

WTE column of September 4, 2015. Editor's headline: "Book captures Wyoming Gems"

Did you know that Wyoming possesses a world-famous grove of trees in its southern quadrant? The landmark known as Aspen Alley "attracts photographers from thousands of miles away and shows up in publications all over the world," write Rich Rosenfeld and Robert Edgerton in "The Living Wyoming: A Photographic Tribute." The photograph of Aspen Alley is augmented by a description of getting there via SR-70 from Encampment to Dixon on "fifty miles of some of the most breathtaking views you'll find on this stretch of the road." The added GPS coordinates give even more detailed information.

Should you be on a search for a Wyoming memento to send to a family member or special someone, you need look no further than this just-published volume. It will also serve as your coffee-table addition to delight the visitors who leaf through it.

With 120 pages and over 275 breathtaking images, the book is the first of a projected four-volume series. This labor of love took the authors two years of effort and 4500 miles of travel. Plus, they compiled more than 15,000 photographic images from which to choose the most poignant for their elegant product. All these pictures explore only the southeast quadrant of our state. The documentation of the remaining three quadrants will follow in due time, we are told.

The authors have focused on hidden treasures and spots most of us never hear about, let alone get to visit. The gems they found off the roads less traveled convinced them that their dream was worth pursuing. To make the documentation accessible to the roundabout traveler, the authors provide GPS coordinates for the location from which their pictures were taken. The device not only gives a perspective of distances but also becomes a helpful tool for "those brave explorers" who decide to venture off the beaten path.

The quadrant, in turn, is divided into four areas of focus. The content of Grid Number One includes such colorful monikers as Box Elder Canyon, Casper Mountain, Devil's Gate, Razorback Ridge, Hell's Half Acre, and others.

Night-sky photographs add a sense of the unexpected and a mystery to be savored. One memorable photo shows shooting stars up close while lightning strikes illuminate the middle distance.

Here is an excerpt from the text accompanying a photographic journey that documents what the pioneers would have seen as they crossed "several hundred miles of rugged, unfamiliar terrain," where this landmark would assure them they were on the right path. Lamont lies "just off US 287, about halfway between Alcoa to the north and Rawlins to the south." The Ferris Mountains, approximately 7 miles to the north but not easy to access, can be observed from Lamont via "GPS: 42.2191 / - 107.4776."

Grid Two covers the spectacular Ayres Natural Bridge, which represents one of just three such natural bridge formations in the United States. There's Glendo Reservoir and Guernsey State Park, North Sybille and Long Canyons, the Hat Creek Stage Station, and

other markers.

Grid Three goes from the aforementioned Aspen Alley to Battle Pass, climbing up to 8,620 feet to give entirely different perspectives of Battle Mountain. From there it zeroes in on historic hotels, the Laramie River Overlook, plus picturesque snapshots of the tiny community of Savery with its old frontier cabins..

Grid Four includes Cheyenne with a photo series in homage to Frontier Days. It then veers off to the ghost town of Hecla. The Ames Monument, the University of Wyoming, Vedauwoo Rocks, Lone Tree Canyon, and Warren Air Force Base are documented also.

An Afterword explains the location of towns and cities in the quadrant and gives additional information on population numbers, the altitude at which the dwellings can be found, and their latitude and longitude.

What you won't find documented in "The Living Wyoming": The pigheadedness of elected officials. The callousness of resource-exploiting mega-corporations. Extractive industries that disrespect the environment and the people and wildlife in it. The mercury in coal dust, the ravaged moonscapes of strip mining, the ozone spikes and water contamination of the fracking boom. Thus, when you put "The Living Wyoming" on your coffee table, be prepared to add, as Paul Harvey would say, "The rest of the story." It's out there somewhere.

The book could have benefitted from more thorough editing. The page numbers recorded in the Afterword are absent on the book's actual pages. Also missing is a website from which to order your copy. Interested readers must contact "The Living Wyoming" at P. O. Box 941789, Atlanta, GA 31141.

On the other hand, to savor the photos and access the pertinent GPS information is worth the effort of acquiring this collection of enchanting images about our oh-so-disparate state.