

FIRST DRAFT

Little Book Cliffs were home on the range to Dave Knight

If you've hiked or ridden horseback on a difficult trail in the Bureau of Land Management's Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range northeast of Grand Junction, you can bet Dave Knight traveled the same tough trail.

Knight was a part Cherokee Indian from Oklahoma who rode and hiked these same lands, beginning more than 100 years ago. In 1914, Knight homesteaded on land just outside of what's now the Little Book Cliffs, and remnants of his cabin still stand on private land. But he spent much of his time on public range.

He herded ancestors of the wild horses that now live there. He also ran cattle on this range and briefly experimented, unsuccessfully, with grazing bison here.

Knight had a reputation as a tough-as-nails backcountry stockman. On one occasion, when his horse fell and broke Knight's leg, Knight reportedly crawled several miles to the railroad tracks in De Beque Canyon and flagged down a railroad worker with a hand cart to take him to the hospital in Grand Junction.

Knight reportedly made his bed under any suitable rock outcropping he found. On cliffs high in the Book Cliffs, he hand-chiseled steps in the sandstone ledges, so he and his horses could travel with greater ease up and down steep faces.

Knight's horses were predominantly grays, and they were valued by locals for their nimbleness in rugged country and their stamina.

Knight also had a reputation for enthusiastically protecting his range from overgrazing, reportedly using his rifle to run off other cowboys, cattlemen and sheepherders who attempted to bring their animals onto the range he claimed.

Occasionally, he had to deal with rustlers, like the six Palisade men who were arrested in 1937 for killing and butchering a 1,500-pound bison bull that belonged to Knight. All six were fined for the killing and also faced charges from state officials for fish and game violations.

Harvey Armstrong of Silt, who was raised in De Beque and knew Knight when Armstrong was just a child, said he was told the Palisade group disliked Knight. They were trying to drive him off the range by killing his buffalo.

Knight had other problems with his bison, like state game officials who claimed they belonged to Colorado.



BOB SILBERNAGEL



PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL/From Marie Tipping

A young Boots Corn holds two horses his family bought from Dave Knight, an early homesteader and backcountry stockman.

"It's always been understood that the animals belonged to Mr. Knight," said a January 1935 article in *The Steamboat Pilot*. But state officials argued that the bison were no longer Knight's because he "let his permit run out several years ago."

That must have been a state permit, since there was as yet no federal grazing permit system for these lands.

The same news article also reported that "a huge (bison) bull has wandered far from his home range and commandeered one of the main highways, refusing to allow autos to pass."

The fact the bison couldn't be herded like cattle proved troublesome for Knight. One story is that on the day he brought the recently purchased animals from Oklahoma by train, and they were unloaded near De Beque, they charged straight through the wooden corral prepared for them and down to the Colorado River.

Orlin Corn, who as a youngster also knew Knight, said if one of the bison escaped into the Grand Valley, "Dave was the only man who could take it back, the rest of them (cowboys) couldn't do it."

But the biggest problem with Knight's buffalo experiment involved anatomy. He used bison bulls to breed Hereford cows, but the calves were too large for the domestic cows to give birth easily.

According to his obituary in *The Daily Sentinel*, Knight was born in 1874 in Oklahoma and arrived in De Beque in 1911. Corn said he attended an Indian school in Oklahoma, but ran away as a teenager, arriving first in Denver, then going to work on ranches in Moffatt County before moving to the De Beque area.

When Knight arrived in De Beque, he brought with him 40 "broom tail" or wild horse mares, purchased from a man in Piceance Creek. He also had two high-quality Arabian



George and Tina Corn. George is on a gray horse he purchased from Dave Knight, who arrived in the De Beque area in 1911.

stallions, which he ran with the mares in Main Canyon and in the higher country at the west end of the Little Book Cliffs range.

"Knight's horses were much desired by law enforcement officers and by cow outfits up and down the western slope of the Rockies," wrote David L. Wheeler.

Knight also shipped some east to St. Louis for sale in eastern markets, and he sold to the U.S. Army during World War I.

But after the war, as automobiles gained wider acceptance and the Army no longer needed animals, the horse market fell apart. Knight shifted more to the cattle business.

"Knight began to let his horses run free, and some joined wild bands, especially in the early 1940s, when failing health prevented him from attending to them properly," Wheeler wrote.

Knight died in November

1945 at St. Mary's Hospital in Grand Junction, survived by his 93-year-old mother in Arkansas, a half-brother there and a half-brother named Charlie Chitterman, who lived in De Beque.

His ranch and grazing permits in the Little Book Cliffs were sold to others. Grazing permits for cattle were given up when the area was formally designated the Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range in 1974.

Information for this article came from "The Far Country: Wild Horses, Public Lands and the Little Book Cliffs of Colorado," *The Journal of the Western Slope, Winter/Spring, 1998; Oral History of Orlin Corn, Museum of Western Colorado; conversations with Harvey Armstrong and George Decker; and newspaper articles.*

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2016 THIS WEEK IN THE LEGISLATURE

The annual budget, known as the Long Bill because of its length, is to be introduced today into the Colorado House. There, legislators will spend much of the week poring over it, and trying to make changes, completing that work by week's end.

■ **Today:** The Senate State, Veterans & Military Affairs Committee will hear HB1275, a bill that would force companies that have tax havens in foreign nations to pay state income taxes.

■ **Tuesday:** The Senate Transportation Committee will debate HB1060, a measure that would require the Colorado Department of Transportation to erect a roadside memorial for a state trooper who dies in the line of duty.

■ **Wednesday:** The Senate Education Committee is to hear SB148, a

measure that would require high school students to pass a civics test in order to graduate. State law already requires them to take a civics course.

■ **Thursday:** The Senate Agriculture, Natural Resources & Energy Committee will hear HB1228, a bill that would create a flexible water right for farmers and ranchers.

■ **Next week:** Once the House is done with making its tweaks to the state budget, it's the Senate's turn to do the same thing.

Scheduled committee hearings are subject to change. All floor action and committees can be watched or heard on the Legislature's website at www.leg.state.co.us. Check that website to see which measures are available for remote testimony, and how to register to speak.

— Charles Ashby

Carbondale Republican challenges Rep. Tipton

By GARY HARMON
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U.S. Rep. Scott Tipton, R-Colo., so far has no Democrat foe for the November general election, but he does have opposition within the Republican Party.

Alex Beinstein, a 27-year-old Carbondale resident who grew up in the Roaring Fork Valley, said he has raised about \$4,800 in his bid to unseat Tipton, who is seeking a fourth term.

Beinstein, who attended the University of Chicago and law school at the University of Maine, is campaigning to honor the Constitution and put Saudi Arabia "at the forefront of the war on Islamic terror."

On his website, alexanderbeinstein.com, Beinstein said it "made no sense to fight the Revolutionary War to replace

one huge central authority in London with another in Washington DC."

He criticized the Every Student Succeeds Act, which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act, trade promotion authority for the president and the most recent budget compromise.

The Saudi government's role in funding the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, has gone unpunished, Beinstein said, calling for Saudi Arabia to be listed among the state sponsors of terrorism, increased sanctions on Saudi Arabia and asset freezes on any Saudi linked to terrorism.

Beinstein needs 30 percent of the delegates at the GOP Republican convention April 9 in Colorado Springs to get on the primary ballot.

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State orders sewage lagoon shut down

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DURANGO — Colorado regulators ordered a mobile home park northwest of Durango to shut down a sewage lagoon that is seeping into a nearby creek.

The state health department said the contaminated lagoon is

leaching iron and coliform into Lightner Creek, a slow-flowing tributary of the Animas River.

Health officials said coliform can produce strains of E. coli that cause diarrhea, nausea, fever and vomiting to people that come in contact with the water.

"They have been a longtime

problem for the division," said Mike Harris, a manager for the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's clean water enforcement unit. "And it's just gone on too long."

The state health department sent a cease-and-desist order to the park's owner, but Darlene

Mann denied ever receiving notification from the state. If Mann fails to comply, the people living in the 40 mobile homes could be forced to move.

Some residents of Lightner Creek Mobile Home Park said they were unaware of the regulatory dispute.

BLOTTER COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

Credit card fraud suspected

A reward of up to \$1,000 is being offered for information leading to the arrest of two people suspected of using a stolen credit card at a local liquor store, the Mesa County Sheriff's office reported.

Two people are suspected of using the card Feb. 19 at East Valley Liquors, 418 32 Road in Clifton.

One suspect is described as a black female with dark hair and glasses. She was last seen wearing a red T-shirt with Notorious B.I.G.'s Juicy album cover on it, the Sheriff's Office said.

The other suspect is described as a black man who was last seen wearing dark-colored pants and a gray and blue varsity jacket with a baseball cap on backwards.

The couple was last seen driving away from the liquor store in a dark color sedan

believed to be a newer model Chevy Impala, according to the Sheriff's Office.

A photo of the suspects can be viewed at 241stop.com.

Call 241-7867 or go to 241stop.com for information or to make a report.

Activity reports for the Grand Junction Police Department and the Mesa County Sheriff's Office were not available on Sunday.

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