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“Last in the Atlas—First in My Heart”

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By Anne Gibbons

Ms. Gibbons is currently in her twenty-first year at Lynchburg College. She is now serving as the associate chaplain there. She is involved in a variety of community activities, including various roles with the ongoing community dialogue and action group on race and racism and serves on the board of Miriam’s House.

Ms. Gibbons is completing course work this year for her doctor of ministry degree through Lexington Theological Seminary and hopes to receive the degree in May of 2010. She graduated with a master of divinity degree from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and holds an undergraduate degree in social work from Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Ms. Gibbons has been married for twenty-five years to Chris Barrett, who, like her is also a minister at Resurrection Catholic Church near Smith Mountain Lake. She is the mother of three adult children: Dominic, Zachary, and Adella.

Introductions: Beginning a new year, way to reconnect, welcome new member.

Please give your name, primary association, and your response to the question:

Where are you from?

As you heard from the introduction, I'm still Anne Gibbons, still working at Lynchburg College, and the answer to the question – where am I from would be Worland, Wyoming. (welcome to Wyoming sign)

Although in this age of GPS garmin and mapquest, most of us don't use maps or atlases very much anymore. However, if you happen to have one lying around and flip through the back, you'll notice that Wyoming, is obviously the last state listed and Worland, Wyoming is one of the last towns and for those atlases that also list counties, even that comes towards the last as my home county is Washakie, named for Chief Washakie of the Shoshoni tribe. With a population of 4970 and an elevation of 4065, we're one of the few "cities" in the state where the number of people actually exceeds our height above sea level. (Show elevation sign here)

Another thing you might notice if you were looking through an atlas is the relatively small number of towns given the size of the state (insert map here)

According to US Census Bureau statistics From 2005-2007, Wyoming is the least populated stated in the union with a total population of 514,000 - (49 percent) females and (51 percent) males. Yet in total land area Wyoming ranks ninth with

just over 97,000 square miles, slightly larger than Oregon, (around 96,000) and just slightly smaller than Colorado (about 104,000))

Between 1990 and 2000, Wyoming's population grew from about 454,000 to 494,000, an increase of about 9%. At one point, the population was projected to reach over 700,000 by 2005 but obviously that never happened

Wyoming ranks 49th in population density (5.25 persons per sq mi in 2000); only Alaska is more sparsely populated with 1.16 persons per square mile.. However, during the 1970s Wyoming was the 3rd-fastest growing state; its population grew by 41%, from 332,416 at the 1970 census to 469,557 according to the 1980 census, largely from immigration. The growth rate reversed during the 1980s, shrinking the population to 453,588 in 1990 (-3.4%). Leading cities, all with populations of less than 100,000, are Cheyenne, Casper, and Laramie.

But statistics like these don't begin to tell the story of my home. And so I'd also like to share some poetry that brings a little life to the numbers. A friend of mind and a poet, Maureen Tolman Flannery, also grew up in Worland and she's written rather extensively about her experience of the West. In the poem entitled simply "Wyoming" our state is described this way:

Wyoming

Where every town

Has a sign

At its entrance

Posting

Population

And

The elevation,

Which exceeds it

Where there's room

For a cowboy

On every license plate

And in every bed,

And each one

Drives a pickup

Wears a Stetson

Spits snooze

Uses a gun

On animals he cares for

When its time

And kills when its time

With neither guilt

Nor show of sentiment

(insert license plate sign)

So how best to share with you the story of where *I'm* from. I decided to look at some of the major C's of Wyoming. It's Chronology, Characters and Critters, Conflict & Controversy, and finally some if the Charms of the Countryside.

First – the chronology - There is archeological evidence that Indians inhabited what is now Wyoming as early as 11,000 B.C.E. About 6,000 years ago, the region became a desert, and most of the occupants left. Around 2500 B.C.E, the

climate improved and some Indians returned. They lived mainly by foraging. About 500 C.E. the buffalo became important to the Indians, as a source of food, clothing, and skins for trade. The Indians remained the primary inhabitants of Wyoming until the 19th century. The major tribes at that time were the Shoshoni in the west, the Crow in the north, and the Cheyenne and Arapaho in the southwest.

The major portion of present-day Wyoming had become part of the United States as a result of the Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803. A small section in the west was included in the Oregon country, acquired by treaty with Great Britain in 1846. A small area in the south was acquired in 1845 as part of the Texas annexation, while the southwest corner came by cession from Mexico in 1848 after the Mexican War.

The main reason for settlement came as a result of the railroad. In 1867 the Union Pacific Railroad entered Wyoming, and settlement followed along its route. Discovery of gold at South Pass that year also brought settlers. Cheyenne, the first of the terminal towns, was founded in 1867; two years later it was the capital of the newly formed Territory of Wyoming. One of the first acts of the new territorial legislature was to give women the right to vote; and in fact it was the *first* state in the union to grant women equal voting rights with men.

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By 1877 all bands of Indians that were hostile to the settlers had been driven from Wyoming, and the remaining Indians had been placed on reservations. During the 1870's, cattle ranching became the territory's most important industry. Sheep raising and general farming followed in importance. For years there was much strife between cattlemen and sheepmen and between cattlemen and farmers over grazing rights. This trouble culminated in the Johnson County, or Rustler, War of 1892, a vigilante action by prominent cattlemen and hired gunmen against farmers and others suspected of rustling. It ended after federal troops were called in to restore order.

Wyoming became a state in 1890. After statehood, farming began to increase with the aid of federal irrigation projects. Cattle and sheep raising, however, continued to be the mainstays of the economy. Although the first oil well had been drilled at Fort Bridger in the 1860's, it was not until 1912 that an oil boom began when vast fields were discovered in central Wyoming. Oil reserves held by the federal government near Casper were involved in the Teapot Dome scandal of the Harding administration.

Beginning in the 1920's—before the Great Depression began—Wyoming was plagued by economic problems. Agriculture, coal mining, and oil production suffered severe setbacks. Prosperity returned with the increased demand caused by World War II. By mid-century, the production of oil and other mineral resources

had surpassed agriculture in importance. Tourism also became a major industry. Rapid development of the Powder River Basin's coal reserves in the late 1970's and in the 1980's provided new growth for Wyoming's economy. During the 1990's, the minerals industry, tourism, and agriculture were the mainstays of the state's economy.

Now that you know a bit about the chronology of Wyoming, let me tell you about some of the characters and critters who make up our history. Both 2 legged and 4 legged creatures are featured on our state flag. (insert state flag)

Although Wyoming became a state in 1890, it did not have an official flag until the early 1900s when the state chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution held a contest. A young woman named Verna Keays from Wyoming who had recently graduated from the Art Institute of Chicago created the winning design and in 1917 the flag bill was introduced in the state senate. According to reports, a good deal of spirited conversation ensued in the halls of the senate to decide if the bison should remain as the featured livestock. And whether a different animal would be

more appropriate- a donkey, an elephant or a moose, to represent the current political makeup of the state at that time. In the end, the bison remained and the bill was passed and the flag adopted on January 13th of that year.

The bison is considered Wyoming State's mammal and it is often called the monarch of the plains. The American Bison is a bovine mammal, also commonly known as the American buffalo. "Buffalo" is somewhat of a misnomer for this animal, as it is only distantly related to either of the two "true buffaloes", the Asian buffalo (or "water buffalo") and the African buffalo. However, "bison" is a Greek word meaning ox-like animal, while "buffalo" originated with the French fur trappers who called these massive beasts *boeufs*, meaning ox or bullock. So both names, "bison" and "buffalo," have a similar meaning. Centered on the bison is the brand of the Great Seal of Wyoming. In the original design approved by the State Legislature the bison is shown facing away from the staff. Verna Keays who originated the design had drawn the bison so that it would face away from the flagpole as it flew to symbolize the freedom with which the bison had once roamed over the plains. However officials from the DAR didn't agree with this and suggested that better balance of design would be achieved if the bison faced the staff. This is the way that the first flags

were manufactured and, though not "official" this is how the bison has been shown since 1917.

The colors of the State Flag are the same as those of the National Flag. According to official documents: "The red border represents the Indians who knew and loved the country long before the settlers came.; also the blood of the pioneers who gave their lives reclaiming the soil. White is the emblem of purity and uprightness over Wyoming. Blue, the color of the sky and mountains, is symbolic of fidelity, justice and virility." (insert state seal)

The most prominent feature of Wyoming's seal is the central figure of a woman standing before a banner which reads "Equal Rights" which is also the state motto. As referenced earlier, Wyoming bears the distinction of being at the forefront of states advocating equal rights for men and women, well before the turn of the century. The right to vote was granted to women on December 10, 1869 and in the following year, the first American woman to cast a ballot was Louisa Swain who voted in Laramie City as part of a general election. It was interesting for me to note that Louisa Swain was actually born in Norfolk, Virginia in 1800 and raised in the Quaker faith. A few years after casting her historic ballot she and her husband moved to Maryland to live with their daughter. Mrs. Swain died in 1878 and she

is buried in the *Friends Burying Grounds* in Baltimore. Fifty four years later in 1924, Nellie Tayloe Ross, became the first woman governor in the nation.

In addition to the motto, on either side of the woman are located two pillars, each with scrolls that proclaimed Wyoming's major economic strengths: oil, mines, livestock, and grain. On each pillar are burning lamps, symbolizing the Light of Knowledge. In the foreground, a striped shield and star, topped by an eagle, represent Wyoming's sovereignty and dedication to the Union. The number 44 identifies Wyoming as the 44th state to enter the Union.(that number does not seem to be visible on this slide however) On either side of the shield are the dates 1869 and 1890, which represent, respectively, the date that Wyoming organized as a Territory, and the date that Wyoming gained statehood. Flanking the pillars are figures representing the livestock and mining industries. The outer circle bears the words "Great Seal of the State of Wyoming".

To commemorate the birth of the flag, special brochures were printed at the time and distributed to every student in every school which at that time was probably quite a production literally and figuratively since this was long before KINKOS or copy machines

The bison pictured on the flag was especially significant for the earliest and perhaps most important historical characters of Wyoming - the

indigenous tribes of the area. Among these groups were the Mountain Shoshone who now live on the Wind River Indian Reservation. (insert slide) The Mountain Shoshones, also known as the Sheep Eaters or the *Tukadika*, are part of a larger group of American Indians known as the Shoshone. It is believed that the Shoshone migrated from the **Great Basin**, an area located between California and Nevada, into the greater Yellowstone area, the Lemhi Fork of the Salmon River in central Idaho, and into the mountains of northwestern Wyoming.

The Sheep Eaters lived mainly in the Absaroka, Teton and Wind River Mountain Ranges of Wyoming, and in what is now considered Yellowstone National Park. They were extremely resourceful and took advantage of their location in a mountainous region by keeping watch from the higher elevations. The climate was cooler in the mountains and fresh water was always plentiful.

The Sheep Eaters based hunting techniques and annual migrations on the accessibility of game. They also made tools, paints and utensils from the rocks and minerals available to them. Of special interest were tools made from the Obsidian rock. (insert slide)

Obsidian is very rare in the eastern part of North America, and so was highly sought after as a trade item. It was used to make some of the sharpest points which

are known as “bleeders”, and can even be used to cut leather garments. Obsidian can hold an edge that is actually as sharp as, or sharper than, surgical steel.

All groups of the Shoshone were extremely sensitive to the delicate balance between the land, the animals, and the people that shared their environment. Fishing is an activity that displayed their sensitivity to the natural world . Because female fish carry the eggs, the fishermen realized that killing one female fish might accidentally be killing hundreds or even thousands of that species in one fell swoop. Knowing this, the fishermen mainly aimed their harpoons at male fish in order to guarantee the return of the species. In doing so they would ensure that during the next fishing season there would be enough fish in the various bodies of water to feed the members of their clan.

The Shoshone knew that over use of natural resources could cause the extinction of various animals, which would have a direct impact on their available food sources. Extinction of animals could also upset plant life, causing various plants that might have depended on these animals to keep them in check, to grow rapidly and to take over the soil. In other situations these plants might not grow enough or might not even grow at all. The growth rate could in turn have a direct impact on soil erosion, water quality, and survival of animals dependent on certain plant life

This chain-reaction could cause the Shoshone's own extinction as a result of disrupting the natural cycle of the ecology beginning with the seemingly harmless act of over-hunting various species of animals. Long before the rest of us began to understand the importance of good stewardship of our environment and many years before we grasped the urgency of understanding our interdependence with all of creation, native peoples instinctively understood their place in the web of life.

Eventually, pressure from white settlement began to push tribes out of their traditional homelands, Chief Washakie determined that his people were best off moving permanently into Wind River Country, which was known for its mild winters, abundant game and plentiful mountain-fed streams.

In the early 1860s, however, other tribes were also vying for control of the Wind River Valley, in particular the Crow Indians, who lived in the northwestern corner of what is now Wyoming. Under Chief Big Robber, the Crow began encroaching into territory the Eastern Shoshone considered their own. Chief Washakie sent a message to the Crow offering a compromise, but Chief Big Robber ignored the request and killed the messenger sparking a fierce war between the tribes, which also included the Shoshone's allies, the Bannock.

The fighting was inconclusive and finally the two chiefs agreed to a dual to determine the outcome and control of the Wind River Valley. The battle was hard-

fought but ultimately Washakie prevailed and killed Big Robber. According to local legend, Washakie cut out Big Robber's heart and put it on the end of his lance as a sign of respect for his fallen foe's valor. Crowheart Butte, in the northwestern part of Wind River Country, is named in honor of this famous encounter. (Insert slides – 1st sign, then red butte)

In 1868, Washakie and a council of tribal elders signed a treaty formally establishing the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. Unlike most American Indian tribes, the Eastern Shoshone were the only one to have a say in the location of their permanent home. Today there are approximately 2,650 Eastern Shoshone living on the Wind River Reservation.

Another tribe living on the Wind River is the Arapahoe. Their own name was Inuna-ina (our people), but they were referred to as "dog eaters" (for the obvious reason) by other Native Americans. The Arapahoe are members of an American Indian people who moved from Minnesota and North Dakota to the upper Missouri River area in the 17th century, where they became close allies of the Cheyenne. Their language belongs to the Algonquian family. Originally a farming people in the eastern woodlands, they acquired horses and adopted the nomadic existence of the Plains Indians, hunting buffalo, and raiding other peoples and Anglo-American settlers. They also became known as great traders. In addition

to the Wind River reservations in Wyoming the Arapahoe also live in Oklahoma, and number about 7,000 total .

Like other Plains Indians, the Arapaho practiced the sun dance and had secret societies that were military clubs for creating war rituals and ceremonies. They believed in medicine bundles, which contained objects thought to have magical or healing powers, for example special pipes or hoops. They lived in tepees and hunted and raided in small bands.

Although allies of the Cheyenne, the Arapaho were enemies of the Shoshone, Ute, and Pawnee with whom they constantly fought. They also fought to protect their land from white settlers. By 1835 the Arapaho had split into two groups, the Northern Arapaho remaining on the Platte River, Wyoming and in Montana, and the Southern Arapaho moving to the Arkansas River, Colorado. In 1867 the Southern Arapaho signed the Treaty of Medicine Lodge, and were given a reservation in Oklahoma with the Cheyenne; the Northern Arapaho were assigned to the Wind River reservation.

Although the earlier conflicts of Wyoming may have involved intertribal warfare or battles between settlers and Indians, other controversies have taken their place. One of the ongoing conflicts in Wyoming, especially where I grew up

centers around the use of federal lands for cattle grazing, and seems to pit old time ranchers and cowboys against “tree hugging environmentalists”

On one side of the argument we find old timers like my father. Wyoming natives are often suspicious and resentful of what they perceive as the meddling and encroachment of “back east liberals” who come in and try to change the way things have always been done in the name of supposedly saving the environment. On the other side are environmentalists, often from the outside, who sometimes intrusively and insensitively presume to know far better than the locals how best to manage their own lands.

The heart of much of the controversy centers around the extent to which ranchers should continue to be allowed to graze their cattle on federally owned lands. Environmentalists argue that large herds are stripping the land of vegetation to the point that the plant life can no longer regenerate itself. Cattle grazing along riverbanks threatens to destroy fragile ecosystems with the possibility of exterminating certain species. Some activists are concerned that the entire landscape could be so destroyed that the only answer is to require these federal lands to become cattle free.

One author advocating a fairly radical return of rangeland to pre-cattle days is Jeremy Rifkin. In his book: *Beyond Beef: The Rise and Fall of the Cattle Culture*,

the author argues that if Americans gave up eating beef altogether, they'd be healthier and western landscapes would thrive as a result.

On the other side of the fence, literally, are the ranchers themselves whose culture, tradition, and livelihood depend on raising and grazing their cattle on the land. Contrary to the environmentalists' claims, some ranchers argue that grazing is actually good for the land. Cattle manure provides fertilizing properties, the hoofs help to work the land, and grasses are kept short and cropped as the cattle eat. Ranchers counter that removing them from the land would result in the disappearance of their water distribution systems which would ultimately result in re-desertification.

A small but growing number of ranchers are beginning to relook at their traditional agricultural practices to find methods that are more sustainable as a result of the influence of environmentalists. In particular, they have become more knowledgeable about the harm and destruction that can occur from cattle grazing too near creeks and rivers. These "riparian zones" only constitute 1 % of the landscape but about 80% of all wildlife depends on these watered areas for their survival.

Some ranchers have begun restricting hunting on their lands for years at a time in order to allow antelope herds to regenerate after being hunted excessively one year or killed off due to extremely harsh winters.

While some environmentalists would still like to see cattle grazing stopped altogether and some ranchers are still very resistant to adjusting their practices, a middle ground does seem to be occurring as ranching methods are becoming more sustainable.

While conflicts and controversy about the use of the land may continue, no one disputes its charm and beauty. So I'd like to conclude my talk by sharing a few highlights from the countryside itself and perhaps in doing so, you may want to consider visiting Wyoming yourself, if you haven't already done so.

For those of you interested in geology and archaeology, Wyoming holds countless treasures. – (insert picture of Yvonne & Katie) What appear to be whale formations are located about 10 miles by road south of Worland and to all appearances seem to be “swimming” right out of the hill side. These giant eel like formations complete with blow hole are a product of our volcanic past. Another popular dig is the Colby Mammoth Site –(insert picture of Colby site diggers) The Colby site is located just outside Worland on private property. This important site was named after Donald Colby who discovered the first Clovis spear point there in

1962. Mr. Colby found it while using heavy earth moving equipment during the construction of a reservoir.

Parts of at least seven mammoths were found in an ancient gully in two areas and dating estimates could place this site as early as 14,000 years ago. Other types of animal bones found on the Colby site include horse, camel, bison, pronghorn, jackrabbit and possibly musk-ox.

For the water lovers among us, the Big Horn River provides boating, fishing, and hunting in northern Wyoming's Big Horn Basin. (Insert boats on river) It irrigates farmland and is occasionally fed by small tributaries from both the east and west sides of the basin. Boaters appreciate its solitude and ever-changing scenery. Anglers can catch Brown, Cutthroat and Rainbow trout, and Ling. The Big Horn River is approximately 130 miles long and is publicly accessible in a number of locations.

The Big Horn is also important historically. At the turn of the 20th century, the town of Worland was actually located on the west side of the river near where 15 mile creek enters the Big Horn "Camp Worland" consisted of Charlie (also known as "Dad") Worland's Saloon, 2 hotels, Dance Hall, a tent school house, 3 retail stores, 4 residences, a Chinese Laundry and the Hanover Canal Company Office. The town of Worland was actually slid across the ice in the middle of the winter

1905 – 1906, to be on the right side of the river when the rail road got there in the summer of '06'

In addition to rivers and lakes, smaller but equally beautiful waterways are the numerous creeks which flow throughout the mountain region. Some of my favorite childhood memories include trips to the Big Horns and picnics along the side of a creek where we would wade and fish. (insert creek pictures)

Another childhood memory I have is taking a Sunday drive with my dad in his pickup. When I asked where we were going, he replied “oh, just for a drive in the badlands.” To which I responded “Is that where Krushev lives?” In my naivete and with my political upbringing, I guess I had come to associate all things bad with communism. What I did discover on the quick road trip with my father was yet another place of beauty right in my own back yard. (insert bad lands picture)–

Most of Washakie County sits in the basin of five mountain ranges. The volcanic activity that created our unique area left us with some of the most barren looking but most beautiful landscape you'll ever see. The browns, tans, reds, and gold mix to create an artists dream and are featured often on postcards, photographs and canvas . As the sun rises over the Big Horns or sets over the Absarokas, the badlands blaze in color.

Last but not least, are the mountains (insert picture of Big Horns)—Five mountain ranges surround the Big Horn Basin where I grew up. To the east the Big Horn Mountains, which you see pictured here, and to the south the Owl Creek Mountains, to the west the Absaroka Mountains the northwest are the Carter Mountains and to the north the Pryor Mountains. One of the reasons I have loved living in Virginia, and Lynchburg in particular these last 20 plus years is that I have the Blue Ridge to gaze upon in my adulthood even as I loved looking at the Big Horns in my youth.

In closing I want to pay tribute to my dad, Terrill Gibbons, who was born, raised, and still lives in Worland Wyoming, Washakie County. Dad taught me a love of the land and an appreciation of history. Even now, at the age of 82, he thrives on revisiting the past through leadership and participation in about four wagon trains a year. (insert wagon train picture) This photo was one of those used on the 2003 Wyoming State Highway Map.

I began this talk with a poem written by a Worland native and I'd like to finish with another by the same author entitled "Western Land"

Western Land\

Isn't passive,

Isn't merely ridden over,

Fenced, proved up on,
Hayed, irrigated, grazed.
It coils around your sense of self
And rises up in gullies
Like a striking diamond-back.
It inserts mountainous power
Into the inner workings of families,
Demanding generations,
Dispersed like scattered herds,
Recline on the same rocky bedground.
Subliminal as air,
It becomes what you are thinking
Without thinking about it.

And now you also know what is last in the atlas but first in my heart.

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