

Sherry at Estes Park Valley

by Nancy Martz

I want to visit with my friend Sherry. I'll take Route 36 out of Lyons and up where trails like Bitterbrush and Lock Vale trigger memories, all sweet and funny and unique in my life. I drive through Roosevelt National Forest and past Hermit Park. Kruger Rock rises with Ponderosa Pine forests and wetland meadows around. Mt Olympus is there, too, and trails named Pole Hill, Lumpy Ridge, and Homestead Meadows. They summon brooding reminiscence but still dazzle and beckon.

A few miles from Estes the traffic increases. I remember a carload of us divorced women often heading into Estes because it was Sherry's favorite mountain place, and I seconded it. We would have music Sherry loved playing as we all talked and laughed and told stories for our ears only. An American in Paris and Appalachian Spring with all the windows down so we could smell the mountains. We would dress up for Estes and eat elegantly at the best restaurants and then savor the homemade ice cream and fudge and browse the book shops and the expensive clothing stores. Before we left, we always had to visit the Christmas Store open year round because Sherry loved it. The car trunk was full of shopping bags when we finally drove down the mountain road and split up to our own homes again.

Once when the best steak in town was still at Nicky's on Fall River, we sat in the large and exquisitely upholstered shell around a feast of prime rib and filet mignon and wondrous bottles of Cabernet. As always, we dressed to the nines for the dinner and had outstanding conversations laced liberally with good humor and love for one another's friendship. Often we would stop at Nicky's tavern when we came down from Rocky Mountain National Park to have Black or White Russians or champagne.

Sometimes we would stay overnight in an exquisite mountain home whose owners had given Sherry a key. Sherry and I always stayed up the longest reading parts of books we loved aloud to each other.

I am having a celebratory black Russian at Nicky's alone before I continue up Fall River Road to see Sherry whose classy and cultured spirit and friendship is so high placed in my heart. Tombstone Ridge, Beaver Brook, and Mt. Wuh are there as I drive on, and McGregor Mountain and The Needles. I turn left now onto Fish

Hatchery Road. The elevation is 8035 feet. In the distance the Deer Mountains, the Sundance Mountains, and the Continental Divide. I look over the wild grasses for the right tree in this special place called Estes Valley Memorial Gardens. Under it is Sherry's stone that says October 11th 1991. I stand here looking at the stone in a place she wanted to be among the Rocky Mountain sheep, elk, deer, fox, rabbits, squirrels, and chipmunks and the grand views. She is and will always be a grand friend.