

Oil Boom in Rockies

I enrolled in the Doctorate of Arts program at Idaho State University in 1973 and completed all the coursework for the Master's degree. I also began a novel, titled *Gib*, for my creative thesis. But I soon realized that when the National Organization of Women hijacked the Affirmative Action bus in 1974, working class white males were being kicked off the bus. There would be few-to-none jobs available to guys like me in American colleges and universities for years to come. I am still fairly bitter about it but, lucky again, an oil boom hit Wyoming and I jumped onto an oil exploration helicopter, getting off only now and then, and rode it for the next 25 years. My first year in the seismic business, I made twice as much as the chairman of the English department at Idaho State.



And it was a life that suited me. I have always enjoyed working on the edge and an oil boom will afford a man all of that he can stand. I survived two helicopter crashes

But life as a seismic worker was just what I wanted out of life then – freedom from real responsibility, life in the outdoors during all the seasons, helicopter rides all over the country, from Alaska south to the Mexico line.

It was another nomadic life, and for five years I pretty much lived out of my truck as I worked for various companies in the mountains of America. All the ops were supported with helicopters and we finish a job in Utah, move to Montana, or Idaho, or Arizona, or Texas, California, New Mexico, etc, etc.

A crew was made up of about thirty to forty men and women, a couple of office trailers, dynamite magazines, two or three helicopters and crews, tool trailer, ten or so vehicles, and the heart of a migrant worker.



Typical field LZ on the South Fork of the Shoshone River near Cody, Wyoming and Cool Ray hooking up the Dog House to the belly hook as the chopper hovers



Terrain typical of what we crossed in the Rocky Mountains, near Cody, Wyoming. It doesn't get much more beautiful, or tough, than this



Me and my nephew Justin Burns in 1972 near Cody, Wyoming



To me, there is still little that compares with being flown to the top of a mountain in a helicopter then dropped off to work one's way to the bottom with friends, lovers, and the crazy bastards common to the business in those days



Thanksgiving 1980 in Meeteetse, Wyoming



The beauty Lisa Mueller



Michael Z powdering his nose



The woman known as "Two Scoops". God seldom put a kinder soul in a worse body



Your Uncle Piss and his girl Sweet Pea whom he later traded for a motorcycle!



Seismic in winter was slow so an occasional trip to Mexico was in order. Here at Chacuca's house of ill repute in Santa Rosalia, Baja California Norte



Muscle beach boys at Punta Gavilan, Baja Concepcion



Garibaldi grouper, Parrot fish and other dinner delights



A *chubasco* storm blew in and the backwash buried our 34-footer in the beach. I had to single-handedly dig it out of the sand. Note the water reflections under the bow.

That mostly unbridled life lasted for about five years, then I decided it was time to grow up so I moved into management, scouting projects and getting permits to operate from landowners and federal agencies

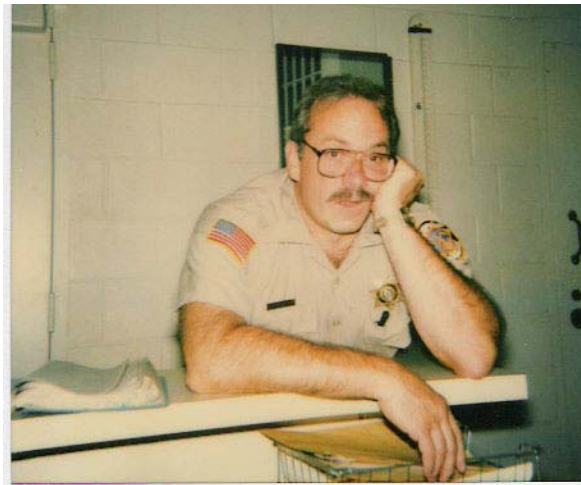


Scouting project in Nevada, near Lake Mead



Southern Nevada terrain

There was one interlude of four years, after the oil bust of 1984 and into 1988, when I worked as a deputy sheriff in Cody, Wyoming.



While I was working for the Park County Sheriff's Office I volunteered to work the midnight shift at the jail, so I could do some writing. It was the most disheartening job you can imagine. See my poem *Jail Rounds*. I bought a stack of legal notepads and began writing my novel based on my Master's thesis, *Gib: A Contemporary Western*



The real Detective Tommy Thompson, D-1 in the Park Co Sheriff's office.
I borrowed his name for my hero in the Jackson Hole Mysteries series.



While working for the sheriff's office I also had a little horse logging business near Yellowstone Park. The area was proposed for Wilderness status so no motorized activities were allowed



Logs for Cody Lumber



Firewood for the Wapiti Valley





I quit the sheriff's office in 1988 when the Yellowstone Fires blew out of Yellowstone and onto the Shoshone National Forest northwest of Cody



Documenting the documenters of the fires was part of my job



I was a Fire Information Officer and photographer for the U.S. Forest Service and have a couple of hundred photos but these two show, pretty much, what I did. The guy being filmed and interviewed, this time for ABC, is Pat Kaunert a favorite of the media because he was so knowledgeable, glib, and photogenic – a seasoned man

I wrote a long essay on the Yellowstone Fires titled *Seasoned by Fire* that is located in the *Poetry* file on this site, a description of the next album, *The Yellowstone Fires*