



Up Front

A talented and chatty bugger.

By C.J. Hadley

I am so close to the steep, east side of the Sierra Nevada that sundown comes early. The peaks scratch 12,000 feet and my piece of dirt sits at 5,000. I hate to leave. If I'm lucky I can still see cows grazing on good meadows on the way north to Reno, or south on Highway 395 toward Bridgeport and Los Angeles. If I'm lucky I can see where wildfire has cleared the greedy pinion and juniper and left room for more

Steven L. Thompson, who has survived many more wrecks and a brain tumor, lives in Annapolis, Maryland with Lanny Pepper, his Philadelphia debutante/writer wife. Steve's award-winning novels star Max Moss, a man (like cowboys, sheepherders and Thompson himself) who is able to come through anything. Still in the long, slow process of recovery, Steve and Lanny were visiting Oakland.

On a couple of occasions, Steve has traveled to Nevada, at his own expense, to help *RANGE*. As a writer and editor, he's helped get us out of workholes so deep we can't see the bottom. He's an inspired intellectual, a charming and chatty bugger who does great work for us. He particularly enjoys talking to ranchers and writers who care about this magazine. He told me, "Out of



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Dry country doesn't deter my pards—Bones, the big white dude, and Bebop, the wicked bitch of the West. On this particular day in Washoe Valley, Nev., fog lifted off the valley floor to hide the Sierra Nevada. An arch of white mist was nature's surprise gift.

palatable and valuable plants. And if I'm really lucky, I feel rain.

Recently I crossed the High Sierra and drove down to Oakland, Calif., to see a sick friend. He and I had the same jobs in the old days, working at AutoWeek in California and Car & Driver in New York. I've known him for 33 years and he's one heck of a motorcycle racer. He's one of very few who, for five laps, averaged more than 100 mph on the dangerous British race track on the Isle of Mann.

On a rainy evening on his birthday last year, he and his motorcycle French-kissed a big, fat automobile at 60 miles an hour. His pelvis and just about every bone in his body were broken. His internal organs looked like a mess of chitterlings. And his chance of survival was grim.

all the people we know in major league publishing and in academia—most highly paid, overeducated a--holes—you are the only one doing anything relevant." He was talking about the value of *RANGE*.

When I trucked out of my heaven in the high desert, the sky in Nevada was bright blue. When I got to the city by the bay, the sky was the color of a cheap lawyer's suit. That trip renewed my commitment to the good people who live and work in the rural West. It renewed my passion for *RANGE*.

Steve's listed on the masthead of this magazine as "East Coast Wrangler." He promises to bring us occasional reports on the insanity close to the Beltway. He's an airforce brat but claims his roots are in Utah. In future issues you can judge how deep for yourself. ■