

RIGHT HERE, WRITE NOW

Congratulations to the winners of our semi-annual essay and poetry contest. We are now accepting entries for our Summer issue contest, published in August 2000. There's a \$100 prize for fiction or essay and a \$50 prize for poetry. Subject matter must speak to summer and should reflect the Telluride region. Deadline is Feb. 15, 2000. For complete contest rules, please drop by the Telluride Publishing office in Lawson Hill, e-mail us at edi@telluridepub.com, or call the editorial department at 970-728-4245 ext. 2.

Each December, Telluriders, like all Americans, contemplate New Year's resolutions by reflecting on the previous year and deciding what changes need to be made. In Telluride, there will always be things people want to change, but there are constants, too. One of those, which in one way or another lured us all here, is Telluride's observance of time. Whether we want more of it to pursue our hobbies, interests, or a better quality of life, or whether we already appreciate its casual haphazard cadence, time's unique nature in Telluride is an inseparable part of our lives.

Time plays such a significant role here that we've coined our own phrase, "Telluride Time." I learned about this phrase on my first of several visits to Telluride when I, an uptight Bostonian on vacation, sat with my parents at the Telluride Jazz Festival, caustically whining about a delayed show as if I had somewhere important to be. A local woman turned around and essentially suggested I shut up and chill out. Shocked, I complied, but not before commenting on how rude and time-challenged the people of Telluride were.

Was I a little testy? Absolutely. But the flip side of that temperamental coin was that, when not on vacation, I awoke at 5:30 a.m. and commuted three hours each day, never missing a train that took me to a job I despised in a crowded, dehumanizing city. I had been programmed into one of those super-punctual people who always arrived five minutes early no matter what the weather or traffic conditions. I saw it as a basic human courtesy to be on time.

Two years later, amidst teasing reminders of my vow never to move south of the Mason-Dixon Line or west of Ohio, I broke all my own rules, packed up my car and left Boston for Telluride. It was a move that made not one whit of sense to friends, coworkers, my parents and even my grandparents, who still pictured Colorado as occupied by homesteaders and gun-toting robbers on horseback.

Looking back now, I can appreciate their astonishment. I lit out for a town that didn't even merit a dot on a national map, much less such everyday banalities as a stoplight, a Wal-Mart or a McDonald's. I had no job, little savings and few friends in Telluride, yet there was something about the pace of time here that had unexpectedly begun singing to my soul, even if it meant making a career change from academic editing to dishwashing. I was not alone. Many people have made this same pilgrimage to Telluride, searching for something more satisfying than devoting all their time to corporate America in

exchange for paychecks they're too tired to spend.

It didn't take long to become acquainted with the many facets of Telluride Time. Performances, typically start at least 15 minutes late. The post office doesn't always open exactly at 9 a.m. Meeting times are loosely adhered to. Twice-a-year during off seasons, time literally slows to a halt. At a party recently, I showed up an hour late and nobody noticed. "Fashionably late" takes on a whole new meaning.

Telluride Time permeates every aspect of our lives, and the freedom it brings is both enlightening and liberating. After a year in Telluride, my roommate commented on how much I'd loosened up since my arrival. My former punctual self might have been insulted; my new self took that as a very big complement.

Ironically, I recently discovered just how far my pendulum has swung since moving to Telluride. I overheard a loud, obnoxious tourist on main street complaining about the speed limit and asserting that we all must be drunk to drive that slow.

To the chagrin of my husband, one of the many people employed by our fine tourism industry, I walked past the woman and said something to the effect of, "If you can't slow down to Telluride's speed, go home." This outright impertinence was uttered from the mouth of the worst of the worst—a former maniacal Boston driver who had mastered cutting off other drivers and articulating profanity through gesticulation.

Nowadays though, I like driving slow on main street. I like waving at people I know and checking out the movie listings posted outside the Nugget Theater. I don't mind stopping for pedestrians, who often appear out of nowhere, and if I drove any faster, I'd probably kill somebody. These days, when an impatient tourist begins tailing me—or worse, tries to pass me on the right as if our wide, welcoming main street is a four-lane highway—I slow down even more. I smile and wave when they pass me with furious faces. What's their hurry, I wonder? I look at that old life—the life of those rush-rush-rush people—and sigh, knowing I once was like that, too.

But Telluride Time symbolizes more than a laid-back pace of life. It describes how the very nature of time seems to slow down. When I first contemplated moving here, the only person I knew here insisted that the days are longer in Telluride.

"You get off of work at 5 p.m.," he said, "and you still have four hours of sunlight left in the summer to go hiking, biking, fly-fishing,

TELLURIDE TIMES

By Allison Johnson

whatever." The concept of actually wanting to do something after a day in the office was entirely foreign to me, but the notion was enchanting, intriguing and in the end, irresistibly luring. Now I have time to read. Time to take walks. Time to spend my paychecks on sundry outdoor equipment that actually gets used.

Each weekend is a new adventure. Since moving here, I've climbed my first fourteener, taken my first backpacking trip and nearly killed myself on a mountain bike. I've seen bear, elk, bald eagles and some of the most breathtaking sunsets of my life. I've gone naked in public at Orvis Hot Springs and skied the Plunge with a pounding heart, babbling from top to bottom about how I was sure to die. I survived all these new experiences and many more. Telluride's sense of time opened up new doors and adventures for me, and much to my surprise, it shut very few that I would have preferred to keep open. I don't miss spending a Saturday at the mall or an evening at a crowded health club. I don't miss cultural opportunities like ballet or chamber music because they still exist here. And I especially don't miss those hours lost to TV since I gave it up in 1996 as my own New Year's resolution.

Telluride Time is a potent concept mirroring how we, as both Telluriders and Americans, choose to prioritize our lives. The end of a year, a century, a millennium

always seems to be given over to contemplations of the past, present and future. It is the one time of year when people become both reflective and proactive, taking time to re-evaluate and shift their priorities. Just as often as Americans make resolutions to lose weight, they also resolve to restructure their days: to spend more quality time with their families, to work less, enjoy more, pursue hobbies, be a little more selfish.

Just by living here, I have fulfilled those resolutions. Like many others in Telluride, I am content with the quality of my life, the tempo of my time. I still will make resolutions and work toward new goals, because no one is perfect and we all have aspirations. But as I look ahead to the twenty-first century, the nature of my resolutions will not involve significantly altering my lifestyle. My resolutions will focus on details, like flossing my teeth or watering my plants with something akin to consistency.

While the magic of Telluride Time is naturally perpetuated on multiple levels, its essence is a foreign concept to most Americans. If we could bottle and sell it, we'd all be millionaires, and when counting our blessings we should never forget to include Telluride Time in that list. It's a welcome and well-kept secret that many here cherish and many others spend their whole lives yearning for. Perhaps Thoreau described it best when he wrote that "time is but the stream I go a-fishing in." ❧

POPULUS TREMULOIDES (QUAKING ASPEN)

"Apocalypse is a healing vision."
—Kathleen Norris

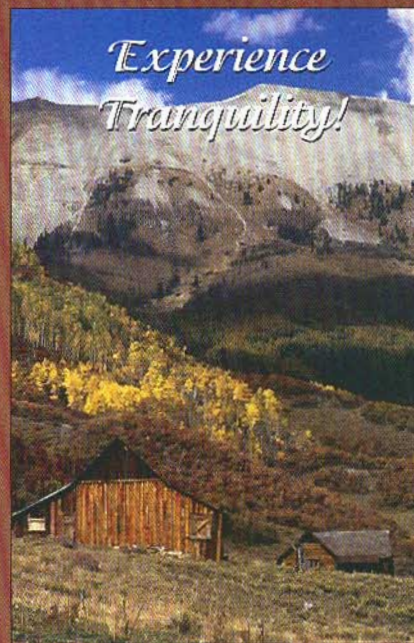
Aspen hold vision
in trembling leaves
that turn to light,
in deep green tinted
with the hint of sky,
in the pale beige
of a thousand upright trunks
whose dark nodules
resemble wide-eyed-children
running after us,
asking us to see.

How to express the vision
of innumerable untold miracles?
hope in millennial trees
scrolling over the mountainside,
filigreed tips and widths
perpetually pointing upward.
Prophets in a dark world
turn their faces
to the voice of aspen
sent to testify—

Feelers beneath
the rounded earth
resounding
against heart valves
like pipe-organs:
"the mountains and the hills
shall break forth
before you in singing,
and all the trees of the field
shall clap their hands."^{*}

^{*}ISAIAH 55:12

—ANITA TANNER



Heritage (Her-et-ij)

- 1: property that descends to an heir
- 2: something transmitted by or acquired from a predecessor:
 - a: legacy
 - b: tradition
 - 3: birth-right

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