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Comments:

I was born in the suburbs of Chicago during the Fifties and Sixties traveling to visit my sister in Miles City when I was thirteen seeing the Beartooth Mountains as my first look at such magnitude. I was never the same. Mountains inspire creativity like water quenches thirst. I learned, in that moment, that the world held in the protected wilderness what otherwise is unknown.

During that summer of 1962 I slung a Jan Sport external frame backpack over my shoulders and heading up the Stillwater from Nye hiked five miles into the Beartooth Wilderness with my sister, brother-in-law, and nephews into alpine meadows ringed by sharp peaks.

The middle of the Beartooths to the West, entered via the East Rosebud drainage, holds special meaning as well. Although the Beaten Path up to Cooke City, by name, tells us about how popular it is and is often associated with East Rosebud, its the lake that captures me. Have you ever ice skated on its translucent surface? It feels like you could drop into its bottomless blue.

Or how about MT.Cowan? The eleven miles in from Mill Creek access took all my strength to arrive. The challenge of accessing wildness teaches us about the value of enduring pain, developing stamina, and gaining the grandeur of the high country by sheer will. Why else would dehydrated food taste so damn good?

The Crazies, Absarokas, and Pryors are saturated with millennia of sacred ceremonies ranging from Fasting, to Sweat Lodges, to Sundances. In a rational, respectful way this is reason enough to leave well enough alone.

Think of it this way. If like human skin, the boundaries of the Custer Gallatin Wilderness are the skin of wilderness, and it is punctured or breached, then the organism, the ecosystem, is vulnerable to creeping infection. We know this story.

Think of it this way: in the epoch of earthly and atmospheric degradation are we really considering violating its well being, its integrity?