Sledding with CREEC and RC

On Saturday, March 5, the Conservation and Restoration Ecology Club (CREEC) and the Range Club (RC) combined for an afternoon of sledding, hotdogs, and hot chocolate. The activities kicked off at 5pm on the popular hills of the Sinks Recreation Area. The activity was an exciting employment that aroused the smallest of attendees. I couldn’t keep my 2 1/2 year old daughter off the inner tubes. Each trip down the hill led inevitably to another trip back up. It was a never-ending cycle. Luckily, Alan Bass, a new student to USU this semester, brought his snowmobiles allowing the return trip to the “mountainous peaks above” much easier. Those seeking alternate snow sport challenges were towed behind the snowmobile up, down, and across the malevolent mounds of rise.

Pulling a load more than could be born at angles that changed with each turn, the snowmobile and Alan both ended up on their sides along with the towee Clint Sampson. The exciting part though was when the unpredictable machine sprung to its tracks and decided on its own to keep going. Watching Alan chase the machine, as if it were a runaway dog, marked the highlight in the “adult entertainment” for the day.

By, Isaac Pittman
Spring Break

“I camped out in the snow.”
-- Kohei Yoshida

“I went to Vegas.”
-- Meghan Wereley

“I made a snow angel and I spent more money than I’ve made all month.” -- Hannah Beesley

“I went snowboarding on Alta ski resort property.”
-- Julie Tracy

“I was hunted by a sea anemone...and I went car shopping.” -- Jen Barnett

“I defrosted my freezer.” -- Kaylynn Little

“I bathed in Lake Mead’ -- Levi Roberts

“I went to San Francisco and Reno for a Lacrosse tournament” -- Kyle Olotsky
Long Story Short
By Jessica Evans

It seems to me like the most popular topic lately is spring break. You know, one of those pleasant conversation starters. No one has asked about mine. And by ‘no one’ I mean everyone, their grandmother, and their family pet. Mine was probably not as adventurous as others may have been, but it was eventful nonetheless.

Let’s take a step back. I drive a ’93 Pontiac. Not even a cool Pontiac, a generic Grand Am. In other words, it’s not as reliable as a jelly sandwich on wheels. Not to mention the huge dent in the side from when I got hit by a bus (long story). It shouldn’t leave Cache Valley, let alone take off and drive through Wyoming to Boulder, Colorado like I made it do. Because everyone would disapprove of my journey (long story). I had to leave at the crack of dawn before anyone was awake, and no one knew where I was going. I realize that was stupid now, but I am 22, I am OUT of the womb now, thank you. Besides, college kids are invincible, right?

Boulder. Boulder is a great city. If I could get past the fact that it is run by hippies, I think I could live there. Boulder has open space. Boulder has beautiful people walking beautiful dogs. Boulder has an auto mechanic, Jesús, who showed me the metal things poking through my two back tires, so Boulder also has the 60 bucks I dropped for new ones.

After Boulder, I spent a bit of time in Ft. Collins before I left Colorado, still flying solo. My plan was to meet some buddies in Moab, so I got to drive through some pretty cool areas, including Vail Ski Resort. I have the self control of a thirsty alcoholic at a bar. I could not resist. It just so happened that I had my snowboard. I left Vail not long after arriving due to a minor concussion (long story).

Okay, I eventually made it to Moab. Yea for Moab! I think it’s my favorite place to visit, ever, but that could be the mountain biker in me speaking. When I drove into town I was all sorts of excited. I parked at a ball field, where my car jumped around excitedly. And by ‘jumped around excitedly’ I mean died.

Something about that particular day in Moab: you had the normal slew of road and mountain bikers, and more than the normal slew of Japanese tour buses (long story). And of course since it was spring break for everyone north of the South Pole, and Moab is second only to Mexico for spring break destinations, you had a slew of crazy young adults. Here’s the kicker. It was the week before Jeep Jamboree, where 3,000 souped-up jeeps tramp around the great outdoors of tiny little Moab. What that meant for me was that every mechanic in town was booked until the next millennium. But I found one that could work on my car—in two days.

Picture a small town chuck full of Jeeps and dirt bikes and ATVs, all being towed by Cool People in Big Pick-up Trucks. Then you see a putzy Honda Civic pulling a broken Pontiac down main street. We fit in reeeeeeal nice. Now, I won’t name names (Reggie), but the person who worked on my car happens to be the uncle of a CNR student (Reggie! It’s Reggie!). The person who worked on my car also happened to know that I needed him, and so could charge me over 500 dollars for a fuel pump.

Three college students, covered in red sand (long story) finding a motel in Moab during Jeep Jamboree for a reasonable price is a joke. They too were booked until the next millennium.

I made it back to Logan, eventually, a day later than intended and having missed the Carrot Top show, which I had tickets for.

In other words, if you want to know about my spring break, I’ll tell you I got to see old friends, snowboard, mountain bike, and I hate my car (long story).
Meet A Professor
By Helena Torgerson-Hall

Name: Neil E. West

Where did you grow up? Klamath Basin in Southern Oregon

Where did you get your degrees? Oregon State University

What are your degrees in? B.S. (with Honors) in General Science, minor in education. PhD in Plant Ecology, minor in animal ecology.

When did you decide and what inspired you to go into your degrees? I grew up in an Agricultural background. My father was a Rancher, and I also participated in 4-H, and mini summer school put on by Oregon State University. I liked the lifestyle the people had teaching at the University, and I was a very curious person. Through this type of lifestyle I could be intellectual but still care about the land.

What classes do you normally teach? I usually teach only graduate courses. Wildland Ecosystems (FRWS 3800) is the only undergraduate course that I teach. In the past, I have also taught about half of all the range courses here in the CNR, at one time or another.

Why did you decide to teach? I observed through interacting with federal researchers, that their full time research careers lead them to an increasingly narrow focus and greater cynicism. It’s healthier to have a mix of generations around you. I like having these cohorts of young idealistic people coming in that believe that they can change the world and turn things around. Also, research and teaching interact. You don’t really learn a subject until you teach it and find out where the holes are. If I had gone into a federal career, I would have probably become too narrow minded and cynical.

How long have you been teaching? This is my 41st year here; retirement comes for me this July.

What research are you currently involved in? Applying Remote Sensing (RS), Geographic Information System (GIS), and landscape ecology theory applied to improving rangeland monitoring.

Have you had any interesting jobs before becoming a professor? I am about the only one that can say that I’ve been in this career for so long. To add variety to my career, I have gone on sabbatical to teach and do research at other places. My first sabbatical, I went to the University of Georgia where I sat in classes and worked with the graduate students on using computer-simulated models of grasslands. My second sabbatical, I went to Yale University and taught the first and only Range Ecology course to graduates. My third sabbatical, I split between Australia and Israel, where I wrote review papers. While in Israel, I discovered their environmental education was taking grade-school children to a plot of land for a week and teaching them about the land and having them con-
duct studies on the land so that they would have a greater appreciation for the land. Israel is one-third the size of Utah.

**Hobbies and interests:** Fishing, hunting, and traveling.

**Philosophy on life:** Live and let live.

**Advice to the world:** We forget our fundamental connections to the land at civilization’s peril.

**What book would you recommend for someone to read?** Jared Diamond’s book entitled, "Collapse." It’s on the re-examination of how previous cultures have collapsed with the cause being related to ignorance of resource sustainability.

**What do you hope people will remember you for?** I’m most proud of my graduate students that will continue what I have started and take even further. They are my primary intellectual successors.

**Strange talents:** My wife constantly complains about when we go to the movies, I grumble that they didn’t really shoot the movie at the location they’re saying they’re at, because I know the vegetation, landscapes, animals, etc. I don’t divorce ecology from much in my life. Although, I’m not as bad as Gene Odum, who we put together a pot of money against; if anyone could get him to deviate away from ecology for two minutes, they would win the pot. No one ever won and it went into a fellowship fund.

**Favorite music:** Folk and acoustical music.

**Favorite color:** Green

**Favorite food:** I’m going to spend more time in retirement cooking gourmet foods, particularly French pastries.

**Most embarrassing moment:** Losing keys to a van when I was leading an important group of visitors to a research site.

**Something unique about Dr. West:** First person to have stood on several isolated mesas in southern Utah (with helicopter assets).

**Pet peeves:** People that say they are going to do things and don’t.

**Thoughts on Logan:** I do enjoy living here. It’s a very pleasant place to live and work. My favorite thing about Logan is the access to the mountains and deserts.

**Future plans/dreams/wishes:** I’m going to spend as much time outdoors as possible and away from the damn computer.
It’s My Money
By Jason Schane

President Bush’s recent proposal to privatize Social Security is a must. As college students, we should be concerned with this issue because it is our generation that will have to either pay out the rear when the shortage comes, as the baby boomer generation starts to retire, or we will be the ones stripped of our promised benefits from the program.

The problem with our current social security system is that it is a “pay as you go” system. What this means is, the money that you are currently putting into the Social Security system is going directly to those who are currently collecting the benefits from it. Not a single dollar that you put into the system will go towards your own personal retirement. The program has worked very well for many years, since we had the baby boomer generation providing the necessary funds for the program. But soon it will shift; we will have this larger group of people collecting from the system and a smaller group of people putting money into the system. It is estimated that by around 2018, the system will be will be paying out more money that it takes in. This is well before the time that I expect to retire.

This problem is not something new; we have been discussing it for decades, but nothing has been done to solve it. Democratic Senator, Joe Lieberman, recently said on CNN’s Late Edition, “Every year we wait to come up with a solution to the Social Security problem, [it] costs our children and grandchildren and great grandchildren $600 billion dollars more.”

Well, how do you solve this problem? Political Science Professor, Mike Lyons, suggests, “Increase taxes, and raise the age for when recipients can receive their benefits.” This is not a solution; doing this would enhance the problem and put it off to another generation.

What President Bush is doing is pushing for PRAs (Personal Retirement Accounts). This will allow individuals to have the option to invest the money normally forced into the current social security system, into the stock market. Some argue that the stock market isn’t safe. I agree 100%; it isn’t safe. However, neither is putting my money in the hands of the government. One of the great things about this country is that we promote self dependency. I just don’t see how having to be required to put my money into a system, whether it works or not, promotes self dependency. If I lose money in the stock market, I have no one to blame but myself. If I lose money in the hands of the government, (which I will), I have the government to blame.

If you have questions about this problem, you are welcome to email me at jasonschane@cc.usu.edu. Or, on Thursday April 7th come to the patio of the TSC; the College Republicans will be putting on a non-offensive demonstration on the problem with social security.

If you would like something printed in the Almanac (story, poem, advertisement, etc.), contact Jason Schane at jasonschane@cc.usu.edu or Helena Torgerson at heletorg@cc.usu.edu.
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Kody Menghini
By Angie Cannon

Q: Where are you from?
A: Reno, Nevada...born and raised there.

Q: What is your Major?
A: Wildlife Science

Q: Why did you choose to go into Wildlife Science?
A: I've been a lifelong hunter...I thought it would be cool to work with wildlife.

Q: What year are you?
A: Junior. I got two more years till graduation.

Q: And then what happens after graduation?
A: I'll probably go to grad school...probably in Nevada.

Q: So, why do you like Nevada so much?
A: It's my home and there's nothin' out there. I like the open space and the lack of people.

Q: So...if there's nothing out there, what do you do for fun? What are your hobbies?
A: I like to hunt...that's about it.

Q: So...what else do you do?
A: I hike and watch wildlife.

Q: Hmmmm...so, if you were stuck indoors, what would you do?
A: I would probably read hunting magazines...or anything to do with natural resources.

Q: What's your favorite book?
A: You Know You're Nevedan If...
   For example, (You know you're Nevedan if you know what pogo nip is).

Q: So what is pogo nip?
A: It's a freezing fog that freezes the ground.

Q: What's your favorite music?
A: Country

Q: How about your favorite food?
A: Wild game...steaks, stew...deer, elk, bighorn sheep, mountain lion...anything.

Q: What is your dream job?
A: Wildlife biologist in Nevada

Q: Do you travel a lot?
A: I've been around the West quite a bit...I've never been international. I've been to Hawaii six times...my aunt lives there. I want to go to New Zealand and Canada.

Q: How do you like Logan?
A: It's nice...it's different than home...not better or worse...just different. It's close to four states where I can go hunting.

**Things Cody can do for you: Tell you all about Nevada and what it has to offer.**
EVENTS

Coffee Hour
Every Tuesday 9:30-10:30
In the CNR Atrium
$1.00 buys you a donut and/or a drink

Livestock Marketing Workshop
April 1-2, 2005.
For time, place, and more information,
contact: Rae Ann Hart via phone
(435) 797-2556 or e-mail at
rangesci@cc.usu.edu

2005 Sustainable Landscapes Conference
Landscape Cycles:
Connecting People to Place Through Agriculture

April 5, 2005 @7:00 pm
Ellen Eccles Conference Center
Cost $10 or $5 with a valid student ID in Advance or $15 at the door
Tickets available in all USU Ticket Offices
For more information, please visit www.sustainablelandscapes.org

Ushers needed!
for the CNR Awards Banquet April 9th
See Kristy, Maureen, or the Peer Advisors in NR 120 for details.