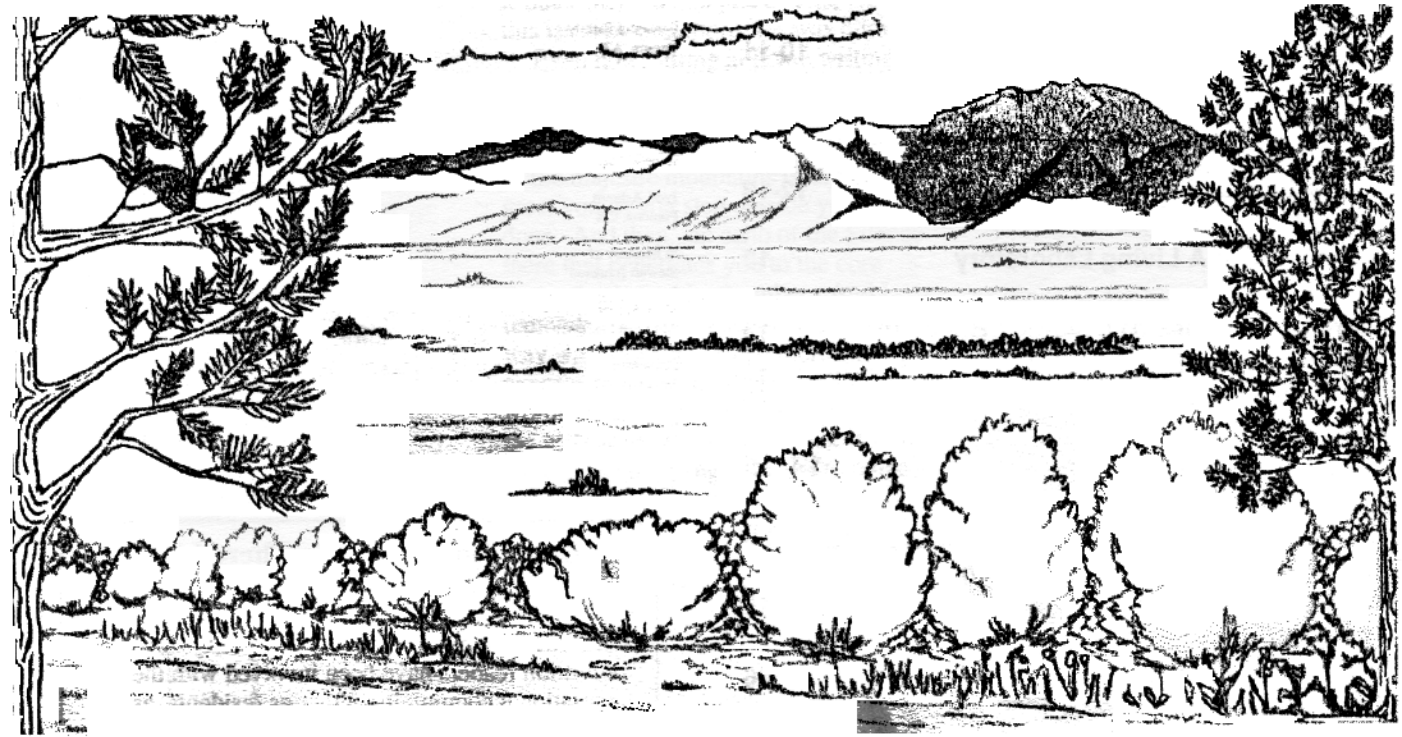


Collaboration

Summer, 1993

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Baca View: By Karen Davenport

Special Issue: Baca Grande

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In the Next Issue: Is There Life After Auroville?

Auroville is 25 years old this year. Many *Collaboration* readers have been involved with the international community, either as residents, as fund-raising friends or both. We would like to hear your stories and reflections about life in and out of Auroville. Please call us at 802-869-2789 or write to the address below if you would like to contribute, either through an article or an interview.

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Four Days in May

By Bill Moss

THIS SPECIAL EDITION OF *Collaboration* is a direct result of a rather remarkable four days back in early May.

The SAA Board, consisting of Wayne Bloomquist, Martha Orton and myself, were invited to come to Baca Grande by Seyril and the Board of the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center, to participate in a series of discussions with them and various friends on a possible collaboration in Baca.

The initial focus was the offer to the SAA of a plot of land adjacent to Seyril's Savitri House; a half acre containing the Savitri Solar Dome and an unfinished building called Solar Bridge. I must confess to some serious doubts beforehand as to the feasibility of completing the building and establishing a program worthy of the

time and resources involved, with only the resources of the SAA at hand.

At the end of the four days, Wayne, Martha and I knew that we alone could not do it. But something else had happened, something completely unexpected. Through some inner alchemy, we had each arrived at the unshakeable conviction that it was essential to do something--whatever we were capable of, considering our limited resources--to participate in and encourage the growth of a community of followers of Sri Aurobindo and Mother there in that place. And so, this issue of *Collaboration* was born.

Even now, sitting at home writing this, I wonder how we could have come to this conclusion, given the obstacles that are as much in evidence as the majestic mountains rising up to greet you as you step outside your door. And then...an echo of the Silence there that penetrates you to the core comes back, and I remember. And I remember why we knew that the only way was for people to go there and experience it for themselves. No words can tell you. You must travel the wide expanse of the Bloodless Valley, see the Sangre de Cristo range

rise up before you upon your approach, wade through the herds of deer that stroll through the town, meet the lovely and quirky residents of Crestone and Baca and hear them tell you (as one shopkeeper told me, spontaneously), 'We warn people who move here about that first year. Any baggage you're carrying, any stuff you've been trying to avoid, will be right in your face, until you deal with it. Some people just drop everything, pack up and go back where they came from.' (To which I responded, "That's just the kind of place we're looking for!")

And maybe then, and only then, you'll decide that this is the kind of place you were looking for.

Bill Moss is President of the Sri Aurobindo Association and lives in Watertown, Massachusetts.



Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range, Baca Grande, Colorado

Envisioning a National Center at Baca Grande

By Martha Orton

WAYNE BLOOMQUIST, Bill Moss, and I, all board members of the Sri Aurobindo Association, met at Baca Grande, Colorado, during May 7-10. Our purposes in meeting there were twofold: (1) to hold a face-to-face meeting of the board in a place dedicated to the yoga, the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center; (2) to meet with Seyril Schochen, founder and visionary of the SALC, and other members of its board, to discuss possibilities for collaborative efforts in Baca, particularly with regard to expanding and developing what has already been established there. Afterwards I wrote an account of these meetings which was published in the June issue of NexUS. Now I would like to write about the experience from a more personal perspective.

I had expected to be impressed by the beauty of the mountains there. I am very much a lover of mountains and I have seen and admired many in different parts of the world. Frankly, I was truly awed by their beauty and fascinated by the changes which come over them during the course of a day and from day to day. So I discovered, soon after arriving, that I was in love with the tremendous beauty of the place. The first morning there I took a stroll through downtown Crestone -- not many buildings, I thought, no traffic, cool fresh air, a crystalline stream rushing through the neighborhood, mule deer sitting contentedly on a lawn, the mountains rising abruptly at the end of the road -- terrific! I was thoroughly enthralled by Baca/Crestone as a physical place.

As Wayne, Bill, and I shared our appreciation of the beauty of the area, we agreed that there are definite advantages in its taking time to get to and not being immediately accessible. Thus it has so far been protected from any kind of dense development or intense tourism. There is a very small town with facilities and services, and the place retains a peaceful, quiet atmosphere.

As regards atmosphere, in the more significant meaning of the word, I am

unable to describe what we all felt in any way which could be considered adequate. I can say that there is an extraordinary, high, beautiful atmosphere. All three of us remarked on this as a very real part of our experience of the place. In fact, it could be described as our primary experience there. It is principally because of this that I feel we should develop a major, national center for the yoga in Baca Grande.

There are also other reasons, more on the level of mental ones, which can be put forward as supporting such a plan. The existence of the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center, with Savitri House as its focus, is a major consideration. Seyril, along with her associates, has established a firm base for the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. In our meetings together, we all felt that the time has come to expand further the work and opportunities that can take place in this excellent context. We intend to collaborate and pool our efforts to develop the center which is there, already well-established, both materially and spiritually.

The Sri Aurobindo Association would like to assist in raising funds for the completion of the Solar Bridge. This building, when complete, will offer living space for resident coordinators of the workshops and programs which can be held there, as well as offering meeting space. Completing this building is a truly high-priority project. With its completion the facilities for meetings, meditations, and workshops will be substantial. The Solar Bridge is located on a half-acre plot with the Solar Dome, in which meetings for approximately 50 people can be accommodated. The Solar Dome is adjacent to Savitri House.

The location has other advantages in that there is land available nearby for expansion and for purchase by people interested in coming to live there. It is pleasant to envision the gradual growth of a residential community of followers of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, centered around their primary purpose for coming together. In mentioning this, it is perhaps worthwhile to mention that the community infrastructure (roads, electricity, water, etc.) is in

place in Baca Grande, and that the land is level and good for building on. (Also, I might mention that this location is different than the site for the proposed Savitri Village, with which some readers may be familiar. That location poses considerable challenges for development as a residential center; the slope of the land and the uncertain availability of an adequate water supply are examples of this. Hence our view that our energies and resources are best put to use at Baca Grande, where the SALC has already established so much and where building and gathering together is more feasible.)

On our last day in Baca, the three of us experienced the culmination of our meetings with a quiet and grateful sense of purpose. To be frank, I should probably mention that we had all been somewhat serious. There is nothing particularly wrong with that, except that what came next seemed to happen as a corrective, to be sure we did not get too serious.

It was, interestingly, Mother's Day and a new restaurant was opening in Crestone, having chosen that as a propitious day. Seyril, Suzanne MacGregor, Ariel and David Browne, Bill, Wayne, and I met there for lunch. The place is called Perestroika and it's an amazing little fantasy of a building, fake onion domes and all. For its opening there were "gypsy" musicians, a remarkably diverse crowd of happy people, and a highly playful atmosphere which swept up everyone there into lightness and laughter. Someone remarked, "Krishna is playing with us."

In fact it seemed wonderfully coincidental that our hopes and plans for the future had been blessed with coming together into what felt like their true formation on Mother's Day. As the day, and our time in Baca, drew to a close, Wayne remarked: "This has been the Mother of All Days." Remembering that feeling and the sense of what we felt there gives me much hope for bringing into realization a major center for the yoga in Baca Grande.

Martha Orton is on the board of the Sri Aurobindo Association and lives in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Close Encounter Of The Cellular Kind

By Wayne Bloomquist

CERTAIN EVENTS OCCUR in one's life that are significant and pivotal. The first such happening occurred for me when I wrote to the Mother in 1972, along with her non-verbal response and activation of my inner consciousness. The second and most transforming event began on November 23, 1973 upon my arrival at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, India. This was my first experience with a real

Berkeley with its diversity, mental stimulation and beauty. I am amused when I see polls listing the ten best places to live. These polls list categories for schools, jobs, etc., but never for a mind-set, diversity and openness which are most important to me, not to mention a "power spot."

I have spent much of the last 20 years trying to bridge the gap in consciousness between Pondicherry and Berkeley. Each time I go there it

become just neutral; I want to be able to be as receptive as possible to the force or forces that are transforming my body and the earth today.

When I first went to Baca last November, I was surprised as to how much I felt at home there. I returned in May with a great deal of anticipation, not only to meet old friends, but to re-experience the place and validate my feelings for it. Would it be possible to love a physical place here in the U.S.

as I do India? Our Sri Aurobindo Association (SAA) Board of Trustees, Martha Orton, Bill Moss, and myself, was going to examine this place very carefully for possible collaboration with the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center (SALC) established by Seyril Schochen some seven years ago. We wanted to assist her valiant efforts to continue to develop her vision, but we also had to be certain the place was right for SAA. How were we going to do this? Would we take a vote at the end of our short 3-5 day stay? Or perhaps we would develop a checklist for the pros and cons. Our validation came (at least for me) when, on the last full day there,

everything fell into place. Decisions and meetings that had been taking days and weeks to complete before were done in a matter of minutes. As if a celebration had been planned for us, the grand opening of Perestroika in neighboring Crestone was our big social event. This small, sleepy-eyed town came alive in this Russian restaurant with multitudes of people, music, dancing, food, cappuccinos and celebration. It could not have been better orchestrated. That evening our Board members and Seyril met at her



Gathered at the base of Savitri Village

formidable "power spot." I was disoriented for three weeks, followed by an adventure in consciousness for the next four months that exceeded all of my expectations. I was to absorb and to integrate that experience for the next six years.

Often I thought about the force in Pondicherry, and each time I return there my experience is different. What is surprising to me is that I have never felt at home anywhere else except in India, and especially in Pondicherry. I have grown to like my home in

seems the integration is more complete, and I can move or make the transition a little easier.

It is with this background that I have become more attuned to the earth's energies. Where these energies come from I'm not especially concerned, although some energies are negative and some are positive. Some come from below, some from above. More and more I'm feeling their impact, and I have recently found some physical devices that seem to neutralize the negative forces. But I don't want to

home, Savitri House, for a final meditation. A massive, silent block of peace descended that immobilized and uplifted us.

The one word that I keep hearing from those who attended at Baca, including David and Ariel Browne, was "exhilaration." We all felt a validation to continue Seyril's and/or Mother's work at Baca. The decision became obvious and flowed far beyond the mental level. It was a rare encounter.

A vision occurred for me at Baca that I want to share with you.

I appeared to be in the land of the dead, saw many faces, almost like Venetian masks, that were in grays and muted greens and gave me the feeling of antiquity--that they had been asleep/dead for centuries--something very ancient about them, but also quite eerily beautiful. I reflected on this vision and received the impression that they represented

that which is to be transformed. They are gods and goddesses--the sleeping powers to be--that are waiting for the transformation and could be symbolic of life in the bodily cell that is to become immortal.

Baca could become our Center for Transformation in the western world.

Wayne Bloomquist handles the book distribution for the SAA and lives in Berkeley, California

A Visit to Baca Grande

By Gordon Korstange

(Editor's Note: The following article is adapted from one which appeared in the 1989-90 Fall/Winter Collaboration. It was written in June of 1989.)

THE ROAD INTO BACA Grande led from the tiny, empty-looking town of Moffat, Colorado straight toward the imposing center of Kit Carson mountain. I pushed the cruise control buttons of our rented car, took my foot off the accelerator and felt the peaks pull us into them like a magnet—past the Luis Maria Baca Grande Ranch house; past the Good Samaritan Hotel where a group of Christians treat substance abusers; past the mirage of a golf course; then past the turn-off into another tiny town, Crestone (pop. 75) and into the residential area of the Baca.

Getting There

The drive from Denver had been long, about four and a half hours, at first a series of mountain passes, climbing steadily from 5000 to 9000 feet, but as soon as we came down out of the last pass and shot out under the presence of huge white mountains onto the ribbon of road that bisects the San Luis Valley (at 8000 ft., the highest alpine valley in the world), they began to pull on us.

It may be the perceptual effect that great distances of flat land leading to 14,000 ft.-high mountains create—you see them from very far away, and it takes so long to reach them—almost like driving in slow motion at 70 mph.

Someone described the sensation as feeling like a mountain is actually coming toward you, then at a certain point retreating, coaxing you on and on.

As we drove south, the valley widened and the landmarks of the American West appeared: barbed-wire fences, grazing cattle, abandoned stores and houses. Conspicuous, large trees, with twisted trunks of rugged bark and gaunt limbs, reared up and proclaimed themselves survivors among the scrub-brush that dotted the dry pastures. Small towns, with names like Fairplay and Conifer, appeared beaten down by the wind and sun and consisted of little more than general stores and gas stations. After the glassed-in condos and hi-tech offices of Boulder, we seemed suddenly thrust into another time and space.

Baca was empty too. we parked at the restaurant and de-facto community center called the Bistro and got out into windy silence. The group of 12 townhouses surrounding the Bistro seemed deserted. It felt like an afternoon in Auroville—the constant pressure of the wind sweeping across flat land, the sun boring into you out of a cloudless sky—only here were mountains, not an ocean, milder temperatures and the gurgle of a nearby stream.

That first night we walked slowly, savoring the air, with Seyril Schochen up to Savitri House while the sun went down behind the San Juan Mountains across the valley. A deer bounded

across the paved road. We watched the play of amber light on Kit Carson and Crestone peaks, hoping the sunset would turn them the blood-red color which caused the Spanish conquistador, Coronado, to exclaim, "Sangre de Christo!" (blood of Christ), giving them their modern name, when he saw them for the first time.

From the deck of Savitri House, standing near the 400-year-old juniper tree that seems to guard it, we looked out on the scattered lights of the alpine valley and, farther to the south, Alamosa, 50 miles away, with 30,000 people, the town that serves as provision center for Baca as Pondicherry does for Auroville.

The Bloodless Valley

The spiritual source of Baca, however, loomed behind us: the mountains, sacred to native Americans for thousands of years. Their medicine men and elders went up into them to acquire power, and their young men came on vision quests. They called this area the "bloodless valley," in ironic juxtaposition to Coronado's epithet. Tribes met here in peace, with no weapons, to trade and talk beneath the dignity of the mountains.

The sun's light had faded, and the night sky was peppered with stars. We were in the dark presence of land, and that land had palpable power.

The next day, inexorably, we were pulled up into those peaks, lured by tales of a 12,000 foot mountain lake.

The trail ascended along Willow Creek, a stream bordered by trees through which we could catch the green gleam of isolated tents, shelters for Outward Bound students of the University of Colorado which has a center at the Baca. They were in the final day of their wilderness experience, a silent time alone.

After about two hours of steady uphill walking, we came to a meadow called Willow Park that formed a lip at the base of the peaks. Beyond and below, the San Luis valley lay flat and brown. The mountains were near enough now to show their wrinkled fissures. Although the thin air made us pause often, we pushed on up through a series of switchbacks, surprising a deer at one point.

At the waterfall that spilled out Willow Creek, we had to traverse an open rocky face where the strong, gusty winds seemed almost ready to fly us, like kites, off the mountain on a long drifting arc to the plains over 3000 feet below. We picked our way along a path through a rock slide, stopping to examine multi-hued stones whose dominant color was pink. Each uphill effort affected us more as we neared 11,000 feet. Even baby-step climbing produced a pumping pulse rate.

Willow Lake

As we walked exhausted through a small valley semi-circled by the peaks, we began to wonder if we could reach the lake. Then a tall, blonde-bearded young man, the first hiker we'd seen all day, came striding down the path toward us with the encouraging news that the lake was only ten minutes away. He was Brother Ross, a Carmelite monk who had come to the Baca in 1982 to help build a monastery. Later that week we were to visit and admire the beautiful workmanship of its chapel. Now we were grateful for the news of how near the lake was and how long (up to six months) it takes to get used to the altitude.

In the basin formed by a circle of mountain peaks, the icy, deep blue water of Willow Lake lapped stone and drank in light. An animal's skull on a rock near the water stared at us as we ate lunch. An orange tent stood on the far side of the lake, but no one stirred. The peaks were reachable along a

rocky ridge, but we had gone far enough. Here would be a place to wait, to fast, a place that seemed a funnel for pure sky, for the wind, for the invisible.

Hanne Strong

She came from Phoenix, Arizona to the Baca seeking a place where she could live in the Southwest. Her husband, Maurice Strong, Canadian businessman and environmentalist, had gotten involved with the ranch when his company took over the property from another company which had first developed the land beneath the mountains. They had intended it to be a vacation retreat and had installed electricity and water lines in anticipation of an influx of retirees who never came. As she stood in front of the ranch house and gazed up at the mountains, she knew this was a special place. She moved from Phoenix soon after.

Two months later, an 82-year-old "Anglo" named Glen knocked on her door. "So at last you have come," he said by way of abrupt introduction and plunged on, pouring forth a stunning visionary description of the Baca as a place that would draw seekers and leaders from many different religions, spiritual paths, and political philosophies. Later, weeping, he stood with her on a patch of barren ground, disconsolate that the restaurant later to be called the Bistro had not been built yet. During the course of three visits before he passed away, Glen prophesied and placed many of the Baca's present structures.

Red Ute

Hanne Strong was to learn much more, especially from native Americans like Red Ute, about the power of the Baca to attract people and heal them. For thousands of year, he told her, different tribes had gathered there peacefully under the protection of "the white mountain," fastened to earth with a thunder bolt and home of the thunder beings. Hanne speaks of Red Ute with reverence and awe, and of the sun dance, a four day ritual of movement and fasting that is the high point of a Southwest native American's spiritual life. To perform one confers grace and power. Red Ute has completed thirty-

six.

He told her much about the people who had lived there for thousands of years before Anglos came. He told her, too, that the Baca was now going to attract tribes and chiefs from all over the planet to assemble and create peace.

And slowly, without being called, they began to come. Individuals like Christian Barnhardt, a member of the Swedish Royal Academy, designator of Nobel Prize winners, came dying of a heart condition, to say goodbye to Hanne and Maurice. One week later he pronounced himself cured by the Baca and is still alive today.

Then, according to Hanne, there was Bill Moyers, the most thoughtful television commentator and producer in the United States (and a former Baptist minister) who told Maurice, as they sat below the thunderbolt mountain, that he could feel the power emanating from the earth. Minutes later, she says, a nearby bush burst into flame.

Refuge for World Truths

Some of the chiefs brought tribes. William Irwin Thompson, founder of Lindisfarne, had a large stone house built and sponsored a school for sacred architecture. He later handed over the property to American Zen roshi, Richard Baker. Today it looks out from a niche in the foothills as the Crestone Mountain Zen Center. Other groups who have settled in the Baca as part of its Refuge for World Truths include the Haidakhandi Universal Ashram and Temple, the Spiritual Life Institute (The Carmelite Monastery that Brother Ross helped build), the San Luis Valley Tibetan Project, and the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center.

Aside from the Carmelites, many of these organizations consist of only one or two people living in a house that is dedicated to a spiritual tradition. Most of Baca's seventy-five people have bought or built their own houses and live privately, making a living as best they can in an area that doesn't offer much in the way of employment.

Savitri Village

Seyril Schochen met Hanne Strong at

the Matrimandir in Auroville when Hanne visited it as part of a United Nations' habitat delegation. They stayed in touch and met again at the International Women's Conference in New York City where Seyril gave a presentation on Auroville. She moved to Boulder and stayed in a house that was owned by a Rajneeshi who returned when the guru's Oregon empire collapsed. He didn't want Sri Aurobindo in his house. Seyril called up Hanne and said, "I'm moving to the **Baca**."

Once there she set up shop in a house named "Savitri." It's a typical, photos, posters, symbols and books about Auroville and the Yoga. From her room Seyril churns out ideas, letters, articles, plays, and activities of the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center, the organization she founded in **Baca**. She has tables full of her ongoing and yet-to-be-born projects that keep her constantly in motion.

The day before our departure, we go with Seyril and an architect, Michael Baron, to visit the site of her latest and grandest project, Savitri Village, a solar community dedicated to conscious education and integral living, that has land (61 acres donated by Maurice Strong) and a plan (drawn up by Phillip Tabb of Boulder) based on Seyril's vision.

We drive away from the center of **Baca** and park along the road that leads south towards the Zen Center, and, beyond that, the abandoned gold mine that swelled Crestone's population to 4000 people fifty years ago. We walk up the steep, winding road, made by miners for hauling wood. Our guide, Michael, points out the little pink ribbons tied to trees that mark boundaries, possible roads and buildings.

When we reach the mesa the ascent is more gradual. The land runs right into the mountains here, too close to get any grand vista, only glimpses of peaks through the stubble of pinion pines that also hides our view of much of the valley.

Michael finds a "mano," a native American stone, smooth and flat, that was used with a "matate," the base, for grinding corn. "They're all around," he says. "If you think it's a good spot to camp they probably did too."

We're soon kids again, thinking we've discovered manos every few

feet, taking them to Michael for verification; tilted with wonder at this presence of the past on land which had seemed as barren and rough as an eroded field in Auroville. Suddenly the place becomes alive. We find red and yellow wild flowers, an open space with a view that would make a good building site.

"You have to listen to the road," Michael says, "find out where it wants to go. Even though the plan is there, the land will tell you how to shape it if you listen. You can start by just taking care of it, clearing good building rock from the road, harvesting dead trees for firewood, camping out ..."

Storm clouds, big thunderheads, are rolling in from the west now, making passes at the **Baca** as if they would rain, then peeling off south. Just like June in Auroville. We find, near the center of the site, an unusual clump of trees, spruce and a venerable juniper with thick-muscled bark. Seyril says, "Let's meditate," and we all touch a branch or trunk.

As I feel the craggy strength that has bound this tree to the mesa for unnumbered years I sense the determination it will take to build Savitri Village here, where everything is just beginning, sustained by one woman's vision and will, a woman who revels in the seemingly impossible.

There is also the **Baca**. Like Auroville in the early years, before trees, the Matrimandir and enduring communities made the idea of human unity almost respectable, people will have to come to this part of southern Colorado, hike the land and be drawn to the sacred presence of the mountains in order to fasten themselves to this windblown, rocky shelf, invoke the spirits of those who left the smooth stones, and begin to call it home.

Gordon Korstange is the editor of Collaboration and lives in Saxtons River, Vermont

The Uncovering Of Flaming Inner Altars

By C. V. Devan Nair

WHYDO THEY WANT TO worship? the Mother once asked. Why not BE?

And that is the largely forgotten purpose of temples, churches, mosques, gurudwaras, and spiritual retreats. To discover Agni, the eternal flame within each being, within the least grain of dust in all the galaxies and beyond--and to BE, everywhere. He is the child of the waters, the child of the forests, the child of things stable and the child of things that move. Even in the stone he is there, sang a Rishi of the *Rig-Veda* some seven to ten thousand years ago.

There are several retreats to which pilgrim seekers adjourn in order to withdraw altogether from life and world, for these appear to constitute an irredeemable vale of pain and tears. But integral seekers must deny themselves this easy option. For we have heard Savitri's tremendous prayer to the Supreme:

Then all the woman yearningly replied:

"Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain,

Thy joy, O Lord, in which all creatures breathe,

Thy magic flowing waters of deep love,

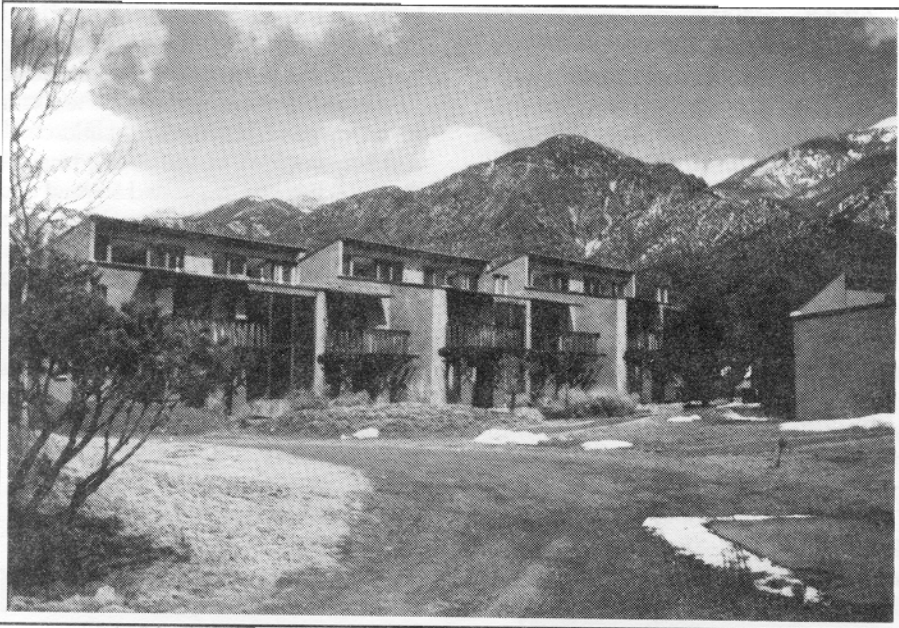
Thy sweetness give to me for earth and men.

Again:

I climb not to thy everlasting Day,
Even as I have shunned thy eternal Night...

..Earth is the chosen place of mightiest souls;

Earth is the heroic spirit's battlefield,
The forge where the Arch-mason shapes his works.



Town Houses, Baca

Thy servitudes on earth are greater,
king,
Than all the glorious liberties of
heaven.

For us, therefore, retreats have a special significance. One such is the golden glory of Matrimandir, emerging from a red, sun-baked plateau along the Coromandel coast of South India, at the center of the world's first attempt at a collective Yoga--the international township of Auroville. Many know it far better than I do, among them some (like Seyril), whom I had watched from a distance, in the early years of Auroville, working on the scaffolding of that miraculous temple being shaped into BEING by both the conscious and unconscious instruments of the Mother.

SHE is not elsewhere, as many imagine. For the Mother who, in Her physical embodiment, had lavished Her divine largesse upon so many of us, was and remains the universal Mother moving within the tumultuous heart of a world in travail of a new birth--but most sweetly, most powerfully, in the heartbeats of Her devotees. The Matrimandir now nearing completion will be the apocalypse, the great uncovering of flaming inner altars throughout the world.

Recalling Her words and blessings of incredible Power, I was privileged to feel an intense burning within, even as I watched from a distance that scaffolding going up. For Matrimandir

was pre-existent in the inner dimensions of the Divine Mediatrix, and several of Her children were blessed with irrefutable intimations of its inevitable translation into material reality.

The inner chamber of Matrimandir has already begun to provide a unique retreat--not to fall asleep in the Infinite, to use the words of Sri Aurobindo--but to awaken us to the Shakti within ourselves--so that we may utilize whatever we may receive of Her powers, capacities and inspiration for Her transforming action on earth and life and human kind.

Not every integral seeker can find his or her way to the Matrimandir in India. Nor is that mandatory. But we can endeavor to find the temple within, and this one can do with or without the help of a formal physical retreat. Nonetheless, there are some locations on earth which exude a special atmosphere of blessedness, and lend themselves naturally to shrines, temples, monasteries and retreats. Baca is one such location.

What can one say about the possibility of a retreat in Baca for aspirants of the integral Yoga? A marvelous idea, surely! For the Baca region of Colorado, a high plateau of shrub and juniper where the deer and the antelope roam, encircled by looming or receding horizons of craggy mountains, was already a perfectly obvious retreat for an ancient American Indian spiritual

tradition. They called it the bloodless valley, for it was the place where the warring tribes came to smoke their pipes of peace in amity and concord. And they built there several stone circles in which they could sit down for contemplation of the Great Spirit. If one may paraphrase a wonderful line in *Savitri*: "On a height they stood that looked towards greater heights."

Not surprisingly, one night on a short visit to Baca as Seyril's guest, and coming as I did from the Hindu tradition, it was as if I thrilled in that vibrant atmosphere to the tremendous drum beats of Shiva pounding the worlds in His great cosmic Dance. Seyril may still have with her a handwritten note relating to this episode, which I had left for her before my departure. Others have been unexpectedly visited by extraordinary meditations. Yet, afterwards, these did seem to be the natural outcroppings of the Baca magic.

Drawn like needles to a magnet by the pervasive atmosphere of a vast, resonant serenity, Baca is today the preferred site of a Hindu temple, a Zen retreat, a Carmelite monastery and a Tibetan center. It also proved to be a natural choice for the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center. One needs little else to seriously consider locating there an Aurobindonian retreat, to serve as a spiritual diving board on the heights of one's own being, from which one may re-plunge into the often muddy water of daily life, there to win the ultimate Victory. In this regard, we might recall a great utterance of the Mother: It is in life that the true victory is to be won. You must know how to be alone with the Eternal and the Infinite in the midst of all circumstances. You must know how to be free, with the Supreme for companion, in the midst of all occupations. That is the true Victory.

And in his incomparable manner, Sri Aurobindo gives us the clue to the true Victory: A detachment, the calm of an equal regard, a superiority to the reactions which trouble and are the weakness of the soul involved in outward nature.... Such would be the objective of an Aurobindonian retreat in the felicitous air of Baca Grande, Colorado.

C. V. Devan Nair, Former President of the Republic of Singapore, lives in Bloomington Indiana

On Baca

By Ariel Browne

WE HAVE JUST Returned from Baca Grande and the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center. We are spinning back out of a purposeful maelstrom, a gathering to consider the proposal (focalized by Seyril Schochen) that the national, even international, community of devotees to The Mother and Sri Aurobindo build a place of living concentration, retreat, education and collective research in the integral yoga, the yoga of the cells, here in the Baca in Colorado.

For our gathering, the four directions with miraculous perfection yielded Bill Moss and Martha Orton (East), Wayne Bloomquist (West), Ariel and David Browne (South) and Rod and Kirti Hemsell with their gorgeous children (North). Already in the Center are Seyril and Suzanne and Kenny and Maggie, who are bright gems, holding the fire of the vision already.

I am, as always after a visit to the Baca, stunned with the pure beauty, energy and creative tension of the place. Turning to *Savitri* for guidance, this passage rushes into my lungs--a sudden bracing air, a reminiscence, or a premonition:

There were summit glories inconceivable,

Autonomies of wisdom's still self-rule

And high dependencies of her virgin sun,

Illumined theocracies of the seeing soul

Throned in the power of the transcendent's ray.

A vision of grandeurs, a dream of magnitudes

In sun-bright kingdoms moved with regal gait....

All objects there were great and beautiful,

All beings wore a royal stamp of power.

There sat the obligarchies of natural Law,

Proud violent heads served one calm monarch brow:

All the soul's postures donned divinity.

There met the ardent mutual intimacies

Of mastery's joy and the joy of servitude

Imposed by Love on Love's heart that obeys

And Love's body held beneath a rapturous yoke....

(Book I, Canto III)

There is the relentless urge to wax rhapsodic about Baca. Better to defer to *Savitri's* rhapsodies and feel the heart's overwhelming response to this place, and the cells' leaping joy.

This is a place where the labour of Earth in her passionate prevailing wrestle with the Supramental is overt. These partners in creative evolution's stretch and play are out in dance here. And the grave mountains, those lofty deities, bear down upon humanity's well-entrenched methods of defense against this visceral induction. Religion supports this defense, but Baca is not a religious place. Rather it is a place of spiritual body, and it takes you up into its fiercely patient heart if you make the slightest sign of interest.

In 1988, I made a small sign of interest, and Baca touched me with visions: The Great Divine Mother with long wafting skirts hovering above the dry, crystal plain that undergirds Baca's rise; Mother, with long wafting skirts like wings, below the body, sweeping me and everything up into the foothills of the "14-ers," the 14,000 foot high line of mountains that background Baca called the Sangre de Cristo range (the blood of Christ).

Here were other visions, but my cells will not forget the pungent, enthralling smell of cottonwood, juniper, pinon, and Earth-body; I was overcome, stung inside my nasal passages by the sharp, evocative musk of earth.

I wandered in the arid plain below Baca, forced to push through sharp, defined little deity auras. Each stone, bone, antler, plant and bird, and the brook: that sweet, rushing, slender body of silver-blue! A long-time resident described this distinct, conscious presence like this, "Every stone in the Baca is a bodhisattva." I understood. Here the land is conscious and expressive, as is its nature. Where

I live, and where most of us live, and just down the road from Baca, the Earth has been beaten into submission. Just as spouses inexplicably do to the loved one, and parents do to children, and humans do to animals. We beat that which is too bright and sensual and alive and compelling--compelling us to intimacy, and change. Intimacy is like that. Intimacy changes us, irrevocably. I say to you, "I do." It means, I change with you. I acknowledge that your presence in my life, and mine in yours--changes me forever. I will never be the same again. Your energy touches mine, and presses me. And I do to you. Even as I sit beside you, my aura and yours have already mixed it up. If we embrace, Ah, the change. If I lie beside you and dream your body into mine, and mine into yours, what new beings are we when we awake?

Baca is an incredibly intimate place of Earth. It insists its transformative spirit upon you. Walking its earth is walking in Earth-body: a sharp-sweet-tingling-prana breath-stretching-demanding-bone deep cell compelling intimacy.

During this last visit, in early May, 1993, we gathered in council in response to the call from Seyril to come and be in a gathered research of presence and collective meditation. Seyril has been the instrument of this vision for some time now, and she felt to join with the community to ask about a stirring we have all felt, a stirring of new creation toward a center for the national body of devotees to retreat, to practice, to research and contemplate. We all heard many voices calling us to gather, and deep energies compelled us. We coalesced in a swirling mass of love and gratitude, carrying the gossamer reminders of those other busy lives from which we had been freed, miraculously, to be here. We brought bright commitment and opened warm hands of trust to the One.

Our meeting place was Turtle Island, a wonderful bed and breakfast in Crestone, right next to Baca. There were about sixteen of us in that first council, and many other smaller and larger meetings brought that council into focus. We needed little incandescent light. Our hearts and souls and feet made the three rings of light which illumined intuition and unified know-

ing. From a timeless place in the cells we know exactly how to do this council, how to leave the ego and the mind aside, and move into the breath-filled calm of the unified center. Mother and Sri Aurobindo allowed us to be with Their bodies and call it darshan. And we still may gather and call it council, or darshan, or meditation, or even meeting. Such was this meeting.

What it yielded, this meeting of surrender to That, is a YES! Yes; a bright body is coming to birth in Baca.

We cannot say yet what it is. But the Great Mother holds it in her womb as it grows more luminous, and we may be below her, held in the inexpressibly soft, and purposeful, wafting of wings.

This is a new idea that comes of the collective. We who gathered felt ourselves to be representatives, geographically separate perhaps, but joined in this new being which reflects the love, the collective Love. This is our willingness to surrender to intimacy with Them. We have long ago said, and have been constantly saying,

I do. Intimacy yields.

For all of you dear ones, joined in heart with me, see what yields in you. If you are stirred and inspired, go to visit Baca. Go with The Mother and Sri Aurobindo and ask as you do--what about this Baca? Ask for all of us. And let us all know. I believe that new places on Earth are birthing in the Supramental, and Baca is one. What do you feel?

Ariel Browne is the director of Aurientation Integral Healing Center in Atlanta, Georgia

The Baca

By June Maher

MY FIRST EXPERIENCE of the Baca came in 1982. Seyril and I, at the invitation of Hanne Strong, drove down together for several days visit, staying at Hanne's townhouse in the pueblo area.

There is a vibrant and varied community in the Crestone/Baca township, but it is the land that spoke to me. My experience of the land, the place, was totally unexpected. It came in a floodtide of passionate connection that filled my being.

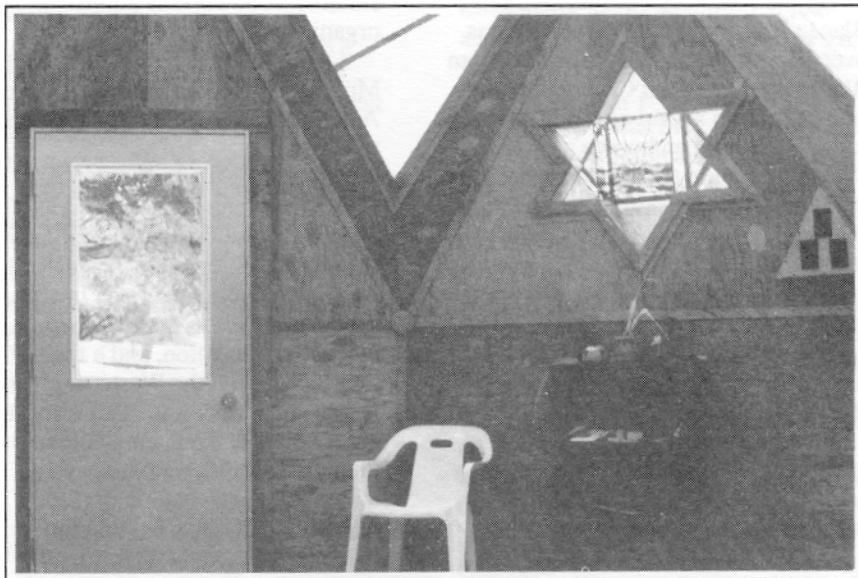
Although I have been an infrequent visitor since 1982, that first impression has never left me.

The Baca represents, or rather, is one of those special places given on Earth which are potent with possibility for human evolution. I feel the same for Auroville, which is my life's focus and service, but in a different way.

In the case of Baca, my experience has led me to feel that it is a site especially receptive and nurturing to the Child and the Body.

In this place I do believe, with mind quieted, the forces at play can open to those who are receptive a means to lighten, to infuse with health and well-being, the whole body.

In this place, in ways and means that are not yet fully known nor seen by us, there can come an acceleration to the body's cellular consciousness..."a body made beautiful by the Spirit's Light."



Inside Savitri Solar Dome

At the risk of seeming effusive, I share with readers excerpts from my journal of that time:

This also is like coming home--beauty, harmony, plenitude.

The Valley (San Luis) is aligned north and south. The sun traverses east to west--a cross, sacred to Indians when they found the earth presenting this configuration.

To honor the land and to make the greatest use of forces, energy ascending and descending, one should take into account this alignment when building.

What is the big gap is something for children, integrated with now strongly adult, thinking orientation.

Thinking, the mental might be difficult as it runs counter to the gravitational field of earth soul in

this spot. Rather, there should be emphasis an opportunity in the environment, to absorb and assimilate and thus transmute the body consciousness.

Here the body could be trained by adepts...to become more flexible, strong, calm in order to contain these forces and pulsations.

If all is done harmoniously, without too much interference from the mind,--a place where the new race might begin to flame up, a new birth cradled protectively by this spot. Come and see for yourself!

June Maher co-founded Auroville International USA and lives in Aptos, California



Baca: A Special Place

By John Menchen

WHEN ROBERT FROST read his poem, "We were the land's before the land was ours" at the inauguration of John F. Kennedy, he captured something of the essence of the human relation to land, in particular an evolving American awareness of responsibility. In a special sense, however, this idea could apply to the Baca/Crestone "field of opportunity."

On the south edge of this area is Blanca Peak; several other mountains over 14,000 feet range northward from Blanca, including the Crestone Peaks, and these form a kind of rampart to the east. This has been known as the Sacred Mountain and Eastern Gate by the Hopi and other native peoples from time immemorial, and many shrines still exist. This area was considered a place of healing, of vision and a place to seek enlightenment.

Unfortunately, until quite recently, our society has only seen this region in terms of commercial benefit. But from 1979 (with some retreats and some advances), Maurice and Hanne Strong have sustained a vision of their stewardship that embodies the sense of a return of the land to its earlier significance.

It seems that this region in former days had been what the ancient middle eastern peoples had called "haram"--dedicated...a place where no warfare was permitted, but where meetings of clans could occur safely and resolutions of conflict be achieved. Quite clearly in our time, religious differences and the intransigence of sects fuel constant conflicts. So the return of this land to its primal claim upon us as a place to foster understanding and the making of peace between clashing religions was always part of the sustaining vision. And also in our time the repair of torn fabric of relations between people and environment is the most insistent demand that the passion for healing has raised. And this, too, has been part of the sustaining vision of the Crestone/Baca undertaking.

These are some of the projects that are already well-established here or are in practical planning stages:

- The Nada Hermitage and Spiritual Life Institute is a community of Apostolic hermits affiliated with the Carmelites of the Roman Catholic Church. On their land, they have already built a chapel, a guest house, kitchen, refectory, library, organic garden, and eighteen hermitages.

- The Crestone Mountain Zen Center includes a primary residential building, meditation halls, pottery studios, woodworking shop and organic gardens.

- Adjacent to the Zen Center is the Mountain Center of the Lindisfarne Association, a contemplative community of scholars.

- The San Luis Valley Tibetan Project is underway now, and the first building phase, a Stupa, is partially completed. Succeeding stages will be building and organizing an Institute of Tibetan Medicine, a retreat base, a monastic foundation, and a facility for interfacing with the Western scientific and medical tradition. This effort is affiliated with the Karma-Kagyü School. In a different location, an undertaking affiliated with the NYihgma School is starting up.

- The Haidakhandi Universal Ashram has completed the first phase of their mission, the building of a shrine to the Divine Mother. Further steps in transmitting the teachings of Baba Ji have been initiated.

- The Sri Aurobindo Learning Center is a non-profit educational foundation on North Baca Grant Way. Its physical structures are comprised of Savitri House, Savitri Solar Dome, which is built on Buckminster Fuller's geodesic principles, and Solar Bridge, currently under construction, will be a solarized residence, office and classroom/conference space. A pottery studio, greenhouse and two organic gardens complete the facilities for the future New Education campus. A sixty-one acre site on Baca Bluffs is to be developed as an ecological community called Savitri Solar Village; it will have a Vedic library, solar residences, community center, a school for Sacred Theatre studies, an amphitheatre, conference facilities, and community

greenhouse and gardens.

- Bringing depth to the cultural dimension is the Academy of Living Tradition, a group of artists and craftsmen who recently secured land on which to build cottages and studios. Their aim is to explore and express those aspects of art, music and architecture which incorporate traditional values in present-day form.

In a more secular dimension, the Colorado College Southwest Studies program is at the former Aspen Institute Conference Center. The facility consists of residential apartments and dormitory units and a meeting and seminar building.

New forms of education process which involve bringing people into a radical and fresh relation to self and fellows through wilderness encounters have proven very beneficial over the past decade in America. Combining these methods with a dedication to develop the attitudes and learning needed to achieve sustainable communities is part of the evolution being worked out at Baca/Crestone. Presently, there are three ongoing enterprises of this nature, Rediscovery Four Corners, Educo, and Sacred Passages.

These existing resources will be brought into play as support for a major new establishment--the training camp for the Earth Restoration Corps. Working such factors into a curriculum which stresses natural laws and the potential for human transformation into an ethical being is very exciting. The Earth Restoration Corps is a concept which has been gaining much support as more people realize the need for massive remedial action to offset the damage human action has inflicted on the natural environment. Land has been set aside for this project. In close relationship to this is the start-up phase of a model sustainable village using basic simple systems for heat and water needs and advanced photovoltaics for electricity.

Sustainable dwelling and agricultural models have always been part of the planning here, and it is encouraging to see progress along these lines. There are projects already functioning with experimental gardens and one focused on crops such as quinoa for developing an agricultural system for optimal results in high altitude conditions.

Worthy of mention is that in keeping with the original vision of fostering interreligious understanding, it is anticipated that members of other world religions such as the Muslim, Jewish and Zoroastrian faiths will establish their own foundations here.

John Menken is Senior Advisor, the Manitou Foundation, Crestone, Colorado.

Crestone/ Baca: A Living Laboratory

By Kenny Dessain

CRESTONE/BACA, Colorado has, for a number of years, been a living laboratory for alternative energy and sustainable building technologies. A survey of recent housing starts includes four straw bale structures, three Earth Ships (recycled tire walls) and half a dozen insulative pumice stone buildings which use a technique that the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center (SALC) helped pioneer.

Since 1990, SALC has hosted an annual Global Village Network Conference and helped sponsor the Crestone/Baca Alternative Energy Fair. Also in 1990, a new solarium was added to the Center, and construction began on Solar Bridge, a solar-passive, energy-efficient shelter/meeting place built largely of glass and insulative lava rock. In 1991, the Savitri Solar Dome was completed, and it has served as womb and stage for a growing number of cultural celebrations, from pre-school earth songs to the poetic offerings of a self-proclaimed "freelance Hindu pundit", C. V. Devan Nair.

This community enrichment initiative, especially the hard construction component of it, has been sup-

ported entirely by the efforts and resources of Seyril Schochen, the inspirational Director of the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center. Outside the Solar Dome sits a rack of recycled NASA solar hot water panels, ready to be plumbed to the already-installed radiant-floor heating system. Nearby, the Solar Bridge, roofed and stuccoed, awaits completion. Savitri Solar School, another SALC project, enjoyed a successful course in 1992, building a prototype solar-electric motorcycle, and utilizing the Solar Dome for a moving performance of Savitri; it will be unable to convene again this summer, largely due to the lack of a facility.

As Crestone/Baca burgeons as a retreat center, the in-resident spirit seekers and worker bees are confident that energy and support will come to nurture and accommodate this "refuge for traditional world truth" under the Sangre de Cristo peaks.

Kenny Dessain is Co-Director, Turtle Island Peace Camp Crestone, Colorado.

Children's Activities At Crestone/ Baca

By Maggie Dessain

THE CRESTONE/BACA community is a delightful place for children to grow up. Its small but burgeoning cosmopolitan population allows children the open opportunity to play and learn with friends of very divergent backgrounds. Most importantly, it has the wild, natural feel of the end of the road.

For smaller children, daycare is

arranged on an individual basis, though for the past several years, there have been organized preschools. This past year a young children's workshop met often in the Savitri Solar Dome for music, dance, and storytelling.

School-age children have, for the last three years, had the option of attending a small alternative school or riding the public school bus to Moffat, twelve miles distant, where a rural, family environment prevails in a K-12 facility with about one hundred students. Several families in the community are homeschooling.

Summertime in the Sangres is a paradise of hiking and upward-bound camping in the mountains that rise sharply to 14,000 feet just east of the residential strip along their flanks. Special summer programs for kids from inside and outside the community are legion: Baca Stables and Riding Camp, Rediscovery Camp for local and Native American teenagers, Sierra Buena Children's Tipi Day Camp, Gypsy Moth Theatre at Turtle Island, and, last year, the Savitri Solar Summer School, which brought students from Auroville, Europe and Canada to share in alternative energy projects with local youth. This year, the Earth Restoration Corps--an environmental peace corps youth training pilot program--is being planned for August and September to set up camp next to the Savitri Solar Village proposed site.

With the growing home construction in the area, as well as its development as a retreat center, there is also ample employment opportunities for high school youth and chances to become involved in everything from the World Garden to the recent performance of Baratnatyam dance by Tejas Hemsell in the Savitri Solar Dome.

Maggie Dessain is Co-Director, Turtle Island Peace Camp, Crestone, Colorado.

The Gift Of Silence

By Steven Satyavan Krolik

THE SRI AUROBINDO Learning Center, in Baca Grande, creates a promising spiritual atmosphere found in this silent land of Crestone/Baca, Colorado. High above in the East of this divine nest loom the Sangre de Cristo Range mountains that powerfully descend towards the southern region of Colorado, and this gives the impression of a great panoramic spine of powerful inspiration to the people below these majestic peaks. The viewer quickly realizes that one is witnessing a mountain range that offers strength of life to those who drink from its waters of divine nourishment.

The location of the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center is definitely unique with its strength being a healthy soundscape for the internal transformations that Integral Yogic practices manifest. By creating an ideal setting that supports the various stages of internal transformation, the gift of silence truly prepares the way for spiritual victory.

One of the purposes of the Learning Center is to clearly establish a practical foundation for a yogic sadhana. Now is the earthly time to call on the Divine Shakti to confirm and support a much-needed abode of Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's Integral Yoga. A calm inner vision of radiance reveals the human and divine dedication in making the Learning Center a terrestrial manifestation at the foothills of the great and powerful Rocky Mountains.

Here one creates their own spiritual air by breathing in and out the Divine Power that makes up the warp of eternal peace and the weft of silence. Standing on a secure foundation makes the sadhana open itself like a lotus to the Sun. With an opening of the inner quietude, one is divinely lead to calmness and wideness as the yogic path reveals its evolutionary transformations.

When visiting Baca, one carries a

vessel that is filled with mixed mental contents that require voluntary emptying, before alchemically preparing to re-create the inner quietude. Now the stage is set for divinely receiving the gifts of peace, silence and joy. In this mindful texture, the loom of wholeness meets with the Presence. Careful preparation with a receptive silence welcomes the Divine Power to make the mind, life and body an instrument for psycho-physical transformation. This new-found spirituality leads to eventual self-empire (samrajya).

Gone is the restless mind that is replaced with a sacred space for the descending Supramental change that Sri Aurobindo and The Mother offer. At Baca Grande, one walks with inspiring confidence knowing a Spiritual Soundscape makes an ideal atmospheric setting for self-transformational practices. Sitting at the Feet of the Universal Guru delights the spirit by drinking from the well of life that overflows in this area of inspired devotees of The Divine.

Our collective and individual meditations from afar and near are directed wisely for the flowering of lotus-consciousness at the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center. Now is the correct earthly time for a Center that is devoted to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother in Baca. With the Soundscape of Silence as the bedrock for calmness, the Divine lotus unfolds its infinite potential as the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center receives the Sun, giving Inspiration for its destiny.

Om Aditi

Steven Satyavan Krolik lives in San Francisco, California.

a chance overnight with a longtime friend from Santa Fe. We visited Pat and John Caverly and their family, who at the time were living on the Ranch, running a home for wayward Native American teenagers from Denver. "It's a very beautiful place," I thought to myself at the time, "but so are many places in the Colorado mountains."

Over the next year or two, I kept running into people who somehow had a connection with this small, out-of-the-way place. For instance, at a Polarity workshop in upstate New York, I met a woman whose inlaws owned a home here. I received very clear, strong inner guidance to "come here, bring my husband, buy land...." When I heard in the spring of 1988 that Shirley MacLaine was planning to build a large healing center here, I called the one person I knew in the Baca, Pat Caverly. Pat assured me that Shirley's plans were not materializing, and she suggested that I talk with Hanne Strong. Pat quickly added that Hanne travels a lot, and, in fact, was leaving the next day. "Where is she going?" I asked. "Oh, she's going to Boston." "Pat, that's where I live!"

The very next evening, my husband and I entertained Hanne and Maurice Strong in our Cambridge townhouse. Hanne tells us about the world spiritual center vision that she was given by a local prophet, and Maurice tells us about his unusual experiences at the Baca, including one with Bill Moyers and the burning bush. This "chance" encounter lures my husband, and we spend our next two summer vacations at the Baca. In addition, I make several other visits over those years, including several week-long retreats at the Crestone Mountain Zen Center.

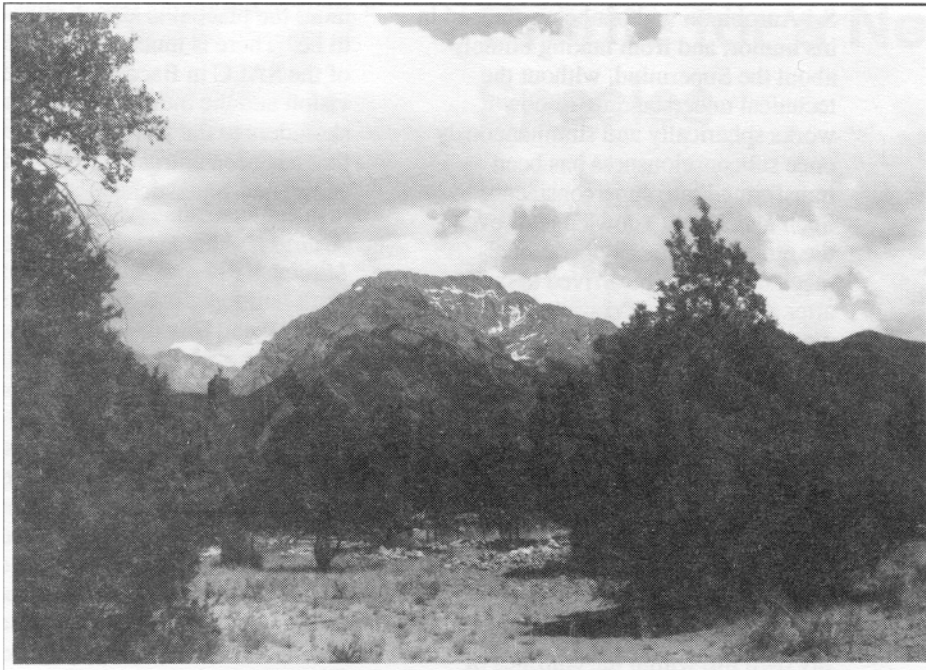
During my visits here, I received several visions and a past life recall. When my husband and I decided to separate in the spring of 1990, the opportunity in the crisis was that I was free to move here. I have continued to have very powerful experiences at the Baca.

In the spring of 1992, while on a cross country ski excursion to a yurt at the Continental Divide south of here, I remembered a near death experience that I had had when I was twenty years old. It included the proverbial tunnel, which was lined with all the peoples of the world sending me love and joy. I

The Call To The Light

By Kate Steichen

LIKE MANY WHO LIVE here, I felt called to the Baca for several years before Life conspired to bring me here from Cambridge, Massachusetts. My first visit here was



it is far more beautiful, uplifting and rewarding for our combined spirit and planetary vision. Here is an example of true collaboration.

Dr. Phillip Tabb and Robert Armon are architects for the Vesica Group of Boulder, Colorado.

A Moonlit Night in the Rockies

By Diane Thome

I AM DELIGHTED TO SHARE, once again, some of my recollections of the experience I had at the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center in Baca, Colorado.

I had met Seyril at the A.U.M. Conference held at Mount Rainier in Washington State during the summer of 1990, and she commissioned a solo tape work from me titled "Into Her Embrace--Musings on *Savitri*." The Savitri Dome had just been completed, and this was the site of the premiere on a clear, moonlit night high in the Rockies, in celebration of Sri Aurobindo's birthday.

This beautiful, peaceful and unforgettable environment made an indelible impression on me. The days and evenings were full of stimulating talks, rituals, conferences and meditations. I feel it so appropriate and timely that the Center become a place for further collaboration on the future of the earth, on transformation, environmental health, education and other issues. The ground has been well-prepared and consecrated to enable the flowering of these and future endeavors.

Diane Thome is Professor of Music, University of Washington at Seattle.

got closer and closer to the Light, and then was told that I hadn't even begun to do the work that I was here to do, and so I returned to my body and recovered from the coma I was in.

In remembering this incident last spring, I realized that the sky over the Baca is the closest image on Earth to my near death experience of the Light. I had received many direct teachings from the land here, but, until that recall, I had not fully appreciated the power of the sky.

Kate Steichen lives in Crestone, Colorado.

Synergy

By Dr. Phillip Tabb and Robert Armon

THE VISION OF THE BACA community in the San Luis Valley of Colorado is truly unique on our planet. There are few gatherings of such diverse nature as can be witnessed there. A beautiful manifestation of unity in diversity is clearly visible, and the wide range of groups and spiritually-oriented disciplines has been actualized in the schools, centers, spiritual retreats, cultures, ethnic backgrounds and traditional religious

practices which exist here in peace and harmony.

The Sri Aurobindo Learning Center, as well as other groups such as the Manitou Foundation, Carmelite Monastery, Spiritual Life Institute, Tibetan Project, Zen Buddhist Center and Native American groups, are active participants in the physical manifestation of this gentle "Baca spirit." The potential of combining energies for the benefit of the whole can be seen here. A benefit of this group effort is quite obvious to most people who have visited the Baca, and it could well be used as an example for future planetary development.

The Vesica Village Planning Group has been involved with several of the foundations and organizations in the Baca in the last ten years. As a planning and design group comprised of an international network of architects, engineers, educators and visionaries, we have witnessed the synergetic manifestation of this group effort and the effect this expanded and intensified vision has had on the education and growth of the many individuals and groups who have experienced workshops, seminars and retreats in the community.

Synergy in a metallurgical sense is an exciting and somewhat mysterious fact, but when witnessed in people in a community such as Baca,

Charging the Atmosphere

By Arvind Habbu

I HAVE BEEN ASKED FOR an appreciation of the Crestone/Baca area, where the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center (SALC) is domiciled. I have so far been there four times, twice for the Sri Aurobindo Birth Anniversary Conferences in 1991 and 1992 when I had the opportunity to address the attendees, and twice more with friends. It is a very pleasant drive from Denver or Colorado Springs to Crestone, particularly in late April or early June when there is still snow on the ground as you wind your way through the high passes.

It is definitely a beautiful place, and it reminds me of trekking pilgrimages into the deep Himalayas and Tibet. The Great Sand Dunes National Monument and the bison ranches are also added attractions.

For a while I did not comprehend how or why the same place, Crestone, could be called by two names, Baca and Crestone. Until from explanations was I able to extrapolate that the Baca is a particular designated zone within the Crestone precinct. Indeed, there is a difference between the types of construction found within the small Crestone township and the much more open "Baca area."

Many find this pristine place particularly holy. With all my antennae out, I pick out nothing but the natural calm of undisturbed altitudes (the Baca is at a height of approximately 8000 feet). And I do sleep very well, very quickly and am re-energized fully when I wake up there. If I were to speak my mind and were given a chance to exercise, I would make of this place a true retreat, a place of ingathering and meditation, embalmed in the serenity of Nature. This is not a place for talk or strenuous activity or hectic imaginative projects.

I would bring to Baca-SALC contemporary attitudes of functional management and architectural construction, and do away with the somewhat excessive stuffiness that comes from knowing too much about

Sri Aurobindo without being steeped in his humor, and from talking blithely about the Supermind, without the technical understanding of how it works spherically and simultaneously once subconsciousness has been transformed into superconscience. Such a technical knowledge of even the most preliminary operational mechanisms can be arrived at only after a great deal of consciousness-work, which alone can provide us with the right authority to such pronouncements.

Though a poet and lover of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, in spite of having grown up in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram School and because of my intimate correspondence with the Mother, I feel disinclined to talk grandiosely about any of their visions, and would prefer to work them out in my own life within the confines of their consciousness-patch given me to cultivate. For this I would like to be able to retreat from time to time to more strongly intensify the will and carry forward the assault of light into darker regions.

I think we who love them must arrive at a much clearer mechanical understanding of the Way that they have prepared for us, in the same manner that we charge each of our daily actions with intensity of awareness, without fantasy, very technically, like when we are simply and purely aware of the movement of the arm and the sinews thereof as we write or type or cut logs. It is sufficient to have this unqualified and ever-penetrating awareness, to pierce into the knowledge of the mind-body cellular mechanism and access the karmic unknitting that takes place when desires thereupon super-imposed are dissolved by being perceived.

The Way is simple, the Way is true, the Way is clear. For to arrive at such preliminary understanding, physical and non-intellectual, and the beginning of unadulterated wisdom, it is first necessary to retreat, to observe with motionless Mind, with ever-present Consciousness. Where else better can this be done than in isolated and pristine Baca?

After a hundred of us have done this and charged the atmosphere with the peace of our spiritual-physical askesis, Baca, I believe, will tend to become

more the place it is already purported to be. There is much that can be made of the SALC in Baca, if we have the vision and the industry to put our shoulders to the yoke and do the Work that has been entrusted to us, simply, zenly, non-fantastically.

Arvind Habbu lives in Kansas City, Missouri.

A Birthday Gift

By Suzanne McGregor

I FIRST MET SEYRIL ON my birthday in Boulder almost five years ago, and the forces were brewing a magic that has carried me through to this day. The early February night was crisp and clear, and Seyril swept her hand across the star-studded heavens. "This, my dear, is your birthday gift!" With that gesture, I was given the greatest blessings I have ever received--open access to the wonders of the Universe, infinite possibilities in my life, the unconditional love of this vibrant sparkling woman. My love for Seyril welled up in me at that moment and endures deeply to this day. Our connection was secured in the twinkling of an eye, and a star.

I live now in the Baca, just up the winding dirt road and across the creek from Seyril and Savitri House, and have worked with her in the activities of the Sri Aurobindo Learning Center. But mostly I have been an eager student, and quite a frustrating one in memorable instances, trying to integrate the teachings and the visions of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother into my life--awestruck and comprehending at times, dragging my feet at others. I have witnessed Seyril living these teachings, giving me shopping lists with quotes from *Savitri* at the bottom, lest I lose my center in the grocery store. Calls from her in the late evening--reading my mind, I'm sure!--with the perfect words to transcend a

heaviness into a lightness of spirit, a gentle reminder of the presence of infinite Grace.

And the wonderful friends I have had the honor, and the absolute pleasure, to encounter through the contacts of the Learning Center! Dearest Devan Nair, with his gentle and inspirational telephone conversations, and his active fax machine, sending along messages that transport me to my star-dusted heavens. And the gift of laughter, always and foremost, the laughter! And the absolutely infatigable Arvind Habbu, who coached me through a hard climb upwards and who was there at the top, seemingly apart from my struggle, but, out of the corner of my eye, I saw the absolute vigilance, and the love. And the immediately apparent past, present and future sister-connection with my beloved Dee DeCew, in whom I witnessed firsthand the dedication, devotion and tireless service to Auroville, her mission and her love. And the visitors brought to Baca in the embodiment of the Sri Aurobindo Association and friends--Wayne Bloomquist, Bill Moss, Martha Orton, Ariel and David Browne. What an inspirational and conscious group they were, full of vision and of heart, of enthusiasm and strength.

It is an inner journey, to be sure, and the travels can often be along quite bumpy roads and unfamiliar territory. It is said of the Baca that if you come with personal issues unresolved, your demons to wrestle will be delivered to you on a silver chain, then unleashed--and thus begins the emergence of Truth as it has been, and can be, for you. It is definitely worth the confrontation, for the gains are immeasurable. The wondrous mountains fortify us all, and the forests nestle us in their powerful boughs--and we are invited by the march of the stars and planets across our endless sky to join in this joyous Dance of all dances.

Suzanne McGregor lives in Crestone, Colorado and has done much of the work on this issue.



Cradle for a New American Species

By John Robert Cornell

THE TV IN THE WAITING area is flashing images of models showing off new fashions. To the right of the screen the tram whines, rushing travelers from one gate to another. Heels click as wave after wave of people wash past on the tile walkway. A blurred message on the public address system competes with the drone of the CNN announcer, who repeats the same selected stories over and over. Outside the land is flat. The wind blows tirelessly.

I am sitting in the huge Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport in early evening. Ten hours ago I awoke to the mountains at Savitri House in south central Colorado.

Karen and I were on a three-day visit to the Baca to see Seyril and help plan the next Global Village Network Conference. There is a presence in this Savitri House where Seyril lives, dedicated to the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Their pictures on the walls everywhere arrest the attention, as if the photographs are really windows opening into the inner foundations of the building. Or the foundation of something more than a building that is taking shape here.

There is silence here, too. You wake in the morning to the sound of the birds borne effortlessly on the looming silence of the mountains. You can see snowy peaks 40 or 50 miles away. The nervous energy of the monkey-mind can spread out in the clear air and come to rest. The mental pollution that precipitates physical pollution into the air is absent here or dwarfed by the 14,000 peaks and the great open space that is the San Luis Valley. You can breathe.

Less than four years ago I was driving toward Baca for the first time in the rich light of late afternoon. All day Colorado had been opening up valley after wider, greener valley as I drove east. Over the last 10,000 foot pass, and the San Luis Valley spread out before me like a great sigh. After I

unloaded my car at my lodging in Crestone, I walked up the main road toward the campground. It was pitch black by then. The nearest town is 50 miles to the south. The night sky was punctured by a million tiny points of light. The milky way poured across it overhead. Then three shooting stars flashed by just ahead and seemed to dive into the trees on the left side of the road. Three travelers from beyond our limited range of sight. I walked back to my lodging listening to the night sounds.

A story on the TV jerks my attention back to the sounds of the airport. Some transcendental meditators are holding group meditations in Washington in hopes of bringing the benefits of calm to the operations of the federal government. To my left in the waiting area two boys are roughhousing giddily. The little one falls back, cracking his head against the hard chair. His mouth works silently for a few seconds before the cry comes out. In sudden, controlled fury, the father clips the older boy, then the younger one too. More cries, tears of humiliation. The air is dense, nervous. People sitting nearby are watching. Super 80 American Airlines aircraft roar into the sky behind me.

I first met Seyril in an airport like this in New York. I remember a wide-brimmed hat, white hair and a radiant smile offered to anyone who happened to be around. She had come from Boulder with Philip Tabb, architect of a dream--Savitri Solar Village. Together they presented the dream to the AUM conference in 1989: a solar village dedicated to the work of transformation on undeveloped land overlooking the San Luis Valley in Colorado.

How had this dream come to her, I wanted to know. What drew her to the Baca? I had asked her this last night. Her answer:

Its secludedness--the difficulty of getting to it, its inaccessibility, its sheer beauty. I kept thinking of that line from the Bible: "Lift up thine eyes to the

mountains from which all guidance comes;" together they presented the dream to the AUM conference in 1989: a solar village dedicated to the work of transformation on undeveloped land overlooking the San Luis Valley in Colorado.

How had this dream come to her, I wanted to know. What drew her to the

inspiration for Savitri Solar Village had come to her and why it has not yet manifested.

"Well, I was always interested in deepening the yearning for that special energy that I felt in Auroville—the collective effort to do the yoga. How could you do it on a larger scale? You couldn't really, not when there was

land and self-sustaining with greenhouses and a frugal, simple way of living. That only when there come together two or three or four who are united and dedicated to that goal...

"It's almost as if this were a cradle of the new American species (laughing). And this is not to say that this is going to be another Auroville. There is only one Auroville and one Matrimandir. But there can be other small forces. When I was last in Auroville three years ago I heard from a fellow who had just come from Italy and was telling me about a group of three Sri Aurobindonians who had a little tiny community outside of the city and they were doing intensively—the three of them—the yoga of transformation. You don't need numbers! You need that spark which will continue to grow as it is more and more purified, cleansed and aspiring with every fiber of our being.

"So it's not a question of hastening the process. It's got to be organic."

This airport seems anything but organic! Another burst from the loudspeaker jerks my attention back to the present moment. What is the purpose of all this hurrying energy? My body tightens but a reservoir of space remains inside, a space that was fed by the Baca. Nearby a couple holds hands. He moves his finger tips over her left hand as he watches the stream of people. She stares at the TV monitor. In the seat beside me the little black boy, recovered from the earlier family incident, and a blonde girl, both about 5, are talking and moving together in the dance of childhood. Then it is time to board. The little girl looks back wistfully as mom pulls her toward the gate.

Now we are packed into the plane. The man beside me pores over his spreadsheet and taps his pencil on his shoe. Giant planes are stacked in a great tense traffic jam waiting restlessly to unleash their power. Something is directing this mighty swirl of energy but it is not clear to what purpose. The go-ahead comes. The cabin tilts back. We are hurtling up toward the stars.

The city comes into entirely new perspective from this distance. Regu-



Seyril placing earth from Matrimandir and symbols on center stone of Savitri Village.

Auroville?

Seyril had lived in Auroville for a number of years, working on the Matrimandir. I wondered how she had resolved for herself whether to return to Auroville or settle in the Baca. Hanne Strong had invited her to the Baca when she was living in Boulder, Colorado. She had visited all the ashrams and religious centers in the Baca and felt that she was being led to do something that had to be done: make an opening for the consciousness of Sri Aurobindo and Mother among all the other spiritual disciplines that had settled there. She continued...

"My parents had disinherited me when I went to Auroville and left my husband. But when I came back and saw them through their last days, I discovered upon reading the will that I had been reinstated. That gave me the wherewithal to buy Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's building here."

As we talked, I wondered how the

only one house here, with the wild lands around it. There was no place for a community. We're in an inaccessible place. There are not enough of us who are consecrated and concentrated and ready to do the yoga of transformation.

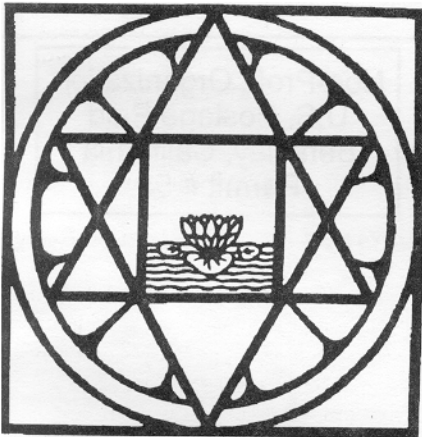
"Just to have a land-based community for collective living there—it's not enough. It's too demanding. The land is too demanding—the altitude, the rigorous winters. There has to be such a core that's pure... and pure in intention... and committed—that just to see it as a place to raise a family or to live inexpensively... It's not enough.

"That's why when Wayne came here and gave his workshop on the search for the soul in everyday living and on the soul and its powers... Suddenly it occurred to us that to do the collective yoga we would have to have a starting place where there could become a union—a unity of intention and purpose—a place based on the

larly spaced street lights cast perfect pools of soft light in marvelous shapes. Specks of white and orange gleam against a black background like a field of stars. Freeways become gracefully curving, arching nerve paths carrying moving packets of light. Feathery circles of light barely touching soften the interchanges. In places the lights seem to coalesce into something more intense, ready to burst into some fiery revelation. In other places they are less dense, and the eye keeps drawing the outlines of Virgo or Libra. As we gain altitude, another, larger pattern emerges. Like the sweeping arms or a spiral galaxy, the lights below radiate out from some central point. The earth's inhabitants, so fitfully hurrying on vacation or business, are unconsciously mirroring the microcosm and the macrocosm.

I settle back in my seat and dose. We are almost home.

John Robert Cornell lives in Carmichael, California and is the editor of Sunseeds.



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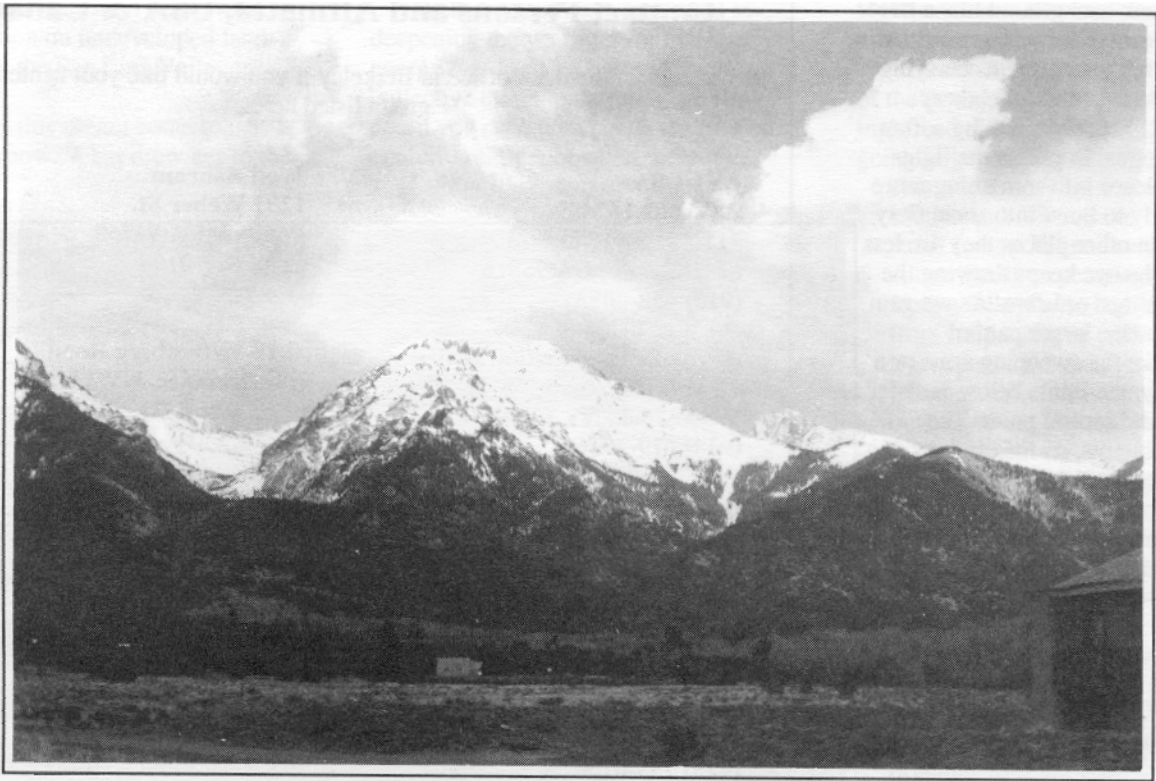
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