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Estes Park

# Trail Gazette

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## Swimming accident claims the life of Denver man

By JAY GENTILE

Strong undercurrents at Mary's Lake claimed the life of a 23-year-old Denver man in a drowning accident Sunday afternoon. According to witnesses, the man drowned after he entered the water in an attempt

to rescue his 14-year-old brother.

The lake is posted as a "No Swimming" area because of the strong undercurrents created by electric power generation at the site. Witnesses reported that the boy was swimming in the lake at approximately 2 p.m. when he encountered problems with the

currents.

Ernesto Sanchez, 23, of Denver, jumped into the water in a rescue attempt but was caught in the currents himself. When a 29-year-old man who was with the two saw this, he also jumped into the lake.

When members of the Estes

Park Volunteer Fire Department and Estes Park Dive Team arrived on the scene two minutes after receiving the 2:18 p.m. call, they found two swimmers — the 14 and 29-year-old — struggling in the water. They were helped to shore by firefighters.

Ernesto Sanchez remained

unaccounted for. Dive team members were directed by witnesses to the area that Sanchez had gone under water.

A few minutes later, Sanchez was recovered from the water, given emergency treatment, and taken to Estes Park Medical Accident: Page 2

## Park shuttle ridership triples from last year

By JAY GENTILE

Three times as many visitors to Rocky Mountain National Park rode the shuttle bus this June as compared with last June, Park officials said. In June the buses run from June 15 to June 31.

Park spokesman Kyle Patterson said 35,347 people rode the buses this June. 29,819 of those chose the Bear Lake loop, while 5,534 opted for the Fern Lake loop.

Patterson said the Bear Lake loop averages 11,000 riders in June. She said the Fern Lake loop has averaged 6,800 riders per year over the past three years.

"The system has been upgraded, and there's more frequency between stops so it's more appealing for people to take (the bus)," Patterson said.

As the first phase of the Park's multi-year transportation study, the Park replaced its old yellow school buses with new official-looking white buses this year. The Park's fleet was also doubled from five to ten buses.

The Bear Lake shuttle has been in operation for the past 20 years. The Fern Lake shuttle is a new addition of the last few years. The shuttles will also run later into the year this season, operating from June 15 until Oct. 8.

At its north end, the bus leaves from the Fern Lake bus stop to the shuttle bus parking area located at the Bear Lake parking lot every 30 minutes from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

From there, the bus heads south to Bear Lake from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. From 7 to 9 a.m., it leaves every 20 minutes; from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., it leaves every 8-10 minutes; and from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., it leaves every 20 minutes.

Chief Ranger Joe Evans said 85 percent of visitors to Rocky Mountain National Park drive along the Bear Lake corridor.

"There's improved service this year and also a curiosity factor," said Evans. "We've gotten numerous positive comments from people riding it and having a good time."

Patterson said during peak times in the summer, there are 3,200 vehicles in the Park competing for 1,600 available parking spaces.

"People are realizing that it'd be easier to park at the (shuttle bus parking area) than hoping someone will back out of a parking space," she said.

The level of increased ridership has taken the Park by surprise.

"We knew it was going to increase with more regular and reliable service," Patterson said, "but it's definitely exceeded our expectations about how much it's increased. We had no idea it was gonna go threefold."

She said it is too early to say exactly how this will effect implementation of the transportation study. Evaluation of the service will take place after the eagerly anticipated July and August numbers come in, she said.

"It's confirmed our premise that a transportation system was needed, and we needed to expand the use of mass transit at Rocky Mountain National Park."

Shuttle: Page 2

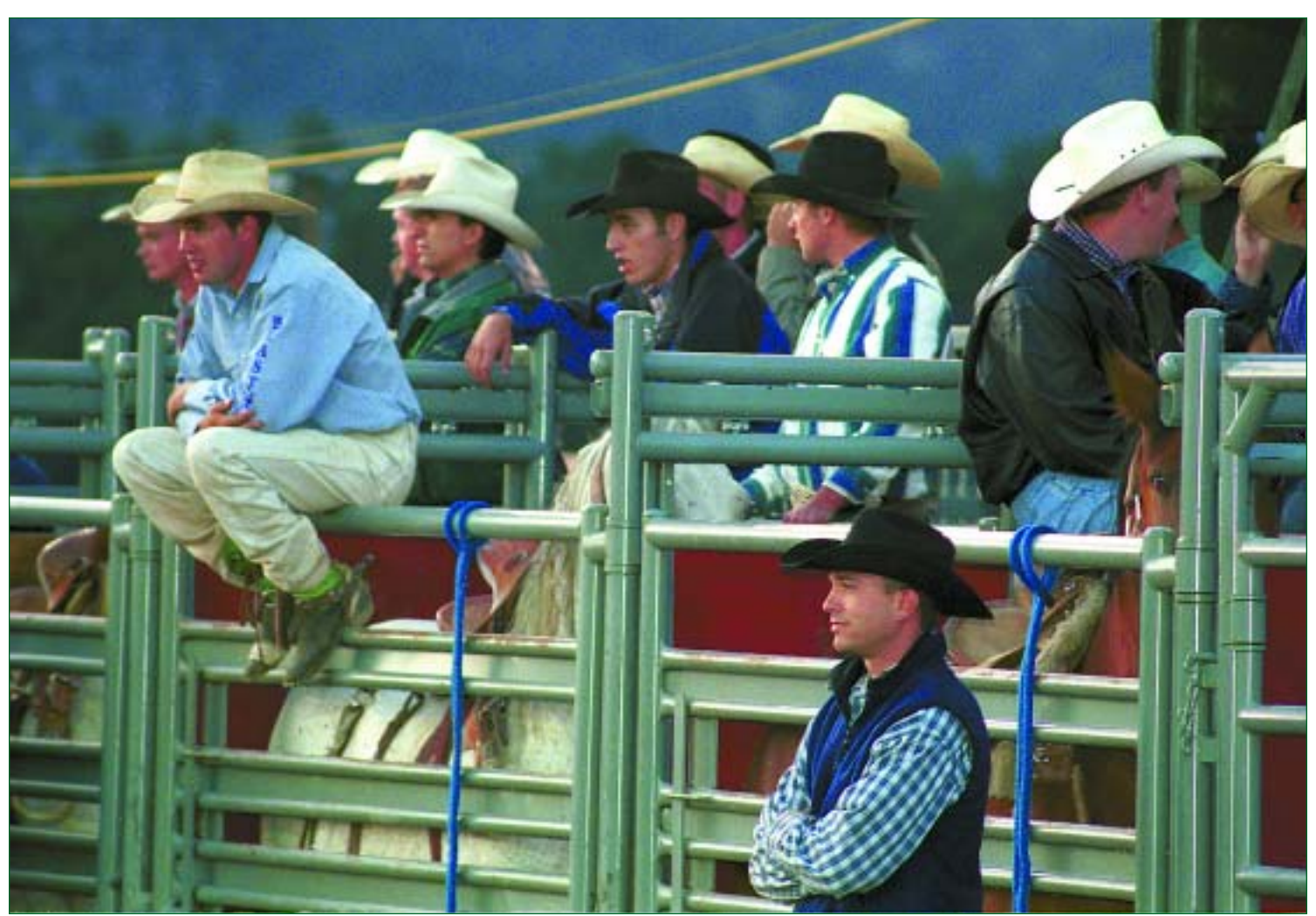


Photo by Walt Hester

## No clowning around

All the cowboys' eyes are to the center of the arena watching the rodeo clowns perform during last Thursday evening's edition of the 75th annual Rooftop Rodeo. The clowns, while providing entertainment to crowds, also play an important safety role in the lives of the cowboys. This week's View on page 10 features the rough and tumble life of the rodeo clown.

## Rooftop Rodeo marks 75th year

Jo Adams, president of the Rooftop Rodeo Committee, displays the plaque presented to her by the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association that marks the Rooftop Rodeo's 75th anniversary.

Jim Nichols of the PRCA presented the award during Saturday night's performance in the Granny May Arena on the Stanley Park Fairgrounds.

Photo by Martin B. Hamilton



## Library's summer performances conclude July 25

The last in the series of performances sponsored by the Estes Park Public Library Summer Reading Program is the David Taylor Dance Theatre's presentation of "A Children's Rainforest Odyssey."

A one-of-a-kind "artistic, environmental and educational experience," said Kerry Aiken, youth library director, will be performed at 1 p.m., Wednesday, July 25, in the Estes Park High School Auditorium. Everyone, of all ages, is welcome.

Excerpts from "Rainforest," the dance group's critically acclaimed multi-media production, will also include the talents of visual artist George Peters. This popular production will highlight the mystery and fragility of one of earth's important ecosystems through an enchanting

Program: Page 2

## Chinese poet escapes homeland for freedom in U.S.

Rocky Mountain National Park's latest artist-in-residence tells of harrowing journey from China

By JAY GENTILE

With the words "Save" and "Revolt" written in blood stained upon his shirt, 32-year-old Beijing poet Xue Di organized several marches in support of the hunger strike being carried out by Chinese students in May of 1989.

The students wanted to force a dialog with their government about democracy. The government decided it would rather speak with gunfire.

At 10 a.m. June 4, 1989, Xue Di heard the shots ring out through the long, narrow streets of his native Beijing as the army carried out orders to "clean up" student-occupied Tianenman Square.

Di, who was trying to block the army from entering the city, felt a wave of terror sweeping over him. But this ruthless bullet spray would turn out to be just a warning round.

The real killing would take place that evening after the army had occupied Tianenman Square. People who approached



Xue Di

the square, the literal and symbolic center of China's capital city, were killed on the spot.

Di says he thinks "a few hundred" people were killed, but the army picked up the bodies before anyone could get an accurate count. The government continues to withhold the exact death toll.

Di, who has just completed his two-week stint as Rocky Mountain National Park's latest artist-in-residence, knew he had to get out of China. Right after one of the most notorious mass killings in modern human history swept his hometown, he went to apply for a passport.

"I was the most unwelcome person to apply for a passport," Di told a group of about 20 people who gathered to hear his poetry reading Friday afternoon

at Moraine Park Museum. "The Chinese government hates poets. Poetry has a power that government is afraid of."

And the fact that he was looking to settle in the United States didn't help matters either. Yet a trip to the U.S. embassy for a visa application offered a glimmer of hope.

According to Di, the man at the embassy was impressed by the poet and offered to arrange a meeting with Di at a downtown hotel, where they could discuss poetry in greater detail.

After their meeting, Di noticed two cars and three Jeeps waiting outside the grand hotel. The vehicles had followed him, and the men sitting in their seats were now patiently waiting to arrest him.

Di begged the man from the

embassy to walk him to the bus station. Without the company of that man, he knew his arrest was certain.

After he boarded the bus, the men followed it as Di began shredding his poems in a hasty effort to destroy the evidence of his crime: thinking in a way that his government did not like.

The plain-clothed men from the Chinese version of the FBI were stopped at a red light, and Di got away. But he soon would receive a phone call from the local police, who wished to arrange a meeting the following morning.

Saying he had to visit his sick mother in the hospital that morning, he arranged the meeting for 1 p.m. At 9 a.m. that day, Di was on a flight bound for New York.

Poet: Page 5

## Community Insight

### Poet: The path to Rocky Mountain National Park

Continued from page 1

Knowing not one word of English, Di stepped off the plane at JFK International Airport and breathed a huge sign of relief. He then noticed that he had suddenly been dropped into a sea of strangers, but at least he was safe.

#### The path to Rocky Mountain National Park

While in Beijing, a translator friend of Di's passed his work to a representative of Brown University's Freedom to Write program in Providence, Rhode Island.

He was accepted to the university as a visiting fellow in August of 1989, paving the way for his harrowing escape to America.

"I wanted to leave the country because it was scary to live there every day," he said from behind a wooden desk inside the historic William Allen White cabin in Moraine Park, where all artists-in-residence stay.

"The first few years were very difficult. I had a nightmare every night."

In one dream, the army pressed a gun against his temple and pulled the trigger just as he awoke. In other dreams, he would run the streets until he was arrested and tortured into submission — a police tactic still employed by the Chinese today.

He says in China, you're either with the government or against it. If you're against it, as Di was classified as, at the very least your name is on record and your phone is tapped — as Di's was when he briefly returned to China in 1996.

While he didn't make the communists' list of favorites, as an artist was considered less of a direct threat than a political activist. And he says he was lucky. "I believe there's a guardian angel in my life to protect me," he said, in perfect English.

"If you're with them, you can make money," he explains, "but you can't achieve the dream of your life. Here I can pursue my dream to live honestly, to

live the way my heart will let me live.

"The Cultural Revolution destroyed the spirit of human beings and people are not living honestly," said Di, the two-time recipient of the Hellman/Hammett Award sponsored by Human Rights Watch in New York. "This country really respects the effort of the individual."

One of his poetry books that was slated for publication was taken off the press after Tiananmen Square. Since then, two of his literary criticisms have been banned and three volumes of his collected works were stopped in press.

Yet he's managed to put out three books in China and two in the U.S.

He has also conducted several interviews with Western media, like in 1990 when a French television crew was smuggled into Di's house at midnight to interview him about the June 4 massacre.

"I don't think people should forget," he says, adding that the government is no better now than it was then. The ruling party's purpose, which Di says is mind control, "is against the human spirit, against the direction of human development."

A few years ago, Di found a book about national park artist-in-residence programs. He has been a resident artist of several — typically coastal — national parks, but longed for the inspiration he knew that the mountains would supply.

#### Nature's effect

"Nature is so pure — unforgiving if you're not careful — but not as harmful as a human society," says the poet, gazing at the serenity of Moraine Park from behind the cabin's large window. "The purity makes me feel happy and satisfied."

"I feel myself better when I'm with nature and perceive my better self," he continues. "I've had the time to come back to myself and a much purer voice. You feel the strength in your own life that con-

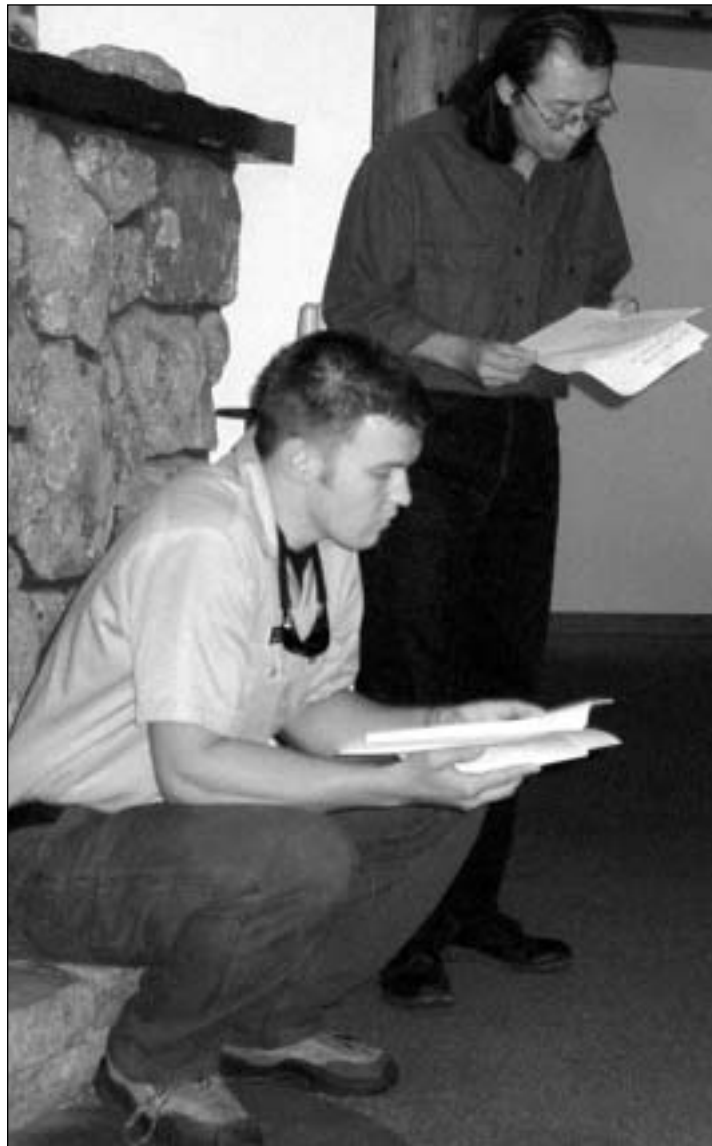


Photo by Jay Gentile

Park Service employee Ben Neil (left) interpreted the poems Di read in Chinese at the Moraine Park Museum Friday afternoon.

nects with the beauty of the nature."

Quite a contrast from his native Beijing, where 13 million people reside under one of the world's most polluted skies, and where the closest place to see nature is a 40-hour train ride to the ocean.

He says a human simply can't be a human in big cities. "You have to be whatever you're dealing with," Di says. "There's too much struggling, too much influence from society."

Through nature, he hopes to cultivate a deeper understanding of the human spirit, which he says he felt throughout Rocky Mountain National Park. He hopes to combine this understanding with his personal experiences and pass it on to us, through poetry.

Now making his way back to Brown University, Di says he hopes to return to China someday — but only if he can live there without fear.

"It's gonna be changed," he says of the oppression that continues to suppress the spirit of his people every day, "but we don't know how long it will take."

#### RMNP's Artist-in-Residence program

**How many?** 6-8 artists each spend two weeks at the William Allen White cabin every year.

**When?** From early June to late September.

**Why?** In recognition of the contribution that artists made in the creation of national parks.

**What kind?** All kinds of artists participate, from painters to photographers to dancers to musicians.

**Who decides?** Artists are chosen by a panel of five professional artists, depending on how good the art is and how the work relates to national parks.

**Since when?** Rocky Mountain National Park runs the oldest artist-in-residence program in the National Park Service. It began in 1984.

**The deal:** The Park provides the cabin. The artist provides food, transportation, two public programs held on Friday afternoons at the Moraine Park Museum, and donates one piece of art to the Park within a year of their visit.

**More information:** Call the Park's information office at 586-1206.

*Source: Ranger Jean Muenchrath, who coordinates the program.*

#### China and human rights:

- 1,781 people have been executed in China in the last three months, more than in the rest of the world in the last three years, as part of the government's "Strike Hard" campaign against crime.

- Executions have been recorded for crimes as diverse as bribery, pimping, drug possession, and robbing of petrol. Eighty-nine convicted criminals were killed in one day April 11. Most executions are public spectacles, sometimes attended by thousands of people.

- From September 1999 to December 2000, at least 77 followers of Falun Gong, a meditation practice deemed illegal as a threat to national security by the government, have died in police custody.

Twelve are said to have "jumped" in official reports and eight "fell." Practitioners have been sentenced to imprisonment without trial.

- Torture in police stations, detention centers and prisons is widespread. A 30-year-old farmer in February was whipped, branded, hung upside down and had his genitals ripped off before he was tortured to death by officials from a township birth control office.

His crime? He refused to reveal the whereabouts of his wife, who was suspected of being pregnant without permission.

- 213 people are still imprisoned or on medical parole as a result of their involvement in the Tiananmen Square protests. Those who commemorate the massacre each year are routinely arrested.

### Andersen, Gustafson to wed in Spring 2002

Tor Andersen and Caitlin Gustafson have announced their engagement and plans for a summer 2002 wedding.

Gustafson is the daughter of Jim and Ruth Gustafson of Madison, Wis. Andersen is the son of Stephen and Janet Andersen of Estes Park.

Gustafson graduated from Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill. and is now in her third year of medical school at CU.

Andersen graduated from Western State College in Gunnison and is presently production manager at Prijon Kayak/Wildwasser Sport USA in Boulder.



Tor Andersen and Caitlin Gustafson

The two are avid kayakers and became engaged while on a kayaking trip off Baja Mexico.

The Ute Mountain on Crystal River, near Marble, will be the site of their wedding.

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Submit Photos of:

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- Service Clubs
- Church Activities
- Adult Summer Sports
- or anything that would be of interest to our readers

First issue will publish on August 1st. We will run these weekly, so first come, first served.

Call John at (970) 586-3356 or drop by your photos at the Estes Park Trail-Gazette office, 251 Moraine Ave.

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