

“I accept challenges and enjoy them.”

“I’m about to take up scuba diving...”

Ann Rich



by Jamie Sibley

My first year in Steamboat in the fall of 1979 I had quite an experience. I moved here from South Dakota, and I was unprepared for all the snow and cold. I had no idea what a Three Wire Winter was. In the midst of the Three Wire Winter I discovered one of the most interesting things about living here was the annual Winter Carnival held every February. I attended Winter Carnival, and while watching the parade I saw Ann Rich, one of the grand marshalls of the parade, and I thought she surely would have a good story to tell about this area and her experiences here. Here is her story:

“I was born in Longmont, Colorado, on July 28, 1919. I had a brother who is now dead, and we were the only two children in the family. He was a couple of years younger than I am. Gates and I were not very good friends, but we were good enemies until I went to college, and then we were the best of friends, with separation. Sometimes I think we made life for our family miserable.”

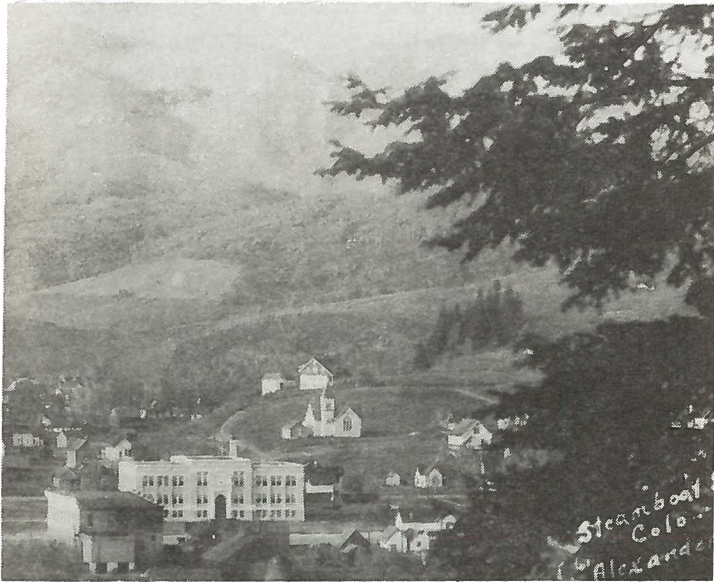
Ann’s parents influenced her life greatly. She

told me some of her mother’s experiences. *“My mother was in the San Francisco fire in 1906. She and her mother were staying in a hotel when it happened. The thing that remained with her was the scare. Children always seem to remember panic. First, it was the earthquake, then the fire. She wasn’t very old, maybe seven, but it was a thing that lasted all her life, and she often mentioned it. She was a mighty smart gal and graduated from high school at the age of fifteen. She had her masters in German in four years. Latin was important to her, because her first job was teaching Latin in Walden. She taught there a year before coming to Steamboat.*

“My father’s family had come to Steamboat in 1906, when he was just a boy. He grew up and finished law school, and they met and married a year later. My mom died in 1967, after a long illness. The illness was hard for her, but she was active till her death. My parents did well by us, always saw to it that we had what we needed.

“I started school when I was seven, and I

started the second grade. My mother was a teacher and enjoyed teaching, so she taught me how to read when I was three. She also taught me to speak German at a young age. Some of her teaching may have worked against me, because when I started school I was bored even in the second grade class. Those first years in grade school were trouble for me because I had disciplinary problems. I loved the academic part, and once I got my problems squared away, I enjoyed it and did well in school."



"Steamboat in the early days."

I then asked her about memories of her childhood years. Ann started by telling me how her childhood was different from ours. "I think it was different in many ways. Steamboat was a much smaller community then. At the same time we had many advantages. Even though there was a Depression during the 30's my father was a good lawyer and saw to it that we had all the advantages that were available. Perry Mansfield offered dancing, so I went there two summers. I rode everyday on my own horse. I was a day student rather than a full time one. We all participated in many things like the girls' ski club.

"My family and I were part of the community sports club, and in the summer we swam a lot at the local pool. Dorothy Wither was my first swimming teacher. She taught me to swim at the age of three. Also A.J. Welton was a fine musician here, and I took both piano and violin lessons from him. We had such fine programs at the community series. There were so many things that kept us active."

Ann talked about some of the hardships about being so far from the city, "We occasionally went to Denver, though not too often. Sometimes we would have to go to the doctor, as we did not have specialists here. Rabbit Ears was never open in the winter, and sometimes Gore Pass

was also closed! For many years I went to an eye doctor in Denver every three months, and that was treacherous at times.

"We lived over on Crawford Hill, across from Dee Richards' house. I think it's 1003 Crawford Avenue. I went through high school here in Steamboat. I think the schools are different today because there are many more social activities. Then the school wasn't so big, and we didn't have the buses. We had many one room school houses up to the eighth grade, and in high school there weren't so many students. Many social events could take place early in the mornings, like band and orchestra. There was a high school orchestra practice in the morning or in the evening. On Friday nights there were tea dances every week. The school liked sponsoring dances, and we had lots of fun. I think the Prom was more important then. Every year we had an annual dance and many small dances, too. Also the jazz orchestra was given permission to play anytime. Dating was pretty much a controlled thing. Parties were chaperoned, and dating was allowed, but certain hours were set, and we were expected to keep them. If the date was too long my father was likely to come storming down the stairs and say it was late."

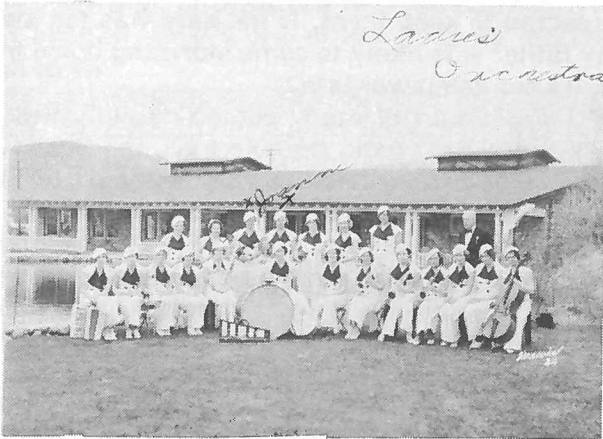
"I was a part of many beginning activities. I was in the first band that we had, and it was a very large organization. I was also part of the first ski band. The whole band went to a gathering in Denver in about 1936-37 where we marched with many other bands. We also played volleyball for fun, and skiing was extracurricular. We skied a lot of it even though our equipment was not modern, and there was a lack of lifts. So we toured a lot in somebody's cow pasture, that sort of thing.



"Look at those poles!"

"I myself had an interest in skiing. I hoped to be on an Olympic ski team. Before 1936 the only thing women could compete in were ladies jumping and cross country skiing. The ski team was very much a part of my life. There were two girls and seven boys on the team. I participated from the time I was in the eighth grade, till I was a sophomore in high school. We were involved in ski carnivals in Hot Sulpher Springs, Grand Lake and Genessee, and there were other teams there too. I know our team went all the way to Glenwood to help establish a Ski Carnival there.

"I guess I liked a lot of things because my folks wanted me to. I enjoyed very much participating in music. Since sports were already a part of my life, I learned to enjoy reading too. My parents wanted us to be well rounded so they saw to it we had a lot of advantages. The whole family rode horses together, read, skied and swam. In high school we had such things as hot dog and marshmallow roasts, particularly in the summertime. We also could build a fire on the snow and roast weenies in the winter, which the Winter Sports Club did every Sunday afternoon.



Ladies Orchestra in Steamboat

"We had only one dirt tennis court, and I never learned to play tennis. It was beside the library and behind the courthouse, where the County Annex is now. The library was where the Cameo is now. We did an awful lot of hiking around the town, but I don't see young people doing it now. I don't believe they do such things as climbing up above the ski jump and fooling around the springs, or the sulphur cave like we used to. The back country, Strawberry Park and the Hot Springs used to be a wonderful place for families to have picnics with friends or horseback alone. I learned early about our wonderful wilderness area because my father took his vacation in August. We went camping for ten days every year without fail, to the lovely lakes which are to the north. We are surrounded with beautiful forest wilderness that is quite different from the small town community life and certainly the big city life which may be a part of your own background."

Dee Richards, a good friend of Ann's, wanted her to tell me an interesting story. "In the beginning this story started with rattlesnakes. We had a biology teacher, Leonerd Treese, who's still alive somewhere, so a gal who corresponds with him tells me. He was one of those truly fine and inspirational teachers. He went far beyond the call of duty to make things exciting, like taking trips to the Flat Tops, to show us about geology. We studied all areas of science. Our rattlesnake project took two summers. A boy from some Eastern prep school was a show off, and I elected to show him rattlesnake hunting.

On the head of Sleeping Giant is a marvelous place for rattlesnakes. We went several times and shot a great number, but he thought it would be a good idea to butcher one. So we got a forked stick and took one home. We dissected it to show the egg with a new snake and the membrane. We saw how rattlesnake oil was made in jars in the sun, and pickled snakes in formaldehyde in square coffee jars. Then one day in January my brother, Gates, and I were playing pingpong, and one of us accidentally with a good hard stroke broke one of the three pound jars. We could see the snake in the square shape wiggling on the floor. It was cold that January, and fortunately the Harbor Hotel was new, so we had a place to go. The smell was really bad, and we couldn't air the house out directly because that would freeze the pipes. It took three days to get rid of that smell.

"There was a time when rattlesnakes were on display at the court house. It was an interesting project, but one to get rid of, I think. My mother had phobia of snakes, so she didn't interfere much in anything having to do with nature. My father encouraged all kinds of things that Gates and I would do with wildlife and nature. So if we caught a chipmunk he'd build a cage for it. We had pigeons and woodchucks and everything under the sun. I particularly remember a toad named Little Albert, and my mother was very good about that. I was almost grown before I knew how awful my mom's feelings were about snakes, and how horrible she felt the day we broke the jar."

When school was out for the summer Ann started to work. "When I was 13 I had my first job. I began working at the swimming pool where I worked for ten summers. My first year I washed towels in an old-fashioned ringer washer in one of the empty private pools. Then, the pool had a section of ten individual hot pools where people could soak with a little space. They could dress and leave their clothes beside the pool. There was always an empty pool where we used the water from the spring for the washing machine. I washed towels and hung them out back. I also swam after I did my chores, and then it required more than just junior life saving. I



"Ku Klux Klan marching through Steamboat"

worked there until I finished college. That first summer I got \$20 a month for eight hours a day, six days a week,"

In 1941 Ann graduated from college and married Dillon Rich. "I graduated from the University of Colorado, and then in 1966 after my girls were grown I went back for three more years. I probably enjoyed school and learned more the second time around than I did the first. I really think college is important because of the studies and the social adjustment of learning to be away from home. I studied English literature which is not very valuable as far as jobs go. And when I went back the second time I had been a legal secretary and worked evenings and part time for my dad. I went to Denver to business school even after I had received my degree in English."

I asked Ann about her first automobile. "I was a junior at the University of Colorado. Goodness, I just choke up thinking about that lovely day. It was such fun. My father drove the car up and there he sat, and I couldn't drive. I was just shaking and excited. I had learned to drive in high school, and I have a vague recollection that we could have a license at the age of 14. I had free use of the car most of the time. I remember using the car to go to play practices, ski meets, and band functions.

"I was enrolled in Denver in college when I got married. Dillon and I had been engaged for quite a while, but he was out of the service shortly before Pearl Harbor was bombed. He had been in the National Guard and thought he was through till World War II was declared. While he was out we were married at my aunt's house in Denver.

"The wedding was at the end of November, and we went to Mexico on our honeymoon, and that was nice. As soon as we heard about Pearl Harbor in December we knew that as soon as we came back there would be orders for Dillon. We figured our finances and stayed longer than we had planned, so just before Christmas we returned home, and, sure enough, there were the orders.

"I think Dillon liked the service. He was mostly a civilian type during the war. He worked in warehousing and shipment for materials for overseas and he was never on a boat. Since we were married a month before Pearl Harbor, and Dillon was in the service, I only came to Steamboat to visit. There were only about 2000 people here then, and most did all they could to be patriotic. It was important to help with bandages and mending, writing letters and helping the USO in any way."

I then asked Ann about her children and how they grew up. "In 1941 Lynn Rich Abbott was born. She's living in Hayden and about to move to Phoenix now. Robin, Lynn's younger sister, is dead now, since 1972. Lynn graduated from the University of Colorado as a French major, and is looking forward to teaching French. I'm sure she will find someplace in Arizona where she can teach French again. Her husband is an instrument engineer, a very specialized occupation."

Ann recalled times when Steamboat was different. "I have vivid memories about the old town of Steamboat. The distances were about the same with the Cabin Hotel where the Bud Werner Library is now and the swimming pool a mile east. That was the whole area of town except for the flour mill which is where the Iron

Horse Inn is now. The flour mill furnished all the power for the town. It was generated by water, and the ditch carried 100 cubic feet of water per second over a water wheel which manufactured electricity. Since the flour mill had more than enough power for their operation they sold the extra power to Steamboat Springs. There was not enough water then in the river for more than six months, so we bought the mill from the town which soon became the beginning of Colorado Youth, Yampa Valley Electric and its network.

"I do have a funny story about that. Colorado Utilities had steam pipes that were sold to houses and the school. Since the pipes were in rows there were bare areas along the streets where little boys could play marbles along the way, if they enjoyed hot pipes nearby, and they did. There were also houses in town without heating units at all. Colorado Utilities was originally across the street from the Forest Service."

There were times in the former days that early Steamboat was concerned about tourism. "Gertrude Jewel had happy recollections about the Cabin Hotel which was the center of community life. Many dances were held there, and often. The Hotel was built in 1909, because of the influx of tourists, and the need for accommodations to accompany the coming of the railroad. The mineral springs were also anticipated to bring tourists, and they have. It was the time of fashion to go to spas and baths. Many came here in the summer and winter to go to the pools. Then there was both an indoor and outdoor pool, and several little ones that could be rented for an hour or so. They were kind of ex-

pensive and not too clean, because one had to wait for the sudsy stuff to drain and get off the walls. The suds were a good thing to do away with for cleanliness sake.

"I think the community had splintered somewhat, partly because of the geographical spread and varied interest. We now have many land developers which we never had when I was young. The interest then was not the growth, expansion and tourism promotion. The major economy was agriculture, and that was the basis for business. We had some splintered interest because of the coal miners in Oak Creek and Mount Harris, but not the major part of the economy."

Ann talked more about the changes in Steamboat. "The first television was in the early 40's. Most didn't have one for a long time after we heard about them. I think most small towns in Colorado made arrangements to get televisions to their little towns by booster systems over the mountains. I remember the picture wasn't very good because they had to beam it over the Continental Divide. My family didn't believe in getting anything we couldn't pay for, so I saw many antennas on houses before we could ever afford one. I was never into watching television because I was going to school, and it didn't seem to be a necessary part of my life. Then I remember seeing the first color television, and I thought it was horrid because it was all green. I love to read and do things outside, so it didn't impress me too much.

"I remember the 50's for the bobbysocks, saddle shoes and pleated skirts. I think there was



"Ann's father's photo of a snowy day by the creek"



“Ann, telling me about old-time Steamboat.”

a philosophical freedom then that young people don't really have now. There was a lack of responsibility, a happiness that I don't see in our time now. Today we worry about inflation and philosophical concepts that young people didn't think about them. This is how I recollect it now.”

I urged Ann to talk about her community contributions. “I have participated in community events whenever they came along because I have always loved the town. I was part of helping raise the money for the first hospital. My father, Addison M. Gooding, helped found an association for collecting money. I wanted to be a part of that. Even tourism has interested me. During the 60's I was manager of the Chamber of Commerce and helped promote the town. It was the beginning of the ski area then which was quite exciting.

“I don't know what I have learned from my many years, except to enjoy life and achieve a certain creativity. I am content in feeling that I am making a contribution. That seems to be more important in the long haul for making me feel good about myself. That is part of being in the community of society.”

Ann also helped with founding of Three Wire Winter. She was a member of the Bi-Centennial committee that helped with seed money for the initiation of this local magazine. Now she smiles to see the students doing so well and actually producing a historical magazine which helps preserve the past.

Ann is presently busy and occupied with work. “I have a part time job selling tickets at the ski area. I don't make a whole lot of money, but I

sure get something that is quite important to me, and that's a ski pass. I have also taught some courses at the college, which I have enjoyed very much. When I returned to college in '66 I had some experience with college teaching. In order to take more classes, and to get more advanced degrees, I was able to get a job as a graduate teaching assistant at Colorado State University. Also when I was at Denver University, I taught speech, so my knowledge of English literature all of a sudden seemed very useful. Another course I taught was Chaucer, which took a lot of work. I'm sure I learned more than anybody else in the class. Rather recently, I've taught speech, too. I think our Mountain State college is a fine thing for this community and one of the things I like to promote.

Ann's vivacity and enthusiasm for life made me glad that I had the foresight to choose her to talk to for an article for Three Wire Winter. I know that I gained a new and long lasting perspective by getting to know and live some of the days gone by in Steamboat Springs as seen through the optimistic eyes of Ann Rich.

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