed from his ground. He saw Herron as possibly “sore and vindictive.” Paepcke wrote a charming letter to Herron, promised the lift passes, and said playfully that he hoped that in the future, both the ski company and Herron “will all count twelve before you get typically Irish and get your dander up.” To Hodges, Paepcke wrote, “I believe that offering him and his eighty-five year old mother and his brother Bill three

complimentary passes will not unduly lengthen the waiting lines of the ski tow and at the same time make him feel that he is part of the family.” This was Paepcke at his best, an illustration of a special touch that both the ski company and the Aspen Institute would miss especially after his death.<sup>246</sup>

The hostility between the ski company and Aspenites eased somewhat in 1958, when two new private ski areas (Friedl Pfeiffer’s “Buttermilk” and Whipple Van Ness Jones’s “Highlands”) opened down the road from Aspen Mountain. Highlands quickly became the locals’ mountain. After the grand opening, resident ticket sales at Aspen Mountain dropped 50%. Hodges complained that part of the reason was that “Jones has passed out season passes to every resident of Aspen except the local dog catcher.” Hodges and Paepcke chafed that Jones, a Harvard graduate and former Wall Street stockbroker, had won local favor by developing a ski area where “making turns” (skiing) became akin to making a statement against the Aspen Skiing Corporation.

In 1960, when the Aspen Skiing Corporation increased season pass prices for children—the one thing Henry Stein had warned Hodges six years earlier never to do—Aspenites grew incensed. Barnard and Freddie Fisher organized and led a “Mother’s march” to protest the action. During the march of local moms and their children—in which Barnard wore a wig, skirt, and saddle oxfords, thus masking class and gender at the same time—one young protestor carried a sign that read, “I wish my father were rich.” Implied by the sign was that kids in Aspen were poor while the

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<sup>246</sup> Hodges to Paepcke, October 15, 1952, Paepcke to John L. Herron, December 9, 1952, and Paepcke to Hodges, December 9, 1952, in Box 94, F22, WPP; See also, Hodges to Dr. Robert Barnard, August 3, 1954, and Henry L. Stein to Hodges, August 5, 1954, in Box 95, F2, WPP; Paepcke to Hodges, August 8, 1954, in Box 95, F2, WPP; and Robert Barnard, M.D., to Paul Nitze, Box 95, F5, WPP.

regularly visiting children of the corporation's outside leaders, including the Denver men, were wealthy. After the march, the ski company revoked Barnard's season pass. Soon after, following a medical emergency on the mountain for which he was called to the rescue, Dr. Barnard charged the company the exact sum for the price of his revoked pass.<sup>247</sup> The mother's march exemplified well the tensions that existed between locals and the outsiders whom locals associated with the company. One implication of a march involving children was that outsider moneyed interests threatened the "freedom" and youthfulness that Aspenites attained by skiing.

With the 1958 opening of both Highlands and Buttermilk and the 1967 opening of the ski corporation's new ski area at Snowmass, eight miles from town, arguments about lift ticket pricing and access to Aspen Mountain subsided briefly as skiers spread out among the four mountains. By the early 1970s, demand had again met supply and the Skiing Corporation chose to carve more room for tourists by limiting cheaper passes for locals. During the 1971-72 ski season, company president Darcy Brown said, "We cannot let everyone go up on the mountain who wants to. Last year we had to limit the number of season passes in order to ensure good skiing for the tourists."<sup>248</sup> Within a few years, the lift ticket pricing practices of the Skiing

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<sup>247</sup> N.M. Inman to Hodges, December 18, 1958, and Hodges to Inman, December 10, 1958, Box 95, F6, WPP. See also, Martie Sterling, "Bugsy Barnard remembered, 1916-82," *The Aspen Times*, June 24, 1982, p. 5-A. For a photograph of the child carrying the sign during the "Mother's march," see *The Aspen Times*, October 7, 1960, p. 14.

<sup>248</sup> Brown quotation in Jill Durrance and Dick Durrance, "A Town...A Mountain...A Way of Life," *National Geographic*, December, 1973, p. 796. For more of Darcy Brown's opinions, see D.R.C. Brown interview, April 10, 1979, by Jeanette Darnauer, AHS. In this interview, Brown, who took over the reigns of the Aspen Skiing Corporation from William Hodges, Jr., in 1958, said, "I still have difficulty in rationalizing why a local should expect to pay less for the same lift ride that someone coming in from the outside does." The long debate in Aspen about who might claim access to a local natural resource—snow—is part of a much larger story in Western American and environmental history about the power relationships that come into play in the management of the region's natural resources. One of the most informative discussions of the local versus non-local fight for the control

Corporation raised such ire in Aspen that locals complained to United States Senator Floyd Haskell of Colorado. He launched an investigation and put before Congress a bill to regulate the industry. Due mainly to Aspen locals' ability to paint themselves as the downtrodden, Haskell felt that the Aspen Skiing Corporation and other big ski resorts in Colorado needed closer scrutiny because most of them, including Aspen Mountain and Snowmass, operated on National Forest lands. By the end of the 1970s, the Pitkin County Board of Commissioners underlined the significance of tourists associating fun and youthfulness with Aspen. They argued not only that the ski company's ticketing policies had led to a labor shortage in the town but that the "absence of affordable skiing for local employees on Aspen Mountain...detracts from tourist experience by the absence of young, enthusiastic local employee skiers."<sup>249</sup> In other words, the town's politicians believed that the presence of ski bums had become part of Aspen's appeal.

The long arguments over the years about ticket pricing and access to the ski company's lifts and the snow underneath them resulted directly from Aspen's increased popularity, and from the immense growth of skiing as a leisure activity in Western America throughout the 1950s and later. One of the clear watershed moments in the histories of both Aspen and of skiing as an American sport occurred in early 1950 when Aspen hosted the first Federation Internationale de Ski (FIS) World Championships ever to be held in the United States. When over one hundred

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of resources may be found in Louis Warren, *The Hunter's Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

<sup>249</sup> For more examples of the lift ticket pricing debate in the 1970s, see John McBride to Senator Floyd Haskell c/o (Aspen) Mayor Stacey Standley, October 1, 1975, and D.R.C. Brown to The Honorable Floyd Haskell, November 4, 1976, Box 178, F2, PHN. See also Floyd Haskell's entries in the *Congressional Record*, July 16, 1975, and April 22, 1977. Clippings of these entries may be found in Series II, Box 41, of the Floyd K. Haskell Papers, Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder (FKH).

skiers and dignitaries from more than a dozen countries descended upon Aspen for a week of competition, the town stood for a brief moment in a well-lit section of the national and international spotlights as a place where play, the celebration of youthfulness, good sportsmanship, and the American dream of opportunity and freedom lay in abundance. It would be an important week in molding Aspen's image, for the FIS world championships allowed Aspen to stand out as a special place of healing in a world still bandaged from the wounds of war. As one journalist put it later, FIS was "the race that started it all." It bolstered Aspen's identity as a ski town with which to be reckoned and as a special place where one might escape for all sorts of fun.<sup>250</sup> Yet the story of the FIS coming to Aspen also illuminates the tensions between ski bums, who claimed that they were not interested in money, and the Aspen Skiing Corporation, whose interest was quite the opposite. Dick Durrance, who worked at the time of FIS for the Aspen Skiing Corporation, told a journalist that "The whole point of getting it [the FIS] was we got the money to cut the different runs for the public. We made it [the mountain] very skiable with Ruthie's Run, particularly. We cut that very wide, mostly for the public." The purpose of FIS varied in the eyes of locals and in the eyes of the company.<sup>251</sup>

In 1949, the company began to try to procure the world championships for Aspen. The Aspen Publicity Office produced a Herbert Bayer-designed booklet which preached the town's advantages as a possible site for either the 1950 or the 1954 competition. Unlike the Olympics, which at that time categorized ski instructors as professionals and therefore as ineligible to compete, the FIS races were

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<sup>250</sup> Scott Condon, "The race that started it all," *The Aspen Times*, February 12-13, 2000, p.13-A.

<sup>251</sup> Durrance interview, AHS.

“open” and were considered among skiers and ski racing fans to be the truest tests of the best talents in the world. Because the FIS races planned for 1946 did not take place, the races in 1950 were to be the first World Championships since the end of World War Two. The town that won the bid for the races could claim considerable bragging rights and would be able to draw more tourists. Aspen needed to convince the FIS officials that an American ski area had the necessary terrain to stage a real test for the world’s best skiers. Because all previous FIS championships were held in Europe, Bayer’s booklet focused largely on the mountain. It included cross-section drawings that showed the vertical drop of proposed race courses, and it also pitched the town of Aspen as “a revitalized modern community containing all of the professional, recreational, and cultural elements of an interesting year round place to live.” This corporate description was a very different description of Aspen than the newcomer’s talk of dirt streets and dilapidated houses. The Aspen sales-pitch team, led by Durrance, also made it clear that Aspen had a nice hospital staffed with proficient doctors, nurses, and a dentist. Eventually, few questioned Aspen’s ability to offer tough courses and necessary services.<sup>252</sup>

By the time the FIS officially awarded the alpine races to Aspen (Lake Placid, New York, won the right to host the Nordic events), Aspenites and Coloradoans understood the importance of the championships in raising the prestige of their town and their state within the national and international communities of downhill skiers. Brewing tycoon and Aspen Skiing Corporation stockholder Adolph Coors, III, served as chairman of the publicity and finance committees for the Aspen FIS. He wrote in one magazine article, titled “Wonderland of winter sports,” that recreational skiers

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<sup>252</sup> Aspen Publicity Office pamphlet, in TOURISM: Aspen Before 1950 file, AHS.

should come to Aspen during the month prior to the event to watch skiing's brightest stars in training and to rub elbows with them on the slopes and about town, before the masses of spectators converged. In addition to promoting Aspen and Colorado skiing, the magazine's editor noted that the FIS event would be the "skier's way of helping to promote better understanding among nations of the world."<sup>253</sup>

As with many international sporting events, this idea of diplomacy through athletics became an important theme for Aspen's FIS. As the first world skiing championship held since World War Two and the first ever to be held in the United States, the races at Aspen offer not only a window through which to examine the tensions between locals and outsiders like Coors, but a way to understand Aspen's place within a broader story of postwar politics. Leonard Woods, who served as the Executive Secretary for the event, tried to get President Harry Truman to write an introduction to the official program in which Truman would recognize the importance of the FIS being held for the first time in the U.S., and would then ask the competitors to exhibit "the best in good will and good sportsmanship." After receiving a rejection from the State Department, Woods noted that the government was "leery of some international entanglement arising from the President's message." Woods pleaded with Paul Nitze, at the time a member of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff (where he soon wrote the famous NSC 68, which helped shape American Cold War policy) to intervene on behalf of the FIS. Nitze was also the uncle to Woods's wife, Nina Paepcke. Why Truman staffers may have seen a simple endorsement of good sportsmanship as problematic is unclear. Chances are that the Truman White House

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<sup>253</sup> Adolph Coors, III, "Wonderland of winter sports," *Colorado Wonderland* magazine (Winter, 1949), p. 10.

simply rejected the proposal as they would have rejected many of the proposals for endorsements that were delivered to them on a daily basis. Nitze told Woods that had he known earlier about the desire for a letter from the president, he might have made a difference. With the program now past due at the printers, Nitze was not going to bother the president.<sup>254</sup>

FIS drew to Aspen the largest group of working press ever to have assembled in Colorado up to that time. The 77 newspaper and magazine reporters, television and newsreel cameramen, photographers, and radio broadcasters came from as far away as Europe and as close as Denver. Many arrived in town more than a week before the races began in order to cover the racers' training sessions and experiences about town. Their stories reflected upon Aspen as a special place in a number of interesting ways.

One of the first stories to hit the press as the FIS week approached came nine days before the first race. "Reds May 'Observe' FIS Meet," blared the *Denver Post*. The article noted that observers from the Russian embassy in Washington were reportedly making the journey to Aspen in hopes of one day staging an FIS event in the Soviet Union. Once the Russians arrived in Denver, the *Post* presented their tale as one of cloak-and-dagger intrigue. "The trio arrived in Denver," the newspaper reported, "via United Air Lines Friday night and quickly switched to train travel before anyone in Denver knew of their presence." *The New York Times* saw the Russian presence through a political lens. The Soviets, according to an "exceptionally reliable source" to the *Times*, were in Aspen to veto the applications of

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<sup>254</sup> See Nitze and Woods correspondence, November, 1949, Box 177, F8, PHN. See also Strobe Talbott, *The Master of the Game: Paul Nitze and the Nuclear Peace* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

Germany and Japan to join the 32-member FIS. The *Times* did not report the results of a membership meeting.<sup>255</sup> What reporters wrote about, once the Russians arrived, quickly became part of the larger storyline that presented Aspen as a place where the common love for skiing and fun helped to ease any possible political tensions. In an article headlined “Russians Impressed With Aspen, So They Break Out With Vodka,” a *Rocky Mountain News* reporter noted that during a party at the Jerome with FIS officials, Colorado’s governor, and others, the Soviets sated the crowd with “stuff that is guaranteed to make comrades of capitalists in nothing flat.” “The cocktail party,” wrote Bob Collins of the *News*, “was another of the acts by the Russians contrary to the standard operating procedure of their diplomats... Upon arrival in Aspen they granted a press conference at which they spoke rather freely.” This type of story about the Russians made it seem possible that in 1950 Aspen, an ostensibly classless society, even the staunchest Communists felt an overwhelming sense of freedom.<sup>256</sup>

Freedom and youthfulness were closely intertwined in the stories that emerged from Aspen during the FIS. At the end of his article on the Russian cocktail party, Collins noted that everyone in Aspen could not help but get into “the spirit of the thing” when watching “these kids flashing down (the mountain) at 30 to 60 miles an hour.” Not every participant was a “kid.” Several journalists relished telling of competitors in their thirties, or of the Austrian Trude Beiser-Jochum, who had given birth just four months prior to coming to Aspen and took second place in the slalom

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<sup>255</sup> N.a., “Working Press to Jam Aspen F.I.S. meet,” *The Denver Post*, n.d., n.p.; n.a., “Reds May ‘Observe’ FIS Meet,” *The Denver Post*, n.d., n.p., and Dan Partner, “Russ Trio to Watch Aspen Ski Tourney,” *The Denver Post*, n.d., n.p., in *Ski Racing: 1950 FIS Clippings*, AHS; Frank Elkins, “High Rate of Injuries Forces Skiers to Curb Speed of Aspen Practice Runs,” *The New York Times*, Feb 12, 1950, p. 140.

<sup>256</sup> Bob Collins, “Russians Impressed With Aspen, So They Break Out With Vodka,” *Rocky Mountain News*, February 14, 1950, p. 39.

event. Britain's lone participant, Evie Pinching, had not raced in more than ten years and had only recently recovered from a broken back suffered in an automobile accident in Austria. Another story described a particularly spry 70-year-old onlooker, Pablo Jacobi, who still skied. A native Argentinean who was a steel industrialist in New York, Jacobi told a reporter of a good friend who skied at age 84. The accompanying photograph of Jacobi showed a man who looked many years younger than seventy. In Jacobi's case, running slalom gates or speeding downhill in Aspen took a backseat to skiing more leisurely and observing the racers. Even so, his skiing gave him a sense of the youthfulness so readily abundant among the "kids" racing for their countries. The FIS president, Norway's Colonel N. R. Ostgaard, age 64, no longer skied very often "because I am busy, not because of my age." After the stories about Pinching and Jacobi, readers might readily conclude that there was no such thing as an *old* skier.<sup>257</sup>

Another theme for journalists at the FIS was a very simple one: foreign competitors (mostly European) were embraced in Aspen and welcomed as family in a land of opportunity and abundance. Although the racers were outsiders, their abilities as world-class skiers helped Aspenites to accept them as locals for several weeks leading up to and during the races. One article noted that a "dollar dearth" explained why more than half of the FIS member nations could not send teams to Aspen. Once there, however, competitors got a taste of America's bounty and Aspen's generosity. When the Austrians ran out of spending money, one local passed the hat and collected \$70 in ten minutes. "Crowd Chips In, Raises Money For 'Flat' Skiers," a headline

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<sup>257</sup> N.a., "Aspen Notes: Human Interest Great," *The Denver Post*, n.d., p. 22; for the Ostgaard quotation, see Dan Partner, "F.I.S. Heads Ask Quiet, Snow at Aspen Meet," *The Denver Post*, n.d., n.p., in Ski Racing 1950 FIS Clippings file, AHS.

announced. A photograph showed a Norwegian skier eating a banana and holding a bunch in his other hand. A caption explained that the young man was “making up for lost time” since Norway had been without bananas for two years.<sup>258</sup>

Journalists further emphasized their point about Aspen’s open arms by noting that native Europeans in Aspen housed and hosted people from their old homelands. For example, Billy Zaugg was an elderly miner who had emigrated from Switzerland to Kansas as a young boy and then moved to Aspen in 1890. He entertained Swiss skiers, as one journalist wrote, with stories of “mining as it was during Aspen’s boom days while they in turn told him of conditions now in Switzerland.” Another headline explained that Mike Magnifico’s Sport Shop served as a “home away from home” for the Italian skiers. Magnifico’s biography offered a stereotypical immigrant success story. “How a penniless cobbler,” one article began, “became almost a legendary figure in the skiing world is a tribute to a condition that exists nowhere but here in America.” Michelangelo Magnifico, who had one of the greatest names in the history of Aspen, moved to America from Italy at the age of 21 in 1921. First he lived in a small town near Chicago, where he stayed for more than five years. His father, who had been in the United States since Mike was two years old, worked for the railroad in Aspen. In 1926, the son came west for a visit. He liked Aspen and returned for good in 1929. For the next seven years, Magnifico managed a small shoe repair store in town. Along the way, he married Aspen nurse Maggie Walsh and became a naturalized American citizen. When Andre Roch came to town in 1936 and

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<sup>258</sup> Charles Little, “Dollar Dearth Main Reason behind Absence of Half of F.I.S. Members,” *The Denver Post*, n.d, n.p.; n.a., “Crowd Chips In, Raises Money For ‘Flat’ Skiers,” *The Denver Post*, n.d., n.p., in Ski racing 1950 FIS Clippings file, AHS. The photograph of the Norwegian skier, under a headline reading, “Aspen Says ‘Hi!’ to World Skiers,” may be found in the Powers Scrapbook, AHS.

encouraged townspeople to cut a ski run on Aspen Mountain, Magnifico was one of the first men to grab his axe and a saw and climb the mountain. He also ordered several pairs of skis and boots and began the slow conversion of his shoe repair shop into a ski repair and gear store. During World War Two, Magnifico managed the ski repair shop at Camp Hale. By the 1950 FIS, the mountain featured a ski run called the Magnifico Cutoff, a symbol of the importance of Magnifico's place in Aspen's ski history. He was a thriving businessman whom Gary Cooper visited whenever he came to town. In case anyone wondered where Mike's allegiances lay in the FIS, Tor Torland of the *Denver Post* assured readers that "Mike is a full-fledged American now, and he's rooting hardest for the boys and girls racing under Uncle Sam's colors." While he served as an example of an upwardly mobile "oldtimer" in Aspen, Magnifico also represented the idea that Aspen helped people to reinvent themselves.<sup>259</sup>

By the end of the training days prior to the FIS races, reporters realized that the Americans were simply outclassed by Europe's best skiers. American skiers talked of winning, and one of France's star female athletes said before the races began that the Americans were a "definite threat in all events"; however, she could not have been more wrong. As the start date for the first races approached, the European skiers blistered the courses in their test runs. While the weather worsened and race officials fretted over icy conditions and the need for new snow, the already difficult mountainside turned menacing. Under one headline that blared "Aspen

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<sup>259</sup> The photograph of Zaugg may be found next to the photo of the Norwegian skier with the bananas, in the Powers Scrapbook, AHS. See also Wallace Taber, "Ski Notes," *The Denver Post*, n.d., n.p., in Powers Scrapbook, AHS, and Tor Torland, "Magnifico's Sport Shop Home Away From Home to Italian Skiers," *The Denver Post*, n.d., n.p., in BIO: Magnifico, Mike, AHS.

Course Claims 14 Victims,” the reader learned that Austria’s junior champion had broken his leg in two places and had been flown to a Denver hospital after “one of the worst spills ever witnessed by veteran observers.” Once the races began, the headlines about the carnage continued. The press seemed unduly fascinated with the terrible plight of Canadian racer Margaret Owen, who wrecked several times during the week. One headline read, “Canadian Girl Still Tumbling At Aspen Meet,” while Owen’s final wipeout, which resulted in her evacuation from the mountain on a ski patrol toboggan, was documented in an Associated Press wire photograph. Of the fourteen injured (representing seven nations) in the training week leading up to the races, the United States’ three victims constituted the greatest number hurt from any single country. Before the start of the races, one cartoonist conceptualized the treachery of the course and the significance of America’s weakness at the Aspen races as fraught with political consequences. Newspaper cartoonist Bob Bowie’s drawing of an out-of-control U.S. skier falling off the steep mountain into a dark abyss labeled “Europe’s Strong Teams” provided a clue that some people saw the FIS event as having consequences beyond skiing. The cartoon expressed the idea that the Americans were going to be swallowed by the faster, riskier Europeans. Put into the context of political tensions at the time between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. for ideological hegemony in Europe, America’s show of weakness seemed anything but lighthearted. The fall seemed especially dangerous when one recalled that Russian observers in Aspen were vodka-swilling fun-hogs ready to convert any and all (including the dozens of Europeans visiting town) into “comrades.”<sup>260</sup> But ski bums in Aspen may

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<sup>260</sup> Bob Collins, “Skiers of World Set to Go at Aspen,” *Rocky Mountain News*, February 12, 1950, p. 36; Dan Partner, “Aspen Course Claims 14 Victims: New Snow Necessary To Prime Race Terrain,”

have liked the cartoon. Although the skiing corporation wanted to use the FIS to promote Aspen to potential tourists, locals savored the idea that their mountain challenged top-notch skiers. The image of Aspen Mountain as a menacing mountain certainly made it harder to envision that either the town or the sport of skiing was elitist and effete. Descending Aspen Mountain was a dangerous and laborious effort that required the skills of tough heroes like Italian immigrant Mike Magnifico or Zeno Colo, the Italian, who, the press pointed out, worked as a farmer when not ski racing.<sup>261</sup>

When the official races began, the Europeans dominated.<sup>262</sup> Colo won the giant slalom, edging out men from Switzerland and France. Austrians won all three of the women's races. Meanwhile, Switzerland's Georges Schneider, winner of the slalom event, boasted that the Aspen course was too easy. "In Europe," he said, "our small schoolboys would run such a course. I am accustomed to some thing more difficult." He acknowledged, as did all of the European competitors, that Aspen Mountain itself offered wonderful skiing and serious challenges; however, Schneider felt that the FIS slalom course offered ten to fifteen fewer bamboo-pole-gates to navigate than ought to be required for a world's championship.<sup>263</sup> His

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*The Denver Post*, n.d., in Ski Racing 1950s: FIS Clippings file, AHS. See clippings regarding Owen in Ski Racing 1950s: FIS Clippings file, AHS.

<sup>261</sup> N.a., "Speed of 53 MPH Wins for Italian," *The Waterloo Courier* (Iowa), February 19, 1950, n.p., in Ski Racing 1950 FIS Clippings, AHS.

<sup>262</sup> The FIS races consisted of three events each for men and women: slalom, giant slalom, and downhill. In all, then, six races took place during the FIS week. Jack Reddish's fourth place finish in the men's slalom was the highest finish in any event by an American.

<sup>263</sup> See FIS clippings in Powers Scrapbook, AHS, and "Aspen Course Too Easy, Says Swiss Ski Ace" and "Ski Champ Says 'Cinch'" clippings in Ski Racing 1950s: FIS Clippings file, AHS. When one considers the profusion of headlines leading up to the races and during the races about Aspen's treachery and the mountain's long trail of broken bones, one imagines that the Ski Corporation might have welcomed coverage that drew attention to any aspect of the mountain being easy. After all, as Dick Durrance noted, part of the appeal to the Skiing Corporation in having the FIS was to draw the

comments about the ease of Aspen's slalom course underlined for the Americans just how deep was the chasm between themselves and racers from Europe. America may have been the land of opportunity if one wanted plenty of bananas, but to win at skiing was another story.

One writer saw the results in specifically class-oriented terms. Regarding what he called the American "nightmare and catastrophe" at Aspen's FIS, an exasperated James Laughlin (a Harvard graduate and noted publisher) wrote in *Ski* magazine, "If we want to produce winners... we must train them in Europe where they can race every weekend against runners better than themselves and learn by so doing." Laughlin then suggested who America needed to develop as ski racers. "Skiers in their late twenties and thirties," he argued, "who have wives and jobs and businesses to worry about cannot be expected to race with disregard for safety. The call to glory sounds loudest when a man is eighteen and has no responsibilities." After making the suggestion that America send its best young racers to Europe, Laughlin then questioned whether such a plan was indeed a good idea. "Would it not make ski bums of some of them," he asked, "unfitting them for a sound career later in life?" American ski racers, Laughlin observed with some glaring stereotypes about class, came from different backgrounds than did the "farm boy" of Europe, such as Zeno Colo, for whom any future was better than one of milking cows. "With girls," he continued, "it is another matter. Missing college and having a few winters in Europe is not going to prevent a girl from settling down at twenty-five to raise a

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public to Aspen for ski vacations where they might ski wide, relatively easy trails such as Ruthie's Run.

family. So we might keep on with international racing for our girls.”<sup>264</sup> In his schizophrenic argument, Laughlin suggested that skiers could eventually grow up and move on to other things. If they did not, they became ski bums. Some Aspenites would have told Laughlin that he was exactly right and that growing up was overrated.

Laughlin indicated some of the complexities in trying to interpret playing in Aspen through a class lens. He conjured up an array of images that explained the success of ski racing (or lack thereof): the American ski bum’s deficient work ethic, European farm boys and their milk cows, and spirited, athletic girls settling down to motherhood. Freedom, youthfulness, Europe, and even the fecundity of fit skiers had been part of skiing’s appeal for years. Many of the European ski posters from the 1920s and 1930s, for example, exuded at once both a sense of youthful freedom, and sexuality, and the joys of skiing with family.<sup>265</sup> These images carried over quickly to Aspen. When he described the town in 1948, for example, the New York attorney Julien Cornell linked the peace he felt while skiing with the town’s charming nature. The charm he felt included images of youthful beauty and maternity. For Cornell, “the little town of Aspen was gently steaming in the April sunshine; crocuses were blooming in the dooryards of trim cottages; young matrons were trundling their offspring beneath the trees which give the town its name.” Cornell, an urbanite, was drawn to the richness of Aspen’s beauty. Not so hidden in his longing lay a desire that associated the rural town’s charm with the fruitfulness of youth.<sup>266</sup> Here was a

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<sup>264</sup> James Laughlin, “What’s Wrong With U.S. Ski Racing,” *Ski*, March 15, 1950, pp. 5-7.

<sup>265</sup> Many of these posters may be viewed at [www.snowskiart.com](http://www.snowskiart.com).

<sup>266</sup> Cornell, p. 83.

tourist who, like Aspenites, connected ideas of freedom and youthfulness in describing the town.

Sex and youthful beauty were important parts of the stories associated with Aspen during FIS. For example, a typical headline following Austrian Dagmar Rom's race victories read, "Blonde Austrian Girl Looms As One Of Best Women Skiers In World," or "Blonde Skier Wins Women's Slalom Title." Most articles about Rom, a world-class athlete, began by describing her as "beautiful." *Ski* magazine's first issue following the FIS races at Aspen featured a close-up shot of her smiling face, not of the champion in action. Although headlines about male skiers failed to mention the color of their hair, men in Aspen were also presented quite frequently as objects of desire. During FIS, newspaper reporters wrote glowingly of handsome Norwegian brothers Stein and Marius Ericksen. One local recalled that Stein, who later moved to Aspen, was known as "the Golden Stud" and that "half the women in town were crazy about him." The love lives of these beautiful athletes made for interesting sidebar stories during the world championships. Before the FIS races began, the Associated Press ran a photo of Rom and her fiancé, fellow Austrian ski racer Egon Schopf, under the caption "Skiing Breeds Romance." Schopf and Rom were engaged in Aspen in the week prior to FIS. One reporter noted that international athletes arranged dates with one another months and even more than a year in advance based on their race schedules. "Talk about the sailors and a girl in every port," deadpanned journalist Bob Collins. Two years later, during the Oslo Winter Olympics, the theme of skiing and romance as intertwined continued. Readers saw a photo captioned "Cupid's Wearing Skis," in which Hayden, Colorado,

native and U.S. ski team member Katy Rodolph was greeted by her boyfriend, Stein Ericksen, at the finish line. Readers also learned that Dartmouth skier Brooks Dodge and “attractive little Inger Joergensen of Norway’s ski team” were an item. In what seemed to indicate that her Aspen engagement with Schopf was over and that her star power had grown, readers learned that Dagmar Rom, “Austria’s lovely blond movie actress, who is also one of the top Olympic skiers, met Othmar Schneider of Austria with a kiss when he sped across the finish line in second place in the men’s downhill.” Finally, the same article described the Olympic Village as a place where international couples paired off in “cozy corners.”<sup>267</sup> In such a scenario, skiing became a youthful endeavor that allowed its most proficient participants the joys and freedoms of youthful dalliances.

Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, Aspen’s reputation as a place for romance grew. Car-loads of sorority girls rented out blocks of rooms while newspaper society columns noted the seemingly trivial in interesting ways. A newspaper caption announcing a trip planned by three men from Michigan in 1955—“3 Bachelors to Ski at Aspen”—served notice that the men were romantically unattached and eligible. The assumption in 1955, of course, was that they would be

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<sup>267</sup> Annie Gilbert Coleman’s work on the gendered landscape of skiing argues that ski mountains were designed and marketed, in part, with romance in mind. Even when women raced daringly and successfully in international competitions, they were portrayed within the larger framework of the stereotypical “snow bunny.” “Snow bunnies,” Coleman writes, “promoted two differently gendered ways of consuming the mountain landscape: through women’s consumption of clothes and men’s consumption of women.” See Annie Gilbert Coleman, “From Snow Bunnies to Shred Betties: Gender, Consumption, and the Skiing Landscape,” in Virginia J. Scharff, ed., *Seeing Nature Through Gender* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), p. 202. For the articles describing Rom and for numerous published photographs, see the Ski Racing 1950 FIS Clippings file, AHS. Rom appeared on the cover of *Ski* magazine for the March 15, 1950 issue. See also Tor Torland, “Elder Ericksen ‘Hot’ War Ace,” *The Denver Post*, n.d., p.22, in Powers scrapbook, AHS, and n.a., “Former Aspenite is knighted,” *The Aspen Times*, November 14, 1997, p. 1-A. For ski racer romance stories, see Bob Collins, “Good Fellowship Abounds Among Aspen Ski Hopefuls,” *Rocky Mountain News*, February 16, 1950, n.p., in Powers scrapbook, AHS, and n.a., “Olympic Romances Headed by Katy-Stein,” n.d., n.p., clipping in BIO: Ericksen, Stein, AHS.

prowling for women once they arrived in Aspen. That same year, a Texas couple noted in the guest register of their lodge that the Holiday House had become “Cupid’s Cottage” for them two years earlier. Visitors consumed Aspen through the play of skiing and the play of romance.

Aspen’s image as a center of romance grew in 1959, when the Fuller Brush company shot photographs in town and created a story to draw female customers into its catalogue of mops, brooms, and cleaning supplies. By using a fictitious romance between a young female tourist and her male ski instructor, the company’s advertising experts effectively sold Aspen as much as they sold any Fuller product. The catalog offered a splashy meeting of romance and consumerism and presented Aspen as a playground with all types of games. The company’s “holiday on skis at Aspen, Colorado” catalogue features a young woman on its cover, riding along on the nation’s longest ski lift, dressed in what resembles, at first glance, a nun’s habit. Once inside the catalog, we read the young woman’s narration: “Beautiful Colorado. Beautiful Aspen,” where “Everything is perfect...except I’m all alone.” Clearly, she is not a nun. The reader is then told that the lonely skier is in town acting as a secretary for her uncle, who is there for a conference. On the next page, the reader sees that her problem is about to be solved. As she powders her nose, three men stand behind her on the porch of the Sundeck. They include a ski instructor, “a handsome blond Viking named Eric,” who holds his long skis in front of him. Neither of the other two men holds skis.

A page later, the narrator dines at the Hotel Jerome with Uncle Harvey, who she says treats her as a date. Ski instructor Eric sits at an adjoining table and appears

to stare less at the niece than at Uncle Harvey. One senses that Eric might be thinking about how such an old man ended up with a pretty young girl, and the reader knows that Eric wants to steal her away. When Uncle Harvey suggests roast beef for dinner, the reader learns from the narrator that “all that mountain air has made me hungry. Perhaps I can concentrate on a thick, pink slab of meat.” The woman, nervously conscious of Eric’s gaze, hopes that her sexually-charged dinner will help her relax. The next thing the reader knows, Eric and the narrator are together. They take trips to the Jerome’s swimming pool. They see a jazz act (featuring Freddie Fisher on clarinet) at the Red Onion, go to ski races where Eric shows off his abilities, and they join a dog sled excursion at Stuart Mace’s Toklat Lodge.

All of these events are spread across more than 40 pages of color photos and text, interspersed with pages and pages of Fuller products. On the final pages, Eric and the nameless woman lie together in front of a fireplace. His eyes are shut, as if sleeping in a post-coital state of bliss, and she is wide awake, wondering about their future.

“It’s been so wonderful, Eric, I hate to leave,” she says.

“Then don’t leave.”

The story ends with the possibility that the two will continue to see one another. When Eric asks her if she will stay, the female protagonist answers, “Well, let’s say I’ll come back.” One wonders at the end of the story if the lead character is not more enamored of Aspen than of Eric, to whom she refuses to make a lasting commitment.<sup>268</sup> For the thousands of housewives across America who received the

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<sup>268</sup> *Fuller Brush Magazine: holiday on skis at Aspen, Colorado*, 1959, SKIING Aspen Mtn. (1955-1959), AHS.

Fuller catalog, here was an image of Aspen that belied the images espoused by the ski bums in town. When they said that Aspen offered a refuge from the consumer desires of a “gray flannel” nation, ski bums overlooked the fact that Aspen was, from the start, a product as consumable as Fuller floor wax. Youth, romance, and freedom in all of its guises were Aspen’s products.

By the early 1960s, ski fashion encouraged the belief that skiing and sex went hand in hand as forms of play in the high country. For example, one 1963 fashion spread in *Ski* marveled about tight-fitting stretch pants: “What the form-fitting fabric did for a woman’s figure and to a man’s interest pushed skiing well on its way to becoming the most popular sport...” A lipstick advertisement that featured a close-up shot of a young woman’s lips prepared to drink from a glass held before her asked, “shouldn’t your lipstick keep your lips ostentatiously slick, moist and lustrous in tricky winds, cold and snow?” In a 1965 *Ski* magazine pictorial, loaded with images of young women on the slopes, the author noted that the cold and sun in the mountains “brings to girls a glowing complexion and a natural, outdoor radiance that non-skiing sisters can never imitate.” Although the writer may have felt that women skiers needed no cosmetics, he might have agreed that lip-softening balm was a worthy exception.

A 1974 *Playgirl* magazine rekindled a Fuller Brush image of Aspen. It described Aspen as a “western toy town” that “attracts males in packs” and where “cadres of...pros named Hansi and Friedl and Thor will show you how to get your feet together” before they go off to the ski shop to “finger” bins of goggles, or “poke” at racks of boots. *Playgirl*, as might be expected, returned to the equation of sex and

rich food. Senior editor Arline Inge wrote that “An iron will and forgiving stretch pants are the key to survival in the enticing restaurants grilling their sirloins behind stained glass windows or broasting chickens in old mine shafts and basting blintzes” elsewhere. “Tanned and toned,” the article concluded, “you think about next year and dig into your lobster.” Considering that pictorials of nude men enveloped the story, images of mine shafts, a tanned hard-body, and blintzes (those thinly rolled pancakes filled with creamed cheeses and fruits in fancy breakfast buffets), allowed for variable arrangements of imagined tropes of decadence.<sup>269</sup> Like the Fuller catalog, the *Playgirl* piece made Aspen a product of middle class desire and presented the town and even its people (men in both cases) as potentially consumable products.

If someone new to town wanted to step into a tableau that included dinner at a table covered with delectables, or sex on a carpet before a warm fireplace, skiing ability mattered. While some skiers spoke of flying, the thrill of speed, and the freedom they associated with those feelings, the ability to ski well allowed for other types of freedoms. A good skier from the middle class, for example, might improve his or her own standing among elites and transition quickly into a respected member of their community. Good skiers who began as outsiders quickly joined the fraternity of locals that tourists or newcomers so often wanted to infiltrate. “When I found Aspen in 1950,” wrote Betty Robbins-Otorowski in 1996, “the way it used to be, it was still a sleepy old silver town with an aura of special excitement...It was a genuine skier’s town.” Robbins-Otorowski described the town as “unpretentious,” with an “old fashioned Post Office,” twenty-five cent hamburgers, and dogs lying in

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<sup>269</sup> “Ices to Embers” fashion report, *Ski*, October, 1963, p. 69; Bonne Bell lipstick ad, *Ski*, November, 1964, p. 147; n.a., “The Girls Who Ski,” *Ski*, January, 1965, p. 51; Arlene Inge, “Aspen Is It, *Playgirl*,” October, 1974, p. 68.

the middle of the street.<sup>270</sup> She brought her husband Oto, a native of Poland, to Aspen at Christmas in 1952. He described Aspen as a “perfect scene for a Christmas Carol movie set if there ever was one.” After a week of great skiing, the “crowning moment” of the trip occurred when Betty and Oto were photographed and named Aspen’s “Skiers of the week” by the local newspaper. [An] “enlargement of this picture,” Oto wrote nearly a half-century later, “is still quite prominently displayed at our residence.”

Before they left town, the Otorowskis ran out of cash, a problem that was not easy to handle in the days before credit cards and automatic teller machines. The only bank in town, as Oto told the story, refused to cash a check unless it was co-signed by a local resident. Fortunately for the Otorowskis, a former member of their New Jersey ski club lived and bartended in town. The couple persuaded him to co-sign for them at the bank. “It was resolved at that time,” Oto wrote, “that we shall have to try to make Colorado our future home.” Their embrace by the community as skiers of the week, followed by their negative experience with trying to cash a check as non-local outsiders, presented the Otorowskis with an image of Aspen as welcoming, but only to a degree. When Oto and Betty moved from New York City to Grand Junction, Colorado, in 1954, and then on to Aspen as permanent residents in 1958, it must have pleased them to cash checks in Aspen with no problems.

In addition to the “Skier of the Week,” the Aspen Skiing Corporation’s early efforts at promoting the town often involved sending photographs to hometown newspapers of notable tourists enjoying Aspen. For example, in 1949, a Cincinnati

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<sup>270</sup> Betty Robbins-Otorowki, “Aspen the way it used to be...,” Aspen History All Eras, Patricia Gates Manuscripts, AHS.

newspaper ran a photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Edmund P. Lunken “Enjoying Aspen’s High-Altitude Sun.” While noting that the Lunkens were visiting Aspen for two weeks, the caption added that they were “Enthusiastic and excellent skiers.” Lunken, the son of an “industrialist” who owned a large valve company and for whom the Cincinnati airport was named, raced planes and sports cars. He was one of Cincinnati’s elite.<sup>271</sup>

Locals in Aspen often acted and spoke with a sense of superiority when referring to visitors. While referring to tourists as “beetles,” “turtles,” and “turkeys,” locals’ jokes often involved a punch line that made it clear that non-locals were second class citizens. Although some locals, both oldtimer and newcomer, did not ski, non-skiers were few and far between, and they still could distinguish good from bad skiing when they looked up at the skiers making their way down the mountain.

Non-locals’ status as second-class stemmed, in part, from their inability as skiers when compared to locals. In less than one month in early 1953, for example, the town’s local two-page (almost daily) newsletter, *The Aspen Flyer*, poked and prodded at outsiders in a number of ways. One issue included the story of a “visitor” from Denver who got lured to the top of an expert ski run by a local and a “blonde beetle” who “fell in with the scheme.” It was a classic tale of the local winning the girl and leaving the urban aspirant fuming high on the slopes. Yet an important part of the story was that the woman apparently had the ability to ski the run, which made

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<sup>271</sup> Wladyslaw J. Otorowski, “Aspen Visit of 1952/1953 Remembered,” Aspen History All Eras, Patricia Gates Manuscripts, AHS. For the photograph of the Lunkens, see clipping from *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, February 23, 1949, n.p., in Skiing Aspen Mtn. 1948-49 file, AHS. For more on the Lunken family, see John Johnston, “A man named Lunken is ready for the show,” *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 12, 2003, on the web at [http://www.enquirer.com/editions/2003/09/12/tem\\_lunken12.html](http://www.enquirer.com/editions/2003/09/12/tem_lunken12.html).

her an accomplice in the plan to embarrass another visitor. Her ability as a skier, in other words, allowed her to play at being local. Locals recalled that skiing leveled the gendered landscape in Aspen. Regarding the town in the 1950s and 60s, one woman said, “there was some sort of feeling of equality about the sexes here that you did not find in other places, in the cities. It was just accepted here...most women who came here were good skiers and they were just out there with everybody else.”<sup>272</sup>

Another story in the 1953 *Flyer*, titled “A GUIDE FOR BEETLES AND TURTLES,” spoke again of Denverites who “come up here under the pretense of skiing and have gone so far as to rent little cabins on a seasonal basis to give the illusion that they are one of us” even though they rarely ventured on to the ski mountain. Other issues analyzed the dress of skiers, charging that some outsiders attempted to fake their way into looking like local ski bum experts. The *Flyer* explained how to spot the differences between fakers and true locals. In “A MORAL TALE,” a fictitious visitor named Curtis J. Stringbag, Jr., “borrowed” a lift-coat and lied in order to buy himself a “resident” lift ticket.<sup>273</sup> Once on the lift, Stringbag yelled obnoxious remarks to skiers on the slopes below. After exiting the lift, he skied fast through the middle of a ski school class and zoomed right over the tips of an “elderly lady’s skis.” Once back at the lift line, “tragedy struck.” “As he bent over to loosen his skis,” the *Flyer* imagined, Stringbag “was struck from behind by a driven ski pole, thrust by a stuffy person who remained unknown through the

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<sup>272</sup> Ann V. Hodges interview, May, 1995, by Jon Coleman, AHS.

<sup>273</sup> In the early days, skiers in Aspen used an old coat as their “lift coat.” These warm jackets were worn for the long, slow ride up the mountain, then returned in an empty chair to the bottom of the lift, where they were piled next to the lift line. When the skier returned, he found his or her coat, put it on, and boarded the lift again for another ride. Taking someone else’s lift coat was a terrible breach of local etiquette because it forced a skier to ride the lift on a cold day with nothing more than a blanket provided by the lift operator.

unwillingness of any witness to identify him.” Stringbag’s demise reminded readers—both locals and visitors—that vigilante justice by locals might be alive and well in Aspen. Finally, after a month of creating the image of the visitor as a complete loser and scoundrel, the *Flyer* quoted native Aspenite Laurence Elisha regarding Aspen weather: “Only damn fools and tourists predict the weather.”<sup>274</sup> In the pages of the local rag, then, ski bums attempted to lay out clearly for non-locals the proper etiquette for surviving in a town in which they were not welcomed socially unless they skied well and played by the local rules.

Locals occasionally projected themselves as smarter than the “damn fools and tourists” who often needed rescuing. Because Aspenites were almost always the men and women who came to the rescue when outsiders found themselves in trouble in unforgiving mountains, both non-local and local newspapers usually presented Aspenites as clever, skilled, tough heroes and heroines. For example, a *New York Times* front page story reported on the death of tourist Alexander McFadden in a 1948 avalanche. McFadden and his brother-in-law, Alexander Cushing, decided to ski into the Difficult Creek drainage despite the warnings of ski instructor Percy Rideout and ski patroller Morrie Shephard. McFadden was a “cotton man” from Memphis via Philadelphia, and Cushing a New York City attorney. “The professionals,” said the *Times*, “cautioned against the venture because of the area’s reputation for slides and falls, but the two expert amateurs said they wanted a real test of their skill.” Rideout and Shepard, the *Times* reported, felt compelled to ski with the men to try to keep them safe. Once the slide started, Rideout yelled for everyone to head for the “timber” to the side of the ravine they skied. McFadden, unable to ski toward safety

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<sup>274</sup> See *The Aspen Flyer*, February 8, 15, 18; March 1 and 12, 1953, in Box 131, F1, WPP.

in the trees, was trapped in the middle of the sliding mass of snow while the other men made their way to the edge. He was buried under more than eight feet of snow. Rideout, the paper noted, “was bowled over, but he rolled down and managed to keep from going under.”

Regardless of Cushing’s denial (which the *Times* hid on page 31 two days later) that anyone had warned him and McFadden, the hundreds of thousands of people who read the *Times* already had an image in their heads. The story from Aspen was that big city skiers endangered their own lives and the lives of others, while attempting something beyond their “expert amateur” abilities, leading to one gruesome death. Meanwhile, “professional” Aspenite skiers, knowing better from the start, managed to escape safely. Although Paepcke, Pfeifer, Durrance, and other management at Aspen were also quoted as denying that McFadden and Cushing had ignored expert advice in skiing the Difficult Creek drainage, the *Times* reported that Rideout “had been quoted in press reports from Aspen as having advised against the trip.” As with many avalanche deaths, the McFadden tragedy involved a great deal of bad luck. The best skiers in the world can not ski out of most big slides, and by all accounts, McFadden was an excellent skier. He and Cushing were also the type of elite that Paepcke wanted to attract to Aspen, so it is not surprising that management—in an effort to appease Cushing—refuted Rideout’s version of what happened. Still, local Aspenites were the heroes of the story while the outsiders came out looking weak. After the slide, Shepard skied out of the drainage to a ranch, where he telephoned for help. Quickly, thirty “ski experts” were on the scene searching for the body. By that evening, sixty more Aspenites rode the lift through darkness, then

descended the deadly slopes on the backside of Aspen Mountain while carrying flashlights and shovels. At 4:45 A.M., McFadden's crushed body was recovered. *The Aspen Times* emphasized in their headline that McFadden was a man from the city. In an article titled "Snowslide Claims Life of Young Businessman," Aspen skiers like Rideout, a Dartmouth graduate, were able to mask their own privileged status by making it crystal clear that the people who died were businessmen from the city.<sup>275</sup>

In 1952, Aspenites shone as heroes again when a Denverite was injured and a friend from Kansas City killed in the Maroon Bells while attempting to glissade (slide) down a snowfield during a late summer descent of a 14,000 foot peak. Photographs in the *Denver Post* focused on the Aspenite rescuers, which included Tenth Mountain veterans and other locals adorned in flannel shirts, jeans, and cowboy hats. The paper noted again and again that the rescuers were experienced skiers and climbers, reinforcing the idea that cowboys and skiers were often one and the same in rural Aspen, and that the victims were the opposite: unskilled urbanites. The photo used for the victim, whose limp body was transported to Aspen on the back of a mule, showed a school yearbook portrait of a soft-looking young man with big lips, neatly

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<sup>275</sup> N.a., "A. McFadden, Cotton Man, Killed By Snow Avalanche in Colorado," *The New York Times*, February 16, 1948, p. 1; n.a., "Snow Slide Warning in Ski Death Denied," *The New York Times*, February 18, 1948, p. 31; and n.a., "Snowslide Claims Life of Young Businessman," *The Aspen Times*, February 19, 1948, p. 1. *The New York Times* noted that McFadden had just returned from six months in Europe, where he skied regularly in Switzerland, while the Aspen newspaper referred to both McFadden and Cushing as "experiecned [sic] skiers." Cushing eventually became a legend in the history of skiing in America. In 1949, he opened Squaw Valley on Lake Tahoe, California. On February 9, 1959, one year before his resort hosted the 1960 Winter Olympics (outbidding Aspen in the process), Cushing graced the cover of *Time* magazine for a story titled "The U.S. On Skis." Skiing in Aspen at the time of McFadden's death was incredibly dangerous, due largely to the limitations of non-releasable boot bindings. In the season of McFadden's death, for example, the ski patrol reported twenty broken fibulas. Ski patrol leader Leonard Woods wrote, "With the exception of the avalanche in Difficult Creek, I think Aspen can take pride in the fact that only fifty accidents, of which 34 were fractures, occurred." See "Annual Report of the Aspen Ski Patrol, 1947-1948 Season," Box 94, F17, WPP.

combed hair, horn-rimmed glasses, a tweed coat, and tie. The paper noted that he was a student at Yale. The chief rescuer was Dr. Robert Lewis, "an Aspen physician and skilled mountaineer." Almost as if to emphasize his strength, one article noted that after finding the injured climber and administering "a blood plasma transfusion," Lewis left him with other rescuers, ran quickly back down the treacherous mountainside to town, delivered a baby, and then hurried back up to the rescue site to help carry the stretcher.<sup>276</sup> It is important to note here that many of the local rescuers had backgrounds as privileged as their victim's. Yet the rescuers were Aspen insiders, whereas the dead man was not.

Several years later, a local employee at a lodge was killed in an avalanche while skiing beyond Aspen Mountain's officially marked boundary (lined with warning signs that the skier and his group ignored). The news reports emphasized that the man was a seasonal worker from Seattle and that two of his three skiing partners on the day of his death were tourists from Seattle. The fourth skier, who was hospitalized for shock, was another temporary lodge worker from Germany. None was an established local. While explaining that Sepp Kessler, instructor with the Aspen Ski School, was the first rescuer to reach the scene, the *Denver Post* said, "Rescuers applied artificial respiration almost two hours before Dr. Charles Houston, Aspen physician and famed mountain climber, pronounced McGivern dead."<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> N.a., "Rescuers Return Youths From Ice Trap," *The Denver Post*, September 6, 1952, p.2; n.a., "Hackstaff Saved By Warm Night," *The Denver Post*, n.d., n.p.; Michaelanne Healy, "One Youth Killed, 2d Hurt Climbing Peak Near Aspen," *Rocky Mountain News*, September 6, 1952, pp. 5-6; Michaelanne Healy, "Denver Youth Hurt on Peak Improving," *Rocky Mountain News*, September 7, 1952, p. 6. All of these clippings may be found in ORGANIZATION: Mtn. Rescue file, AHS.

<sup>277</sup> Due to his status as ski instructor and rescuer, the *Post* made no mention that Kessler was also a German immigrant. See Lee Olson, "Aspen Skier Killed as Slide Sweeps Past Three Others," *The Denver Post*, n.d., n.p., in Skiing Aspen Mtn, 1955-59 file, AHS.

In contrast to outsiders or to “seasonal” workers who managed to get themselves killed, established local Aspenites who found themselves in sticky situations sometimes managed to rescue themselves. In the spring of 1954, for example, hotel owner Alfred Braun, who was a 45-year-old German native, skied away from the Sundeck and off of the back of Aspen Mountain. He planned to ski ten miles through the backcountry trees and glades, down into the town of Ashcroft to the Toklat Lodge home of Stuart and Isabel Mace. When caught in deep snows with darkness approaching, Braun realized that he was going to have to spend the night. He built a fire and stayed awake in his wet ski clothes until dawn. After putting out his fire, he skied to Toklat and arrived thirty minutes ahead of a search team dispatched from town. In the twenty-four hours he was gone, newspapers across the country carried the story of Braun, noting that he was an “Ex-Chicagoan” ( a useful explanation in case Braun happened to die while lost). After he arrived at his destination, one account noted that “Sheriff Herwick said Braun has a reputation as an excellent skier and mountain climber and it was believed only an accident would have prevented him from completing his afternoon ski tour.”<sup>278</sup> Once Braun showed up safe he became a skilled Aspenite, and his seventeen years in Chicago were barely mentioned again.

A terrible accident did prevent Aspen lodge owner Ralph Melville from completing an afternoon climb in 1956. Melville fell down a steep ice chute while attempting a glissade similar to the one that resulted in the death of the Kansas City Yale student four years earlier. He hit a rock and fell a second time, plummeting a total of 500 feet from his two female climbing companions. As one woman ran down

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<sup>278</sup> The clippings concerning the Braun ordeal may be found in Scrapbook 93.32.1, AHS.

the mountain and along rough trails for many miles toward help in town, Mary Lou Hayden worked her way down and around the mountain and half-way up the snow-filled chute where Melville lay battered and drifting in and out of consciousness. Although she had never climbed in steep snow before, Hayden ascended hundreds of feet of dodgy snow and rock to reach her friend. She then lowered him with a rope to a safe spot until help arrived early the next morning. For her efforts, Hayden won the Carnegie Foundation Hero Fund Award for one of the year's most heroic rescues in the United States. Although one news account noted that Hayden was a native of Colorado Springs, in Melville's own story, she was a waitress from Aspen. Robert Craig and Dr. Hayden, both of whom *The Rocky Mountain News* explained had "assaulted Himalayan peak K2 in 1953," were part of the rescue effort. Craig wrote that to the rescue group, "There was no doubt in their minds that she [Hayden] was responsible for his [Melville] being alive."<sup>279</sup> If Melville had died, one wonders whether Hayden would have been referred to as a waitress, a bona fide Aspenite, and not relegated to the role of non-local outsider from Colorado Springs. Aspenites portrayed themselves, and the media portrayed them, as capable and even heroic, while non-local "turkeys" were generally presented as dullards. Visitors who wanted to lay claim to a local's identity as forthrightly as possible coveted the revered status and expertise of Aspenites.

As noted by the *Flyer* in the 1950s, Denverites and others came to town and pretended to be expert skiers or pretended "that they are one of us." This attempt at calling oneself "local" was a well-recognized phenomenon throughout Aspen's

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<sup>279</sup> Robert W. Craig, "Noted Climber Tells of Dramatic Aspen Rescue," *Rocky Mountain News*, August 12, 1956, p. 12; Ralph Melville as told to Charles Goodman, "I slid to the brink of death," *The Denver Post Empire Magazine*, n.d., n.p., in ORGANIZATION: Mtn. Rescue file, AHS.

history. One Aspenite recalled how one of the richest CEOs in America would put “on a sheepskin coat and drive around in a beat-up jeep with a broom in the back” as soon as he arrived in town for his vacations. “People were trying to fit into the funky local,” the Aspenite said, “rather than show off their wealth.” Here was a clear example of non-locals masking their social class in order to blend in with the locals who were often doing the same thing. In another case of people pretending to be Aspenites, one local recalled that she knew Denverites in the 1960s and 1970s who came to Aspen to get the coveted ZG prefix (for Pitkin County) on their Colorado license plates. They went to the Pitkin County courthouse and claimed that they lived in town. They did this, the woman said, “so that they had ZG plates in Denver to show off to their friends.”<sup>280</sup> For Colorado’s insiders, ZG plates were code for “cool,” “hero,” “expert skier,” “sexy,” “rich,” and a number of other signifiers. One man who moved to Aspen in 1970 said later that “It was a privilege to actually own ZG plates because you knew you were at the right moment in history.” *New York Times* correspondent Marshall Sprague wrote of the fakers whom one could readily find in ski towns like Aspen by 1960:

A great many of them cannot ski and probably would not do so if they could. But there they are—along with the real skiers—all playing parts in a ski fantasy as elaborate and ceremonious as a Sioux sun dance... This fantasy’s fantastical elements apply as much to those who can ski as to those who cannot, although the latter love the delusion of doing so and the costumes and rituals that go with it, even when they are doing everything else

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<sup>280</sup> Harry Teague interview, July 17, 1996, by Judith Gertler, AHS; and Ann V. Hodges interview. See Michael Shandrick, “A Look back at HST’s Aspen,” posted on the web February 27, 2005, at <http://colorado.indymedia.org/mod/comments/display/10491/index.php>. One of the “frequently asked questions” as of 2005 on the Pitkin County Clerk and Recorder Office’s website is “can I still get ZG plates?” The answer is that they are no longer manufactured. See the office’s website at [http://www.aspenpitkin.com/depts/5/motor\\_plates.cfm](http://www.aspenpitkin.com/depts/5/motor_plates.cfm).

but...nothing in the whole colorful fantasy is nicer than the après-ski... The entertainers often are ski bums working for peanuts just so they can ski on the side, and the blonde waitresses are apt to be ski bums, too. If the waitresses come to town without a foreign accent and blonde hair, they usually acquire both in a hurry.<sup>281</sup>

Sprague's insight on class masking in a ski town, including the posers in the party culture, made it clear that he thought most people in ski country were, to a degree, laying false claim to a manufactured identity.

The fallout in Aspen surrounding a 1965 *Life* magazine article that focused on the town's "California surfers" illustrates well the idea that actually hitting the slopes while also working in town remained the easiest way to claim status as a true Aspenite. While some surfers claimed that the town would close down without their menial labor, one youth, with a story that must have made some Aspenites frown, explained how he managed life in Aspen without a job: "I beat a narcotics rap in Newport Beach," he said, "and collected \$25,000 from the false arrest suit. That's what I'm living on."<sup>282</sup> Photos of trashed apartments and a beer keg in the back seat of a jeep, combined with the author's descriptions of "silly and revolting" debauchery, spoke little of skiing. Little good did it do when a week later the *Denver Post* ran Aspen's rebuttal, stating that ski resort life might be loud but it was "not loose." The newspaper asked a local bartender what he thought of the article in *Life*. "That guy (the *Life* reporter's Aspen guide) was around here about two weeks," the

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<sup>281</sup> Marshall Sprague, "Refinements in the Outdoor Life," *The New York Times*, January 3, 1960, p. X21. Seven years earlier, Sprague wrote, "The Rockies' skiing industry has been important to winter tourism, since it not only attracts skiers but considerable numbers of non-skiers who like to sit around at Arapahoe or Aspen or Winter Park drinking hot toddies and marveling at the energy of other people." See Sprague, "Rockies In Winter," *The New York Times*, January 25, 1953, p. X17.

<sup>282</sup> Bradford, p. 44.

bartender said. "He's not a skier."<sup>283</sup> This small controversy serves as a lens for looking at the complexities associated with conflicted images of identity in Aspen. In the *Life* fallout, a man who believed that being a skier and being a working-class bartender helped to define what it meant to be an Aspenite, dismissed as unimportant the images presented by an outsider because he was not a skier, likely not a worker, and therefore not local. The outsider's Aspen was not an accurate portrayal of the Aspen the bartender knew. Nor was it a part of the Aspen known or appreciated by Ralph Jackson, who claimed that he wanted to be known as the "Clown Prince of Skiing" because the surfers gave "ski bums" a bad name in *Life* magazine, which enjoyed a long shelf-life in stores, homes, doctors' waiting rooms, and barber shops across America.

At the same time that some local Aspenites complained that their town was being presented unfairly by outsiders, visitors felt like Aspenites looked down on them. In 1974, an historian interviewing County Manager Al Blomquist, said, "It strikes me, I've spent the night here and looked around and it strikes me as being very, very different. You have a high percentage apparently of young adults. It also seems to be a blue denim kind of a culture. I walked around and I had on my Penney's double knits and I was looked upon as somebody from outer space. I could feel it." Blomquist laughed, then replied, "You're called a 'turkey.'"<sup>284</sup> Instead of sending visitors packing for home, the exclusionist rhetoric and actions of Aspenites helped to create among some outsiders the desire to claim ownership in Aspen as members of the exclusive club. Occasionally, Aspenites offered suggestions for how

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<sup>283</sup> Leonard Larsen, "Ski Resort Life Is Loud But Not Loose," *The Denver Post*, April 4, 1965, p. 87.

<sup>284</sup> Al Blomquist interview by David McComb, May 24, 1974, OH 260, Colorado Historical Society (CHS).

outsiders might fit in. In 1976, for example, one local writer described the “No-Nos for El Tourista,” which began, “Unless you are a master of disguise

and can somehow transform yourself from a \$2,000 a week executive into one of Aspen’s *true* permanent working force, you will not be happy in either *The Pub* or *The Red Onion Saloon*...both these bars are shelter for Aspen’s man with the calloused hands. The tourist, in his powder blue jumpsuit, is libel [sic] to receive a sound psychological thumping at the hands of all members here.<sup>285</sup>

Acknowledged here in unambiguous terms was the allure in masking class at Aspen. In this scenario, Aspenites were hard-working men at the bar while tourists were effete losers in absurd ski suits. Importantly, however, “el tourista” would only receive a “psychological thumping” and not the physical beating one might expect at a real working-class dive. In addition, if the tourist had the ability to blend in as a “master of disguise,” locals might embrace him as one of their own.

Aspen’s real estate brokers used ads to play on outsiders’ desire to be a part of the Aspen experience. They advertised property based on the assumption that one might buy brick and mortar status as a local. When real estate companies used photographs of expert skiers to say that living “THE COLORADO WAY” or laying claim to “THE GOOD LIFE” involved being able to ski well, landscape and identity were commoditized along with the very image of what it meant to be local in Aspen. Selling real estate had as much to do with selling an image as it did with selling land or built objects. As one ad picturing a skier snaking turns through powder spelled out, owning a piece of Aspen could improve an outsider’s skiing and his image, and

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<sup>285</sup> Scott M. Bowie, “Hanging Out In Aspen,” *Aspen: The Magazine*, February/March, 1976, p. 50.

most importantly, could procure nativity. Owning property in Aspen would allow a non-local the time to develop the skills needed, as the ad said, to “Ski like a native.” As any winter visitor must have realized, skiing well was one of the quickest routes, according to most locals, to becoming an Aspenite.<sup>286</sup>

In his 1973 book *Hot Dog Skiing*, Aspenite Bob “Boogie” Mann described his route to becoming a local through his abilities as a skier. The Pennsylvania native explained that when he visited Aspen while in college, he was a 230-pound football player who became fascinated with the skiers who zoomed and jumped their way down steep slopes covered in large snow mounds, or moguls. After graduation he headed to Aspen and transformed himself by losing nearly fifty pounds. All he “could think of,” Mann wrote, “was skiing and getting my body in a position where I could do all these crazy antics without hurting myself. I decided to become part of the cult, join in and see exactly how far I could push the limits.” After having lived in the town several years, Mann entered a skiing contest in 1971. While waiting to race he saw another contestant perform a “360 helicopter, backwards” and was stricken with the Aspen ski bum’s version of status anxiety. “My conservative Eastern background,” Mann wrote, “had too much influence on my instincts. There was no way I could go crazy.” Even though he had joined the cult of ski bums, Mann still saw himself as an outsider, an Easterner who was not quite completely free to ski as daringly as a true Aspen local.

As the thousands of spectators watching the young “hot dog” daredevil skiers descend the mogul-covered race course grew increasingly “bloodthirsty,” Mann made

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<sup>286</sup> Fitzgerald Real Estate advertisement, *Aspen: The Magazine*, (Summer/Fall 1974) p. 60. Pease and Associates advertisement, *Aspen: The Magazine*, (Holiday Season, 1978), p. 92. Cooley Investment Co. Realtors advertisement, *Aspen: The Magazine*, February/March, 1976, p. 37.

his way to the top of the run for his start. When the announcer asked him his name and hometown, Mann balked at claiming Aspen as home even though he had lived there for several years. Unlike the other competitors who claimed they were from Aspen even though they hailed from all over the nation, Mann announced that he was from Philadelphia. Then he skied. Instead of racing through the bumps at breakneck speed, Mann did slow turns, stayed in control, and managed to stop in the middle of his turns to smile and wave at the crowd, before proceeding. It was a clownish act and the crowd loved it. In describing how the throngs went “berserk” watching his “performance” of what he called the “slow dog noodle,” Mann said that at that moment in the race, he realized he was “living it.” At the end of the day, when he was “surrounded by people, slapping me on the back, telling me it was one of the most far-out performances they had ever seen,” Mann realized that what he had done was “completely spontaneous and might never happen again.” Most importantly, he had overcome his “conservative Eastern background,” freed his “instincts,” gone “crazy,” and became a colorful local in the process. In short, Mann’s ability to play, to ski the race course in a way no one else had, allowed him to shed his old identity and to become like the Aspen ski bums he had revered when he first visited the town.<sup>287</sup>

Several years before he died, Ralph Jackson appeared in a real estate advertisement on the back cover of an Aspen magazine. Billed as the “original hot dog skier” in “Aspen: a town of tradition & spirit,” Jackson’s image—a man with a wrinkled face and happy smile shaded beneath a black hat and the tattered furry coat

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<sup>287</sup> Bob “Boogie” Mann, *Hot Dog Skiing* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1973), pp. 11-40.

he had found at the dump thirty years earlier—was worth a thousand words.

Although he lived in a tiny, nearly dilapidated house, he professed to be the king of the local die-hard skiers and therefore was useful as a seller of Aspen homes. Jackson provided a useful image for realtors looking to pitch the idea to wealthy outsiders that the freedom of playing in the mountains—and the supposed childlike simplicity of life there—might be bought through the purchase of a condominium or an expensive second home. In the outsiders' world where work daily trumped play, here was a man whose greatest ambition in life had been simply to remain as young as possible by having a good time and skiing for free as long as his legs would carry him. Like other Aspenites, Jackson lived satisfactorily; but more importantly, he played very well. Not only was he never going to be found dead in an avalanche or bruised and battered at the bottom of an icy mountain peak, Ralph Jackson would certainly never be mistaken for a rich executive and not welcomed at the locals' saloon.

Jackson's life serves as a model for Aspenites' practice of masking and denying class through play. In his own fascination with staying young, and through his pursuit of "freedom" by making skiing his top priority, Jackson claimed indisputably a local's identity that seemed to be the antithesis of the wealthy outsider. More importantly, other locals celebrated him for his stealing of lift rides, his "underground" ski school, his lack of "success," and his clownish outfit and antics on the mountain and about town. By celebrating Jackson as a classic ski bum, Aspenites dodged and denied the role of social class as a significant force in their town. In their own forms of play, particularly as skiers, locals also demeaned outsiders. In describing themselves as the best skiers and as the rescuers of inept non-locals,

Aspenites spoke often of how skiing helped them to attain a sense of “freedom” not easily obtainable outside of the mountains.

At the same time that locals mocked and belittled outsiders, they noted their own importance as lures for tourists. According to locals, outsiders wanted to be like them: experts in the mountains, youthful and free from the world’s grind in their playful pursuits. In asserting their magnetism for tourists, Aspenites unwittingly acknowledged the class-masking games in which locals and non-locals were continuously engaged. A Hollywood starlet like Jill St. John paired with an old ski bum like Ralph Jackson appears today to be an odd coupling, but in the context of Aspen by the 1970s, their relationship made perfect sense. As St. John’s ski instructor, the ever-youthful older man taught the young woman how to “hot dog” and fit in as an expert skier on the mountain. When Dolores LaChapelle or the novelist Dan Ford wrote of how “money” and the “corporation” hurt Aspen, they failed to acknowledge that ski bums needed the company lifts to make their play—and their very identities as locals—possible. Just as the FIS ski races celebrated Aspen as a bastion of “freedom” and youthfulness where play trumped even the menace of Russian communists, companies such as Fuller Brush saw Aspen as a commodity. As Aspenites continued to present themselves as heroes against the ineptitude of blundering outsiders, outsiders wanted increasingly to be Aspenites themselves. Denverites with Aspen license plates and the story of Bob “Boogie” Mann, a Philadelphian who finally felt like a true local after playing to the roaring crowd in a ski race, illustrate that who was and who was not an Aspenite was very

often blurred. Beyond the mountains where people in Aspen played, the town at the foot of the hill offered an endless pageantry of games.

### **Chapter Five/ Leaving**

In the preceding chapters I argued that understanding the class dynamics at play in Aspen after World War Two helps us to make sense of the town's social history. In the reasons for which people came to Aspen, in the ways they worked, lived, and played, the denial and disguising of class by elites and the striving of middle-class entrepreneurs shaped Aspen in important ways. When people left Aspen, their actions also shaped the town significantly. Although many came to the town, lived there, raised families, died, and were buried there, thousands more passed through transiently—called themselves ski bums and Aspenites for a season, for

several years, or even for decades—and then moved on to call some other place home. For many, Aspen was akin to high school, college, a stint in the military, life at a commune, or an old relationship put to rest. It was a passing moment—albeit an important one—that people remembered later as a “stage” across which they passed on the way toward the larger acts in their lives.<sup>288</sup> Aspenites also shaped the broader region. By the late 1960s and into the 1970s, some people thought of Aspen as ruined, either as a refuge or as a place providing economic opportunity, and moved to new ski towns. In towns like Telluride, many thought they might reinvent Aspen anew.

This chapter will concentrate on two themes while exploring the multiplicity of scenarios that encouraged departure from Aspen. First, many of the newcomers who lived in Aspen had at least two important things in common: privileged backgrounds and youth. As they grew older, most Aspenites’ life goals and objectives changed in ways that reflected the expectations of their class. Although Ralph Jackson and a handful of other locals offered alternative examples, events such as marriage, or having children, or desires for more meaningful work and better housing, led many Aspenites to question the ways they had worked, lived, and played in their younger days. As part of the aging process, or as part of class striving, some people shifted from ski bum to business owner and managed financially to stay in Aspen. Others, as seen in the example of Al Lewis below, felt a need to leave in order to “make something of” themselves. The end result, with important cultural

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<sup>288</sup> Former Aspen ski patroller Al Lewis noted that Aspen was a “real turning point” in his life. Although a lot of people in his hometown “thought I was nuts because I wasn’t doing the conventional thing,” Lewis noted that his years in Aspen were important because of the lifelong friendships he made there. He recalled, “There wasn’t anybody in town I didn’t really like.” Lewis interview.

and social implications, was that Aspen stayed almost continuously populated by young people. Second among the themes on which this chapter will focus is that, for many Aspenites, part of the town's appeal came in offering a refuge from a "tasteless" middle-class America. When middle America discovered Aspen—most clearly during the 1960s condominium boom—the often-enigmatic qualities of the town's appeal as a refuge and the sense of "freedom" that the privileged felt there seemed threatened, or seemed to have disappeared altogether. People who stayed either fought the system or joined in the process of making money; others moved away. This chapter deals with the people who left.

Al Lewis finally made it out of Aspen on his third or fourth try. After ten years in town, when he worked numerous jobs and lived in various housing arrangements during Aspen's early postwar boom years, Lewis was determined by 1960 to get on with the rest of his life. "You are there as a ski bum," Lewis recalled of his leaving Aspen, "you are in your twenties, then into your thirties, and you think 'I can't stay here forever, I have to go make something of myself.'" Lewis was a ski patroller who had watched Aspen's doctors perform countless surgeries on terribly mangled legs over the years. His plan for life after Aspen was to finish college and then go to medical school. He had one serious problem. Every time he attempted to leave town, his friends threw a going-away party, and, invariably, as the drinks continued to flow into the fuzzy hours after midnight, Lewis talked himself, or someone else talked him, into staying. After three or four going-away parties over as many years, Lewis's imminent departure became a running joke. He became known

in town as “Leavin’ Al,” precisely because he could not leave. Finally, late one night as a going-away party waned, Lewis managed to escape and drive his loaded Nash Ambassador convertible down the Roaring Fork Valley to the town of Carbondale, where he parked under a cottonwood tree and went to sleep. After he sobered up the next morning, Al Lewis drove east through Glenwood Canyon and across the mountains he had first traversed with great excitement a decade earlier. Instead of returning to New England, where he had spent his youth and attended college at the University of Vermont for one year before heading to Aspen in 1950, Lewis steered his automobile toward Boulder. At age thirty-two, he enrolled as a pre-med student at the University of Colorado. While continuing to visit Aspen regularly on the weekends and during college breaks, Lewis eventually made the dean’s List, graduated, and began medical school in Denver.<sup>289</sup>

Scores of Aspen’s ski bums from the 1940s through the 1970s remained in Colorado after deciding to move away from the town. Like Al Lewis, some moved to the metropolitan Denver area but continued to visit regularly the small town, deep in the mountains, which they had once proudly called home. Others moved back to their native regions in the Midwest, in New England, or elsewhere. Some people moved away only to return later to live in Aspen again. Meanwhile, others spent decades as part of the community and left for good without ever looking back. Many former Aspenites migrated to Santa Fe, Santa Barbara, and Tucson, or to other ski towns including Crested Butte and Telluride. Some of these places were similar in style to Aspen. In moving to the same places en masse, Aspenites continued a long tradition whereby mountain town residents undertook group migrations to other mining towns

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

or to larger cities. Historian Malcolm Rohrbough noted that after the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act in 1893, for example, many Aspenites moved to the gold camp at Cripple Creek, southwest of Colorado Springs. One Aspenite wrote that every other person he met there was from Aspen or Leadville, and that ninety percent of the best businesses in Cripple Creek were owned by former Aspen residents. Eventually, a significant number of ex-Aspenites, probably including some who had also passed through Cripple Creek, made their way to Denver. By the 1940s, hundreds gathered annually in that city for the "Aspen Picnic" in Washington Park. In 1954, almost forty former Aspenites attended a picnic at Sycamore Grove in Los Angeles.<sup>290</sup> Telluride became one of the new Cripple Creeks in the early 1970s and into the 1980s for Aspen's ski era residents. Looking for fresh opportunities in a different small, rustic, Colorado mountain town that also provided top-notch skiing, Aspenites flocked to Telluride to recreate a familiar ski town culture in a remarkably similar natural setting.

An aged population in Aspen originally helped to make it possible after 1945 for Walter Paepcke and others to buy large quantities of property in the area. *The Aspen Times* often told simultaneously of the arrival of newcomers and the departure of oldtimers, many of whom moved to Glenwood Springs and to Grand Junction. In 1946, for example, the newspaper noted that the young Maxwell family of Denver was behind the "Fine Home Being Built on Maroon," where they planned to construct "modern log homes that will be fully equipped with electric kitchens for rental

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<sup>290</sup> Rohrbough, 226. For newspaper clippings regarding Aspen picnics in Denver and Los Angeles see Recreation: Picnic/Outing file, AHS. According to the Aspen High School class of 1916 50<sup>th</sup> reunion roster, three of the thirty-three classmates lived in Aspen. While the alumni lived from Maine to California, the highest percentage made their homes in Colorado, particularly Denver. See the reunion guide in School Activity file, AHS.

purposes.” Adjacent to the Maxwell article lay the headline, equal in size, “Gavin Ranch Is Sold To Utah Man.” Mrs. Gavin, the daughter of a “pioneer Aspenite who was one of the first settlers to come to this section of the country,” and her husband reportedly sold their Snowmass ranch for more than \$100,000. With an in-town home also to sell, one had to believe that the Gavins’ life in Grand Junction might be very comfortable. News of the new often trumped the old. Banner headlines announced, for example, that “Aspen Gets Go Signal For Remodeling and Building,” while smaller type noted “Begeleys Sell Home, Move to Salida.” Later, “Three More Aspen Pioneers Dead” fit neatly next to an article about the completion of the town’s new ski jump.<sup>291</sup>

In addition to the departures of older mining-era Aspenites, young ski bums came, worked and played, and then left the town with an alacrity that came to characterize Aspen’s transients. Some left and returned time and again. In 1949, Charles Paterson hitchhiked into town at age nineteen and found work as a bellhop at the Hotel Jerome. Within a month, Paterson managed to buy six lots in town—a half block—on which he built a cabin. “There was a sort of pioneer feeling,” he recalled. “You know, at nineteen or twenty you can afford to be a pioneer. That’s how I felt. That’s the reason why I built a log cabin eventually, I felt like I was building a pioneering log cabin.” Although he did not explain how a nineteen-year-old bellhop could afford six lots, Paterson probably had financial help from his father in New York. Eventually deciding that he needed to finish college, Patterson moved back

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<sup>291</sup> N.a., “Fine Home Being Built on Maroon” and n.a., “Gavin Ranch Is Sold To Utah Man,” *The Aspen Times*, April 25, 1946, p. 1; n.a., “Aspen Gets Go Signal For Remodeling and Building” and n.a., “Begeleys Sell Home, Move to Salida,” *The Aspen Times*, February 14, 1946, p. 1; and n.a., “Three More Aspen Pioneers Dead” and n.a., “Willoughby Junior Jump Finished,” *The Aspen Times*, November 20, 1947, p. 1.

east. After less than two years of college, he returned to work on the ski patrol and with the ski school. Just as Paterson began to formulate a plan to build a hotel on the lots adjacent to his cabin, he was drafted into the army during the Korean War. Returning to Aspen in 1956, he built the Boomerang Lodge. Later, he left yet again to study architecture for three years with Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin East. Back again in 1960, Paterson built a new, Wright-inspired Boomerang Lodge, complete with a window that allowed guests in the hotel's lounge to look into the deep end of a swimming pool.

Aspen, Paterson said many years later, was a tough place to make a living unless one owned a business. In his opinion, the economic nature of the tourist economy, in which unskilled laborers were poorly paid, explained why so many people left. What he meant by this is hard to say, but not every ski bum in Aspen could have bought half a city block or paid the hefty tuition to study under one of the world's most famous architects. Paterson noted in 1994 that he could recall only one person (Howie Mayer, a 35-year veteran of the ski patrol) who had been around equally long without owning his own business. He then described the young people who continued to come to Aspen as similar to himself and other youngsters who had come in earlier generations: "It's the same thing, the same spirit... Those people who come here to work are still very much similar to our original pioneers who were ski bums." The greatest similarities were their youth, their status as privileged people in transition, and their eventual departures.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Paterson interview. See also "Aspen's 20<sup>th</sup> Century Architecture: Modernism," on the web at <http://www.aspenpitkin.com/pdfs/depts/41/modernist.pdf>.

The transient character of Aspen's ski newcomers was obvious from the time that they began showing up after the war. Friedl Pfeifer, a founder with Paepcke of the skiing corporation and the director of Aspen's ski school, actually traveled back and forth the first two winters between Aspen and Sun Valley, where he also ran the ski school. In an arrangement that certainly galled Paepcke, Pfeifer regularly spent two weeks in Idaho and then drove the 800 miles back to Aspen, where he generally spent one week before returning again to the north.<sup>293</sup> As early as 1950, a *Ski* magazine article referred to "old Aspenites" who might want updates on happenings about the town. The next year, *The New York Times* noted that when the snow was gone, many of "the incorrigible ski bums will disappear, as mysteriously and completely" as they did every year. The *Times* and *SKI* probably referred to men and women like Florence Prounis and Jim Adams, who left Aspen in the fall of 1952 but longed to return. Prounis worked for *The Aspen Flyer* and drove a taxi cab, and Adams worked at the Jerome. After they were engaged to be married in Aspen, the couple moved to New York City. They hoped to "get some capital together with which to start a small business in Aspen when we return." Prounis wrote to Paepcke, her old boss, that both she and her husband disliked "the idea of having to live away from Aspen for even a short time, but this seems to be the only way to get things rolling." Living in Aspen would require gaining a grubstake in the big city. According to the Aspen city directories, Prounis and Adams did return to live in Aspen.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Pfeifer, pp. 148-149; Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "A daughter remembers her movie-star father," *The Aspen Times*, January 22-23, 2000, p.7-B.

<sup>294</sup> Tom Nagel, "Good News from Aspen," *Ski*, December 1, 1950, p. 19; Ira Henry Freeman, "Aspen Expects Two More Months Of Spring Skiing," *The New York Times*, March 25, 1951, p. 91; and

By the time Prounis and Adams exited town, just seven years after the opening of Lift One, leaving Aspen was a well-understood phenomenon among Aspenites. The 1952 local musical "I've Had It," written by two Aspenites and produced in both Aspen and Denver, explored the dilemma of leaving. The main character is a young man who works as a Jerome bellhop. He has "had it" with scraping by in the ski town and dealing with tourists. His conflict is exacerbated by the fact that although he has decided to go back home to Texas, his girlfriend does not want to leave Aspen. Shenanigans ensue when she breaks up with him for a snobby music composer drawn to the town's summer music festival. The bellhop eventually wins back his girl and the play concludes with the two engaged, presumably headed out of town to get on with their lives.

The musical's cast reflected well the play's central tenet: that Aspen was full of young, talented people working jobs for which they were infinitely overqualified and which they would eventually leave. Richard Murphy, who played the lead bellhop character, had attended Cornell. When not on stage, he worked as a waiter at the Red Onion. One of the supporting actresses had studied at Radcliffe and performed at the Boston Opera House before coming to Aspen and working as a hotel reservations clerk. The program noted that another actor "came to Aspen last winter. He is a student of radio and television production at Syracuse University and has taken one term off to be a ski bum." While the actors came from relatively privileged backgrounds in the east and claimed to be ski bums, their characters were simpler. Murphy's character was a Texas cowboy, frustrated with his work as a bellhop at the

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Florence Prounis to Walter Paepcke, October 8, 1952, in Box 100, F5, WPP. James Adams appears as a resident in the 1955 Aspen City Directory. See the City Directory collection, AHS.

Jerome. He longed to go back home and be a rancher. By making the lead character a distinctly western (albeit southwestern) cowboy who wanted to leave his bellhop uniform behind and put on his Levis for good, the playwrights simplified for their audience the idea that Aspenites were authentically western and therefore were different from tourists.<sup>295</sup>

The actor with the most remarkable background was the leading female, Adele Girard. She and husband Joe Marsala, one of the musical's authors with Western writer Luke Short (pseudonym for Fred Glidden), came to Aspen in 1949 after Marsala wrote a hit song, "Don't Cry Joe," for Frank Sinatra. Both Girard and Marsala were highly regarded jazz musicians in New York. They decided to move with their daughter to Aspen after reading a *Life* magazine article about the town. Once there, they skied and entertained FIS skiers, Gary Cooper, and other celebrities. Marsala eventually wrote more music. The musical score of "I've Had It" was strong enough that Ethel Merman came to Aspen and made an offer to buy it, albeit with changes to both the music and the script. "In the end," Girard recalled later, "Joe's artistic sensibilities were offended. He and Fred held out for another offer, which never came." A year later, in 1953, the Marsalas left Aspen and moved to California before returning to New York.

Their daughter, Eleisa, had said of the town on first sight, "What kind of a mine dump is this?," but ended up adoring Aspen's small town flavor. She remembered that her family left when the "windfall" money from the Sinatra song ran

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<sup>295</sup> Luke Short and Joe Marsala, "I've Had It," (produced by Aspen Masque and Music, 1952). A copy of the play's script may be found in the Locked Case at the Pitkin County Library (PCL) in Aspen. For a program of the Denver performances at Phipps Auditorium in May, 1952, see CULTURE Theater "I've Had It" file, AHS.

out, and that her “dearest wish”—to graduate with her tiny Aspen High School class—was not to be. Like others, Eleisa Marsala could not quite forget Aspen and easily move on. In the late 1950s, after graduating from high school in New York and spending more than a year traveling with a circus as a trick bicycle rider, she talked her parents into moving back to Aspen. “I was the one,” Eleisa recalled, “who really wanted to return.” She noted that although her parents loved Aspen, “there was really very little meaningful work for them there.” Eleisa took typical ski bum jobs before heading back east to college, and her parents, once giants in New York’s jazz scene, played après-ski gigs in various bars around town. Eventually, Joe Marsala went into the liquor business with fellow Italian Mike Magnifico. Her father, Eleisa said, “wasn’t a behind the counter sort of guy and bowed out after a year or so.” Joe and Adele finally moved to Chicago, where he took a position as a producer with a music company.<sup>296</sup>

Working behind a counter or in other jobs suited to a tourist economy did not satisfy many Aspenites in the long run. Eleisa Marsala met and married an Aspen ski bum, Tony Trampler, whose story resembled her own. Tony’s father, Walter, was a concert violinist. He first brought the family to town for the Aspen Music Festival, in which he performed during the summers from 1953-1956. Tony became fast friends with barber/realtor Jim Moore’s son, Tommy, and recalled riding bikes all over town and exploring defunct mining tunnels. “There were just fun things to do,” recalled the east coast native. “It was really my first experience in a small town during the summer and it just was an incredible experience for me.” Trampler loved life in

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<sup>296</sup> See Phillip D. Atteberry, “The Sweethearts of Swing: Adele Girard and Joe Marsala,” on the web at <http://www.pitt.edu/~atteberr/jazz/articles/Girard.html>; Tony and Eleisa Trampler interview, September 26, 1994, by Ruth Whyte, AHS; and Eleisa Trampler email to author, July 27, 2005.

Aspen. When his parents divorced and he graduated from high school back east in 1958, he talked his mother into moving there. “Just decided,” he explained, “that we wanted to come West for a while.” Once in Aspen, Trampler worked as a taxi cab driver, and he and his mother worked for Bil Dunaway, owner of *The Aspen Times*. In 1960, he met Eleisa Marsala. When they married two years later, the couple left Aspen and moved briefly to California before returning to Colorado. Tony attended college in Denver, where the couple remained forty years later. “We lived in Aspen,” Eleisa wrote, “during its most beautiful time and we are sorry to see that time of discovery, joy and exuberance now a thing of the past...one hopes that the new Aspen can somehow maintain the flavor of the old delightful town that it once was.”<sup>297</sup> Although the Trampers left Aspen to finish college and prepare themselves for better jobs than working in the circus and driving a taxi cab, when they reflected years later on leaving the town, they expressed a sadness that belied their real reasons for departing. If one did not know that they moved away so that Tony could finish college, Eleisa’s statement about the loss of “discovery, joy and exuberance” might suggest that they were forced out by changes in the town, when in fact they moved because they themselves had changed.

While Aspen continued to function throughout the 1960s as a small-town haven for people who wanted to change their lives, the decade ushered in the ski era’s greatest changes. In 1962 and 1963, the city paved all of the downtown streets, burying under a layer of asphalt the dust and potholes that many Aspenites had treasured as an important part of the town’s rural quirkiness. More importantly, in 1964 the Forest Service approved the development of a new ski area at Snowmass to

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<sup>297</sup> Trampler interview; and email correspondence with author.

be built on what had been ranchlands.<sup>298</sup> It was less than ten miles from the slick new downtown streets. Even though downtown Aspen had changed and the modern resort at Snowmass loomed on the horizon, many newcomers to the area saw Aspen as Shangri-La. Hank Barlow came to town in 1965 and described Aspen as a “relaxed” skier’s paradise. At the same time as the 1967 opening of the neo-Swiss modern resort village at Snowmass, gas-powered snowmaking machines began blowing artificial snow on the slopes dropping into Aspen. Barlow said that 1967’s changes, particularly at Snowmass, ushered in the “boom.”<sup>299</sup> By the time the last freight train rolled out of Aspen in 1969 (passenger service had ended years earlier), Joe Edwards warned in his mayoral bid that developers and the ski corporation threatened to turn the town “into a kind of Las Vegas,” meaning that Aspen might become a tacky middle-class playground.<sup>300</sup>

While Aspen’s condominiums and paved streets may have seemed tacky to some locals, plenty of others found that the town offered a breath of fresh air. As some of the nation’s oldest baby boomers, like Barlow, reached adulthood and came to Aspen, they found the town very appealing as compared to the places they had previously called home. Others wondered immediately what had become of the Aspen they had long read about and imagined. New construction and this new cohort of ski bums helped Aspen to grow more between 1960 and 1970 than at any other time in its ski-era history. During the decade, the county’s population tripled and skier visits to the valley’s four mountains increased nine-fold. By 1968, the Aspen

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<sup>298</sup> For a list of significant events in Aspen’s history, see “A Brief Timeline of Aspen History” at <http://www.aspenhistory.org/timeline.html>.

<sup>299</sup> Hank Barlow, “The Second Coming of Aspen,” *Skiing*, November, 1986, p. 96.

<sup>300</sup> For Edwards’s description of Aspen being on track to become Vegas-like, see his campaign letter, October 31, 1969, in Bio: Edwards, Joe file, AHS.

post office complained that it handled more walk-in business than Denver's largest branch, processing 150,000 pieces of mail daily. The town's postmaster noted that the task was made more difficult by the general delivery storage space required by a transient population.<sup>301</sup>

Most observers saw the transient young in Aspen as a lesser problem than were the condominium owners in town and at Snowmass. "Aspen's gone the wrong way," said artist Robert Indiana in 1968. "The rich have taken over a wonderful historic town and they are fast making it into one of their unpleasant gilded suburbias."<sup>302</sup> But the rich had been in Aspen from the start of both the mining era and the ski era. What really concerned Indiana was the *nouveau riche*. As Edwards and Hunter S. Thompson launched political campaigns against Aspen's "greedheads" in 1969 and in 1970, Peggy Clifford called attention to Aspen's "dreams and dilemmas." It was a time when many young and old Aspenites alike began looking for new places to start the original Aspen dream all over again. Although Barlow had only been in town since 1965, in 1971 he looked for a less-crowded place. Four years after the opening of Snowmass, he wrote, "feeling restless and crowded by Aspen's popularity, I moved over the range to slower-paced Crested Butte." Many others would follow Barlow in seeking new mountain-town utopias in the Rockies.<sup>303</sup>

Joan Trumbull Wright and her husband, Philip, managed the Country Store in Aspen until 1972. They had lived a good life in the town, raising three sons and a

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<sup>301</sup> Growth statistics are summed up nicely in the Aspen Chamber of Commerce's "Economic Indicators for Pitkin County," July, 1974, in Aspen History Skiing/Culture Era Clippings, 1970s & 1980s, AHS. For the post office reference, see Aspen Valley Improvement Association newsletter, covering November 6, 1968 to March 10, 1969, in Box 175, F3, PHN.

<sup>302</sup> Robert Indiana served for the summer of 1968 as artist-in-residence at the Aspen Center for Contemporary Arts. His comments about greed and growth in Aspen may be found in n.a., "Indiana paints signs of our times," *The Aspen Times*, August 15, 1968, p. 3-A.

<sup>303</sup> Barlow, p. 96.

daughter, all of whom were active in sports and community life. In 1972, their son Chapin died in a car wreck on the day he graduated from high school. It is likely that Chapin's death contributed to the Wrights' desire to seek a quieter spot elsewhere in the West. When Joan explained, however, why they sold the Country Store and left Aspen in the same year as her son's death she did not mention Chapin. Rather, she explained that Aspen when she had first arrived after the war "was a marvelous, undiscovered, small town then," but by 1972, it no longer felt the same. "Aspen had lost its charm," she explained, "the tragedy of building a better mousetrap." Like new western pioneers once again, she and Phil left Aspen and "struck out for the Big Hole River in Montana." For the next twelve years they operated a fishing lodge near the town of Wise River. Like their parents, the Wrights' children lived adventurous lives. One son died in an avalanche while climbing in China. Their daughter taught English in Japan. Flip, their lone surviving son, lived in Aspen, where he owned a cabinet-making shop. In 1984, Joan and Phil Wright retired to Livingston, Montana, where they lived next to the Yellowstone River, fished regularly, and played tennis.<sup>304</sup>

In some of the places where they went, former Aspenites quickly took over town governments and sought, as Joe Edwards had done, to limit growth, which they saw as chiefly benefiting the old-timer descendants of miners, middle-class entrepreneurs, and most importantly, the big capitalists who made it all possible in the beginning. This political shift caused tension between the young newcomers and oldtimers. By 1975, for example, an anonymous "Group of Tax-payers" from Crested Butte wrote to Senators Floyd Haskell and Gary Hart, complaining that "the

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<sup>304</sup> See Joan Trumbull Wright's short autobiography and her obituary (reprinted from the *Livingston Enterprise*, March 27, 2000) in BIO: Wright, Joan and Family at AHS.

Town Counsel [sic] is all filthy hippies and not tax-payers” who were “trying to make more room for the filthies to congregate on.” The letter writers hoped that their Senators might stop all federal bond issues for Crested Butte. Haskell returned the letter, huffing that he did “not feel that gross allegations unsupported by fact nor signed by name should be given much consideration.”<sup>305</sup>

While a number of baby-boomer-era Aspenites framed their moving away within the context of needing to live in a smaller town, others simply needed to move on with their lives. For every Barlow, or for every Richard Ernst—who told an Aspen reporter examining the phenomenon of “The Aspen Farewell” that he did not want the name of his Idaho town used in the story—there were countless Ella Goodriches, John Stylists, or Susan Smiths. Goodrich came to Aspen in the early 1970s, “drawn to its aura of youthful vigor and excitement.” She had fun in town until she realized that in Aspen, one had “a ready-made and blessed sanctuary in which to avoid everything.” In addition to finding that Aspen’s men were insistently non-committal, Goodrich never found a satisfying job there. After two years, she left for California.<sup>306</sup>

John Stylist arrived in Aspen from California in 1969. He was burned out after three years of law school and a job where he had worked sixteen-hour days for Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) in urban neighborhoods. He needed an anti-city, anti-serious environment after his experience with VISTA. Stylist taught skiing and tennis, and then wrote a novel while learning to play classical guitar. “The

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<sup>305</sup> See Group of Taxpayers/Sen. Floyd K. Haskell correspondence, May, 1975, in Box 57, FKH.

<sup>306</sup> In the stories of Bondman, Ernst, Goodrich, Smith, and Stylist, an Aspen reporter admitted to “altering the names where necessary to protect those who claimed they needed protection. See Lyman Townsend, “The Aspen Farewell,” *Aspen: The Magazine*, December 1977/January 1978, p. 55.

days were warm,” he said, “and nobody thought you were crazy to sit on the lawn, winter or summer, and practice. In Suburbia you’d be on your way out.” After three years of diddling around Aspen and having fun, Stylist returned to his hometown of Dayton, Ohio, and worked in the prosecutor’s office, where he lasted one year. “I was influenced by Aspen to such an extent,” he recalled,

that I found it impossible to live in the Midwest where I grew up. But it was not only geographic, it was also mental. Once you remember how it feels to be drunk, you can’t say you’ve never had the experience. For a while, after the prosecutor’s job, I turned to designing and building houses, about which I knew nothing. When that turned out well, I said to myself that I didn’t have to live in Dayton to build houses. I could go back to Colorado.

Although Stylist, who had married since leaving Aspen, thought of returning there, he moved to Boulder instead. The college town on the front range, he said, felt like a better place to raise a family. While noting that he liked to visit Aspen occasionally, Stylist said that he had no desire to live there again. “Anything different from the ordinary,” he concluded, “seems precious in retrospect. But I don’t miss Aspen.”<sup>307</sup>

Susan Smith did not miss it either. She was a ski bum who met a tourist from Topeka on a ski lift during her third year in town. She eventually moved to Kansas and married him. Before meeting her husband, Smith had expected to stay in Aspen forever, but then she started considering Topeka. She recalled that, originally, she “couldn’t imagine a worse place to be stuck” than Kansas. Then, she began to see Aspen as beautiful but unreal, a place where too many friends came and left. Smith realized that she had never really considered her future in Aspen until she had fallen for an outsider who did not want to live there. Although she missed “the comradeship

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

and exuberance among the young people,” she had children and her husband had a career. Moving back would never be the same. “We are older now,” Smith said when interviewed in 1977 at age thirty, “and Aspen is a young town.”<sup>308</sup>

Others moved to ski towns that seemed like new, fresh versions of Aspen. Like Hank Barlow, who moved from Aspen to Crested Butte in 1971, and Richard Ernst, who moved off to an unnamed mountain town in Idaho the same year, Tommy Bondman sought a simpler version of Aspen in a new place. Instead of moving to Idaho, to the front range of Colorado, or back to his hometown, Bondman left for the San Juan Mountains and Telluride in 1974. He blamed his departure on a boom in Aspen that grew “out of hand.” Unlike others who complained of no future in Aspen, Bondman complained of “no present.” He was too busy working in the construction trades to enjoy doing the things for which he had come to Aspen in the first place. For Bondman, a move to Telluride would allow him to live the life he had imagined for himself years earlier when he arrived in Aspen. He admitted that he escaped to the smaller, mellower Telluride so that he could ski and hike more and spend more time with his wife and son. Bondman said, “I don’t miss Aspen because Telluride is so much like it.” Yet unlike in Aspen, Bondman saw two reasons to hope for controlled growth in Telluride. First, it was harder to get to Telluride than to Aspen because the town had no airport, and was situated in a much narrower canyon than the wide Roaring Fork Valley. Second, and more importantly, Telluride’s politicians started out “*knowing* it’s going to grow. We’re prepared.” As an example, Bondman told a reporter from Aspen that the town’s politicians had a good idea of “how much and how fast,” exemplified by their decision to close the town down for a recent

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

Fourth of July. "How many places would have done that?" he asked, noting that the action may have hurt the town financially in the short run, but that it proved "We're sane here."<sup>309</sup> Bondman linked the town's sanity directly to its ability to deny middle America the opportunity to gather there during one of its biggest holidays.

Aspenites knew of Telluride early, both in the mining era and later. In 1939, as the Aspen Ski Club moved into its third year, Fletcher Brown resigned his presidency "due to his absence from Aspen," and then relinquished the role to his brother, Darcy. Fletcher wrote his formal letter of resignation from the small old mining town of Telluride, roughly two hundred miles southwest of Aspen. Why he moved there is unclear, but it is likely that Fletcher hoped to revive one of the town's mines. Thirty years later, Darcy was no longer president of the ski club, but served as president of the Aspen Skiing Corporation. Telluride became a topic of discussion again when some members of the company's Board of Directors suggested that the corporation expand operations and develop a major ski area there. Although chief stockholder Paul Nitze and others felt that Telluride held great potential and that the company might develop it similarly to Aspen and Snowmass, Darcy Brown disagreed. After touring the mountains around the town with Nitze, an exercise that included walking up and down potential ski slopes, Brown expressed his disapproval in a memo to the board: "Telluride will be a mediocre ski area."<sup>310</sup> Brown's mistake

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>310</sup> Fletcher Brown to Aspen Ski Club, September 29, 1939, in Ski Club file, AHS. For correspondence between Paul Nitze and Darcy Brown during the fall of 1969 pertaining to the Aspen Ski Corporation's interest in Telluride, see Box 178, F7, PHN. Brown and Nitze walked one ski slope that had already been cut and cleared by Dave Farny, perhaps the first ex-Aspenite in the ski era to move to Telluride. Farny, who had moved to Aspen in the late 1950s to teach skiing and operate a boys camp, moved his operation to Skyline Ranch (eight miles outside of Telluride) in 1969. For more on

in overlooking Telluride would have a profound impact on the countless men and women who left Aspen and headed for the upstart ski town over the next few years. Without the capital and expertise of the Aspen Skiing Corporation, Telluride struggled and, briefly, felt like the Aspen of a past era. Babyboomer ski bums who missed Aspen's glory days of unpaved streets and ramshackle housing moved to Telluride and made a fresh start on what they considered to be a new frontier of freedom and fun.

Despite Brown's belief in Telluride's mediocrity, Paul Nitze's son (and Walter Paepcke's nephew), Billy, flew to Los Angeles in 1969 to meet with Telluride landowner Joseph Zoline. They discussed the possibility that the Aspen Skiing Corporation might purchase some of the more than four thousand acres Zoline had bought sight unseen in Telluride the previous year. Although the Nitzes believed that Zoline's asking price of \$800 per acre (more than \$ 3 million total) was fair, Brown convinced the board that Aspen should focus expansion efforts elsewhere. For reasons that he never articulated terribly well, Brown insisted that the company avoid Telluride. Perhaps, Brown disliked Zoline and simply did not want to do business with him. Both Brown and the Nitzes certainly had known of Zoline years before he began acquiring land around Telluride in 1968. In 1955, the native Chicagoan had bought a 200-acre ranch—the Bar Slash X—outside of Aspen. He spoke out often regarding the future of the area. In one 1968 town-hall meeting about Aspen's

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the Farnys, see articles pertaining to Skyline Ranch in Album #1, Telluride Room, Wilkinson Public Library, Telluride (WPL). Like their predecessors in Aspen, some locals in Telluride had always skied. Over the years, the town had seen various rope tows on the lower hills about town come and go. Eventually, some in town dreamed of a bigger operation. In the early 1960s, the Telluride Elks Lodge went so far as to pony up \$12,000 to an outsider to help them find a developer. See Olga Curtis, "Prosperity Returns, But All Is Not Joy in Telluride," *The Denver Post Empire Magazine*, August 22, 1976, p. 11.

growth dilemmas, Zoline chided Aspenites for attempting to tell people like himself—a “part-time Aspenite,” as the *Aspen Times* described him—how to spend their own money. He suggested that ranching was not economically feasible for the region and that zoning laws should reflect that reality. The implication was that ranchers, even city slicker hobby ranchers like himself, should be able to do what they pleased with their lands.<sup>311</sup>

Shortly thereafter, an Aspenite told Zoline about “a place called Telluride ‘which was like Aspen 25 years ago.’” In other words, in Telluride, a man of means might do what he wanted, just as Walter Paepcke had done what he wanted in the Aspen of 1945. But Zoline did not have it in mind to maintain complete cultural control of Telluride as Paepcke did at Aspen. He was less concerned with who came there and what they did than he was with planning a great ski area and controlling the real estate surrounding it. By January, 1969, Zoline had bought up thousands of acres around the town and numerous properties within it. Although, as one reporter put it two years later, some old Telluridians “were dubious about Zoline, a slim, dark-haired man who talks like a city lawyer, wears western clothes, and keeps a French poodle,” mixed identities and images mattered little to Telluride’s newcomers. Zoline intrigued plenty of ski bums in Aspen who were fed up with Aspen’s model of what he called “haphazard growth.” “Aspen grew without controls under inadequate

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<sup>311</sup> Billy Nitze to Paul Nitze, October 28, 1969, Box 178, F7, PHN. For Zoline’s comments about zoning in Aspen, see n.a., “‘If we blow it now...’” *The Aspen Times*, October 31, 1968, p. 4-C. Telluride’s first few years after Zoline’s massive cash infusion were chronicled in Olga Curtis, “The rebirth of Telluride,” *The Denver Post Empire Magazine*, November 14, 1971, pp. 12-19. For more on how Zoline came to buy thousands of acres in Telluride “sight unseen,” see Amy Levek and Dean Rolley, producers, *The YX Factor* (Telluride, Colorado: Tell Me A Story Media, 2004). This documentary film includes numerous interviews with people who lived in Telluride in the 1970s.

zoning laws,” Zoline said emphatically, before noting that “We can profit from that lesson here.”<sup>312</sup>

While they welcomed the strengthened economy that Zoline promised, the doubtful oldtimer Telluridians may have been most uncomfortable with references to Aspen. Only one year after Hunter Thompson and his band of Aspen freaks made a national spectacle of the sheriff’s race in Pitkin County, Telluride’s own marshal, Everett Morrow, noted that he was worried about his town getting “the overflow of the bums run out of Aspen.” Morrow dressed in a cowboy hat and boots, wore a “low-slung gun holster,” and occasionally saddled a horse to patrol Telluride’s dusty streets when not driving his police car (with its bumper sticker: “If you don’t like cops, the next time you’re in trouble call a hippie”). He said that long hair worried him less than narcotics. However, drugs and hippies, a newspaper article pointed out, were the two things Telluridians mentioned with furrowed brows “when they talk about Telluride becoming ‘another Aspen.’” More than one year before the Telluride ski area opened, *The New York Times* featured the town in a piece that showed a photograph of Morrow looking like a character from *Gunsmoke* come to life. In an article titled “Fear of Hippies Awakens Colorado Town,” the reporter noted that Telluride’s “model for evil is Aspen.”<sup>313</sup>

For many Aspenites, Telluride became the new model of a Western American ski town dream where they could put Aspen’s failures behind them, learn from them,

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<sup>312</sup> Charlie Meyers, “The Telluride Chamber of Commerce Presents Joseph T. Zoline,” *Colorful Colorado Magazine*, September/October 1972, p. 66.

<sup>313</sup> Anthony Ripley, “Fear of Hippies Awakens Colorado Town,” *The New York Times*, May 20, 1971, p. 26. Four years later, in his essay “Telluride Blues—A Hatchet Job,” included later in the collection of essays titled *The Journey Home: Some Words in Defense of the American West* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977), Edward Abbey told of a heated Town Council meeting in which a French chef in Telluride argued that Morrow’s problem was that he watched too much *Gunsmoke*.

and create an ideal community. They began arriving not long after Zoline made the pronouncement that he wanted to prove that Aspen might serve Telluride as a valuable example in how to manage more wisely the inevitable growth associated with a resort area. One of the first people to show up after Zoline's initial publicity charge was a twenty-nine-year-old shaggy-haired attorney named Robert Korn. A native New Yorker, Korn told a reporter that he went to Aspen after being "smothered out of New York." After less than a year in Aspen, however, Korn and his wife claimed to have taken a wrong turn on their way to visit the Grand Canyon, ending up in Telluride in October, 1970. They rented a house, under the watchful eye of Marshal Morrow, that became "a kind of community center for the disaffected" long-haired youth trickling in and out of town. "In three years," Korn predicted to *The New York Times*, "this main street will be filled with stores and people with beads and long hair. We are the first waves."<sup>314</sup>

By the next fall, lifts were still not constructed but a snow cat operation hauled skiers up the mountain. Zoline's Telluride-based realtor, Jerry Vass, targeted readers of the *Denver Post* in an ad that implored them, in a voice reminiscent of nineteenth-century land speculators, to "BE A PART OF THIS NEW SKI BOOM." This tactic differed vastly from Walter Paepcke's more subdued approach to attracting Aspen investors decades earlier. Tacky or not, a number of Aspenites decided to follow Zoline's and Vass's advice. By the fall of 1972, just months prior to the opening of Telluride's lifts, one magazine noted that "among the newcomers—many of whom have purchased and rebuilt sagging residences or opened shops—are

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<sup>314</sup> Ripley, p.26. Ripley's *New York Times* piece described Korn in a manner that conjures up an image today of a young Bob Dylan sans harmonica and guitar: he had a "bushy ball of hair, wearing the revolutionary uniform of blue work shirt and jeans."

refugees from Aspen...all are searching for Aspen as it used to be, Aspen before the ski and tourist boom hit.” Mike Martin was one of the Aspen migrants. At the end of the ski season in April, 1972, he left Aspen for Telluride and got a job remodeling old homes. On the eve of the grand opening of the ski area that Zoline called “Big T,” Martin described Telluride as the kind of town where one might fire a cannon down Main Street without having to worry about hurting anyone. He seemed pleased to have placed Aspen firmly behind himself and to have found an isolated, somewhat desolate alternative.<sup>315</sup>

Other Telluridians in the early 1970s described the town in ways reminiscent of newcomers’ descriptions of Aspen in the 1940s and 1950s. Their dilapidated houses and working-class jobs helped them define themselves as pioneers. For example, Steve and Terry Catsman heard about Telluride while working and living as ski bums in Aspen. After they were married in 1970, the couple decided to leave their menial Aspen jobs behind so that Steve might return to college in Michigan. Two years later, the couple loaded up their van and drove back across the country to Colorado. Instead of heading up the Roaring Fork Valley to Aspen, they rolled through Glenwood Springs and the Western Slope farm communities of Delta, Olathe, Montrose, and Ridgeway before chugging up the narrow, winding road into Telluride. They later described the town as the kind of place where one might meet the whole population during the first night at the New Sheridan Bar (located below the New Sheridan Hotel, Telluride’s old red-brick equivalent to the Hotel Jerome). The Catsmans camped out and lived in their van before finding a house to rent in

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<sup>315</sup> Jerome “Jerry” Vass’s Telluride Realty advertisement may be found in the *The Denver Post*, November 14, 1971, p. 40. For Mike Martin’s description, see Meyers, p. 66.

town. Steve cut firewood and worked as a carpenter, before getting a job helping to build the original ski lifts. It was the type of work that must have made him feel like a ski pioneer who had traveled back in time to Aspen, circa 1946, when young men had helped to construct Lift One on Aspen Mountain. “We looked at Telluride,” Catsman recalled, “as a chance to participate in the planning, growth and development of a whole new community.” Of course, as with Aspen in an earlier era, another community of longtime locals already existed in Telluride. Only months after moving to town, Terry dreamed of owning a restaurant. Within one year, she and Steve did something they might never have been able to do if they had returned to Aspen: they opened a European-styled bistro called The Senate.<sup>316</sup>

From the beginning, Zoline’s company marketed the idea of Telluride as a new western frontier, where men like Catsman (and more importantly, tourists) might make their dreams come true while reinventing themselves in a small town reminiscent of a bygone era. “The town? Oh, the town,” one 1972 advertisement read. “Right out of the real West. In fact, Butch Cassidy knocked over his first bank right on Main Street.” After noting that a new double-seat chairlift was set to begin operations one month later, the ad dared readers to “Find out what they’re all going to be talking about for years to come. Before they start talking.” An important part of Telluride’s marketing strategy in the early 1970s, in fact, was to set itself up as a more authentically western small town than Aspen. Telluride’s boosters pitched also the town as a place where one could get in on the ground floor of a sure bet. Another ad from 1972 showed a sophisticated, well dressed couple walking a city street at

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<sup>316</sup> The story of Steve and Terry Catsman may be found in Cynthia Hansen-Zehm, Liz Barbour, Ellen Sammon, and Laura Schiller, “Still Life on Main Street,” *Telluride Magazine*, Winter, 1992/1993, p. 24.

night, lit skyscrapers behind them. The man says to the woman, "I know you've been to Aspen. I know you've been to Vail. But you haven't been to Telluride." Again, to talk of Telluride before anyone else did provided cachet and maybe a great investment opportunity. Within a few years, the Telluride Resort Association (TRA) boasted in a packet of promotional materials for travel writers, editors, and travel agents that Joe Zoline, a "far-sighted developer," had "left Aspen" to build "a fantasy spot" in Telluride. TRA failed to mention that, in addition to his house in Telluride, Zoline still owned and visited his ranch in Aspen, as well as his primary residence in Beverly Hills. "Compared to Colorado's big-name resorts," the release read, "with their myriad stop lights and traffic jams, Burger Kings and Kentucky Fried Chickens, this beautifully restored Victorian mining town is a breath of fresh air." In case the reader was not clear to which "big-name" resort TRA referred, they made it clear: "Aspen mayor Stacey Standley, during a recent visit to Telluride said: 'On a scale of ten, I'd give your town a nine, and the rest of us [Aspen, Vail, Steamboat, Breckenridge] a five or a six.'" The context of traffic jams and fast food restaurants suggests that Standley referred to a measurement of Telluride's ability to keep Middle America at bay. Finally, after noting that artists, writers, and ski bums, "many of them refugees from the cities or overcrowded ski towns," called Telluride home, TRA borrowed a quotation from a *New York Times* article that described the town as "an Aspen that hasn't yet grown up." Growing up meant paving streets and building neo-Swiss condos. Growing up meant becoming less western.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> "This year it's Telluride" ad and "I know you've been to Aspen" ad, *Colorful Colorado Magazine*, September/October 1972, pp. 22-23; Telluride Resort Association press release, 1976, in Telluride Chamber Resort file, WPL.

Indeed, like Aspen in 1945, Telluride offered people a well-preserved remnant of the Western American past where they could play with definitions of class. The gingerbread Victorian houses, the old hotel, the opera house, and the marshal with his pistol and horse were very real, as were the miners. Unlike Aspen in 1945, mining in Telluride remained a vital part of the town's economy into the ski era. When the Telluride lifts began running in 1972, the Idarado Mining Company rightfully claimed to be the largest employer in town and the second largest hardrock mining operation in the state of Colorado. One man who moved to town in 1973 argued that much of Telluride's magic in the first few years resulted from the presence of working miners. Rob Schultheis recalled the whistle that marked the beginning and the end of work shifts at Pandora (the local name for Idarado's mine), then of "rubbing shoulders" at the bars with the "salty hardrock miners with rock dust in their pores, mud-stained mucking boots, and tales of subterranean shenanigans." Drunken cowboys ("with loaded guns on their hips") showed up and weaved between the hippies at rowdy Halloween parties, and sheepherders shot their guns at more than one local hiker." Meaning perhaps that it was not always comfortable when old westerners and new westerners met face to face, Schultheis said, "The Old West wasn't always pretty." Yet by placing ski bums side by side with miners, cowboys, and sheepherders in their reminiscences, Telluride residents like Schultheis blurred the lines between outsider and insider while presenting newcomers as pioneers.<sup>318</sup>

Like earlier generations of Aspenites, many of the Telluride newcomers framed their arrivals and their lives there as a search for freedom in small-town Western America. Schultheis recalled happily that he knew everyone at the post

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<sup>318</sup> Rob Schultheis, "Rainbow's End," *Telluride Magazine*, Winter, 1992/1993, pp. 15-17, 62.

office when he went to pick up his mail, and that “No one dreamed of locking their house, or car.” Michael Brown likened his arrival in 1972 to landing on an unpopulated planet. To his friend Ned Mulford, a native New Yorker who eventually worked briefly in Telluride’s mines, his first night in his small house on Pacific Street (one block off of Main) made him feel that he was in “a cabin in the woods.” Sylvia and Kenny Hemann remembered pot-bellied stoves and bad plumbing, while Howie Stern recalled that he saw in Telluride a place where a kid from Philadelphia might live a “remote” and “bean sprouts kind of life,” very different from the urban and suburban environments from which many of the ski bums had escaped. As with Aspenites such as Ralph Jackson before them, Telluridians often felt that they had found a mountaintop fountain of youth. “I think there was a feeling,” recalled one of the earliest newcomers, Thomas “T.D.” Smith, “that we were never going to grow up.” Another man said that Telluride in 1970 gave one the feeling “of being on the edge, of being young for a long, long time.”<sup>319</sup>

The media certainly noticed Telluride’s youthfulness. A 1973 article in *Skiing* used the word “kids” over and over again in its descriptions of the local newcomers. On the ski mountain, in addition to being “heroes” on Telluride’s absurdly steep slopes, the ski bums were “stony-broke kids.” Down in town, they “lived in old vans,

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<sup>319</sup> Schultheis, p. 62; Hansen-Zehm, et al., 19, 25, 26, and 27. See also, John Maccabee, “Ramblings in Telluride,” *The Telluride Times*, February 1, 1979, p. 4. Earlier generations of Aspenite ski bums and Telluride ski bums both talked of feeling that they were moving to the ends of the earth. However, generational differences showed. For example, Telluridians—mostly of the baby boomer generation that grew up with television—often recalled that the town only received the signal for one TV station. Directly next to the Maccabee editorial that mentioned how Telluride gave him the sense in 1970 of “being young for a long, long time,” a local cartoonist drew a man shaking a television, while screaming “I need you. I want you, More! More!” Whereas early ski bums in Aspen spoke often of the need for an improved hospital, Telluride newcomers in the 1970s made it a top priority to create KOTO, which at its founding in 1975 made Telluride the smallest town in America with an FM radio station. “KOTO,” wrote one reporter, “is the poor but precocious offspring of Telluride’s diverse, youth-oriented citizenry.” See Tad Bartimus, “Tiny town backs rare radio station,” *Syracuse Herald* (New York), January 4, 1982, n.p., clipping in Album #1, WPL.

in pickup trucks, and in the sagging wooden cribs out behind the Silver Bell, one of the old bawdy houses.” They partied and let it all hang out, sometimes literally. One oldtimer complained that the antics of the skiers made the miners and the prostitutes of Telluride’s past look like prudes. “At least the whores were ladies,” he said. “They had more self-respect than to parade down Main Street with their boobs hanging out.” *Skiing* saw the antics of the “kids” as simply “a wooly innocence,” played out more often than not at the Victorian-era Roma Bar. In one description of the scene at the bar, a journalist saw Telluridians very clearly as young people playing a sophisticated game where they operated in an idealized western past and avoided anything smacking of middle-class America’s late twentieth century realities. “The working parts of the Roma,” John Skow wrote,

were a huge, mirrored bar and its bottles and beer taps, built of dark glossy wood, grand as an altarpiece. The shaggy kids crowded around, wearing beat-up jean jackets, cowboy hats, ground-sweeping granny dresses for the girls, droopy mustaches, plain, somber faces. It was fantasyland, each man his own Sundance Kid. They were prospectors, loners, badlands badmen, runaways to the great lost frontier. Richard Nixon did not exist; no one had ever heard of freeways; Watergate was some Oldsmobile owner’s bad dream.<sup>320</sup>

While Skow seemed to hit the nail on the head in discussing the escapist value of a place such as the dark, downstairs basement bar at the Roma (in an already isolated Telluride), he painted a scene much less adult-oriented than did the town marshal. That same year of 1973, Everett Morrow witnessed a “Tea [sic] shirt pulling contest” in the Roma that led to four women and one man dancing nude to the raucous cheers

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<sup>320</sup> A promotional copy of John Skow, “How Good Are the New Ones?,” *Skiing*, October, 1973, n.p., may be found in Telluride History/ Magazine Articles file, WPL.

of the crowd. At one point, according to the report Morrow wrote later that evening (he watched for more than forty minutes before writing his citations), the dancers simulated “the act of sexual intercourse while standing on the Bar in plain view of the public.” At the end of his report, Morrow noted that he had called the chief of police in Aspen, seeking advice on how to handle such behavior. Whether “wooly innocence” or wooly lewdness, the descriptions of the Roma offered by both *Skiing* and Morrow included no old people.<sup>321</sup>

Two years later, in 1975, Telluride’s “kids” had managed to wrest almost complete control of both local culture and local politics. The youngsters were no mere debauchers and ski-slope heroes. A story in *The New York Times* reflected the shift. Whereas only four years earlier, Everett Morrow’s picture lay under a headline about the town’s worries over hippies, by 1975, the banner “Colorado Town Lures Youths With Sun, Scenery and Bagels” told an altogether different tale. One photograph showed skiers walking down Main Street past a Volkswagen van. Another photo introduced the town’s new mayor, the bearded thirty-four-year-old Jerry Rosenfeld, who talked on the sidewalk with one Terry Tice. Tice held skis and wore a knit cap, goggles, and a bounty of snow balled like cotton to his shoulder length hair, his beard, and the sweater underneath his down vest. He was, the caption noted, a member of the Town Council.<sup>322</sup>

In less than five years after the start of Zoline’s boom, Telluride’s population had doubled from roughly 500 in 1970 to 1,000 in 1975. What Morten Lund of *Ski*

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<sup>321</sup> Morrow’s full report from March 11, 1973, was published under the heading “Shakedown Street” (followed by a quotation from the Grateful Dead song of the same name), on the last page of *Telluride Magazine*, Winter 1992/1993.

<sup>322</sup> Grace Lichtenstein, “Colorado Town Lures Youths With Sun, Scenery and Bagels,” *The New York Times*, April 16, 1975, p. 40.

magazine found most interesting was *who* came to Telluride, and *why* they came. The town, according to Lund, was a “marvelous Victorian” relic with superb skiing and “the most magnificent backdrop of any ski town in the West.” He explained that “a cauldron of talent and young energy” had invaded Telluride with a zeal to create an ideal community. “For a town whose men still come out to the Elks Club on Saturday night in business suits and women in plastic heels,” wrote Lund in *Ski* magazine, “and where the band plays *Chattanooga Choo Choo*, it was some invasion.”<sup>323</sup>

The youngsters did not set out immediately to vanquish the sounds of Glen Miller in favor of rock n’ roll. They came to Telluride with one very important understanding, something Zoline had alluded to several years earlier: they intended to learn from Aspen’s mistakes. Newcomers in Aspen spent almost two decades testing the waters of local politics, not jumping in completely until the early 1960s, by which time zoning codes had already allowed for several downtown building “monstrosities.” On the other hand, Telluride ski bums elected their own (a group of twenty and thirty-something’s known as “The Slate”) in less than two years from the construction of the first lifts. While the oldtimers’ heads spun (under photos of the

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<sup>323</sup> Lichtenstein, “Colorado Town Lures Youths With Sun, Scenery and Bagels”; Morten Lund, “What is Telluride And Why Are They Saying All Those Things About It,” *Ski*, February, 1975, pp. 54-59, 72-74, 77. Both Lichtenstein and Lund made stabs at estimating Telluride’s population in 1970 and 1975. Lichtenstein guessed that the population had jumped from 450 to 1,000, while Lund put the numbers at 400 and 800, respectively. The U.S. census counted 533 people in Telluride in 1970 (down from 677 in 1960) and 1,047 in 1980. As with Aspen, population numbers in a transient town like Telluride are nearly impossible to gauge. Both authors wrote about Morrow’s firing. Although he had accosted strangers for years with disrespectful questions about why they were in Telluride (including one infamous incident with Supreme Court Justice Byron White), and although he engineered a sting against liquor establishments for serving an “undercover” minor, Morrow’s actions three days after the election of The Slate went too far. During the Telluride Jewish community’s Passover Seder, held in Catsman’s Senate restaurant, Morrow barged in, carrying a gun, claiming that he wanted to make sure that none of the participants (including newly elected mayor Jerry Rosenfeld) were violating the law by drinking wine in a restaurant after 8pm.

new town leaders, *The Telluride Times* wondered, “Is this the government or the cast of *Hair?*”), the youngsters set to work implementing change. Their first action included firing Everett Morrow and placing on the bench as a municipal judge the young owner of the co-ed sauna/bath operation underneath the New Sheridan Hotel and bar. In a passage that provided a more nuanced analysis than that of the *New York Times* reporter, ski journalist Lund wrote:

The salient point for outsiders is that the newcomers are supremely aware that Telluride is special, and do not intend to spoil the city they came to live in, even if that means contravening the profit motive. There will be no Holiday Inn up front on Main Street... Things are different in Telluride. It's not Aspen 20 years ago. Aspen 20 years ago was populated by political naives, and Telluride is not. Aspen 20 years ago wanted, first of all, what the tourists wanted, which was what the Ski Corporation wanted. Telluride is a different story.<sup>324</sup>

Lest we forget, Telluride also invented itself as a ski town in an era quite different from the 1940s and 1950s when Aspen developed. Telluride's first ski bums, largely baby boomers, had gone through the unrest of the 1960s and emerged politicized. Although most Telluridians likely had not worked in the South registering voters or resisted Vietnam, they had been to Aspen or knew of the political fights there in the Joe Edwards and Hunter Thompson elections in 1969 and 1970. Although Lund noted that Zoline often clashed with youthful ski bums, the writer made it clear that Telluride's young people, including The Slate, appreciated that Zoline was not a corporate drone. The fact that the man acted on instinct instead of computer-driven analyses gave some Telluridians hope. Even if things became worrisome, they reasoned, Telluride was still better than the alternative. According to

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<sup>324</sup> Lund, “What is Telluride And Why Are They Saying All Those Things About It,” p. 74.

ski patrolman Jim Gowdy (described as one of “many Aspen refugees” in Telluride by the 1975 *New York Times* piece), “At Christmas time in Aspen you take your life in your hands just crossing the street. Here, you can walk down the middle of Main Street and hardly see a car.” Gowdy’s description of Telluride, colored as it was by his experience in a more crowded Aspen, recalled the comments of so many Aspen ski pioneers thirty years earlier. They found in Aspen a special place with frontier-like housing, manual-labor jobs, and the close-knit community that seemed to come naturally to a small town. As noted above, the former Aspenite’s description fit neatly with Telluride’s own marketing plan. By the end of the 1970s, one brochure described the town as a “lusty testament to the western frontier,” where the “greatest natural resource” was the local resident, including miners and shepherders right alongside artists, writers, ski bums, and the ever-present ski town phenomenon: the drop-out Ph.D.. After reminding readers that cars were not needed in a town where everyone walked everywhere, the Telluride brochure proclaimed, “There is an elegance here that the rest of the world has lost.” In describing what they loved about Telluride, old Aspenites described also what they missed about Aspen. Ironically, of course, they did this in advertisements.

While Telluride advertised itself as a better alternative to Aspen and to every other place in the world, some Telluride-lovers felt that the town had already started to turn down a path toward ruination. Aspen had enjoyed nearly two decades before people started complaining vociferously about the pitfalls of growth and what they saw as greed, but newcomer Telluridians and old visitors began worrying well before the fifth anniversary of the big-time skiing initiated by Joe Zoline. In early 1975, for

example, Edward Abbey wrote a piece whose title summed up his feelings: “Telluride Blues—A Hatchet Job.” Abbey began the essay, “The town of Telluride was actually discovered back in 1957, by me.” Lamenting Zoline’s “californication” of Telluride, Abbey offered his usual acerbic view of growth in the region. In his opinion, the old-time locals needed to take the newcomers’ cash and then beat them up. The only problem with this solution, according to Abbey, was that the local young men, who traditionally had done all of the fighting in town and run out the undesirables, were too busy drinking and having sex with the hippies. “Now,” a bartender told Abbey, “even cowboys can get laid.” Abbey rambled on about the “middle class proletariat” hippies, about how he missed hearing Hank Williams on jukeboxes that now played rock n’ roll, and about the shoddiness of Zoline’s new condominiums. “Someday soon, if this keeps up,” he said, “there will be no places left anywhere for anybody to find refuge in.” But even Edward Abbey, irascible curmudgeon king of the Colorado Plateau, could not stay away from the new Telluride. When *The Telluride Times* published his piece in November, 1976, Abbey wrote a note pleading with town members to still welcome him. He liked the town, he really did. “In fact,” he wrote, “whenever I want a good restaurant meal I drive over the La Sals to your town.”<sup>325</sup>

Newcomer locals were often equally charmed by Telluride’s small-town appeal, but were rarely as chagrined as Abbey. While numerous Telluridians told a reporter in 1976 that they were attracted to the town because of “small town living in the midst of spectacular scenery,” few had complaints. As in Aspen, decent housing was expensive and hard to find. Still, as with Aspen in the early days, locals rarely

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<sup>325</sup> Abbey, *The Journey Home*, p. 124, 129. Edward Abbey letter, excerpted in “Abbey’s Afterthought,” *The Telluride Times*, November 25, 1976.

complained. Instead, they told of roughing it, pioneer style, in shacks, in cabins, and in one case, a “shanty” where the wind blew through cracks in the walls. Part of the housing situation was the result of stringent building codes that the newcomers and their Slate had imposed. For example, no building could be torn down or have exterior changes made to it without the approval of the Town of Telluride’s Historical Preservation Commission. The enforcer of the rules was a building inspector who happened to be an “Aspen refugee.” With an insight that would prove remarkably prescient years later, native Telluridian Elvira Wunderlich, age sixty-one in 1976, told a St. Louis reporter that that the young people should be more focused on building affordable housing instead of tennis courts and a radio station.<sup>326</sup>

Three years later, Zoline sold the ski area to a New York investor. Real estate prices boomed, and sentiments such as those expressed by Wunderlich, appeared regularly in and around Telluride. Letters to the editor called for employee housing, and a cartoonist conjured up a real estate firm known as “Greedhead & Ripoff, Inc. Realty.” One Telluride oldtimer—then living across the state in Golden—wrote that western Colorado was the latest “national sacrifice area.” He admonished the young newcomers in Telluride to listen to the few oldtimers left in town, to “take a toke for them the next time.” “God and the wild mountains,” he wrote, “won’t protect us from ourselves...don’t let the stupid goons intimidate you, telling you it has to be this way.” Who were the “goons”? For some, undoubtedly, they were the outside investors who looked only at the bottom line. For others, the goons were the local developers and realtors, or even the young politicians. One old-

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<sup>326</sup> Curtis, “Prosperity Returns, But All Is Not Joy in Telluride,” pp.16-17; Jakki Savan’s story, “Newcomers Fight To Save Telluride Charm,” was the cover story for the Sunday magazine in the *St. Louis Dispatch*, January 25, 1976, pp. 9-13.

time summer resident (a home owner in Telluride since 1959) called The Slate group the “Irresponsibles,” claiming that their “decisions regarding zoning, construction, variances, and preservation are so capricious that they raise suspicion of flagrant favoritism to friends, if nothing worse.” She left Telluride for Idaho, she wrote, commending the town to the protection of St. Jude, “patron of lost causes, forlorn hopes, and things despaired of.” Indeed, by the late 1970s, it appeared that all of Telluride’s talk, including that of The Slate about controlling growth, had been for naught. Between 1977 and 1978, building in Telluride increased 9.5 percent, then jumped 12% in 1979. One local warned of “Aspenization,” and then argued that “We can’t both consume Telluride in our growth process, and preserve it too.” He suggested that the town government cap building permits each year. Telluride, at age seven in its ski era, showed wrinkles of experience, and its youth seemed to be fading quickly.<sup>327</sup>

In 1979, a year of growth and change for Telluride and the year in which Zoline sold the ski company, a writer visiting the town wrote not of Telluride’s changes, but of the changes in his own personal life and in the lives of his friends

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<sup>327</sup> See, for example, the sarcastic letter to the editor of *The Telluride Times*, written by “The Sweatshop,” titled “Let’s sell out,” January 18, 1979, p. 4, and Louise Gerdts, letter to the editor, November 8, 1979, p. 4. Reminiscent of Aspenite G. G. Roberson’s editorial, “Ski Bums Reply,” in *The Aspen Times*, December 21, 1962, p. 16, both of these letters referred to working ski bums as slaves to absentee owners. Gerdts, who used racialized language to make her point that Telluride needed affordable employee housing (“After all, who is going to do all de dishes for dem rich honkies,” she deadpanned), argued that Telluridians needed to look at Aspen’s efforts to house employees. “Telluride” she said, “is indeed a special place, and its beauty tends to camouflage its difficulties sufficiently to lure even the most experienced and put them under its spell.” The cartoon, which appeared in the *The Telluride Times*, May 17, 1979, p.4, included two people walking by the sign. One person said “The price is not only obscene. It’s X-rated for even Telluride.” John Meislahn’s August 28, 1979, letter to the editor may or may not have been published. A copy of the original letter is in the Telluride History/ Magazine Articles file, WPL. Shanna J. McGee, letter to the editor, August 23, 1979, p. 4. For growth numbers and talk of “Aspenization,” see Jim Botenhagen, “It’s the rate, not the numbers,” *The Telluride Times*, November 15, 1979, p. 6.

there. Novelist John Maccabee recalled visiting Telluride in 1970. Back then, Maccabee wrote, he was happily married to a beautiful woman who traveled with him to exotic locales such as Oaxaca, Mexico, and to rural American outposts including Dunton Hot Springs near Telluride. In Dunton, he wrote and played piano, and she danced. On hikes into the mountains around Telluride, Maccabee met Mexican cowboys, Indian shepherders, and “guys on the lam from Detroit.” It was a magical time. After writing another book or two and after more trips to Telluride, his marriage ended. Maccabee was older and wiser when he came again to Telluride for comfort and fun. “There are lots of good friends in town now,” he wrote. “Many of us knowing we won’t be young forever anymore but we’ve got our youthful reflections in each other’s faces.” In the faces of his Telluride friends, Maccabee said, with their hints of youthfulness, he saw an innocence that he had lost. In a statement that may have summarized the feelings of many people over the years who visited or lived in Aspen or Telluride, Maccabee wrote to all readers of the *Telluride Times*, “I like losing myself in these mountains and in your innocence.”

For every person who came to either Aspen or Telluride in 1955, 1965, or 1975 and saw an idyllic small town, someone who had lived there longer most likely saw something else. The older residents saw change, both in the physical nature of the town, and perhaps more importantly, in themselves and in their cohort of locals. Some people were able to admit this and to articulate their feelings, while others could not quite put their finger on what it was about their town and their place in it that bothered them. Rob Schultheis, for example, wrote in 1992 of his early days in Telluride. He acknowledged that simple “nostalgia” for his own youth might have

infused his memories of 1973 with “the feel of a myth—a fairy tale—slipping away as our memories fade.” Ex-Aspenite and Topeka, Kansas resident Susan Smith explained her feelings succinctly when describing why she could not live in Aspen again: “We are older now, and Aspen is a young town.” On the other hand, Peggy Clifford, who argued in countless newspaper columns and two books that Aspen had changed a great deal for the worse between the early 1950s and the 1970s, never came to this conclusion. Although she admitted that she and her generation had changed, she offered complicated explanations: “Aspen, having given us everything at the beginning, had no more to give. We began to think more of the idea of Aspen than the fact of Aspen. The idea overshadowed the reality, obscured it... Aspen is a kind of professional innocent, but there is no such thing as a professional innocence, so the people of Aspen are floundering.” When she left Aspen after twenty-six years there, she wrote that she “did not look back or cry or say anything memorable. Because whatever it was, it was finished.” Years later, Clifford seemed very clear about what was “finished” the day she drove out of Aspen. She described herself and other Aspenites as “highborn WASPS in flight from our old, rich American families. We were also in flight from America, which we found crude, materialistic and backward.” In Aspen, she said, the people who skied just two weeks a year were “a different species—more to be scorned than admired,” and the tensions between Aspenites and visitors created “a class war—with a twist.” Once the crude and backward materialism of the rest of America (exemplified by the condominiums bought by the newly rich) found Aspen, it was time for the real elites like Clifford to move on and away from the tasteless people who had invaded their town.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> Peggy Clifford email to author, April 8, 2006.

Clifford's *To Aspen and Back: An American Journey* (1980) is one person's memory of Aspen covering roughly the same period as this study. At its heart, it is a memoir by a self-proclaimed elite of arriving in, working in, living in, playing in, and ultimately, of leaving Aspen. In the chapters above, I have drawn on the author's often keen observations again and again, particularly to make the point that some Aspenites in the postwar era imagined their town as an outpost of freedom in an America from which some of them, like the author, felt a need to escape. Clifford's characters were not fictional, but undoubtedly, as with all memoirs, her descriptions of them and her analyses of their actions reflected her own feelings about what the characters meant to her. Their actions, as she interpreted them, helped her shape her argument about the place she called home for more than a quarter of a century before it was, in her opinion, ruined.

Whether or not she stated it outright, Clifford seemed to feel that ruination was tied intimately to a loss of innocence. Taking into account all of her stories, the most compelling example of a loss of innocence in Clifford's Aspen was the tale of the death of young Tom Weld. "If the fugitives had a hero," she wrote,

it was Tom Weld. He moved through Aspen like a prince, was president of the Aspen Ski Club, seen from time to time with Tony Paepcke.<sup>329</sup> In the summer he worked as a carpenter, wore cut-off overalls with tools hanging out of every pocket. In the winter he worked on the ski patrol, skiing in every kind of weather. Tall, graceful, wry, with the face of a star, he was too fine not to be occasionally arrogant, in the way that all the blessed are arrogant. But there was in him too a kind of hesitancy that signified an unreadiness or unwillingness to accept either the responsibilities or the privileges of his rank.

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<sup>329</sup> "Tony" was Antonia Paepcke, Walter and Elizabeth's daughter.

The Welds are an old American family, rich, aristocratic, proper Bostonians. Weld had gone to Harvard, then left it all behind and come to Aspen. He drove a beat-up red pickup truck, lived in a rented room, and was very happy. His family understood nothing. They urged him to get a proper job. He said he would give them a summer and hired on as a geologist at a mine in Nevada. I don't even know what they mined there. I only know that six weeks after he left Aspen, Tom Weld fell down a mine shaft and was killed instantly. Someone went and brought his truck back to Aspen. He was buried in the family plot in a Boston cemetery. All of Aspen mourned its lost prince, and blamed America for killing him.<sup>330</sup>

For Clifford, the Tom Weld of the 1950s embodied everything right about Aspen in its early days before the condominiums. The real aristocrats about town proudly shunned the world back east, including that culture's flawed designs for them. "The bitter lesson" of Weld's death, Clifford wrote nearly a half century later, "was not lost on the rest of us: real life is lethal, and our families were insane."<sup>331</sup> Regarding Weld's death and Clifford's published description, Weld's best friend and onetime roommate in town, the man who went to Nevada and brought back his personal belongings, disagreed with Clifford. "Nobody blamed anybody," said "Leavin' Al" Lewis. "Many Aspenites were killed in all the usual pastimes: rafting, mountain climbing, back country skiing, scuba, car racing...you name it...What a way to go when compared to the nursing home or fatal illness." Equating falling down a mineshaft with falling down a mountain, Lewis indicated that Weld may have seen his job in Eureka as both work and adventurous play. Like other Aspenites who died, as Lewis explained, "doing what they loved," Weld never had to face some of

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<sup>330</sup> Clifford, "To Aspen and Back," p. 37.

<sup>331</sup> Clifford email to author, April 8, 2006.

the indignities that come often with old age. Growing old seemed to offer fewer alternatives for a quick and easy death.<sup>332</sup>

Lewis's memories of his time with Weld in Aspen emphasized the process they went through in becoming western. Lewis's own photographs of his journey west from New England to Aspen in 1949 document the excitement with which he traversed the nation. From the windshield of his convertible, he photographed the flat-to-the horizon expanses of the Great Plains; then in eastern Colorado, at first glimpse of the Rocky Mountains, he snapped pictures of distant peaks, with one hand visible on the steering wheel in every shot. When moving across the plains, Lewis felt compelled to document the landscape he traversed. He was a young man headed west, at the wheel of a Nash Ambassador. With the roof down, he drove through a heavily mythologized American landscape once traversed by covered wagons. In Glenwood Canyon, Lewis marveled at the expansive rock walls rising above the two-lane highway that followed the snaking Colorado River. In one photograph, the viewer sees Lewis's car on the side of the road, with a door open, and next to canyon walls rising steeply.

Viewed more than a half century after he snapped them, Lewis's photographs of his journey into the West, to Aspen, display a visual language akin to Lewis's own words about pioneering once he got to town. He told of living in an old miner's cabin and of working back-breaking jobs tearing apart the infrastructure of old mines. He met Tom Weld when the two of them worked together dismantling a brick smokestack at an old mill. "We climbed up on ladders," Lewis said, "and knocked down the bricks with sledge hammers, and then finding all the whole bricks, we'd

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<sup>332</sup> Al Lewis email to author, April 30, 2005.

clean off the dried mortar with big farrier files and stack them next to the railroad cars to be shipped to California.” Later, they worked together as carpenters and as taxi drivers between Aspen and the train depot in Glenwood Springs. Eventually, both men made the ski patrol, where their work sometimes allowed them to play the role of hero. Lewis explained that before Weld moved into a house where he often paid his rent with deer and elk that he killed in the mountains, Peggy Clifford’s “prince” was the same man who removed the backseat from a 1937 Lincoln sedan and installed a woodstove “for cheap overnight accommodations.”

The friendship of these two Massachusetts natives—one a college dropout from a middle-class Springfield family and the other a Harvard man from an influential Boston clan—grew from their shared adventures in Aspen. Later photographs of Lewis and Weld focus on their hunting trips in the backcountry near town, where they carried rifles, rode horseback, and built campfires. At other times, they pushed into the backcountry in an old Army Jeep, climbing steep mountain roads shaped in a previous century by miners, horses, mules, and wagons. When they returned east for visits to family and friends at the end of each year’s ski season, Lewis and Weld slept in their sleeping bags in cornfields along the way. Molded by the West, these men of different backgrounds became increasingly alike. “The first year we arrived in New York in our cowboy hats and LEVIS,” Lewis explained, “we were an odd sight as that attire was completely unknown to the city folk there and we were the eye candy of New York.” Yet Lewis’s memories of his and Weld’s rural western identities are contested by other photographs in his collection. One picture of a ski patrol dinner party, for instance, shows every male—Lewis and Weld

included—wearing suits and ties. The men and their dates, women with well-coifed hair and long dresses, look as if they might have stepped into the restaurant straight from office jobs in Manhattan.

In addition to offering a different analysis than Clifford did of Weld's death, Lewis also told a very different tale of the circumstances surrounding the tragic loss of his best friend. Lewis pointed out that Weld's Harvard degree was in Geology. He had always wanted to work in the mines and put his college training to use. The reason he went to Eureka had nothing to do with his parents or the pressures of a grey-flannel-suited America. His decision stemmed from long-held desires to use the specific knowledge he had learned in college, and to get on with the next phase of his life. Lewis said that before Weld left Aspen, he experienced a life-changing event: he had fallen in love with the woman he wanted to marry. "He and I often debated our fate in life," Lewis explained, "and the fact that we should begin to take charge and make something of ourselves." Weld often lamented to Lewis that he found it hard to live a truly free and easy life in Aspen because the ski patrol barely paid the rent. Weld went to Eureka, Lewis explained, so that he could make enough money to buy an engagement ring for his girlfriend. "He was actually working on Sunday," Lewis said, "[to earn] more money, helping the electrician string some wires in one of the utility shafts which had an elevator 'skip' as they were called. The skip was supposed to shut down during the work session and while Tom was hanging out in the utility shaft a skip came down and knocked him loose and he fell to the bottom of the shaft where he was killed." Lewis described the memorial service, where "more than half the women in Town, married and otherwise, were all wearing black arm bands to

mourn the loss of their favorite Lothario.” Weld’s parents, Lewis explained, set up a fund and a trophy for an annual Tom Weld Memorial Ski Race, which suggests that they understood more about their son and his wishes than Clifford knew. As for Weld’s red pickup truck, Lewis said that it remained in Nevada. He recalled that the only thing he brought back to Aspen from Eureka was a “seedy black cowboy hat, a Weld trademark. I kept it for myself and wore it out. If it was raining, it would keep the rain off your head, but did so in dirty black streamlets off the brim and down in front of your eyes.”<sup>333</sup>

The contrasting memories of Al Lewis and Peggy Clifford both illuminate and complicate the stories of Tom Weld and of Aspen. They offer different perspectives on what Weld and the town meant for people. For Lewis, Weld was a close friend. They arrived at roughly the same time, and they worked, lived, played, and partied together for years. Both men left Aspen to get on with the rest of their lives, as Lewis put it. Once he left to attend college in Boulder, Lewis continued to visit Aspen. Weld, of course, never returned. Although Peggy Clifford admired Weld, she did not know him as well as Al Lewis did. In her 1980 memoir, Weld represented everything about Aspen that made it special in the old days. Like her, Weld had ostensibly escaped from America to hide out in a special place. According to Lewis, this may have been the case, as it was with many Aspenites; however, when Weld moved into the world beyond Aspen, he did it willingly. He wanted to marry and begin the next phase of life. Like many Aspenites who left over the years, Weld and Lewis

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<sup>333</sup> Al Lewis emails to author, April 27 and April 30, 2005. Lewis shared his photographs with the author in October, 2003. While Lewis attested to Weld’s popularity with women in Aspen, he recalled nothing of a relationship with Paepcke’s daughter or with Clifford. The woman who inspired Weld to work in Nevada was, to the best of Lewis’s recollection, a “real looker” named Daphne.

eventually left Aspen because the town no longer fit their personal needs, goals, or aspirations.

“Leavin’ Al” Lewis reflected many of the trends among former Aspenites after leaving the town. Following college in Boulder and a stint in medical school in Denver, Lewis left the West and returned home to Massachusetts to help manage his family’s small business. He later bought a grocery store in Brattleboro, Vermont, operated it for a few years, then moved back to Massachusetts and secured his realtor’s license. His was a middle class existence. Lewis continued to visit Aspen occasionally. “I always missed the Rockies,” he said. He married and raised three children, living back east for nearly two decades. During the 1980s, Lewis and his wife, Debbie, decided that they wanted to retire in the West. Because Aspen offered few affordable options that intrigued them, Al and Debbie Lewis examined other towns and properties across the Rockies, from New Mexico to Montana. They decided to buy a small condominium in Telluride, a town that Al described to Debbie as “how Colorado used to be in the old days,” with plenty of decrepit houses. “Telluride was nothing,” Lewis recalled twenty years later. “It was like Aspen in the beginning again.”<sup>334</sup>

This chapter has sought to investigate two themes in the stories of why people left Aspen. As Aspenites grew older, their goals and objectives in life changed. Events such as marriage, having children, or the desire for more meaningful work and better housing led many Aspenites to question the ways in which they lived, worked, and played in their younger days. People often moved on, with the result that Aspen

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<sup>334</sup> Lewis interview.

stayed almost continuously populated by young people. The second theme in this chapter is that for many Aspenites, part of the town's appeal lay in its offer of refuge from "tasteless" middle-class America. When Middle America discovered Aspen, the often enigmatic qualities of this appeal seemed threatened for some locals, or seemed to have disappeared altogether. But for many oldtimers and for countless newcomers, Aspen was home. Although some sought new areas of refuge at places such as Telluride, others remained in Aspen, where they continued to live it up.

## **Conclusion**

At the end of 1959, only several months before Walter Paepcke's death from cancer in Chicago, a 36-year-old man named George Henry Dovenmuehle, Jr., of Goshen, Indiana, wrote Paepcke for advice. Dovenmuehle needed a change in his life, but was not very sure what to do. He was thinking about moving to Aspen. He enclosed with his letter a résumé that revealed a great deal about himself, including that he was vice-president in charge of manufacturing at a company called Metal-Glass Products, and that in an earlier job at a bank, he had decided that he "was not cut out to be a banker." Dovenmuehle had served in the military at the end of World War Two, where he learned to fly airplanes; he had been divorced and remarried; he had four children and he was involved heavily with both the Boy Scouts of America and Camp Fire Girls. Under "hobbies," he noted that he enjoyed "Skiing, flying, guns, home and family." He suggested meeting with Paepcke, writing that he thought he "might benefit from your thinking to help settle my own thoughts."<sup>335</sup>

In February, as Paepcke lay dying in his apartment at the Drake Hotel in Chicago, laid up from "bursitis," as he told friends, he received a note from Lloyd Gould, a right hand man at CCA. Attached to a more polished résumé from Dovenmuehle, Gould's note explained to Paepcke that Dovenmuehle had unsuccessfully negotiated to acquire the Pitkin County Bank in Aspen, but was still interested in moving his family there, "where he hopes to enter business and make his home." Apparently, Dovenmuehle reasoned, he might indeed be cut out for life as a banker as long as the bank was located in Aspen. Short of owning the bank, he asked

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<sup>335</sup> George H. Dovenmuehle to Walter Paepcke, including Dovenmuehle's attached résumé, December 29, 1959, Box 102, F4, WPP; see also the updated résumé and the handwritten note from Lloyd Gould, scribbled on Dovenmuehle's letter to Paepcke, February 18, 1960, as well as Dovenmuehle to Gould, April 19, 1960, Box 102, F5, WPP.

if perhaps Paepcke had a job for him. Paepcke made no known reply. On April 19, 1960, only six days after Paepcke died, Dovenmuehle wrote Gould and explained that he was sorry to hear of Paepcke's death. He wanted Gould to know that he had abandoned any hope of moving to Aspen, for he and his wife had settled in Golden, Colorado, instead. Dovenmuehle planned to find work in Denver.<sup>336</sup>

Although he never lived in Aspen, George Dovenmuehle's life was nevertheless shaped by the town once he decided to move his family from Indiana to Colorado. Even though it was no Aspen, Golden was not a Goshen either, in that it was at least snuggled up close to the Colorado mountains that Aspen helped make famous as a new type of American playground in the postwar era. In the example of Dovenmuehle and in the stories of people who actually made Aspen their home between 1945 and 1975, it is clear that in postwar America, Aspen helped to shape a new western dream characterized by a series of images that brought to mind an antimodernist way of living in the Rocky Mountain region. During the Cold War era after World War Two and through Vietnam, three decades characterized by both abundance at home and anxieties about political order in the United States and abroad, various notions of how to live simply became manifest in why people came to and how they worked in, lived in, played in, and sometimes why they left Aspen. By the 1970s, these various ideas about what Aspen meant shaped the broader region immeasurably as other towns tried to capture what Aspen once had while avoiding its problems. By the late 1980s and 1990s, Aspen's significance as a Janus-faced model for a new western style became clear as the term "Aspenization" entered the national

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

vocabulary when critics discussed growth in any part of the country, but particularly in the American West.<sup>337</sup>

By the 1970s, a life of simplicity became fleeting for many Aspenites for a number of reasons. First, people came to Aspen with different motivations. Some, like Peggy Clifford, explained their arrivals as part of a moral purpose: America and the world were spinning out of control in a whirlwind of conformity exemplified by cookie-cutter lives in urban communities and in suburbia. Aspen, which appeared to be suspended in time, a small town relic from the past, appeared to be a safe haven from the chaos. Aspen offered hope. People might live authentic lives there, while housing themselves in log homes, decrepit miner's cottages, tents, or VW vans, while working for wages as carpenters, waitresses, taxi drivers, and in other pursuits that allowed ample time to play in an almost preternaturally perfect Western American landscape. Problematically for many who saw Aspen in such a light, others came with no clear moral agenda. Like Al Lewis, who noted that life in Aspen seemed to be more fun than attending college in New England, many Aspenites simply wanted to live it up while they figured out what to do with their lives. Finally, simplicity often became elusive once someone grew older and his/her goals and priorities shifted. Unlike a Ralph Jackson, who never quite moved beyond a ski bum mode of living, most Aspenites—such as Lewis and his close friend, Tom Weld—decided

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<sup>337</sup> I will discuss the possible origins of the term later in the Conclusion. Suffice it to say that numerous examples of the use of "Aspenization" appeared in the regional, national, and even international media by the early 1990s. For just a small sampling, see John Lancaster, "In Taos, Some Fear Tourism Means 'Aspenization,'" *The Washington Post*, January 30, 1991, p. A3; n.a., "Residents of Moab Keep Wary Eye on 'Aspenization,'" *The Salt Lake Tribune*, November 6, 1991, p. B3; Ken Miller, "Is McCall in danger of 'Aspenization'?", *The Idaho Statesman* (Boise), September 15, 1997, p. 1A; Elizabeth Aird, "Vancouver's close brush with Aspenization," *The Vancouver Sun*, May 23, 1998, p. 15; James Brooke, "Unspoiled New Zealand: Queenstown is out there, and worth the maze to reach it," *The International Herald Tribune* (Paris), January 3, 2003, p. 8.

eventually that Aspen had served its purpose for them and they moved on to do other things.

When Peggy Clifford arrived in Aspen in the 1950s, she fell instantly in love. By the time she left in 1979, the love affair was over and Clifford had no desire ever to return. In 1978, she used a new verb—Aspenize—when she wrote an article for the *Rocky Mountain News* titled “The ‘Aspenization’ of the rest of America,” in which she argued, “The generally held belief that Aspen is being ‘Los Angelized’ is erroneous—in fact, things are the other way around. Aspen is a trendsetting influence for the United States.” America had followed Aspen, she wrote, in wearing Levi’s, hanging Warhols on their walls, practicing est (Erhard Seminars Training), and instituting growth management plans for their towns. More importantly, Aspenites—“a special breed, beyond crass ambition and material appetites”—had taught the rest of the country to mock “the Great American Virtues of industry, thrift, probity and virtue—while celebrating play and turning on an axis of good times.” Calling Aspen “THE place of the 1970s, America’s latest capital of hip,” Clifford wrote of how 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox planned to use its profits from *Star Wars* to buy the Aspen Skiing Corporation from the Paepckes, Nitzes, and other stockholders. Once the moviemaking giant “owned” the mountain, Clifford argued, Aspen’s power as an American cultural icon would be indisputable.<sup>338</sup>

To a degree, Clifford was right that America by the 1970s had become like Aspen—less formal in its blue jeans, and in the wake of Watergate, more interested in partying than in party politics. She was also right that Aspen’s image was

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<sup>338</sup> Peggy Clifford, “The ‘Aspenization’ of the rest of America,” *Rocky Mountain News*, March 12, 1978, p. 1.

everywhere. She mentioned John Denver's hit songs, and how a novel set in the town sold two million copies before being turned into an NBC television mini-series. Denver's lyrics for "Aspenglow," which appeared on his second record in 1970, included the chorus "Aspen is a life to live/See how much there is to give/See how strongly you believe/See how much you may receive." Although these words may have sounded like a summary of Paepcke's original thoughts when he dreamed up Aspen as an escape for elites in 1945, the words took on new meanings and provided intriguing questions for the millions of readers of Burt Hirschfeld's 1976 novel *Aspen*, summarized on its cover as "Aspen. The wild place....where men and women come together for every kind of pleasure." Yet although she mentioned the "Establishment" and their role in Aspen as participants at the Aspen Institute, Clifford did not emphasize the role that elites continued to play there in the town's ski culture.<sup>339</sup>

Although Paepcke and Friedl Pfeifer had contrasting ideas about what Aspen should become in 1945—Paepcke dreamed of Aspen as a place for contemplation and intellectual stimulation and Pfeifer thought of it as a center for skiing—neither one of them could have imagined that thirty years after their first discussions Aspen would be the subject of a bestselling "RAW NEW BLOCKBUSTER OF A NOVEL" with the cover illustration of a man and a woman (she clad in nothing but pink panties) embracing before a backdrop of green mountains. Pfeifer's vision of Aspen as a place to play more closely resembled the 1976 image than did Paepcke's, but part of the latter's vision lived on even after his death in 1960. The summer Music Festival

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<sup>339</sup> "Aspenglow" appeared on "Take Me To Tomorrow" (RCA, 1970). Lyrics may be found at [www.lyricsdepot.com/john-denver/aspenglow.html](http://www.lyricsdepot.com/john-denver/aspenglow.html). Burt Hirschfeld, *Aspen* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976). Clifford, "The 'Aspenization' of the rest of America," p. 1.

and the programs offered by the Aspen Institute changed over the years in that the festival evolved chiefly into a school for the world's aspiring symphony musicians and the Institute became less a school for businessmen to learn the Great Books than a think tank for shaping government policy. Even with these changes, an intellectual superstructure—Aspen as a place for enlightenment among elites—lived on and made the town original and unique, different from a place such as Telluride.<sup>340</sup>

Whereas Aspen had its classical music festival in the summers, a famous ballet, and eventually developed a renowned wine festival—all of which represented what was left of one part of Paepcke's dream—Telluride became famous for festivals celebrating bluegrass music and wild mushrooms. Newcomers in Telluride, some of them Aspen refugees, said that they were running away from the big city, from Richard Nixon, or that they had moved there because they had heard that “there were no jobs.” As noted earlier, some Telluridians said specifically that they were escaping Aspen. “There was something Brigadoon-like about the town,” said Dan Sadowski, one of the early bluegrass musicians to play at the Telluride Bluegrass and Country Music Festival. “It had a lost boy feel and I felt that I had managed to land in something so incredibly special that might not happen anywhere ever again.” Telluride, another person said regarding the widespread use there of illegal drugs in the 1970s, “seemed like a frontier, it seemed as if we were above and beyond the law.” As elites in the 1970s gathered in hushed crowds at Aspen to listen to Itzhak Perlman play his Stradivarius violin, Telluridians smoked pot, drank beer, and danced

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<sup>340</sup> For the quotation and artwork on *Aspen*, I refer to the paperback 17<sup>th</sup> printing in 1976. For histories of both the Aspen Institute and the Aspen Music Festival, see Allen, *The Romance of Commerce and Culture*, Sidney Hyman, *The Aspen Idea* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), and Bruce Berger, *Music in the Mountains: The First Fifty Years of the Aspen Music Festival* (Boulder, CO: Johnson Books, 1999).

in the dust to the sounds of bands such as New Grass Revival, which sometimes featured Sam Bush on a violin known as a fiddle back in Bush's native Kentucky and in Telluride. In embracing a genre of music such as bluegrass as part of their summer tourism identity, Telluridians made yet another statement about how they were different from Aspenites.<sup>341</sup>

Telluride was like Aspen in some ways but not in others. Elites who wanted to create non-elite identities had sought out Telluride and other places when they felt that Aspen was too far gone from their vision of what it had originally meant. By the mid-1970s and into the 1980s, it was hard to find anything "Brigadoon-like" about a place with a decidedly middle-class Dodge car named for it and with best-selling romance novels and John Denver hit songs set in it. Furthermore, even though people there wore blue jeans and practiced New Age est, Aspen retained an important cultural role for elites who defined themselves through the consumption of high art and were not concerned with masking class. Aspen had always held in the shadows of its mountains a bifurcated elite—the old Red Onion versus Institute split—but by 1975 it seemed that a large number of the Red Onion crowd had tightened their masks and hit the road, preparing the way for other newcomers, who called themselves ski bums and the working class, to step onto the long and storied stage over which so many others had passed.

Before Walter Paepcke's death, he was Aspen's autocrat. When Gropius wrote in "Rebuilding Our Communities" in 1945 that the ideal postwar community required a forceful persona in the planning stages, he might never have imagined a

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<sup>341</sup> For all of the quotations regarding Telluride, see Levek and Rolley, *The YX Factor*.

more perfect model than Paepcke. When Paepcke shared copies of the Gropius piece with Aspenites after his first visit there, the sharing was a part of his formulation of a plan to make a postwar escape for himself and his fellow elites. Largely, his plan worked. This is not to say that prior to his death no one challenged Paepcke's authority, for people did. By the late 1950s, for example, two independent ski areas (Buttermilk and Highlands) opened in Aspen without Paepcke's blessings and the musicians at the Music Festival broke away from the auspices of the Institute and created their own entity, the Music Associates of Aspen. Yet while Paepcke lived, Aspenites—and particularly the elite newcomers—generally trusted him and his vision for the town. After his death in 1960, Aspen struggled to determine its identity because it lacked the authoritative leadership of Paepcke or anyone else who was as able or as willing to wear as many hats as he had worn beginning in 1945. His death, Clifford wrote, “triggered an era of disorder for Aspen.” Whereas Paepcke had once held most of the power at the Aspen Company, the Aspen Skiing Corporation, and at the Aspen Institute, after his passing each of those entities struggled to find its way. By 1980, Aspen had a Kentucky Fried Chicken, the Hotel Jerome was badly in need of repair, 20th Century Fox owned the ski company, Peggy Clifford had gone away, and the Aspen Institute had moved most of its programs and its center of operations to New York and to the Washington, D.C. area while holding many of its storied seminars at Crestone, Colorado, one hundred miles southeast of Aspen. “It would never have occurred to my husband,” Elizabeth Paepcke said in 1981, “that some day the assets of the institute would be taken out of Aspen.”<sup>342</sup> After her husband's death,

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<sup>342</sup> Clifford, *To Aspen and Back*, p. 80. William E. Schmidt, “Some Question Aspen Institute Tie To Resort Sales,” *The New York Times*, December 13, 1981, p. 26.

Elizabeth continued to spend much of her year traveling between Aspen and her Lakeshore Drive apartment in Chicago. Following Walter's burial in Aspen, Elizabeth increasingly began to see the town as a place under siege by developers and other pests who were turning the Paepcke dream into a mess. In 1970, she declined to remain on the board of a college in Maryland, saying, "I am getting too old, too tired and too exhausted by the hornet's nest of problems in Aspen" which drained her energy. By 1982, she wrote Mortimer Adler to apologize for missing him in Aspen when he had been in town: she had left for Chicago, Elizabeth explained, "to escape the brouhaha of an Aspen 4<sup>th</sup> of July and to garner a badly needed rest." What had once been her small-town place of escape in the rural West became something Paepcke needed to escape from by going to the big city for peace and quiet. Yet she continued to visit the town and to spend much of her year there. In 1994, at age 91, Elizabeth Paepcke died in Aspen after falling in her garden.<sup>343</sup>

Aspen offers a case study of the American obsession with denying and evading the presence of social class. This dissertation looks at the ways in which Aspenites argued over and shaped the meaning of their town from 1945 to 1975. In chapters that examined why people came to Aspen, their work, their housing, their play, and also why many Aspenites eventually left, I question how the projecting and masking of social class evolved in Aspen and why that mattered in the broader story of change in postwar America. Newcomer Aspenites shaped the town as an escape from the middle class. They often masked their intentions by presenting themselves as small town westerners, as pioneers on a frontier of freedom and fun with a clear

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<sup>343</sup> Elizabeth Paepcke to Richard Weigle, May 20, 1970, Box 50, F2, EHP; Elizabeth Paepcke to Mortimer Adler, July 6, 1982, Box 22, F2, EHP. See also Wolfgang Saxon, "Elizabeth Paepcke, 91, a Force in Turning Aspen Into a Resort," *The New York Times*, June 18, 1994, p. 54.

sense of who belonged in Aspen. While the town itself changed as it grew, particularly by the 1960s when technological advances made skiing easier and safer just as condominiums made it possible for an increasing number of absentee owners to obtain properties in town, Aspen's chief demographic trait continued to be that it was populated largely by the transient young, mostly privileged. In this respect, Aspen the ski town—or an offspring community such as Telluride, the ski town—was no different from Aspen, the mining town, or Telluride in its mining heyday. After all, mining communities at the end of the nineteenth century were populated largely by young people, particularly men, who often moved away and began new lives elsewhere.

It is through this longer lens of time that Aspen in the first thirty years of the ski era following World War Two becomes most important historically. Although the town has attracted the transient young since 1879, the miners eventually stopped moving to Aspen, while the skiers have continued to snake up and down the valley to the town's now famous lifts and steep slopes for six decades. This study matters because it argues that the people who came into the Roaring Fork Valley and into Aspen (and eventually to other ski towns in the Rockies such as Telluride) carried cultural baggage that must be unpacked and examined before Aspen and the transformation of the Rockies into ski country after 1945 can begin to make sense. "Living It Up in Aspen" builds on and contributes to the field of scholarship about tourism and myth-making in Western America in that it uses the framework of class and the importance of imagery to construct a story about social and cultural change in the Rockies after World War Two. Other scholars' assessments of the imagined West

in the twentieth century have been valuable for me in thinking about how to frame this story because other than its geographical location and its weather, the most *western* aspect of Aspen is that myths about the region shaped the town in important ways. Robert G. Athearn's *The Mythic West in Twentieth-Century America* examines a long history whereby easterners attached meaning to specific western towns in the early decades of the century. As with the post-war Aspenites, when Athearn's easterners sought to describe the inhabitants of those towns, they "reverted to phrases that also described the frontiersmen, as traditionally viewed." Katherine G. Morrissey's *Mental Territories: Mapping the Inland Empire*, takes the idea of regionalism as a mental construct and examines its development in "the Inland Empire" of eastern Washington, the panhandle of Idaho, and in northwestern Montana. She notes that scholars often point out that regionalism is a state of mind without explaining it. Her goal is to investigate the Empire, also known as "Spokane Country," to determine "the formation of a particular 'mental territory' at a particular period of time." Her argument, that the construct of an agricultural paradise built by boosters and by the people they drew to the Inland Empire "offers a vivid example of the power of perceptions," is useful for looking at Aspen even though Aspen drew a completely different type of person for different reasons. The importance of perceptions in drawing people to a place is developed further on the town-level in Bonnie Christensen's *Red Lodge and the Mythic West: Coal Miners to Cowboys*. Christensen shows how Red Lodge, Montana's image evolved in the twentieth century so that what really began as a late-nineteenth century coal mining town reinvented itself in the 1930s—with rodeos and neon signs shaped like tee-pees—as a

“Western” cowboy town that tourists to the region expected to see. In the 1950s Red Lodge developed a “Festival of Nations” that celebrated the heritage and culture of the various ethnic groups who lived there. This annual festival helped create new sets of images to place alongside the cowboys; as with the other public identities of Red Lodge, the festival’s development reflected larger national tensions. Christensen writes, “Conveniently obscuring other deeper tears in the national social fabric, particularly divisions of class and race, Americans [in the Cold War era] pointed to ethnic integration as proof that the United States indeed exemplified democratic pluralism and opportunity.” Although Christensen’s Red Lodge boosters were drawing mostly day tourists while Aspen’s boosters sought elite long-term visitors or residents, her model for evaluating perception of place and historical change in that place is useful in looking at Aspen.<sup>344</sup>

Annie Gilbert Coleman’s *Ski Style: Sport and Culture in the Rockies* asks a multiplicity of questions that help historians of Western America understand how important skiing has been in shaping the region’s identity in the twentieth century. Coleman’s analysis of how the ski industry helped its customers consume wilderness, each other (through gendered representations of skiers), and an idealized European experience at once is a model study for historians hoping to chart change over time while engaging cultural theory. Aspen serves as a site for much of Coleman’s analysis, but in drawing on the important connections in the development of a ski *industry* across the Rockies, some of the intricacies between a ski culture including

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<sup>344</sup> Robert G. Athearn, *The Mythic West in Twentieth-Century America* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), p. 45; Katherine G. Morrissey, *Mental Territories: Mapping the Inland Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 12; 166; Bonnie Christensen, *Red Lodge and the Mythic West: Coal Miners to Cowboys* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), p. 146.

tourists and outsider capitalists and a ski *town*, or local culture, are overlooked. For example, she writes that “Most of the industry’s movers and shakers, for instance, held degrees from Yale—or membership in some such exclusive group—in common with their upper-class clientele. When the ski industry opened the sport to people outside these groups in the 1960s, it still held up the elite as ski icons.” Coleman is correct that this was true of the ski industry, but ski bums and the ski industry were not one and the same. Vail had no equivalent of Freddie Fisher or Ralph Jackson and it certainly had no Hunter S. Thompson. It did have I-70 cutting right through the middle of it. Aspen was unique—different from Sun Valley and different from Vail—because of its geography, but also because of the period and the circumstances under which its own local culture was born and because of the series of images that created it. Aspen, Steamboat, Vail, Telluride, Winter Park, and Crested Butte share certain qualities, but skiers and tourists in the know attach different meanings to each of these places and each—to a degree—has a distinctive identity, part of which is based on the types of people drawn to each place. When Coleman writes of the rising tide of non-skiing service workers in ski towns by the late 1970s, she says that eventually the “ski bum disappeared into the muddy waters of low-wage labor.” Today, many self-proclaimed ski bums in the towns mentioned above would likely disagree with Coleman on this point.<sup>345</sup>

The big questions that shaped this study originally began to develop as I read Hal Rothman’s sections on Aspen in *Devil’s Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West*. In this impressive and expansive study, Rothman labels tourism—in places ranging from Aspen to Las Vegas—as a “devil’s bargain,”

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<sup>345</sup> Coleman, *Ski Style*, pp. 188; 192.

whereby Western Americans invited in vacationers “only to find that it irrevocably changes them in unanticipated and uncontrollable ways.” His analysis is sharp when looking at patterns of outside corporate power shaping the broad history of tourism in the region in the last century. “In tourism,” he writes, “the very identity of a place becomes its economic sustenance, and in that transformation is a complicated and paradoxical situation for the people of that place.” With Aspen, Rothman does a good job summing up the basic story told earlier by James Sloan Allen and Peggy Clifford: Paepcke wanted a utopia, then died, the “Mother’s March” complained of corporate outsiders, Hunter Thompson ran for sheriff but failed, and the ski company sold out to 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox. Here and there, the newcomer locals—or “neonatives” as Rothman calls them—appear as change-makers and culture-shapers. In one place, for example, Rothman notes that prior to the 1960s, “skiing skill and experience and local residence took precedence over visitors and their money.” Yet for the most part, the key players in his brief study are the corporate men: Paepcke, William Hodges, Darcy Brown, and the latter day arrivals from Hollywood. One of my first questions upon reading Rothman was *who* were these locals, exactly, and *how*, precisely, did their “skill and experience” take “precedence.” Rothman speaks broadly of ski bums on a few occasions and rarely, if ever, mentions one by name. I wanted to know who they were and how they differed from not only visitors but to the corporate men such as Paepcke. By the end of his look at Aspen, Rothman claims that the ski bum is “all but disappeared.” Based on my own observations after years of living in Colorado and Montana and working in a ski town, I questioned this assertion and Rothman’s basic thesis. Was tourism a “devil’s bargain”? Was it fair to say that Aspen and Las

Vegas were similar in the bargains people made there to accommodate tourists? In looking at Aspen in more detail—at the lives of natives and newcomers and the ski town culture that developed in Aspen both with and against the grain of Paepcke’s original dream—I think it is important to note that many locals in Aspen saw change as a good thing, indeed. This is reflected even today in the number of Aspen families who remain there because they have evolved over time from mining and ranching families to ski town families. Western historians ought to remember that in Aspen, mining boomed from about 1880 to 1893. Those thirteen years seem relatively paltry against more than six decades of an economy built on skiing and tourism. While the lives and cultures of mining towns, miners, and of other extractive industries and their workers have been explored by Western American historians in detail, ski towns have been ignored as subjects deserving thorough inquiry outside of broader surveys, such as Coleman’s history of skiing and Rothman’s history of tourism. “Living It Up in Aspen” draws on the models provided by Morrissey and Christensen—in their studies of a micro-region and one town, respectively—in that this work focuses on an iconic ski town and the culture that evolved there, then attempts to place its story into a larger context about elites and their desires to create new types of western identities in Aspen after World War Two.<sup>346</sup>

In thinking and writing about the evolution of a ski town culture in Aspen—influenced greatly by the ski industry but shaped mostly by the people who worked, lived, and played there as residents—I have drawn on some of the seminal works in American cultural history. Warren Sussman’s *Culture As History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* makes the salient point

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<sup>346</sup> Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains*, pp. 10; 22-23; 270; 349.

that the tensions within cultures define them and that arguments and debates are reflected in cultures. In Aspen, the central tension that drove the original development after the war was not between a corporation and the locals as much as it was between elite outsiders and the increasingly homogenous urban and suburban America from which they sought refuge. The arguments and debates reflected in Aspen's ski town culture involved elite Americans, largely, questioning the materialistic tastes of a broader, middle class America. Many Aspenites certainly pursued a way of living akin to what David Shi has referred to as the "simple life." Shi pointed out in *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* that during times of crisis in American history, "simplicity has provided an emergency reservoir of moral purpose." When elites came to Aspen and transformed themselves into ski bums during the Cold War era, their visions of a simple life in a small town in the Mountain West reflected their desire to escape an America they characterized as having lost its way. In Aspen, people chose to live differently than in the urban and suburban areas many of them left to come there in the first place. When T.J. Jackson Lears, in *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*, argued that "antimodern impulses reinforced a shift from the Protestant ethic of salvation through self-denial to a therapeutic ideal of self-fulfillment in the world through exuberant health and intense experience," he explained a shift in thinking during one period which came to its full fruition in places like Aspen in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> Warren Sussman, *Culture As History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); David E. Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985; Athens: The University of

In looking at the local culture that developed in Aspen, this study offers a more complicated model of the town's history than the accounts provided in the important and necessarily broader studies of the history of skiing in the region by Coleman and of western tourism history by Rothman. The first chapter, "Arriving," asked why people came to Aspen in the first place. While some people came for economic opportunity, most people came to play. Many noted that their draw to Aspen lay in its nature as a small town reminiscent of what they thought of as an idealized Western American past. The town's beauty and old-fashioned charm—and even its scale—allowed Aspenites, particularly newcomers, to see their lives there as simpler and more authentic than the lives they knew in the Midwest and in the Northeast. Their rhetoric about simplicity revealed anxieties about changes in postwar American society, especially the rise of new types of suburban developments and a burgeoning middle class consumerist culture. Chapter Two looked at work in Aspen during the ski era. Each generation tended to emphasize in their memories and reminiscences the "ski bum" work they did once they arrived. Through their work, jobs they might have taken no where but Aspen, privileged locals and elites built identities as westerners. In stark contrast to the worlds that their friends and families inhabited on the east coast and in large metropolitan areas, Aspenites saw themselves as the opposite of the organization type, the man in the grey flannel suit. In Chapter Three, I examined how housing reflected Aspenites' conceptions about authentic living. By living in tents, cars, old miners' cottages, or in new log cabin homes, Aspenites felt as if they lived in a simpler time in the past and often referred to

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Georgia Press, 2001), p. 278; T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), p. 14.

themselves as pioneers. Their housing reflected well the antimodernist sentiments that many locals used in constructing identities as down-to-earth, yet removed from the masses. When condominiums boomed in the 1960s, Aspenites complained that the new buildings brought to town a middle class ethos that needed to be curbed. Chapter Four examined the importance of play in Aspen. Through recreation, especially skiing, Aspenites made it clear who belonged in the town and who did not. An important point in this chapter is that skiing helped Aspenites link the images of perpetual youthfulness and “freedom.” Eventually, real estate agents in the 1970s began to advertise that owning property might help someone to “ski like a native,” to play as a young local, and to become Western in the process. The final chapter examined why people left Aspen. I noted here that as Aspen grew in population and stature as a cultural landmark in the American West, the town continued to be populated largely by young people. Transience helped define the town. By the late 1960s and into the 1970s, some Aspenites sought new places of refuge. In towns such as Telluride, some former Aspenites attempted to reclaim Aspen as it once existed in their own idealized conceptions and memories.

This dissertation has examined the ways Aspenites argued over and shaped the meaning of their town. Here is a “biography” of Aspen that explores how class tensions shaped Aspen’s culture in its first thirty years as a ski town from 1945 to 1975. In understanding why people came to Aspen, why they worked in particular ways, how they housed themselves, how they played, and why many of them eventually left, I explore how the projecting and evading of social class worked in

Aspen and why the culture that resulted from those actions help us understand  
America.

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CHS Colorado Historical Society, Denver  
DPL Western History Collection, Denver Public Library

EHP Elizabeth H. Paepcke Papers, Special Collections, University of Chicago  
FKH Floyd K. Haskell Papers, Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder  
PCL Pitkin County Library, Aspen, Colorado  
PHN Paul H. Nitze Papers, Library of Congress  
WPP Walter P. Paepcke Papers, Special Collections, University of Chicago  
WPL Wilkinson Public Library, Telluride, Colorado

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