

# three wire winter



\$3.00

1987  
CAROLINE BANCROFT  
AWARD

for the advancement of Colorado history  
to

*Three Wire Winter*



COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## THREE WIRE WINTER: AN AWARD WINNER!

by BILL MCKELVIE, History Teacher, Steamboat Springs High School

*Editor's Note: This year, for the first time, the Colorado Historical Society awarded the Caroline Bancroft History Award. The late Caroline Bancroft, a well-known Colorado historian, provided for this monetary award to be given annually by the Society to a Colorado organization, museum, or municipality with a population of less than 50,000 that made the greatest contribution during the year to the advancement of Colorado history. Steamboat Springs High School received the 1987 award for its publication Three Wire Winter. The following article was submitted by Bill McKelvie, the high school's faculty advisor for this project.*

Preserving the past for future generations is the goal of *Three Wire Winter*, an oral history magazine published by Steamboat Springs High School students. This multifaceted project began as a suggestion from the Steamboat Springs Centennial-Bicentennial Committee in the fall of 1974 to write a book on Routt County history. Faculty advisor Bill McKelvie enlisted the top history students in the school to try to organize it as an extracurricular project.

By early 1975 the project had not yet been realized. A nonprofit organization called IDEAS, Inc., the Steamboat Springs School Board, and the Centennial-Bicentennial Committee provided funding to restructure the project. This created an magazine publishing class beginning in the fall of 1975.

The two-hour class, which offered credit in both English and history, originally contained 28 students. Naming the magazine was among the initial challenges. Hundreds of names were considered before the class settled on *Three Wire Winter*,

a title that reflects the ranching and skiing heritage of northwestern Colorado.

In the early years, ranchers used their barbed-wire fences to measure a winter's snowfall. During a "three-wire winter," the snow that piled up against a fence would cover the third wire. A "three-wire winter," which makes getting feed to their cattle difficult, meant a certain amount of hardship for ranchers.

The staff of the first magazine was so enthusiastic that they thought the first issue would be on the stands in a matter of weeks. They underestimated the time it would take to learn the basics of photography, interviewing, transcribing, typing, and paste-up. From the beginning, the goal for every student was to learn all aspects of magazine production, from fund-raising to final layout.

Story ideas are generated by the students themselves, many of whom have had the pleasure of

seeing his or her byline on a published article about a grandparent. Others choose an interesting neighbor or acquaintance, or pick a topic and then locate the proper people to interview. Students build self-confidence by scheduling interviews, developing their own questions, and making their own photos.

The class also teaches the basics of running a business. Fund-raising has been an ongoing necessity. As a Colorado nonprofit corporation, the class is entirely self-sufficient. The school system pays for the advisor's salary but makes no other monetary contribution. A single issue now costs about \$4,500 to publish, not including expenses such as replacing cameras, tape recorders, and other equipment. A majority of the funds is raised through special events that get the students further involved with the community, including an annual barbeque and auction as well as selling corsages for the homecoming dance.

Another primary objective of *Three Wire Winter* has been to motivate students who respond to the informal structure of the class and the challenge of interviewing, organizing a transcription, and learning how to operate both a camera and the darkroom. Nothing they accomplish in traditional academics can quite match the thrill of seeing their byline in a publication that they know will be preserved for generations.

One of the biggest rewards of the *Three Wire Winter* project has been the positive impact it has had on so many lives -- students who meet new friends in the community and residents who are eager to share their experiences and memories. Receiving the 1987 Caroline Bancroft Award from the Colorado Historical Society is a great honor. *Three Wire Winter* is pleased to be recognized as a participant in the vital process of recording and preserving Colorado history.

# Three Wire Winter

## 24th Issue

"The Right Place at the Right Time" .....	Pat Dempsey
"The Gunslingers" .....	The Old West
"I Made More Money Off a Fast Nickel Than a Slow Dime" .....	Angelo Iacovetto
"Life of a Routt County Coal Miner" .....	Bill Lee
"Our Main Goal Isn't to Get Rich Off of Any of This, But to Be Able to Stay on the Ranch" .....	Patsy Sherar
"It's the Greatest Feeling to Be Able to Fly" .....	Cyndy Simms and Rick Denney
"Steamboat Dance Theater: I Love It When the Lights Come On" .....	Noel Hefty, Julie Filler, and Robin Getter

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Currently, **Three Wire Winter** is in its 14th year and consists of 17 students and 1 advisor. This is the 24th issue, containing interesting history and accomplishments of mainly locals in the Routt County area.

The **Three Wire Winter** project began in 1975 and became a non-profit organization in 1978. We welcome all letters, subscriptions and donations, which are tax deductible. To purchase or renew a subscription, please write:

**Three Wire Winter**  
P. O. Box 770664  
Steamboat Springs, CO 80477

Subscriptions are any four issues for \$12.00 and a single issue is \$3.00. Past magazines available are: #3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24. Future issues include: #25, 26, 27, 28.

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