

Never Say Die

By Pete Clark

In late May, 1960, I arrived in Pinedale, Wyoming to join Lawson Geophysical Party Twenty-Five for the summer. Finding a place to stay would be challenging, as my wages were low and the town and its environs were a Garden of Eden to the country's ultra-wealthy. Five of the ten richest men in the United States had summer homes in or around Pinedale, and nearby Fremont Lake gave up record breaking mackinaw trout to any angler wily enough to get them out of the water. Rooms looked to be as scarce as hen's teeth, so I went to the Party Office and spoke to the Party Manager, for whom I had worked the three previous summers. After listening to my tale of woe, he said there was a boarding house at the east end of town, the side of town farthest from the river that might have a room. He said look for a sign with no business name that stated, "Board and Room."

I headed for the east end of town, soon coming to a long, gray, two-story building with the appropriate sign hanging over its door. The lady inside said a room was available and breakfast was from 6:00am to 7:30am and dinner was 6:00pm to 7:30pm and sack lunches would be provided. The rent was \$22.00 per week. I said it was all very good and she led me upstairs to room twelve, which had ecru walls, a tan rollup blind and a blue chenille bedspread, which looked out of place, but I was happy anyway. There was a bathroom at the end of the hall with a tub, which made me hope that people came in from work at different times, but there was little chance of that.

That evening, I had my first meal at the boarding house. There were two long tables, each capable of seating twelve people. Each table was set with plates, cups, glasses and silverware, along with bread and butter. Soups, salads and the main courses were set out in bowls and platters. It was serve yourself and don't dawdle, as I quickly learned. Dinner that evening was a stew containing beef, or more likely, elk or deer, carrots, onions and potatoes. A salad of chopped up lettuce, tomatoes and boiled eggs was provided and you could have any salad dressing you wanted as long as you wanted vinaigrette. The food was delicious and coffee, tea or water could be used to wash it down.

Initially, the bowls and platters were passed around, as were the bread and butter. Kitchen help poured the drinks. After the first go-around, if you wanted more of anything, you had to be a streak of lightning, or what you wanted would be on another's plate. In short, to survive in that environment, one had to develop the infamous Boarding House Reach. I became very proficient in reaching, grabbing, forking, scooping and spooning anything on the table, as my hands had become Food Seeking Missiles, tracking that last helping.