



# The Hitchin' Post

January 2008

Available on-line at [www.mountaintimes.net](http://www.mountaintimes.net)  
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Patsy Ward, Editor

**A Community Oriented Newsletter for Weed and Surrounding Communities**  
**"If You're Lucky Enough to Live in the Mountains, You're Lucky Enough"**

## Sympathy

Our prayers and condolences are extended to:  
...Susie Geckler and family on the passing of Susie's husband, Dwayne, who passed away December 3 in Oklahoma while they were visiting their son. Memorial services will be held at the Weed Community Center on January 5 at 2 p.m.

## Anniversaries, Birthdays, Comings & Goings, Get Well Wishes, Etc.

### Happy Anniversary to...

...Noel and Shirley Akers-15

### Happy Birthday to...

...Jesse Mateer-2

...Jean Weddle, Pat Foster; Bill Lee Parker-4

...Anna Rae Brown-6

...Hannah Toth-7

...Teri Smith-8

...Gary Stone-11

...Elaine Wright-15

...Christopher Alvarez-16

...Evelyn Miller, Bryan Green, Joshua Livers, and Earl Burton-21

...Kara Goss-23

...Louise Winkel and Judy (Wagner) Raymond-24

...Felicity Braziel-25

...Kris Williams-26

...Kirk Hall-28

...James Livers and Bonnie Nunn-29

### Comings & Goings

...Doug Miller took time off to relax in south Texas visiting friends and Evelyn's family. He also went deer hunting with Dusty and friends, and they had a successful hunt!

...Jeff and Louise Winkle took some time off, but I have a feeling theirs was work time even though they visited with their son and his family.

...Jim and Claudine Walls finally got to come to the mountains for a visit. We are so glad they took time away from their pool to spend a little time with us. They both look great. They brought new pictures of Kaylee, their first great grandchild. She is an adorable little girl.

...Russ & Elaine Wright spent Christmas in Seattle and Vancouver visiting family and friends.

...Tom & Patsy Ward were blessed with friends who joined them for a small holiday celebration in their home. In addition to their friends from this area, out-of-town friends included Tomiva & Lila King and Bob & Joy Springer from Carlsbad, Judy Long from Hobbs, and John & Jan Rauch from Artesia.

### Prayers and Get Well Wishes to:

...Brianna Green; Janie Hudman; Rebecca Nagy; Eddie Spurgeon; Karen Rodgers; Ken Stewart; H.B. Newell; Elaine Wright; Shirley Hafliger (Tom & Sheila Fry's daughter); Carson Rodgers

**A Very Big Thank You** to everyone who helped decorate the Weed Christmas Corner and to those who participated in lighting the entire town. We've had lots of positive comments about our lighting project.

## Weed Calendar

January 1 - New Year's Day (Federal holiday)

January 7 - Bookmobile, Weed Post Office, 1:15 - 2:30 p.m.

January 21 - Dr. M.L. King Day (Federal holiday)

January 28 - Weed Community Meeting, 6 p.m.  
Location to be announced.

## New EMTBs

- Russ Wright

Sheila Fry and Robert & Kay Hudman very successfully completed Emergency Medical Technician, Basis, program through Eastern New Mexico University, Roswell. This is a 192-hour program that included 16 hours of clinical emergency ambulance rides with AMR in Alamogordo. We are really pleased to have these three highly trained EMTBs as part of the Sacramento/Weed Fire and Rescue Team. Thanks for all the hard work guys.

## Pinon News

- Margaret Merritt

Greetings! From southeastern New Mexico. We don't stay put very long despite the price of gas, so we cover a lot of miles. The road to Alamogordo and El Paso has been well used of late. Mostly good weather over the mountain where it is always good to stop for a sample of the Mountain Top Mercantile's bread and goodies. Everybody driving needs a stretch break, no? Any excuse will do if one is needed. Incidentally, the bread comes in all flavors IF you are lucky and early enough as it comes out of the ovens. They do take orders!

Local folks met at Tularosa for an Award's Luncheon this month for Good Stewardship and Land Conservation. Plaques were awarded to the Merritt family of Pinon whose representatives were Hilton & Avanel Merritt and Margaret Merritt. James & Freddie Evroagge of Pinon/Dell City area also received a plaque for conservation. Bill Mershon was honored as an outstanding person in this field of supervisory and acting. Along Peñasco River on Hwy. 24, you can see a lot of work where cattails have been in the creek in past years. More water now. All this takes lots of work, miles, and dollars to get done. Some is walking with a shovel digging, some with a machine shoveling mud and cattails. Sometimes a sprayer carried on a person's shoulder and sometimes with an airplane to cover stretches of arid Crow Flat which can

grow grass if greasewood doesn't get the water. Better water management is a big plus here. We all need water to live in a dry, desert area. Remember; turn off faucet!

November and Thanksgiving feasting is over so we can now get going on December's attack on our waistlines! Recipes coming out now are not only expensive but an outright outrage for a calorie-limited diet. If ingredients are more than five, you can estimate enormous increases in calorie/body weight if the product makes it out of the oven without cremation. That problem makes the point undebatable. Not edible at all!

Some of us are old-fashioned cooks whose shopping list is quite standard, predictable, and usually edible. Sometimes, the recipes call for dictionary definition or a picture to identify it as called for. When small onions fried were a favorite and every time left in an unoccupied kitchen, this one fried onions. Very careful to eat the result and clean up the kitchen, I was amazed that Mama always knew I had fried onions. Small people are not very good as detectives, I guess. Onions grew in the garden where gathering was no problem - just a point made. Onions were fried.

Our area children are usually deprived of the privilege of eating vegetables pulled from the ground, washed in the irrigation ditch, and consumed on the spot, sometimes with a wrapping of cold biscuit, sometimes just with the damp crunch of fresh vegetable. Cookies and candy bars are okay, but, oh, the crunch of fresh vegetables!! Another treat was apples off the tree. As soon as the blossom dropped off the apple, we identified it as edible, thinned the multiples, and began to eat. Some folks contended that green apples were bad for the stomach; however, we ate and survived on them, raw and cooked. Apple pie you have yet to enjoy until you have had a green apple pie for supper. Slept well, too.

Our little people were scarce at our Pinon Christmas party due to a rash of runny noses and sore throats, but the little ones there were fun. One little Miss was so cute with her short bangs and pigtails, but Grandma discouraged comments. The new bangs were self-created and hopefully NOT to be repeated. Maybe so - life goes on and on. The tables were so tastefully decorated by the 4 p.m. crew that the whole room was festive and Christmasey with good smells there and arriving for serving time at 6 p.m. Packages piled up on the exchange gift table as folks came in. About 60 people came and went after eating. Forty-five of those stayed to play and participate in the exchange. Supposedly only three "take a-ways" are permitted, but sometimes in the hilarity of the occasion the less shy folks get by with shady counting. Sometimes they don't! All in fun, with fingers pointing - "you were 1, you were 2, you were 3, and now just where are we?" Good-natured rivalry/exchanges made new friends and old friends laugh again together. We all missed Dulce Stevenson's packages of Divinity Fudge. Brownies were really good, but Dulce's divinity was a traveling commodity, always. We all miss her.

A Bunco group is active in our area. They seem to have a lot of fun together. Never played that game myself. Dominoes, 42, and such are old friends. Even Chinese checkers are around somewhere.

Good everyone came to have fun. Maybe next time others will join us in community fun.

Adios 'til next time, Margaret.

### Christmas Goings-On

The Sacramento Mountains Community Christmas Celebration was held on December 15. This special service was made more meaningful by the singing of "O Holy Night" by Marie Rodgers and "Born To Die" by Cari Barrett. Bro. Don Brown reminded us of what Christmas really means, and Bro. Ran Loy from Cloudcroft United Methodist Church "put the period" at the end of Bro. Don's message. It was as if they had gotten together on what they were going to say...or perhaps...just perhaps...the Holy Spirit had something to do with it! After the service, we gathered in the Dining Hall for a delicious meal and lots of fellowship. And, for the diner's entertainment, the "Definitely Off Broadway Players put on a one-act play called "The Unexpected Guest." Those of us in the cast sincerely hope we didn't give anyone indigestion! We had a blast and are already planning for next year. If you have ever had a burning desire to make a complete fool of yourself by being in a play, contact me!

Speaking of next year, we have tentatively scheduled the Community Christmas for the 6th of December to kick off the Christmas season and hopefully not run smack dab into six other events scheduled for the same weekend....maybe only three? The holidays are (usually) made more special by friends and family, and this year my Christmas was definitely made more special by a visit from my son, Johnny, and his friend, Sharon. They came from the Austin area and spent the weekend of the Community Christmas Celebration with me. They enjoyed everything about our community, except for the unusually cold weather. I had warned them about the cold, but cold to them and me apparently have a different definition!

- Joy Garrett

At the Weed Baptist Church on the 16<sup>th</sup>, the children put on a play entitled "The Christmas Rose" directed by April Hiles. They did a wonderful job! Children really make the Christmas season bright! Afterwards, a potluck luncheon was served and then the Mayhill Baptist Church regaled us with a Cantata. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, a candlelight service was held at Weed Baptist Church.

On the 20<sup>th</sup>, the Community Christmas Party was held, with Mike Hernandez and his karaoke, carols being sung, music played, and the arrival of Santa. Many thanks to H.B. Newell for the excellent job she did in putting it all together. It was a most enjoyable evening!

### Elk Depredation Concerns Heard in Santa Fe

By Ellen Wedum

Members of the Water and Natural Resources Interim Committee heard from Otero county ranchers, County Commissioner Mike Nivison, and Congressman Stevan Pearce on Wednesday November 28 on the subject of financial losses to allotment owners due to the elk population increase. The hearing was organized by State Senator Vernon Asbill, who represents portions of Eddy and Otero counties. Charles Walker, who spoke first, is a third generation rancher in Otero county, and grandfather of the 6<sup>th</sup> generation to come. His

grandfather moved to the area in 1887, attracted like many others by the Federal government's promise of water, grazing, and right-of-way rights to what became known as allotments. The pioneers established grazing units where there was water, and protected them with their lives.

About 1905 the US Forest Service (USFS), under the Department of Agriculture, formally established and recognized these allotments but also started the practice of charging the ranchers fifty cents a head annual grazing fees. The allotments were abused by eastern speculators, and miners and loggers who were allowed 'free use' permits for ten head of cattle, but typically had many more. With only one ranger to supervise the whole forest, enforcement of reasonable limits on the number of cattle was impossible. This led the ranchers to form the Grazing Advisory Board in the 1950's. The GAB convinced the USFS to terminate the 'free use' permits and other abuses. The ranchers, with the help of John Hall, who was then supervisor of the Lincoln National Forest, brought in a range management specialist who taught them about rotation grazing. As the specialist explained, "We have a little bunch grass here, it's depending on the weather and you to help it survive. So we're going to give this little plant a rest." The ranchers adopted rotation grazing and saw an improvement in the health of the grasslands.

Then about 1967 the Mescalero Apaches brought several truckloads of Rocky Mountain elk (about 158 head) onto the reservation specifically for the purpose of establishing a hutable herd. (The Merriam elk indigenous to the area were hunted to extinction prior to 1900.) Everyone immediately recognized that the elk were not going to realize that they were Mescalero Apache elk and were supposed to remain within the boundaries of the reservation.

In a Memorandum of Understanding filed in the Otero County Courthouse in 1994, Charles Walker, Paul Jones and Bill Edgar testified that according to the records of the GAB meeting of March 7, 1967, Supervisor Hall, who had a B.A. in wildlife management, stated that if the elk were allowed to become established in the Lincoln, they would destroy "the best deer herd in New Mexico." Mr. Hall also promised that the USFS would not allow the elk to reduce the ranchers' animal unit months (AUM) that were then documented to be on the Lincoln.

Forty years later, the elk population has increased to several thousand head (an independent study group that is part of the US Fish and Wildlife Department estimated 4,000-5,000 elk in 2003) and they have migrated both north to Ruidoso and south to Weed. The elk are crowding out the cattle, and the USFS is cutting the ranchers' AUM.

Bruce Thompson, Supervisor of the NM Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), stated that an average of 1,000 elk per year have been killed through 'harvest programs' in the last eight years (and indeed the numbers estimated by the USFW group in 2007 were down to 2500-2700 elk). He also stated that 60% of the DGF annual budget of \$37 million comes from the sale of various hunting and fishing licenses.

Studies by the Range Improvement Task Force (RITF), headed by Dr. John Fowler, show

that rotation grazing is not working any more. If a rancher keeps his cattle off of a portion of his allotment, the elk will just move in. The ranchers are required to move their cattle out of the high-altitude meadows after five months (June to October), but during milder winters, the elk just stay there. So that little bunch grass never gets a rest. The RITF studies have shown that if cattle are present, fewer elk will move in.

The elk also don't differentiate between private property and allotments. Last year they ate all the alfalfa on Charles Walker's 35 acres of private land, a loss of about 1500 bales of hay. Now the NMDGF did give Walker 8 bull elk permits, which were worth about \$4,000 apiece, and 6 cow elk permits, that he could sell to hunters, to make up his losses that year. Charles Walker and Mrs. Jimmy Goss both agreed that they are not trying to get rid of the elk, they are trying to live with them while staying in the cattle business. However, thus far the NMDGF does not recognize their claim that they should be compensated for elk overgrazing on their allotments.

Mrs. Goss has looked into the legal status of the allotments. In the USFS office the documents read "Owner, Lincoln National Forest" on the allotment papers, but in the county records the USFS is not listed at all. After searching through thousands of documents at the county courthouse for nearly eight months, she went back to the USFS and asked to see the "Grazing Cards." On these cards the name of the owner and the prior history of the allotment is given back to 1910. Of course she already knew that there was legal ownership involved, because the allotments can be bought and sold, and inheritance tax must be paid by the heirs when the owner dies. Mrs. Goss clarified that there is a difference between "public" land and "Federal" land. Federal lands are those where prior rights, such as mineral, oil, gas, or the water, grazing, and rights of way rights of the ranchers, have been established by Acts of Congress, such as the Homestead Act. But public lands have no pre-existing rights.

The Gosses in particular feel that they have been unfairly penalized by the USFS when the real problem is the elk. In 2000 their allowed AUM had been cut from 553 to 330 (partly due to the drought). By 2004 it had been cut to 230 AUM, because the USFS said their allotment was 85% depleted of forage, when the maximum depletion allowed is 35%. Dr. John Fowler of the Range Improvement Task Force has analyzed pellet samples from all the area allotments for the last 6-7 years, and estimates that 60% of the pellet material was from elk and the remaining 40% is from cows, deer, rabbits and other little critters. Since the elk actually consume less forage (70%) than cows, it appears that in 2004 the Goss allotments were supporting about 230 cows (plus deer, etc) and a minimum of 490 elk. The Gosses filed a lawsuit against the USFS in 2003. Commissioner Nivison reminded the legislators that the loss of cattle means a loss of tax revenue for the county. He urged that any legislation proposed stipulate that the best available science be applied to the depredation problem. Congressman Pearce pointed out that the increase in the elk population, coupled with the decrease in available meadowland in the Lincoln, is not all the fault of the USFS. Lawsuits have prevented thinning from occurring,

and even harvesting trees after a fire is hampered by paperwork. It can take five years to get permission to cut in burned areas and by then the trees are no longer of commercial value. All the sawmills but one in the Otero county area have shut down.

There was much discussion of possible solutions, but the only quick fix seemed to be for the NMDGF to compensate the ranchers for their losses by giving them hunting permits that they could then sell. Charles Walker estimated that an additional 10 bull permits per year, which sell for \$3,000-\$4,000 each, would probably cover his allotment losses. However, Director Bruce Thompson objected to this solution, saying that increasing the supply of permits would reduce their value. He also refused to accept that the ranchers were entitled to compensation for elk depredation on their allotments as well as on their private property.

But Senator Hardin of Clovis summarized the feelings of most of the legislators present when he said, "The elk are eating someone else's property. The ranchers own the grass. Now, they don't own the ground under the grass. But they aren't getting any compensation for the grass the elk eat."

#### Area Churches

Cowboy Church - Mike Burris, Pastor.  
Slack (Breakfast) - 9:15 a.m. Services - 10 a.m. We ain't fancy! Just come on in, kick off your boots, grab some coffee, biscuits & gravy and share the word of God with the rest of us cowboys, cowgirls and little buckaroos. We are located in Hay Canyon. God Bless and Happy Trails!

Mayhill Baptist Church - Norman Green, Pastor. Sunday School at 10 a.m., worship services at 11 a.m. Children and youth Bible drill and adult and youth Discipleship training, 5 p.m. Evening worship service, 6 p.m. Children and youth Bible study and adult Bible study and prayer meeting, Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. Men's breakfast and devotional, Thursday, 7 a.m.

Mayhill Church of Christ - Eddie Coleman, Pastor. Sunday Bible class, 9:30 a.m.; worship service, 10:30 a.m. Evening worship, 6 p.m., and Wednesday Bible Study, 7 p.m.

Piñon Baptist Church - J. B. Craft, Pastor. Bible Study, 10:30 a.m.; Worship service, 11:30 a.m.; 12:30 potluck.

Piñon Church of Christ - Bible Study, 10:30 a.m., Worship Service, 11:30 a.m.; potluck 12:30 p.m.; Wednesday Bible study, 7 p.m.

Sacramento Mountain United Methodist Church - Joy Garrett, Lay Minister. Sunday worship service at 10 a.m., Sunday School at 11 a.m.

Weed Baptist Church - Wade Maberry, Pastor. Sunday School 10 a.m., Worship Service at 11 a.m. Bible Study/Prayer, Wednesdays at 2 p.m. Potluck luncheon every third Sunday of the month.

Weed House of Prayer - Don Brown, Pastor. Services are held every Sunday in the home of Jimmy and Frances Goss. Prayer and singing at 10 a.m.; sermon at 11 a.m. Prayer service is held each Wednesday at 10 a.m. Wednesday Bible study class, 6:30 p.m., Fellowship Hall. Everyone is welcome to attend. Potluck luncheon the second Sunday of each month.

(If you have additional information you would like to include about your church, or if there

are changes to the existing info, please let me know. Ed.)

#### A Note of Interest

Aluminum cans netted the Weed Community Association \$388 for the year. Keep those cans coming!

#### For Sale

Yamaha console piano in very good playing condition, has been regularly tuned throughout its 30-year lifetime. \$1200 OBO, U move it. Call Russ and Elaine at 687-3073

#### Twelve Days of Christmas

There is one Christmas Carol that has always baffled me. What in the world do leaping lords, French hens, swimming swans, and especially the partridge that won't come out of the pear tree have to do with Christmas?

From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. Someone during that time wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics. It has two levels of meaning: The surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of their church.

Each element in the carol has a code word for religious reality, which the children could remember.

...The partridge in the pear tree was Jesus Christ.

...Two turtle doves were the Old and the New Testaments.

...Three French hens stood for faith, hope, and love.

...The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

...The five golden rings recalled the Law or Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament.

...The six geese-a-laying stood for the six days of creation.

...Seven swans a-swimming represented the seven fold gifts of the Holy Spirit: Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership and Mercy.

...The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.

...Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control.

...The ten lords a-leaping were the Ten Commandments.

...The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven disciples.

...The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in the Apostle's Creed.

So, there is your history for today. This knowledge was shared with me and I found it interesting and enlightening. Now I know how that strange song became a Christmas Carol.

#### Hunting in Unit 34

January 1 - 15, bow season for deer