

# HOMESKIN

## Video Pony Express

Outside Boulder, Colorado is a former open-hole gold mining region so pocked with unmarked abysmal pits that an entire mountain was recently condemned, like a slum building with a caving foundation, and leveled with dynamite and bulldozers. Core-ravaged ghost of the Golden West! It's a place where no one is sure whether a rock lies in a natural position or was spat out by hydraulic hoses. Too many mining blasts have rocked the cliffs to determine whether their faces are original. It's a spot deserted of Indian spirits and gray with the stayed-poor phantoms of miners.

New "planetarian" communities have been nesting here in the last few years. Life-actors of continental resurrection, self-conscious agents of terrestrial repair. Dirt roads trailing off the hardtop reveal pockets of small domes, rebuilt mining shacks, new houses of recycled lumber, and restored log cabins. The settlements of Ward, Summerville and Gold Hill have tripled and quadrupled in population. Ghost towns turned freak towns.

We chose a campsite central to the new communities but on land well outside any of them. Our purpose was to provide an occasion to bring communities together, not to glom onto their scenes. This was going to be the first delivery of video mail on our West-to-East run.

*Homeskin* letters are videotaped introductions between new communities, collectives, families, and tribes living on the land. They are electrical impulses creating their own circuits.

Planetary consciousness, the idea that any spot on the planet is part of the whole, and that acts and ends can be undertaken for planetary rather than national, ideological, or social-hierarchical reasons, is the uniting factor between new communities.

Trucking around the hills—"the domes", Ward, Summerville—we were exposed to paranoia attending the Boulder County Sheriff's recent invasion of the new hillfolks. In the classic pre-election pattern, he had busted four hundred people the week before for hitch-hiking, camping, "walking on the wrong side of the road"—every small-time bullshit excuse that would discourage massive occupation of the hills by longhairs. It's only taken a hundred years for the Indians to become friendlies and the law men to become "the hostiles".

Our tapes of Canadian Doukhobors and the Cali-

fornia Sierra tribe were acknowledged but without a feeling of continuity with each other. The circuit that needed to be created was among themselves.

Ward's unofficial mayor, Charley Dagleman, was persuaded to make a "tour" tape of Ward showing voluntary community building projects, garbage collection, cafe, and fire department—all freak projects. He interviewed Betsy at the Post Office, tore down some "Wanted" posters, and told how feds come and wait for people to pick up suspected dope packages. Ward's marshal had been forced to remain inside under house arrest while the Boulder County Sheriff raided the town. Charley explained that this was necessary because otherwise the marshal might have stopped the sheriff, and proudly pointed out the marshal's outhouse.

We then made a tape of "the domes" and recorded a first-hand dope arrest witness from Summerville.

The town of Ward offered to host a video showing in their main street. Not *along* the street, *in* the street! Everyone from the communities that had been taped was invited to come to Ward to see their own tape and meet nearby hillfolk. It was an incredible occasion! A keg of beer on the back of a pickup truck, cars parked to block the street at both ends, barbecued lamb, Chinese New Year's decorations on the main buildings, banjos and guitars. A strong positive number in the face of outfront hick-politick harassments. Neighboring communities dug their planetary stance for the first time together! The circuit exists now.

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What's the difference between video *mail* and videotape?

Camera, VTR, equipment-mirage in general are not the *property* of their carriers, toters, Pony Express riders. The whole video event can be shared totally. Camera work, sound, narration *should* be shared. Ward's "mayor" did visuals and narrated our tour. He made his own letter. We drove the truck.

Video mail belongs to the senders and receivers. We delivered the War letter to people from Libre, Colorado in a NYC loft months later when we were all passing through.

Peter and Judy Berg