

Blustery

Partly cloudy with scattered afternoon and evening thunderstorms; possibly severe. High 80-95; low 50-55/12A

Sunday, June 16, 1996

Great Falls, Montana

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Foolish fathers

In honor of father's day, Tribune readers tell tales of quirky escapades their fathers or husbands have gotten into. (TE)



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Storm busts windows, cuts power across state

By JASON KOZLESKI
Tribune Staff Writer

A quick, severe rain storm blasted the Simms area with golf-ball-size hail, caused major power outages in several cities and left slashed crops as it swept northwestern Montana.

Windows were knocked out, gardens were squashed, leaves were shredded and some trees were uprooted in Simms, where the storm apparently hit the hardest.

The 15-minute storm was the most ferocious that Sylvia Sauke, a Simms resident for 73 years, said she has ever seen.

The mixture of high winds and hail ruined her garden and left her wondering about her shrubs, grass and grain crops.

"Whether or not they'll be okay, that's the \$64 question," she said.

She said a lot of fields looked battered from her house. Others reported seeing extensive hay damage.

A 161,000-kilowatt transmission line went down between Havre and Great Falls, affecting a service area south to Big Sandy and west to Joplin, Montana, according to Dean Conklin said.

Power was out from 7 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. for about 7,000 customers, he told the Associated Press.

That outage resulted from a lightning strike on a 250,000-volt transmission line between Missoula and Broadview, north of Billings, Conklin said.

Power surges causing lights to dim and resulting in isolated outages that didn't last long occurred in Great Falls, Augusta, Choteau and Conrad, he said.

Similar problems were reported in Helena, Butte, Dillon and Deer Lodge.

Power also was out in Lincoln, Conklin said.

MPC's Mike Campbell, the town manager at Lincoln, was at a station at the Landers Fork when something happened, probably a lightning strike, Conklin said.

Campbell was thrown to the ground and his hand lost 30 feet away, but the dazed worker was not seriously hurt and returned to work, Conklin said.

Spontaneous outages also were reported in Missoula and the surrounding region.

In Simms, residents were concerned with more than electricity. Chris Hitchcock said the hail broke three windows on her house, and a neighbor lost five.

She said her husband described the storm as "green snow" because of all the leaves blowing in the wind.

Marlene Largent, who also lives in Simms, was mowing her lawn when the storm came.

She ran to park her car out of the storm's way, and was left with red welts on her arm, hair wounds, as proof of the storm's power. The wind blew down a huge elm in her yard.

"This was just like out of a Stephen King movie," she said. "I've never had this happen."

Two inches of hail still covered some ground in Simms an hour after the storm, even though the sun

See HAIL, 3A

Great Falls TRIBUNE

Freemen just tip of iceberg, watchdog groups say

By DAVID POSTER
Associated Press Writer

JORDAN — Even as a weekend rodeo replaces defunct Freemen as the town's chief roadside attraction, Americans elsewhere should brace for more Freemen extremists, watchdog groups say.

"This is a movement, not just a few people out on a ranch in Montana," said Bill Wassmuth, executive director of the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment, based in Seattle.

Saturday, the steady rhythms of farm life replaced high anxiety around Justin Township, the foreclosed wheat farm where Freemen held the FBI at bay for 81 days until their surrender Thursday.

Black Angus cattle wandered down a road where black armored vehicles roared just days before. And neighbors pitched in to help rancher Dean Clark cultivate a field of limits to him through-out the long siege.

Clark bought the land at auction last fall, but Freemen, some his relatives, or-

"There's a very large well from which these confrontations can be drawn."

— Chip Berlet, Political Research Associates

dained him to stay off the property. Now those Freemen are gone, most of them sitting in a Billings jail awaiting trial on charges that include writing bogus checks worth millions of dollars and threatening a federal judge.

But the Freemen philosophy lives on, Wassmuth said, and some 600 people attended seminars at Justin Township, hearing the Freemen recipe for clogging courts with phony lawsuits and collecting free money from unsuspecting companies and government agencies.

"Their activities are showing up in 18 states," Wassmuth said. "People are filing bogus financial statements, trying to cash bogus checks. Many of them are identi-

fied back to LeRoy Schweitzer," a Freemen leader.

Those who monitor far-right extremists say the Freemen and other groups — militia, tax protesters, white supremacists and common-law advocates — share anti-government beliefs that invite run-ins with established authorities.

The Northwest has a big share of those groups, from northern Idaho's white-supremacist Aryan Nations to the Militia of Montana, which wears a coming one-world government and sells conspiracy-theory literature by mail.

Militia of Montana founder John Truchman agreed that the arrest of Jordan's Freemen would not dampen the zeal of other far-right activists. Even he believes the Freemen looked foolish, but he says their coming trial will be a forum for his own group's claims that U.S. currency is illegal.

"This is what we've been searching for," Truchman said. "It gives us a platform to address the painful issue of the

Federal Reserve and the OTA money system — Out of This Aid."

Anti-government fervor, coupled with conspiracy theories and fundamentalist Christian beliefs, assure that others will take up where the Freemen left off, said Chip Berlet with Political Research Associates, a think-tank in Cambridge, Mass., that monitors the far right.

"The basic thesis of the Freemen is that government is a conspiracy run by evil-doers, some of them satanic," Berlet said. "Those ideas lend themselves to a confrontational mentality."

Many groups share what Berlet calls an apocalyptic world view, interpreting the Bible's book of Revelations to mean the end times are fast approaching. Berlet predicts more confrontations as the year 2000 nears.

"This isn't going to go away," he said. "These are deeply held beliefs, and these are people who act on their beliefs, however aberrant they may be to mainstream society."

After the

Freemen

Standoff

Inside:

■ Jordan residents told farewell to publicly 1/B

■ Garfield County sheriff critical of FBI's tactics 1/B

■ FBI agents in charge says standoff tense last week 7/B

Paradise has its price

Life harsh in bare-bones development

By CAROL BRADLEY
Tribune Staff Writer

CRAIG — Frank Nowakowski had grown accustomed to carloads of strangers pulling up in his driveway, asking directions. But at 4 a.m. one wintry morning looking for warmth, he realized the serenity of his little pocket of Montana had shattered permanently.

In Nowakowski's back yard, on a jagged and breathtaking sweep of land halfway between Great Falls and Helena, developers are peddling paradise on the cheap. For \$200 down, \$230 or so a month, they promise wide blue sky, crystal clear waters — the good life.

The promise is illusory. What is unfolding, in contrastation of this Missouri River community, more closely resembles a modern-day "Grapes of Wrath."

With no running water, no sewage system, no electricity or gas, conditions in these peaks and valleys north of Craig are too primitive to attract many upscale buyers. But families too poor to afford property anywhere else are setting up camp at a steady clip — only to pack their bags after a harsh winter or two has drained their enthusiasm.

See PARADISE, 4A



These photos by Carol Bradley

Time has run out for couple determined to build home

By CAROL BRADLEY
Tribune Staff Writer

CRAIG — Five-year-old Alex had a vision from God, he told his Grandmother Bernadette. Someday, she would have windows and doors.

For now, Bernadette Chester has no windows or doors, not even any walls.

On a saddle-shaped ridge five and a half miles into the bowels of the Buchanan land, Bernadette lives in a 40-foot-long canvas tent with her husband, Kenneth. In one corner of the tent, 10 puppies sleep soundly in a cardboard box. In the center a wood stove heats coffee. Lining the sides are a cushioned couch, a chest of drawers and two double mattresses sprawled across the dirt floor.

Of all the hard-luck stories in this bare-bones development, the Chester's is the hardest. It epitomizes the fate that can befall a family when, lured by cheap financing, it

See HOME, 5A



These photos by Bruce S. White

Fitzgerald, first lady of song, dead at 78

By LARRY GERBER
Associated Press Writer

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. — Ella Fitzgerald, the world's "first lady of song" whose vocals ranged from deeper blues to bebop fantasies, from mellow musings to a soaring soprano that could shatter crystal, died Saturday at 78.

During a five-decade career, she recorded some 250 albums and won 13 Grammy Awards.

In recent years, Fitzgerald was virtually bedridden with complications of diabetes. In 1993, her legs were amputated below the knees.

She died peacefully at her home, surrounded by family and friends, spokeswoman Andrea Hecht said, while declining to reveal the cause of her death. "She was a very private person, and her family would want us to respect that," said Hecht.

"Her fans will remember her and love her, that's what's important,"

■ Fitzgerald left indelible mark on music world/9A

said her attorney, Richard Rounseell. "Male or female, the best singer on the planet," said colleague Mel Tormé. "Her loss is irreplaceable."

"We'll miss her," said jazz pianist Dick Hyman. "She created most of the pop singing tradition that has been around ever since."

Born in Newport News, Va., on April 25, 1918, the untalented Miss Fitzgerald overcame shyness to start singing in public at age 16.

Through her career, she kept at a distance in her music; her songs were melodic adventures, not miniature autobiographies.

The kids loved her. Back at Yale for an honorary degree in 1986, she said, "This is where, you might say, that it all started."

"I idolized her, and she was my in-

spiration," said singer Phyllis McGuire of The McGuire Sisters. "Her singing style was unparalleled, and I tried to emulate her. But there was only one Ella Fitzgerald. I am so grateful that I knew her."

No matter the material: ballads, blues, scat or mellow, she varied her delivery to keep songs fresh.

"If you don't learn new songs, you're lost," she said in 1967. "No matter where we play, we have some of the younger generation coming to the club. It's a drag if you don't have anything to offer them."

President Clinton said "I am deeply saddened by the death of Ella Fitzgerald. The jazz world and the nation have suffered a tremendous loss in the passing of someone with so much talent, grace and class."

She was married twice and had one son. She also raised a niece. A private funeral was planned, according to Hecht.



AP photo

Singer Ella Fitzgerald died Saturday in this 1991 photo she performs at Radio City Music Hall in New York.

Index

Advertiser index 2A
Classified Section C
Crossword 4E
Entertainment 8D
Legals 6-7C
Business Section G
Montana Section B
Montana Parade Section E
Obituaries, records 2B
Opinion, letters 10-11A
Sports Section D
TV listings Section F

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LAND DEVELOPMENT

Paradise: Newcomers not prepared for primitive environment

FROM 1A

for life in the wild.

At any given time, about 50 residents can be found living off 6,100 acres that have been divided into two subdivisions, Missouri River Ranches and Eagle Canyon Ranch. The development is a daily topic among local residents who gather for coffee at the O'Connell Store in Craig.

"I hear it every morning," store owner Pat O'Connell said wryly. "While a few of the families' children are enrolled in public schools in Craig or 23 miles north in Cascade, most are home-schooled — prompting local residents to wonder how thorough an education the children are getting."

Though some of the newcomers are honest and hard-working, area residents believe the development has attracted a number of questionable characters: people who steal eggs from neighboring chicken houses, for example, or break into existing cabins.

So many of the newcomers have taken advantage of Cascade's charity food bank that the organization has been forced to limit families to three months of food a year. "We were spoiling them," the director of the food bank, Linda Loveland, said. "Equally, if not more troublesome, is the development's effect on the land."

Builded roads have triggered erosion along mountainsides. Newcomers are chopping down trees to build log cabins. In the privacy of the woods poaching is commonplace, newcomers say. As humans move in, other animals are fleeing time-honored habitat.

"It's really sad to see it chopped up," said Jim Williams, a wildlife biologist with the state Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. "That area is rich in wildlife diversity: elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, black bear, mountain lion, and turkey blue grouse — a lot of species with inherent natural and recreational value as well," Williams said.

"When they get subdivided, large tracts of land that become virtually inaccessible for recreation forevermore for sportsmen in the state."

Bruce Knudsen, the area warden for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, echoes his colleague's sentiments. "There are people who say, 'This is the way we want it. We want to live this way,'" Knudsen said. "They've brought in generators, maybe done some water work, maybe some sewer work."

"But the ones living in old camps and basically tarpaper shack-type things, you wonder what they're doing to the land."

Local developer owns land

Local residents wonder not just what, but why. Across Montana, developers are converting ranches into rural subdivisions, forever altering unspoiled landscapes. In this case, though, the land in question belongs to John D. Buchanan, a Great Falls developer and ex-banker who made his fortune long before he began developing his land in Craig.

Acting through Montana Recreational Properties Inc., a corporation he formed with a couple of developers from Deer Lodge, Jim and Debra Lane, Buchanan is selling a patchwork of parcels for roughly \$1,000 an acre in contrast to the \$20,000-\$30,000 for developed land.

Contract-for-deed means buyers aren't given title to their property until they've paid the full amount; in this case for 15 years. Buyers who pull up stakes before then often disappear without recouping any of their investment.

As it happens, neither state nor county government has the authority to review the quality of roads, the adequacy of sewage disposal or any economic impacts wrought by the two side-by-side subdivisions on Buchanan's land.

Before 1993, as long as they extended 30 acres, tracts of land in Montana were exempt from Montana's zoning laws. Buchanan and the Lanes saw to it that parcels in their development were at least 20.01 acres in size.

The absence of oversight vexes some officials. "There's going to be a cost connected with this somewhere down the road," predicts Mike Aders, a regional supervisor for Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

It bothers local residents as well. So, too, does the fact that, where Buchanan's land north of Craig, taxes are concerned, few of the newcomers appear to be carrying their share of the load.

Like a number of his neighbors, Nowakowski, a highway patrolman, also resents what he sees as the move to live behind the development. "It's the slinky back that's all it is," he said. "It's just a way of taking a large piece of property and carving it up into many small parcels of property so you can make a huge profit."

"People are being told that 'you can come out here, there's all

this hunting and game, we're going to take care of the roads and you're going to get jobs.' Then they get here and fall on hard times. Then it's local government's responsibility to take care of these people."

Denying responsibility

Privately some of the newcomers also complain they've been sold a bill of goods — that conditions inside the development make it seem designed for high turnover. The Lanes visit the site so seldom that most property buyers have never met the couple, they said. "I don't think they want any of us to stay," said one.

Buchanan refused to discuss the development at length with the Tribune. Contacted by phone, he claimed he no longer had any connection with the land. "I said it," he said.

According to court documents, he did in fact sell the land — in a contract-for-deed to Montana Recreational Properties Inc., the company Buchanan owned 50-50 with Jim and Debra Lane. Until the company pays for the land in full, in other words, it belongs to Buchanan.

If the people of Craig are concerned about the development, Buchanan said, "maybe they should have bought the ground from me."

He said, then, after buying the property in 1986, he tried for several years to sell it as a single parcel. "I never got one offer, one proposal at all," he said. "This magnificent land you talk about now."

"I tell you what, it's been hard advertising," she continued one sunny morning, speaking loudly into the chilly air that circled over the be- ginnings of an addition to the cabin and, with a pronounced limp, marked her way over to the dirt yard.

The unpredictable roads bother her, Carol said. She traverses in and out of the ranch with "my four-wheel-drive and a lot of praying."

Axe-deep in goop

Inside the development, there's a universal warning to visitors: If it starts raining, get out. Graded but not gravelled, the miles of roads that crisscross the subdivisions are scarred in some places with ruts a foot and a half deep. When the ground is soaked, the roads are virtually impassable.

Acting as a consultant, the Lewis and Clark County Conservation District Board investigated the roads in May 1993. The board determined that the roads were causing severe runoff, that existing culverts weren't capable of handling the runoff, and that traffic in and out of the development was contributing to the spread of erosion.

The board asked the Lanes to consult them about any future changes on the land, and recommended the developers work with the county road board to correct the roads.

The Lanes say they've hired a certified weed sprayer, but declined to name. The head of the Lewis and Clark County road board in Helena said he's never heard of the Lanes.

The treasurer of the road board said that for three years last spring, Dave Maynard's pickup sat axle-deep in muddy goop. Last summer, Lanna and Louis Gossio and in four months ago after he was thrown out of a similar development near Anaconda for parking with teen-agers and firing off a few rounds.

Like several of his neighbors, V. both also drove disability pay, for a mental condition, he said. He said his days pedaling nine miles to Craig from his property on a red 12-speed bicycle. Then, he buys 12-packs of Schmidt's beer, which he hangs over the rear of his bike and takes back to his four tents.

Townpeople have duly dubbed him the "Unabomber II."

"I drink and smoke pretty much, so this exercise is good for me," V. both admitted one afternoon, struggling to regain his balance after taking a break beneath a big tree.

Several times, problems in the development have prompted residents to call out the Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Department.

For reasons he wouldn't explain, Sheriff Chuck O'Reilly declined to discuss the matter. Cascade County Sheriff Barry Michelson, noting that little if any of the development lies in his own jurisdiction, quipped, "There is a God, isn't there?" The remoteness of these rural subdivisions and the conditions of the roads make law enforcement extremely difficult, Michelson said.

Told that residents of Craig are concerned about the development, Buchanan refused to discuss the issue. He said it's one of his business, but he won't say what's happening on his land.

Jim and Debra Lane also refused to discuss the situation at length with the newspaper. "We're not going to get involved in this," she wrote in a letter to the newspaper. "We expect nothing more from your newspaper," she wrote. "After all that's what is!" Lane went on to deny that the Craig subdivisions are hard-core



Five-year-old Stephanie Rock checks on some neighbors' chickens. Her family moved to Montana from Jackson, Wyo., and before that, California.

These photos by Carol Bradley



to local communities. "There might be a few individuals who have applied for government or private handouts," she wrote. "We would think that each agency handing out funds would police this problem on their own merits."

She also defended the condition of the roads. Like many mountaineers in Montana, she wrote, roads are only seasonal "access," she wrote. "We do not encourage people to move onto the property on a year-round basis. It is rugged and remote property."

Literature implies opposite

The Lanes' promotional literature cites no such limitations, however. An eight-page full-color booklet urges would-be buyers to "Use your land for camping, as a vacation home site or as your permanent residence. It takes the close proximity of schools, medical services and shopping."

For two months Brian Preda worked for the Lanes showing property to prospective buyers, but no longer. He quickly grew disenchanted with the caliber of his new neighbors and with the sales pitch he was

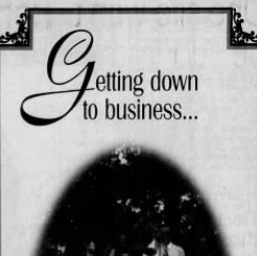
expected to give. Preda has good reason to be frustrated. For a decade he has owned and lived in a cabin located a mile inside the Buchanan land. He's seen in splendid isolation deteriorate into a daily parade of dragging mutants.

Regularly on the rough road to and from his cabin, he stops to pick up beer cans and empty packs of cigarettes. "If they're doing that, the matches are probably going out the window, too," he said. "When all this greenery develops we could be looking at a dangerous situation."

But what infuriates him most is the attitude of some of the new settlers. Preda still shakes his head recalling the afternoon he stood admiring a cinnamon-colored bear from a distance when a pickup with Washington state plates pulled alongside him.

"They were going on about all the hunting they could do back here," he said. "The passengers, 'I finally said to them, 'If you want to come hunt you need to establish residency. And even then there are limits — you can't just shoot everything in sight.'"

"The driver said something to the effect that, 'Who would ever turn us



Getting down to business...

Unabomber II

A number of the residents keep a watchful eye on another newcomer, Marc V. both. A 41-year-old ex-convict from Boston, V. both moved in four months ago after he was thrown out of a similar development near Anaconda for parking with teen-agers and firing off a few rounds.

Like several of his neighbors, V. both also drove disability pay, for a mental condition, he said. He said his days pedaling nine miles to Craig from his property on a red 12-speed bicycle. Then, he buys 12-packs of Schmidt's beer, which he hangs over the rear of his bike and takes back to his four tents.

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