

The new format this issue. . .

came about as the result of the readership survey we did last spring. Most of the respondents (50 to 45 percent) favored consolidating all the news into one magazine. You'll notice we retained the three-section format for the 45 percent who liked the three-part package.

The judges of the American Alumni Council liked the *Alumnus* last year. This summer they named it one of the Top Ten alumni magazines in the country, along with Harvard, Brown, Pennsylvania, Notre Dame, Cornell, and some others. The staff isn't getting big-headed about it, but we are pleased, of course.

Now, lest this be the only column in the world that hasn't talked about Watergate:

I've worked for two newspapers, two major corporations, and a large public university. Some of my best friends are lawyers. I've worked in political campaigns and the PTA, taught Sunday School, been a deacon, and spend considerable time in a lot of bars with a lot of people. Some of my best friends are reporters, admen and PR types. And, Ladies and Gentlemen, I can report to you that there are little Watergates everywhere.

If the syndrome troubles you—as it does me—you probably can start doing something about it not very far from where you are.—S.S.

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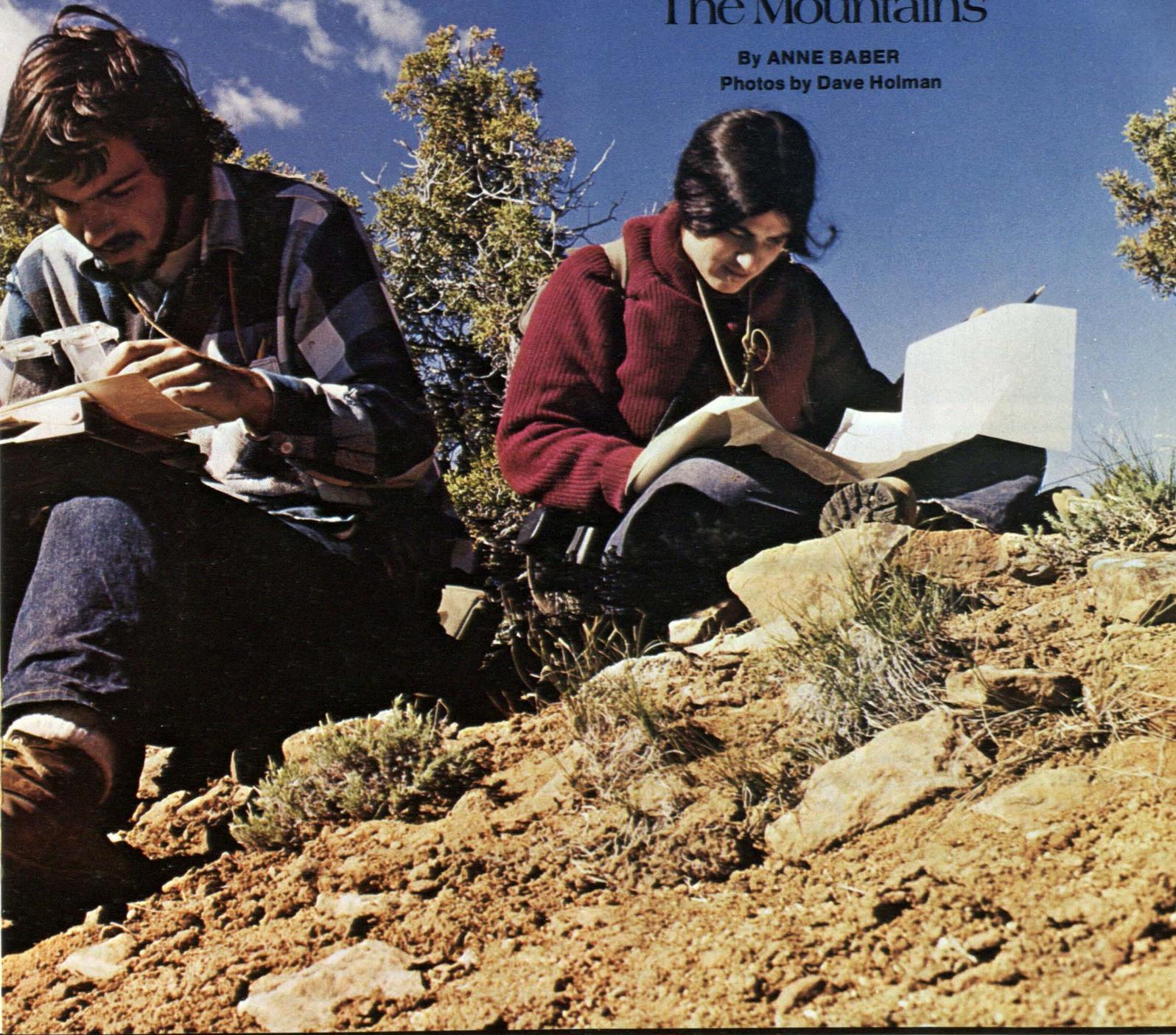
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Mizzou's mountain-climbing geology students have "the perfect, outdoor classroom" at Camp Branson in Wyoming.

Don't Throw Rocks Off The Mountains

By ANNE BABER
Photos by Dave Holman



As a classroom rule, “Don’t throw rocks off the mountains” is a bit unusual. But so’s the classroom. It’s the east flank of the Wind River Mountains near Lander, Wyoming.

There, over a thousand miles from Mizzou, the University has a 13-acre tract of land leased from the Forest Service since 1929. At the center of the tract, deep in Sinks Canyon at the edge of the Sho-

shone National Forest, is Camp Edwin B. Branson, the oldest and perhaps the most ideally located university geology field camp in the United States.

A county surveyor, so the story goes, found a well-preserved fossil amphibian skull as he was working near the Popo Agie River in about 1904. He sent the skull to the University of Chicago. The staff there considered the find of such great importance that



Fireplaces keep the students cozy as they finish up maps or get their notes in order in the laboratory where they often work until midnight. A red-roofed bathhouse and the girls' dorm are typical of camp buildings, many of which were built by students and professors over the years.

they sent PhD candidate Edwin Branson to the riverbed in Sinks Canyon to investigate the area.

What Branson found was an almost perfect outdoor laboratory for observing geological formations and learning field techniques.

When he came to the University of Missouri to head the geology department, Branson, who had the reputation of being something of an educational maverick, voiced his opinion that you can't teach geology within the four walls of a college classroom. Branson investigated Maine, Missouri, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and even California, but settled on the Wyoming site for the field study camp.

"I didn't come out here for a survival course," one of this year's 48 students griped to the camp director, Dr. Clayton Johnson. And it's no place for a tenderfoot, but neither is the camp as primitive as it was when the first group of students in 1911 hiked the 10 miles from Lander behind a rented light mountain wagon which carried their tents and the season's food supply.

Today, you can drive right to the camp, though the last couple of miles are dirt road. Some students bring cars, but many ride the University bus which leaves Columbia the first of June.

Consisting of a dozen or so log cabins, the camp is on an island between two forks of the Popo Agie, which, swollen with the melted snow from the mountains, floods the area almost yearly. Johnson, who was there as a student in 1936, remembers you had to "jump in and jump out" to bathe then in the icy water. The Popo Agie, nowadays, is known as a good trout stream. But students have little leisure

time to fish and the out-of-state licenses went up to a prohibitive \$25 this year. (One student did pay the fee and says he has a "very expensive" trout in the freezer.) The river does have other uses. Students have been known to chill a beer in it, thereby breaking Camp Rule II, "No drinking."

The students, relaxing over a game of whist in the cabin they call the reading room on a Sunday evening late in June, had a hard time coming up with Rule III. "I guess," Roland Boehne laughed, "it's, 'Don't visit the girls' dorm in your underwear.'" Somebody starts kidding him about his amorous exploits in Lander. "Come on, Roland Scope, let's hear about the Lander girls."

But Roland's nickname leads off into an explanation. Lowell Lischer rises from a dilapidated wicker chair in front of the dying fire and waits for attention. He has a sense of the dramatic.

"We call him Roland Scope because we found out during the first week that in his ability to work, he's about as functional as Role and Scope." He sits. It's an in-group joke. The earliest Role and Scope announcements in the University's academic reappraisal program led geology students and professors to believe that they might lose their PhD program on the Columbia Campus. It didn't work out that way, but many of them are still angry.

About half of the students at Camp Branson are not from Mizzou. They come from 18 other well-known colleges and universities all over the country. Though they don't understand the joke, their presence at the camp is testimony to the wide and good reputation of the geology program.



Smiley (fourth from right) epitomizes Branson campers as he sits on his rock hammer, wears an antler crown and grips a knife in his teeth. Everyone looks forward to mail call. Campers especially like “care packages” containing Kool-Aid to put in their canteens.

Students pay about \$350 (\$600 if they are not from Missouri). The cost is comparable to summer school in Columbia. Some students make sandwiches, wash dishes or drive busses to help pay a portion of their fees.

Part of the camp’s good reputation must come from the seriousness of the students. John Hall tells about the usual Sunday recreation—a seven mile hike. “Smiley (Skylar Burdette) and I drove over to Hell’s Half Acre, to the uranium field, and walked around. We talked with some Arapahoe and Shoshoni Indians. They were very friendly and showed us around the field. Nope, we didn’t get any pictures,” he continued. “It was snowing and hailing.”

It’s snowing at the camp as John talks. Nobody allows himself to be impressed with the weather. That’s an unstated rule.

Rule IV is not a joke. “The bus leaves at 7:30.” The students go out into the mountain range classroom six days a week. “My conscience wouldn’t hurt me if we didn’t work on Saturdays,” Johnson says. “What with the lab work at night, they’ve earned their eight hours of credit.” But usually work doesn’t stop on Saturday afternoon until about three.

Nobody has to put it into a rule that it’s a good idea to get to bed pretty early.

Before the morning sun has reached the bottom of the canyon, there is activity in the mess hall. Mrs. Breuen, the camp cook, is in the kitchen scrambling nine dozen eggs with ham chunks and heating up the homemade cinnamon buns for

breakfast. In the hall, two students hurry to make innumerable bologna and cheese, cheese and ham, and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and to stuff them into paper bags with an orange. Everyone picks up a bag after breakfast.

By 7:30 Monday morning, the two busses are loaded. Class begins.

The “classroom” for the day is Derby Dome about 15 miles from Camp. Students work at a variety of sites in the Lander area at a series of problems designed to teach them to recognize and name the formations, to identify the minerals, rocks, and fossils and to interpret the conditions under which they were formed. They make maps and cross-sections showing the distribution and attitude of the formations, and study aerial photos, learning to see on the ground what the camera lens captured. Within a 25-mile radius from the camp are producing oil fields, gold mines, coal mines, asbestos mines, hot springs, mountain glaciation features, the uranium field, and the Popo Agie River, a Ripley’s-Believe-It-or-Not phenomenon that disappears into a mountain and reappears in a deep pool filled with leaping trout.

“A geologist is an offbred historian,” Raymond Peck, former head of the geology department, had explained in his office in Columbia. “He gathers evidence and from it interprets the history of the earth. In Wyoming, this history is exposed. In Missouri, the rocks are covered with vegetation and soil. In Wyoming, you can walk on an outcropping for miles and miles. You can see and prove what’s happened to the earth.”



At Derby Dome, an oil field known for “classic” geological formations, students gather data for use in map construction. An after-dinner volleyball game in the canyon behind camp is one of the favorite pastimes after a day spent climbing the mountains.

At Derby Dome, the meaning of the word “exposed” becomes clear. Red-orange sandstone cliffs reach the blue sky on three sides. Johnson gives the day’s assignment. The students are to discover what the original formation, the dome, looked like before its center settled into a flat, wide plain. (Imagine a fallen soufflé.) This is Sherlock Holmes on a grand scale. As Johnson gives instructions, someone points silently to the top of the ridge. Standing there, very much the color of the rock, is a large deer. The lecture stops. They watch the deer.

John Long takes the prize for the most unusual field outfit. He is wearing a pith helmet to which is strapped a thermometer. It reads 58°. The more standard dress is hiking boots, jeans, a canteen, a pack, a heavy shirt, sweater or ski jacket. Sue Marcus pushes up the sleeve of her ski jacket to show her sun blisters. Last week, it was a sizzling 95° in the field. “I wonder if the University health insurance covers skin grafts?” she jokes.

Another group of students is tackling another problem at Dallas Dome several miles away. “It’s a classic geological example,” Dr. David K. Davies, the camp’s assistant director, explains. “If you want to strike oil, just look at the center of one of these domes. Yes, Teapot Dome is the same kind of thing. See that limestone ridge? You can follow it all the way around.” He turns in a circle, pointing at the ridges beyond the oil wells. “There’s the first oil well in Wyoming. It’s still pumping.” Then he points to the top of the opposing ridge. “That’s where the boy last year was struck by lightning.” (The camp made the front pages of the Columbia papers last summer when a student, Michael W. Quearry, was struck by lightning and miraculously suffered only minor burns on his feet.)

And what do students do after class? Drop by for a beer, of course. It’s a bit more complicated when your classroom is a mountain ridge and the nearest watering hole is in Lander. The bus makes a slight detour and deposits some of the students at their favorite, The Stockgrower’s Bar. It has a huge, dark, Victorian vintage bar. They sip their beer, watch a pool game, talk of discovering faults (fractures in the rock strata), compare miles hiked and try to decide whether that dry buzzing sound was a locust or a rattlesnake.

At dinner, the mess hall is crowded. Food is an important morale builder, and it’s very good. Over the salad, steak, hominy, peas and cherry pie, Holly

Martinson tries to explain what’s different about geology students. “They’re happy people,” she concludes. “They’re just not hung up.” It’s unusual for someone to get interested in geology before college. Smiley says, “I’m the only person I know who declared a geology major in the freshman year.” He’s disputed. Richard McConnell, just out of high school and the youngest student at camp, is a winner in the National Science Fair’s annual search for talent. His prize for a project on fossils paid his tuition.

What is the motivation for going into geology? They laugh at the idea of “helping to solve the energy crisis.” The current interest in ecology is not the answer. “Can you imagine being an ecology buff and working for an oil company?”

They don’t seem to be trying to “find themselves.” They have a goal: “To graduate and get a job.”

“Out here,” Nancy Shrader says, “you get a good idea of what a field geologist does. Some people decide, ‘It’s not for me.’ But even if you end up in an office or in research, you still need to understand what goes on in the field.”

But they are uneasy at self-analysis and probing for underlying motivations. Perhaps the word that best describes them (though it might also embarrass them) is “wholesome.”

They jump up for a typical after dinner relaxation—a volleyball game. You walk across the cable bridge, over the Popo Agie, off the island where the cabins are, and climb up behind the camp into a long, flat valley.

As it gets dark, people drift back and into the laboratory. The original lab (now the reading room) was the first building at the camp. Students built it under faculty supervision during the Depression. The new lab is large and well-lighted. The students take out their little yellow notebooks and aerial photos and get to work on their maps and charts. Johnson and Davies come by and help. Dr. Walter Moore from the University of North Dakota, Dr. Bill Craig from Louisiana State University and Dr. Larry Lee from UMSL also are on hand. Craig and Lee are alumni of the camp.

John Hall stops working on a map, looks up and says earnestly, “I’ve learned more here in a month than I ever learned in my classes at school. You can apply everything, and nature’s examples are there for you to see and study.

“Be sure to say it’s all worth it.” □