

# The Land of

**I**doubt if Wyoming could ever come up with a better state logo than the one they have. The bucking horse is standing almost on his head, with his front feet planted, his hind feet about as high as they can go and his back arched like a spitting tom cat. On his back, a cowboy is almost perpendicular to the ground, leaning far back, clinging tightly with his feet and throwing his arm wide to maintain his balance.

The combination of the horse's determination not to be conquered and stay free and the equally tough determination on the part of the cowboy to stay with him, exemplifies our idea of the way Wyoming folks feel about life. They don't expect it to be easy and they are willing to work hard or even fight to get their fair shake. They love their freedom and their land that looks to be the essence of freedom. We like that.

While we grew up almost 1,000 miles away, the state is not unfamiliar to us. As a kid, I was infatuated with anything that had to do with cowboys and maybe still am. I was fed an early diet of first hand cowboy stories by a favorite uncle. Early in the twentieth century, his sister and her husband left Illinois and homesteaded a ranch near Carlisle, WY. Later, Uncle Frank traveled out to stay with them and help on the ranch. Devil's Tower was next door and he rode into Sundance for a Saturday night fling at dances and a beer or two. When it was time to come back to Illinois, he rode to St. Louis, sleeping on hay in a boxcar and paid for his passage by tending several carloads of horses being shipped to St. Louis from the ranches. He came back full of great cowboy stories.

It was heady stuff for a ten year old and each time I get a chance to go to Wyoming or any of the western states, I am still in awe of the vastness, the look of an untamed land and the idea that I could jump on a horse's back and ride forever. (Well, a mile or two anyway before saddle sores!)

So the same feeling prevailed when we spent a week in Wyoming right after attending the NAWEOA conference in July. The first time we came over a rise and saw the road stretching endlessly ahead of us across the green valley and the snow capped mountains on the horizon, it was there. The old feeling of awe and the power of the land was as strong as ever.

So we want to tell you a little about the

wardens of Wyoming that we had a chance to meet on this short visit and something about that wonderful environment they work in.

A week of course, just gives you a taste. It seemed we spent half the trip in the seat of the rental car. Nothing is next door here. The state is the ninth largest in the U.S. It's 375 miles from South Dakota and Nebraska on the east, to Idaho on the west. 276 miles from Colorado on the south, to Montana on the north. Within those 97,000 square miles there is almost 27 million acres of public land. There is a lot of room to roam in this state.

In that much area you will find one of the most diverse landscapes in the nation. Prairies meet the mountains and the mountains are interspersed with huge valleys full of farm crops, hay fields and pastures. It is a vacationers dream. It has two of the most famous National Parks in the nation. Grand Teton NP and Yellowstone, both in the upper NW corner. Flaming Gorge, a National Recreation area is in the SW corner.

You can follow history by taking the Mormon trail or the Oregon trail. Wyoming was crossed in every direction with folks feeling the wanderlust. Fortunately a few had good sense enough to stop and realize they what they were crossing and stayed right here. As you cross the state, you cross the continental divide with rivers flowing to the Mississippi on one side and to the Pacific on the other. You can start at 3,000 feet (above sea level) and climb to 13,000. You can bathe in hot mineral springs or in an icy mountain brook. In the summer you may have 30-60 days above 90F and in the winter it can be so cold you don't want to think about it. If you want all around diversity in most respects of life, here is the place. The only thing you won't find here is traffic jams and nosy people. Wyoming folks are firm believers in minding your own business, a trait that needs to spread all over the U.S.

What you will find is more wildlife (600 different species) than there are people. This is true only because of the efforts of Wyoming Game and Fish and their people and the fore runners of today's wildlife experts. One hundred years ago, people thought there was so much wildlife here that it could never be expended. Of course they were wrong. Here are some samples which is chronicled in the book, "The History of Wildlife Management in Wyoming" which was written by Neal

Blair and published by the G&F Department in 1987.

**December 1875** - A rancher and friend killed 97 antelope in one day. The same year a hunting party killed 100 elk, extracted the teeth, skinned the hides and left all the meat to rot. 3,000 elk hides were brought to Union Pacific railroad stations for shipment in a six month period. Summer 1876 - A group of soldiers, camped on the Big Goose caught 15,000 trout on grasshoppers. One said the trout were so thick in the stream, that when you threw a grasshopper in, they had to wait and take turns to bite it. October 1877 - Antelope carcasses were sold on the street for \$1.50 each. One man stated that he went hunting for one half hour and killed 26 antelope by taking only 32 shots in those 30 minutes. 1879 - the Territorial legislature passed a bill which would offer twenty-five cents bounty for each eagle or hawk that was killed and brought in. 1881 - 20,000 deer hides, 53,000 antelope and 5,000 elk were shipped down the Yellowstone river alone that year. 1889 - The last known wild buffalo in Wyoming was killed.

## *But change was coming —*

**1869** - The first Territorial Legislature passed a bill which offered some protection for fish and game, but it only had 233 words in the entire law. It regulated sale of fish and game but nothing toward limits for taking. The fine was \$50 and an informer was given 25% of the fine. 1878 - A contingent of soldiers were placed in Yellowstone and used to patrol for poachers in the park. 1882 - Moose and mountain goat were afforded some protection in a new law. 1884 - The Legislature passed a bill to build a jail and man it with a constable in Yellowstone. The State effort however was not greatly appreciated by the Federal government. 1885 - The first hatchery was built and for the next five years some two and one half million trout were hatched and released in state waters. 1895 - It was made a felony to kill a wild buffalo or bison. The fish commissioner was named as state game warden and was allowed to have 20 deputies. In 1896, the first warden, Albert Nelson was named to the position. In 1899 the provision for a state game warden was revised and a salary of \$1,200 a year was paid and Deputies were paid \$3 a day. Finally an effort was made to set up a licensing

# Bucking Horses

system in 1903. In the argument for a license it was noted that 31 states and most provinces of Canada already had a license system. For instance the first license was issued in New Jersey in 1873. In 1903 Maine had a \$15 non-resident license that brought in over \$25,000 to state coffers. Illinois took in \$95,000 that year even though their license was only \$1.00. Wyoming had only taken in \$299 that year. A license was finally put into effect.

The State Game commission was set up in 1911, changed to cover both Game and Fish in 1921 and revised in 1937 to about what it is now. The results of their efforts is readily seen in the state today and was evident to us in our travels.

## TRAVELING WYOMING

Coming from Colorado Springs and NAWEOA, the easiest way was up I-25 into the SE corner and right into the Capitol of Cheyenne. Here was a good place to start our tour. We were a little apprehensive, for we knew this was the week of "Cheyenne Days" and we were worried about traffic, crowds and filled hotels. But our worry was for naught as we experienced none of these. The Headquarters of Wyoming Game and Fish was easy to find and the folks there most genial.

We had always been a little mixed up as to just how this Department worked. We had seen the titles of Chief Game Warden and Chief Fish Warden and had been familiar with the name Rex Corsi for years as their Chief Game Warden. We knew he was retired. We once thought they were perhaps two separate agencies, such as they have in Pennsylvania.

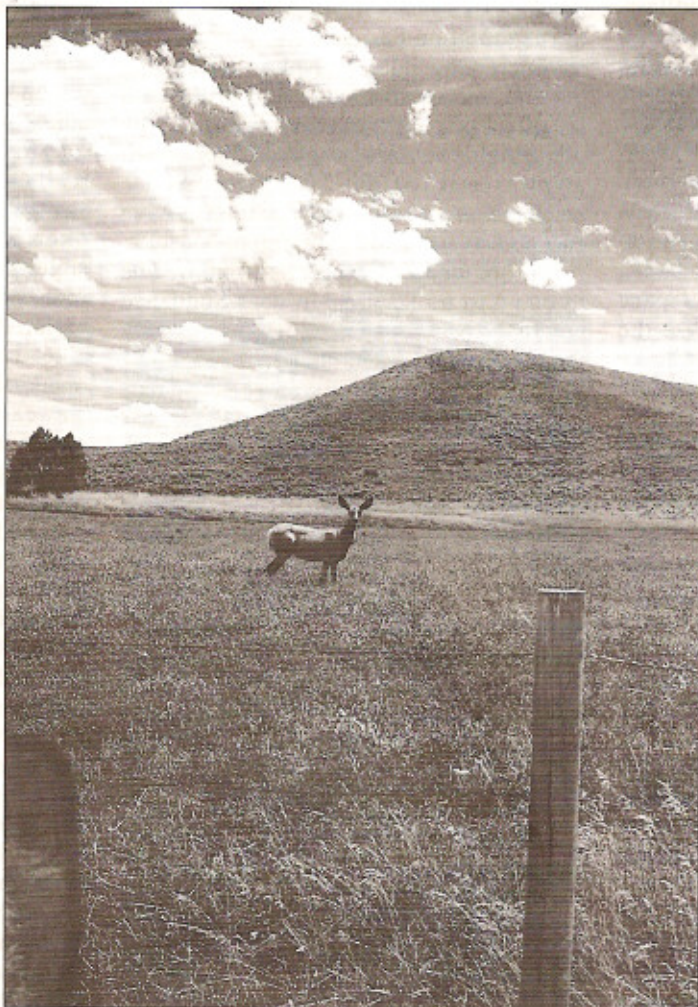
So our first stop was to see Russ Pollard, who has been our contact in the Department for a few years. Russ was able to straighten out the puzzle for us. First of all there is just one agency. Within it there is a fish division and a game division and

they have kept the warden titles for the each division head. The head man in each division is still referred to as the Chief Warden. Mike Stone heads up Fisheries, but since he has no enforcement folks working for him, we stuck pretty much to the Wildlife side. The Chief Game Warden is Jay Lawson. He came to Russ's office to welcome us and visit. Jay has two assistant chiefs, Harry Harju, who works out of this office and Terry Cleveland who has his office in Casper. Jay then took us to meet the Director, John Baughman. We enjoyed our visit with him and was impressed with a wall full of fine buck antelope heads. It is great to see a Director with those kinds of interests.

Despite the title, Jay Lawson is actually far more than chief warden, as he is over the entire wildlife division. This includes the biologists and management people as well as the wardens. A former warden, who came up through the ranks, Jay reminds you instantly of the movie actor from the western television series called "The Virginian" and another perhaps "Rawhide". I think the TV character's name was Rowdy, a blond curly headed handsome actor. Jay could be a twin. It is great to see an ex-warden in these positions in DNR agencies and it is common here in Wyoming. I wish it was in more agencies.

Russ Pollard is on Jay's staff as a law enforcement coordinator, but as in many western states he has no line authority over field wardens. They work directly for a regional supervisor. But Russ is the immediate supervisor for seven wildlife investigators (one for each region) and has the watercraft program as another responsibility. His investigators work out of each regional office and are more plain clothes or overt rather than covert people and handle the lengthier and more involved cases that field wardens do not have time for. It's a good system.

While we were at headquarters, we took time to say "Hi" to Chris Madson, who is supervisor of publications. He edits one of the finest Fish and Game Department magazines (Wyoming's) in the nation in our opinion. As a young warden in Illinois, I was friends with Chris's dad, John, who was an outstanding writer and speaker and worked for Olin Mathieson in their conservation section. Olin is the maker of Winchester firearms and ammunition and once was known as Western Cartridge Co. Chris has inherited a lot of his Dad's talents. His dad had a "down home" voice and a dry manner of speaking and a humor that matched it. We reminisced about the good old days at Nilo farms where hunts with fine guns and champion hunting dogs were the norm.



Wildlife was plentiful and easily seen as we traveled the Wyoming highways.

After we finished in the Cheyenne headquarters, we were urged to make Casper region our first stop. Scott Talbot, also an ex-warden, is the regional supervisor and he had written us in advance (as had warden Scott Bragonier of this region) inviting us to make sure we stopped here. I am not sure we have ever seen a region DNR office to rival this one. Many agencies would give their eyeteeth to have this facility for a state or provincial headquarters.

Scott took us for a tour and it is some facility. It sits on the banks of the Platte River and was built with no expense seemingly spared by a petroleum company. Eventually the company moved and the Department with a great deal of foresight bought the entire complex for about one million dollars. (well below cost) It includes a storage yard and maintenance shops and has untold square feet in the main building. I think even the janitor here must have a better office than I ever had in my whole career. There is ample room for almost any need, including a large meeting room, which is loaned to public organizations such as sportsmen clubs for meetings. It had a huge walk-in evidence freezer and a space for lab testing and similar work. On the tour, we ran into Asst. Chief Terry Cleveland and has a chance for a short visit with him. As we traveled we learned he is well liked by field folks and we can see why.

This region is about representative of all seven, in that of the nine game wardens, there are four who have increased responsibilities or specialties in addition to their districts. This includes; a wildlife damage control person, a firearms instructor, a custody and control officer for evidence and an enforcement coordinator. While these four assignments do pay some additional salary, they are not supervisors. Everyone in the region works directly for Scott Talbot and he has no intermediate supervisors such as Sergeants are in many agencies. These four just take the special involvement in certain areas out of Scott's hair and see these things get done. Then the investigator works out of this office and confines his effort mostly to this region, but is directly responsible to Russ Pollard in Cheyenne. The region is rounded out then with four game biologists and



Coal mining operations did not bother this trophy antelope buck as he rests on a levee.

clerical personnel.

One of the interesting things at the Casper office was a display of large game mounts that have been confiscated from poachers. They are displayed with the story of the violation beside them. It makes for an interesting public display. Some one got too interested though and broke into the office one night and carried away some of the highly valuable trophies. Their worth might exceed \$10,000. The office has since had its security increased. The thieves have escaped so far.

Before we left Casper, Scott invited us to come to a patrol cabin near Sundance where the officers were going the next day for firearms training. He promised a surprise at the end of the day. So after spending the night at Douglas, we headed across the great grassland that covers the eastern side of the state. It seems like an endless prairie and as we went we saw antelope everywhere along the route. It is no wonder the centerpiece of the Department shoulder patch features an antelope. A number of years ago, Warden Bernie Holz and his wife Sue had us to their home near Torrington, for an antelope hunt and we left with a new respect for these wild goats and a very red face. To say we practiced conservation is an understatement. I am not sure I even scared an antelope let alone killed one. This time we drove up within shotgun distance of many. They seem to know when season is and what vehicle has no guns. Bernie is another warden who has moved up and is now the region supervisor in the Jackson/Pinedale region. I was sorry we did not get there to see him and Sue.

This was the route of the Oregon trail and at Guernsey and many other places,

there are deep ruts in the barren rock cut by thousands of steel wheeled emigrant wagons. Now the steel wheels are on coal trains that wind for miles out of the coal mines going one way with heaps of black coal and the other with empties. Someone told us that a train passes a given spot every ten minutes and we could believe it. Highly prized for its clean burning, compared to eastern coal, it is being mined so extensively we fear Wyoming may some day just sink several feet when the shafts cave in. It does not seem to bother wildlife for we took

a photo of a trophy antelope buck, who was resting on the top of a levee around a fuel tank at one coal mine. A crane worked right behind him. We headed north from Douglas and then east almost into South Dakota. This route took us right through the Thunder Basin National Grasslands which is comprised of some 1.8 million acres of public land. The trip from Douglas to Sundance was about 175 miles but really a pleasure to drive as the road stretched flat and open for miles and we often had no other car in sight. The sensible speed limits of 65 on 2 lane and 75 on four lane sure made these long drives a lot easier. We went over thru Newcastle to take a scenic route along Beaver creek just inside the state line. As we passed thru Newcastle we were reminded of the old nursery rhyme which had something about bringing coal to Newcastle. This town is named after the Newcastle upon Tyne in England and just like the nursery rhyme, coal here is top dog with the huge Cambria mine nearby. The coal is produced in such a quantity that an engine pulls a long line of empties under the chutes and it seems they fill without ever stopping their forward motion.

As we said at the start, Sundance was a part of my childhood memories and as we drove up the main street, I could just see Uncle Frank getting off his horse at the dance. We did not go over to Devil's Tower for we have been there several times, but if you go near, be sure and see it. It is our first National Monument and looks like God might have just taken some modeling clay in his hands, cupped them together and squeezed out this huge tree stump looking rock. It has almost vertical appearing walls

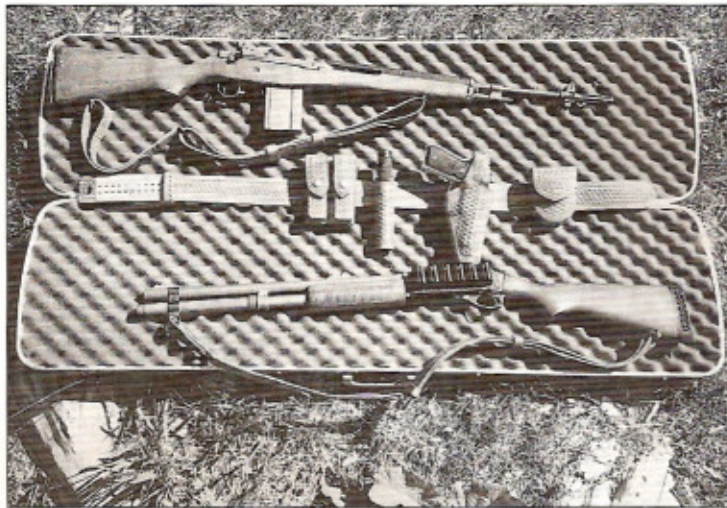
that tower 1,280 feet above the valley around it. On top, it is flat, only 275 feet across tapering up from 1,000 feet wide at the base. I suspect it would be easy to land a space ship there, just as was done in the movie, "Close Encounters of a Third Kind".

We turned instead toward the Black Hills of South Dakota and just before running out of Wyoming territory, came to the Department patrol cabin nestled next to a trout stream under the protection of a high bluff. A neat setting. Patrol cabins are sensible aids for wardens like a 4wd vehicle.

After a long patrol in hunting season and faced with a 3-4 hour ride home, it is an inviting place to spend the night with its traditional wood range for cooking and heat and a cabinet stocked with food. Most western states have them scattered at strategic locations.

The firearm qualification was underway when we got there and was held over in a meadow at the base of the bluff. To get there, one had to walk a 4x12 plank across the trout stream. I teetered across hoping I would not embarrass myself, but after several trips it came easy. The Wyoming wardens carry a fine assortment of firearms. Their sidearm is a model 925SS, 9mm Beretta and this nestles in a good set of light tan leather carrying two extra clips, an extending baton and cuffs. This is complimented by a Department furnished 12 gauge pump with an extended magazine and extra five shell holder on the stock. Lastly they have a M-14 military rifle that has been completely rebuilt. This rifle was obtained from the Navy for the modest price of \$39 plus shipping. They qualify with handguns on silhouettes at the standard yardages then switch to the shotgun to shoot at metal targets. The program requires them to expend the shells in the shotgun and then still under time, slip in one extra shell and fire it. We noticed several different methods of doing this from trying to retain it between two fingers of the left hand (difficult and pump at the same time) - to letting it protrude from the top of a front jeans pocket. Their uniform pants are blue jeans by the way.

Then for the M-14 they back up to 200 yards and shoot without a scope at a 12 inch square plate of steel which is hanging



The firepower of a Wyoming warden - navy surplus M-14, 9mm Beretta & a 12 gauge with extended magazine.

on a single wire. Despite having no scope, the plate clanged loudly many times and several times the shooting stopped because someone cut the suspending wire. Intentionally? Now that would be stuff for cowboy movies.

Just for fun, we asked Scott what might happen if a coyote would run across the bluff while the rifle practice was going on? He laughed and said, "He may not make it!"

After a long afternoon of qualifying we returned to the cabin and noticed a bonfire going in the back yard. Being pretty warm,



Scott Talbot, Regional Supervisor at Casper, prepares to uncover a juicy beef loin that he cooked all day for us in a rock lined pit. It was delicious!

we asked about it. "That's the surprise," we were told. In a bit, Scott and one of the wardens began to tear the fire apart and then raking back the ashes, began to dig in the dirt. After excavating a sizeable hole, they dragged out a bulky package. Taking it over on the grass, they began to unwrap damp and steaming burlap bags and bared a shiny object. The surprise was a full beef loin wrapped in foil and fully cooked to a turn.

Scott told us he learned the art from his Dad, who had learned it from an old sheepherder. Scott with some help,

had came about 6am and dug a four foot square hole about 3 feet deep and lined it with stones. He then built a roaring fire on the stones and when it was down to coals, put the wrapped meat in wet gunny sacks and then covered the entire thing and left it to cook on the stored heat. Since he wanted to eat a little sooner than his recipe called for, he had also built a fire on top of the pit, later in the afternoon, to add some heat from above. In addition to the loin, they had buried potatoes and these plus some side dishes made a fine supper. Pat and I had fortunately brought along several pies and it was a great feast. Scott says they often do this in hunting season, putting the meat and potatoes in the hole before leaving the cabin in the morning and after a day's patrol, return to the cabin at dark with a fine meal hot and ready.

After the meal, we sat around and swapped stories and as Pat and I left for a Sundance motel, there were bedrolls coming out of trucks and a few small tents pitched as most of them prepared for a sleep over. It was a fine time!

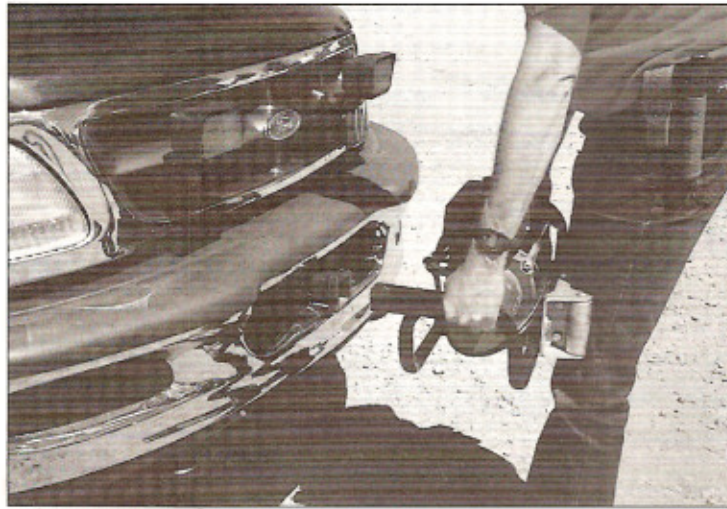
In the morning we headed west again on I-90 thru Gillette and Buffalo. On his way home (here in Buffalo) from the NAWEOA meeting, Rick Pallister stopped by the patrol cabin for a short visit. Rick is a NAWEOA director and had Gary Martin from Ontario riding with him for a visit. Our schedule prevented us from stopping at his Buffalo home for more visiting with Rick and Gary. We drove on to the region office at Sheridan and we were now almost in Montana.

Although smaller than Casper, the region office at Sheridan would be the envy of many agencies. We were welcomed

there by Gary Shorme, another ex-warden who now is the region supervisor. He gave us the \$20 tour and they had much of the same amenities as Casper. When we went to the walk in freezer, we met Lynn Jahnke, another ex-warden who is the wildlife management coordinator here. In looking at the wide variety of animals in the locker, he showed us a small immature cougar. It had been caught and killed by coyotes and was about the size of a grey fox which we know coyotes also prey upon. Also in this area was some separate freezers and one was full of small plastic bags. These are DNA samples from a large variety of species. The Department has an excellent lab facility in Cheyenne that is up to date as possible and they are building a DNA bank of every conceivable specie of fish and wildlife from every part of the state. Sheridan as well as other regions have been taking samples and saving them at every opportunity. DNA testing is going to be one of the most important enforcement techniques that has come along in a long time and Wyoming has a head start in making sure there will be a comprehensive bank from which scientists can make comparisons. Every agency needs to be doing this.

While we were talking, warden Terry Cram came in and we had a chance to visit with him. He was in the process of moving his horses in anticipation of being gone for awhile. We mentioned to him that we wanted to use a photo of a warden and his horse on the cover of this issue and was sorry he was not going to be around with the horses.

After leaving Sheridan and heading toward the Big Horn river, we stopped in Dayton and gave Bob Petersen a call. We had talked to him at NAWEOA and promised to stop. We got to his home just in time to say good bye to his wife and daughter as the daughter was performing on stage in Sheridan that evening. Bob's Department house lies just outside a six foot tall fence that serves as a boundary to a huge wildlife area that is the wintering grounds for elk. The fence keeps them off of private ground and hay stacks. The Department farms parts of the wildlife area with forage crops just for elk. Bob I think told us he had lived in this house for 19 years. It most certainly



**We like this power winch that fits into trailer hitch on both front & rear of Wyoming trucks.**

was in a scenic setting and handy for all he had to do was mount his horse and ride through a gate and he was on the 5,000 acre area. He also has another large wintering area (8,000 acres) elsewhere within his patrol boundaries. We had a good visit at Bob's home.

We spent the night at a lodge at the edge of the mountains between Sheridan on route 14 where you sometimes see your tail lights beside you as you make the hairpin turns. It is definitely a scenic highway. When we went in to breakfast the next morning, we saw the familiar red shirt of a warden. It was Terry Cram and outside he had his horse trailer and two horses. He was ready for us to shoot some photos that we had talked about the day before. No problem to get up before breakfast, load two horses and drive 40 miles of windy mountain road - just so some magazine folks could take some pictures. That's just Wyoming hospitality.

After taking some photos of Terry and his horse. We thanked Terry and headed on to Cody.

In Cody, which is sort of the east gateway to Yellowstone, we went directly to see USF&W agent Tim Eicher. Tim is a good friend of IGW and a former New Mexico state warden. We have a separate story on him elsewhere in this issue. Tim had great plans for us while we were in Cody, but as we tell in his story, he had to take off that evening for Alaska, so we had lunch and talked a mile a minute and gathered as much info as we could while we had time with him. We had also had plans to meet several state wardens, especially Tim Fagan, who we were told might fill in for Tim on the horseback ride Tim had

planned for us. But Tim Fagan and another warden were on an assignment to haul horse feed back into a remote patrol cabin so there would be feed there when the wardens use the cabin this hunting season. The only way in with it was by pack train and they had some 30 miles to go and would be gone the entire time we were in Cody. Gary Brown, the region supervisor was also gone, so Tim arranged for us to have an afternoon with a warden we could really relate to. He was Jim Oudin, a retired officer. Prior to his retirement in April, after 40 years with WY G&F,

Jim was the investigator for the Cody region and as he said in his mentor story, Tim felt a loss when Jim retired even though he had known him only a short time. Jim never let up, because of longevity or age and Tim says he worked just as hard at the end of his career as he did all of it. So we went out to Jim's horse ranch, where he raises quarter horses. He offered to take us around the countryside in his truck, an offer we quickly accepted and spent the afternoon doing just that. Jim took us by the Two Dot ranch. While many wardens have an empty feeling when hunting season comes after retirement and still feel the pull to go out and grab bad guys, Jim does something about it. He just heads for the Two Dot and suppresses the urge by chasing bad guys. He has a deputy sheriff commission and upon retirement was hired by the ranch to make sure game laws are not broken on the ranch. Now this might not sound like a very big job, but we were in awe when he told us that the Two Spot constitutes some 300,000 acres and has been owned for many years by a banking official in Paris, France! The man is very interested in good conservation practices and thus he hired Jim to see that the enforcement end was taken care of. Could you possibly imagine being the owner of 300,000 acres, in some of the most scenic mountain land in the nation? Be hard to comprehend. I'd have a hard time staying in Paris if I had this place to come to. So about one third of the year, life has not changed for Jim. He gave us a grand tour and on the way home the sky darkened severely and up on the top of the mountain, you could see the rain pouring down. In a short time it reached us and was so heavy,

complete with hail, that it was hard to drive. Jim looked up at the mountain top and said, "Hope the wife found some cover!" We asked where she was? "Oh, up there," Jim said, pointing up to the peak, "She is on horseback and on a week's pack trip across the mountain with some lady friends." We had thought the weather was a problem for us in the pickup on blacktop. We could not imagine how it might be huddled in a saddle in a slicker, perhaps under a big pine tree. We felt admiration for Mrs. Oudin for setting out on such a trip, but Jim said she could ride as well as he and they apparently do a lot of it. We bid Jim good bye at his ranch and headed for a dry motel, thinking again of Mrs. Oudin up on that mountain in the hail.

The next day, we were to meet Mac Black, a veteran warden who had been asked to work with us in getting more warden/horse photos for a cover. We were determined to have a Wyoming warden on horse for the cover and from experience we (and you) know how poor we are in the photography business.

Fortunately, Mac was a very patient man and an exceptionally nice guy. We went out to a pasture where he began to blow the truck horn and then got out and began to yell. Before long, his two horses and one pack mule appeared over the hill and came to the truck. He rewarded them with a bucket of horse pellets and then picking out the brown or bay horse, he loaded him in a trailer which was parked in the pasture. We hooked the truck up and took off, looking for a site to take the photo. We drove over half of the state and would you believe even into Montana. Not that Wyoming did not have the scenery, but we had dilly dallied so long, it was time for lunch and the closest restaurant was in Cooke City, MT. Mac couldn't believe we had been here before, but once in 1989, when we were staying with Montana warden Randy Wuertz and his wife Maribeth, Randy got a call to pick up a road killed moose in Cooke City. We went along. Randy had to drive down into Wyoming thru Yellowstone and then back up into Montana, about 40 miles, to get the carcass. Not often we get back to the same place, especially a remote one.



**Antlers are a big business in Wyoming. Velvet is even more sought after for the eastern trade by poachers.**

But Mac was patient and we shot about 40 shots of him and the horse. We appreciated Mac's willingness to be so accommodating and his giving us so much of his time.

Being so close to Yellowstone, you might think we would have went on to the park, but we have been there several times and once even stayed at the Old Faithful lodge in the park. There was construction on the road into the park from the Cody side and a long delay to get there. Plus we were short of time and we cover some of the recent conservation problems in the park in our story on Tim Eicher. So we



**The Casper District wardens gathered at the patrol cabin near Sundance for firearms qualification.**

bypassed the park on this trip as we did the Tetons. We have also been in the Tetons and while we would have liked to have seen Bernie and Sue Holz at Jackson, we had just not allotted enough time to cover the whole state. The Teton area does have some of the best scenery in the state and we have always been fascinated by the National Elk refuge. Don't miss it if you come here or get near.

Late that afternoon, we hurried south passing thru Meeteetse and found a somewhat high priced hotel room at Thermopolis. This is a touristy area too, for the town is celebrating 100 years this year and has the worlds largest mineral hot spring. Big Spring spews forth millions of gallons of 135 degree water each day that eventually ends up in the Big Horn river.

But we were meeting two wardens at Landers and had been promised a boat ride the first thing. Bob Treblecock and Brad Gibb met us on the highway at just about the entrance to Boysen State Park and Reservoir. Here we boarded a 19 foot Sea Nymph patrol boat with a 140 Johnson and took a ride around the reservoir. We always get a kick out of the western lakes, for we are so used to wooded hills surrounding our reservoirs and here the hills are barren as can be. The lake is some 25 miles long and about 4 miles at its widest point. It has a power generation dam and the depth is about 100 feet. It has a good fish population of turbot, trout, walleye and crappie. Busy as any reservoir in the spring and summer it is also popular in the winter with a many as 2,000 ice fishermen on a weekend. The wardens patrol it in a snow mobile then. As every where, they have problems with jet skis or personal watercraft and have a law which says one must keep 100 feet distance between a jet ski and another boat. This eliminates some of the danger from jumping wakes of other boats. They also have the red flag law (which we first saw in Nevada) which says any boat that has a passenger in the water (skiing, swimming or etc) must display a red flag on a tall pole while the person is out of the boat. Good idea. Several interesting things here - the first is a railroad that runs along side the lake and then disappears into the ground and goes below the water level and comes out below the

dam again. The second thing was that the area below the dam and along the river is part of an Indian reservation. The Indians decided that they wanted to stock some big horns in the canyon, but the cliffs are too steep and there is no roads in the canyon. But there is the railroad which follows the river. So with their cooperation, the sheep were loaded in horse trailers and a crane lifted the trailers on railroad flat cars. The engine took the cars into the canyon and at a release site, the trailers were lifted off, the sheep released and the trailers brought back out on the train again. A unique method of stocking.

The last is hard to tell, for it is not often I admit to making a mistake and this was a big one. The river runs along the highway from Thermopolis and is very fast. We were going down hill all the way from Thermopolis and I remarked to Pat that I was thought we would never get to the bottom. She said she thought we were going up hill. I laughed and told her she would never see water run that fast uphill. When we met the wardens she coyly asked which way the river ran? They said downhill, but that we had been *climbing* on the highway ever since we left Thermopolis. They said the way the rock strata is slanted it just appears you are going down hill. When they learned the reason for the question they (with fraternal loyalty) said everyone thinks the road runs down hill, trying to make me look less foolish, but I would have lost the farm on that bet. Perhaps it is time to get out of the nature business when you can't tell which way a river is running. It's crazy country anyway - the river is called the Wind River from its beginning on the continental divide near Dubois and then when it reaches Thermopolis, the same river is called the Big Horn from there on into Montana. Bob said he did not know why. Besides rivers should not run north anyway!

We said goodbye to Brad and Bob took us for a land tour. The wildlife management coordinator at the office, Joe Nemick, was kind enough to borrow us his auto so we would have more room. Bob then took us to see another crazy river called the Little Popo Agie. Don't ask! This fast running river tears along south of Lander and then suddenly just dives underground and disappears. The spot is a state park appropriately called, "The Sinks". Then in less than a mile (although hydrologists say it meanders a lot farther underground) the Popo Agie pops up out of the ground again

and resumes its course like a normal river. It confuses heck out of the fish though. The place it reappears is down pretty deep in a canyon and the park has built a viewing platform on the edge. When you look down in the crystal clear water, there are an army of huge trout gathered in a herd. They are trying to go up stream, but can't get under the mountain. They were guarded by two fat muskrats. Fish pellets were available out of a coin machine and people are constantly feeding the trout - at least what the muskrats don't get and that seemed to be about every other pellet.

We asked Bob if the presence of such huge trout was not an attraction to poachers and he said that definitely they were. About everything from gigs to nets had been used to try and poach them.

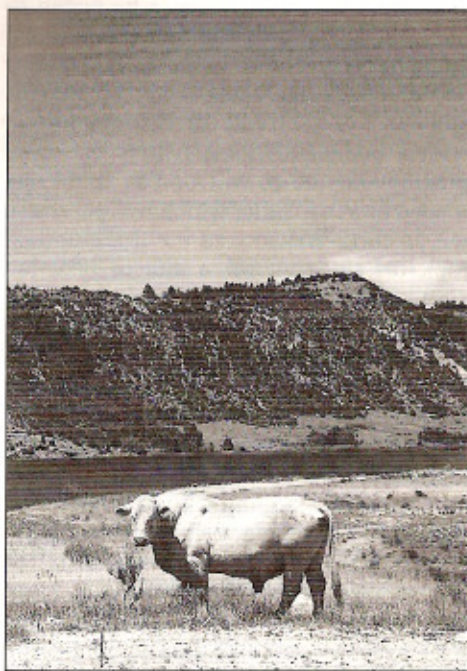
Bob and us then went up on the mountain to check on the progress of a search that was going on. Two days before, a young wife from town, named Amy Bechtel had driven up on the mountain to look for a place to run and train for a competition that required mountain running. She was very physically fit and an experienced runner. However, she had never before ran in the area that she went to, and wanted to explore it to find a good place. She never came home. Her car was found parked along the road up on the mountain, but there was no trace of her. Despite her being in good shape, the time elapsed had caused the searchers to be fearful. A bad fall in a remote spot, an abduction, a mountain lion attack or foul play. There were many theories we found when we got up there, but so far the 100 or so searchers, plus some Forest Service helicopters, had had no luck. The worse was feared. In September when we write this, Amy Bechtel has still not been found and the search has spread nationwide. Some 80,000 posters have been distributed with the information and her photo. 20 billboards have her photo on them and there is a plan to get the posters to hunters state wide so they can be on the look out for her. She seems to have disappeared without a clue. Investigators have went so far as to investigate the possibility that photos of the area where she disappeared may have been taken about the time she disappeared from the Russian Space Station MIR and a request has been made to obtain a look at them to see if they might help. We hope by the time you read this, Amy will have been found.

That evening, Bob and his wife had us over for a BBQ and later in the evening,

region supervisor Kent Schmidlin came over and we had a chance to chat with him.

The next morning we set out for Rawlins, about 120 miles south. Here we were met by Kathy Crofts. Kathy took us to her home/office and showed us some slides of several good cases she had made the past season. Like most of the wardens she goes horseback into the back country to make her best cases. Kathy has two homes. This one in Rawlins, which the Department furnished, that was also her office and the home she shares with her attorney husband in Lander. She commutes between the two homes and spends her time off in Lander. She came to the warden job well experienced in law enforcement as she was a city policeman prior to coming to G&F. It was a good move, for it is easy to tell she loves this job.

Although any one who reads this magazine knows my opinion on so called wild horses (they need tight control and are no different in my mind than feral pigs or goats) But when Kathy told us she had a herd in her district, we asked to go out and see them. With some effort, she found them for us and we were surprised to find many of them to be pure white. One stallion took an interest in us and I even think challenged us a little as he circled us and came closer than the rest. Looking at him and the rest, it was easy to see that these are stock that has been bred from tame horses



Ever see a better "Don't mess with me" look? Open range cattle have the right of way - hit one and you pay for it.

escaped from ranches and there is not a drop of Spanish mustang blood in their bodies. They should not be allowed to ruin the habitat of real wildlife.

But we also had a good chance to see some of the almost trackless and vast land that Kathy has to patrol. It was a fun afternoon and we appreciated her willingness to take us.

Although we had a lot more places we wanted to see and a lot more officers we wanted to visit with, we had come to the end of our time and had to be back in Colorado at the Denver airport by noon the next day. One of the things we wanted to get to, was a kid fishing day the officers association was sponsoring at Laramie on Saturday. Bill Haley had invited us to that. We also wanted to visit with Joe Gilbert in Torrington, as he is President of the Association. We apologize to everyone we did not get to visit with and thank everyone who gave us so much of their time and help. There is so much to see in Wyoming that a week does not do it justice.

## THE WYOMING WARDEN JOB

We know that there are few places any more scenic and lovely to work in than this state. We suspect we might wonder about that statement about mid-January, when the wind chill across the state is about unthinkable and the winter may seem a year long. But how would it be to be a warden here? Here is some idea based on what we know.

There are seven regions in the state and each has a regional supervisor who is over nine or ten wardens and four or five biologists.

The warden in Wyoming is about as pure in responsibility as any where we have ever been, at least in the aspect of the original description of duties when the conservation movement began. Over the years, in most of the nation, the job has pretty much turned into being a natural resource policeman with heavy emphasis on enforcement. In Wyoming, only about 1/3 of a warden's time is spent on enforcement and the rest is spent in almost every phase of natural resource work. They are assigned a territory of responsibility and whatever goes on in that area,



Amy Bechtel

that has to do with natural resources, they are involved in. You name it and they do it. But with this broad responsibility comes a stewardship and a lot of personal freedom to plan their own schedule and work. This creates pride in personal accomplishment, operation of a good district and a satisfied public.

On of the most unique things about this game warden job is that every officer, with that title, is furnished a residence by the Department! They pay no rent, no utilities and no phone bill. Wow, sounds great and are you envious?

BUT- there is a kicker. This home is also the district office and most are identified as such to the public either by a sign or other means. Talk about a warden being the front line of the Department. People therefore have no hesitation to walk right up and if your front door is open, may just walk right in. Hopefully, they stop in the living room. The phone is answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week. No unlisted number in this state as many war-



An officer qualifies with his shotgun on targets out of sight to the left. Sidearm silhouettes are on right. The range is at a patrol cabin near Sundance.

dens elsewhere have become accustomed to. So while the absence of rent, monthly utility bills and repair costs is a real economic plus, there is a price that the officers pay - - great loss of privacy. Lastly, there is a somewhat hidden minus to think about. Mortgage payments are tough, but in most warden lives, the equity they build up over their careers in their homes is probably the largest asset they will have. Personally, I moved up through a series of homes, building most of them myself and when I retired, the sale of our last large house, was the largest part of the nest egg we were able to accumulate. So if you are a Wyoming warden you have to keep this in mind and try and take an amount, equal to what would be a mortgage payment and sock it away untouched for your retirement home. Some officers are buying or have bought other personal property, where they plan on living when they retire, to forestall the big shock of leaving the Department home. This is also a factor in taking a promotion. An investigator position for instance, offers no Department housing. Neither would a regional supervisor or any other position in the Department. So the raise that might come with promotions can be ate up quickly in a new mortgage payment.

While it has its good side, some thought has to be given to how living in Department housing is handled. We will say the several homes we visited were nice as most other wardens have and those officers who have lived in them for some time, have enhanced them beautifully. There are some wardens who maintain a partial residence, especially in summer, elsewhere for their family, but are expected to spend a majority of their time at the provided home and to monitor its telephone.

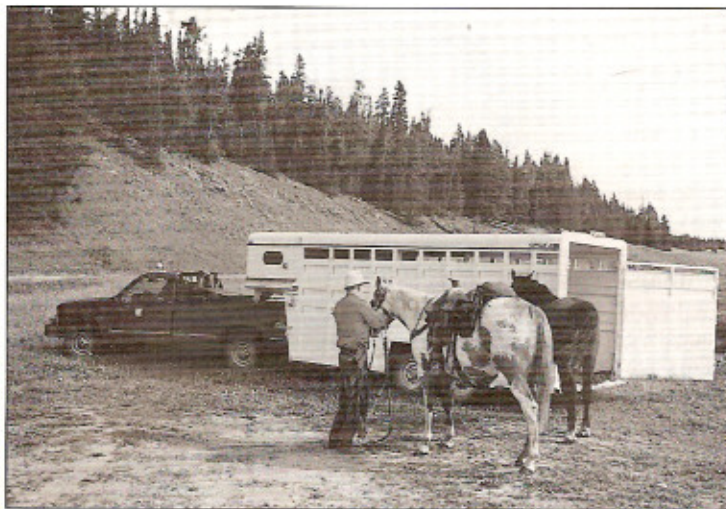
Then the job has another unique stipulation that no other warden in the United States can claim. A game warden here is NOT effected by the Federal Garcia ruling on overtime. When this ruling came out in 1985, most natural resource agencies and their wardens objected to being included under the law. They simply felt they could not function under the hour restrictions and most felt they could not stand the overtime expense that compliance would require. Many objected, but only a few took it as far as court. Most agencies just adapted and little by



little most wardens did too. Most agencies put heavy restrictions on when overtime could be accumulated and most have been paying it with compensatory time off rather than cash. A few like Minnesota bit the bullet and paid a set amount each year to each warden and let them work the necessary overtime to earn it. A few tried to just ignore it and eventually the Feds took them to court and they complied.

But Wyoming was one of a few that fought the ruling, claiming their officers were professionals and therefore exempt. There is a professional exemption provision in the law, but most officers simply could not meet the requirement as enforcement was their main responsibility. Garcia does not recognize law enforcement as one of the professions for exemption. But Wyoming Game and Fish fought it all the way and apparently proved that their wardens only do 30% enforcement and the rest of their time is spent in management/scientific work. They eventually won their case and today the game warden in Wyoming hour's are not tied to Garcia. The exemption only applies to those with the title "game warden" and the region investigators are not exempt and must comply with Garcia. The game wardens receive what is called premium pay. Once they exceed so many hours a month, they receive a one time payment of \$100 and if they exceed a second level, they receive an additional \$100. This premium pay is in lieu of overtime. The Feds never attempted to put biologists under Garcia, so they were always exempt.

The wardens we talked to, had no problem with the exemption, but felt it was necessary for them to get their work done. A warden in Wyoming has perhaps more freedom of self management than most agencies allow their officers. They are no intermediate supervisors in the field. Everyone in the region works for the region supervisor directly. Each warden has an area they are responsible for and everything that has to do with game and fish in that area is their direct responsibility. They work at whatever hour they feel necessary and take time off whenever they feel they can be spared. No one is constantly looking over



Three important pieces of equipment for a Wyoming warden – 1 4WD pickup, a horse trailer & one or two patrol buddies, also with 4-leg-drive.

their shoulder and they realize they will be judged at years end on how well they managed their district, not on what they did today or where they were for an hour. Although Fisheries is a separate division, they have no enforcement personnel. The game warden does all the fish enforcement as well as game and boating. They do all the biological management work in their district that includes everything that effects the well being of all fish and wildlife.

He handles all landowner matters and this is a big job in this state. As in most of the west, despite the less than major impact that agriculture has on the total economy, land owners and especially ranchers rule the bulk of state government. Depredation investigations, prevention and claims are a big part of a warden's work. The state paid out over \$300,000 in depredation claims last year.

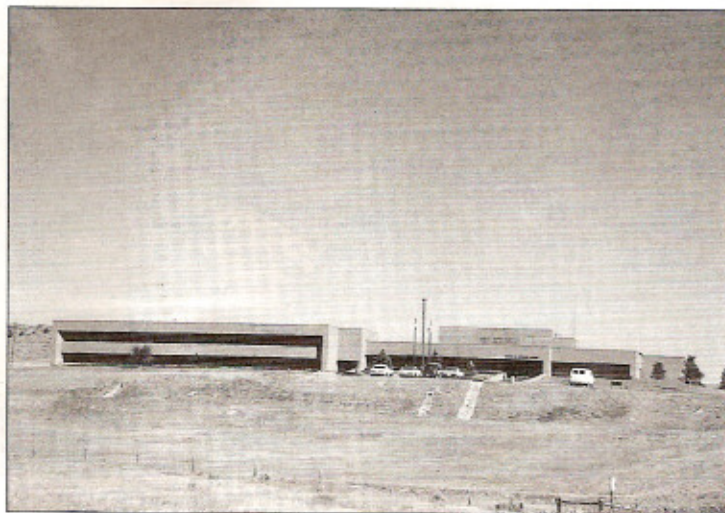
To get the job, an officer must have a

you go over into pure biology or management and thus I think you will find most management employees have once been game wardens. Game wardens and investigators are under the same retirement plan as the state highway patrol. It allows retirement at age 55 with a benefit of 2.25% of a high three year average times the number of years of service. The top percentage allowable is 75% regardless of number of years of service. So you should reach the max in your 33rd year of service. There is a cost of living raise in the retirement program that varies from year to year, but if we read it right it can not exceed 1% of your benefit.

Your vehicle will be a 4wd pickup and in most cases you will provide your own horse for which you will receive some maintenance compensation. Your uniform is very functional. It consists of a bright red shirt and blue Levis, a Stetson hat and probably cowboy boots. There is no mistaking who you are in this distinctive uniform and that is not all bad. If you need anonymity, you just cover the shirt up or wear a civilian shirt. The rest of your uniform is worn by 90% of the population. The shirt has a bright patch featuring an antelope. The badge is badge shaped (not a star) and is rather small by normal police standards.

## FIREARMS

Some of the game laws that got our attention are as follows: Carrying an uncased loaded firearm is permissible in a vehicle but you cannot shoot from the vehicle on a public



The fabulous Game & Fish Regional Office at Casper.

road or hunt on or over a public road. However, if you are hunting for predators on private land, you can shoot from a vehicle on or off a private road. In the same manner you can not use an airplane to take or harass game, but you can use it to hunt and take predators after acquiring a permit. These laws almost make it necessary to catch a poacher killing a protected species red handed. The permissive law puts a harder burden on the warden here than in most places.

The list of predatory animals included coyote, jackrabbit, porcupine, raccoon, red fox, wolf, skunk or stray cat. Predacious birds were included and these were starlings and sparrows. They could be killed at any time.

## SPACE OWNERSHIP

An interesting law declared that the ownership of space above the lands and waters of the state is vested in the owner of the land or water beneath it. It was therefore unlawful to fly an airplane at such a low altitude as to interfere with the existing use of the land or water by the owner and it is unlawful to land an airplane on the land or water of another without their permission except in case of a forced landing where in the pilot is liable for damages caused.

## WARDEN AUTHORIZATION

A game warden is among the peace officers who are authorized to stop any vehicle carrying livestock or poultry of the carcasses thereof and to inspect ownership papers and cargo. Also a dog found in the act of running after or injuring large wild game or livestock may be killed by any peace officer or the owner of the livestock.

## LANDOWNER REIMBURSEMENT

Antelope, deer and elk license have two coupons attached to them. When a hunter kills one of them he must fill out the first coupon and sign it and the coupon remains with the carcass until it is processed. If it was killed on private land, the hunter must fill in the second coupon, deliver it to the landowner and when the landowner presents the coupon to the Department he is reimbursed a fee of \$11 for each coupon turned in. If it is killed on public land, the second coupon is sent to the Department by the hunter and no fee is paid.



Warden Brad Gibb at controls of patrol boat as he and Bob Treblecock showed us Boysen Reservoir.

## DECOY LAW

There is a law that makes it unlawful to discharge a firearm at a simulated wildlife decoy when the decoy is being used by a certified peace officer. Of course the act is only illegal if it was illegal to do the same thing to the animal being simulated. Further, the decoy cannot possess extraordinary characteristics which are unusual for a typical member of the species being simulated. (Meaning we suppose that a decoy deer should not have a huge trophy rack larger than the average buck might have.)

**Licenses** — There is a wild bison license which sells for \$220.00 to a resident and \$1,350.00 to a non resident. Non resident license for elk is \$400 as is a lifetime small game and fishing license for a resident. Non-resident big horn and goat were \$1,500 each. We saw the law book had a non-resident grizzly bear license for \$17,500 but there is no open season.

## OUR OPINION

(For What It Is Worth)

We saw a lot of things we liked in Wyoming. The Department lab and the program on DNA testing is noteworthy. Having an in-house specimen bank for as many species as possible is the right way to go and will offer quick response to wardens and investigators when they are investigating a case. All jurisdictions need to do this.

We like the uniform even though it would not fit everywhere. The blue jeans, the Stetson and cowboy boots (not sure if that is right terminology for boots) all brand the wardens as part of the state cultural. From the nicest hotel dining room to the corner hamburger

joint, this is what people wear. Despite the position, it makes the warden one of the people and we think that is good. Then there is the bright red shirt that perhaps not everyone would like. But it is just enough to set the warden apart, without losing the feeling (as above) that they are one of the people. Like having a prominent sign on the side of a patrol vehicle, it is not the best thing to wear on a surveillance, but like the sign, it can be covered when needed. The rest of the time it is "flying the flag" and a warden is instantly recognizable. Being in the public eye is all part of enforcement and

violation prevention. It sure is a pleasant change from the brown and green we always see. I have never been sure that wardens should be clones of all other enforcement officers. In Illinois we were forever having people coming up in a restaurant and asking us about highway conditions. We should not lose our identity as to who we are and what we do and there is never a question as to who a Wyoming warden is.

We like their idea of their getting a grant and using it to hire retired wardens on a contractual basis. Texas is doing the same. There is a lot of expertise still available in retired wardens. One of those that Wyoming called back under the program is Jim Bradley. Jim was the warden who woke all of us up as to studies on wardens getting assaulted and was the first person to keep track of this important statistic. He did this back in the 80s. I am not sure if he is retired or if he went on to a different vocation, but it is good to see him back working as a warden, even if only part time.

While a week is a pretty short time to delve into any enforcement program, there was not much of anything that jumped out at us that we thought needed correction. Wardens did not have a common complaint although we are not naive enough to think the Wyoming program is perfect. No place has that. But it is a positive looking program as far as we can tell. While they have as up to date enforcement technology as any where, it is sort of a pleasant change to see a game warden position in a more traditional sense than many jurisdictions have. It may not be ideal for everywhere, but we have the feeling it fits Wyoming to a tee. We appreciate the hospitality that was shown us everywhere in the state.