

# The Story of the Zane Grey Cabin

by Belh Counsellor

Although numerous parts of the world have legitimate reasons for calling themselves "Zane Grey Country," it was the Mogollon Rim of central Arizona that Grey referred to as his "beloved."

The settings of his fifty-nine western novels are dispersed throughout seventeen different states. But twenty four are set in Arizona, and half of those are set in the Mogollon Rim Country.

An avid outdoorsman as well as a prolific author, these two passions are what brought Grey to the Mogollon. His intentions were to research and write of the Pleasant Valley Feud and to hunt bear on the Rim.

One of his hunting guides in 1918, Anderson Lee "Babe" Haught, became central to Grey's fascination for the Rim Country.

Babe had homesteaded over 80 acres under the rim in 1897. Arriving in Maricopa, AZ, by train from Texas, he and his brother walked the remaining miles to this "Garden of Eden" that had been described to them by a relative. Its abundant wildlife, lush pine forest, water supply, and farming and grazing land made an ideal setting.

With little more than a smattering of tools, but a wealth of strength and ingenuity, Babe built a home, planted crops, livestock and nurtured a family.

Intrigued with the character and life-style of the Haughts, Zane purchased three acres of Babe's homestead, and hired Babe to build a cabin from which he could hunt and write. Enamored with the Rim's rugged environment, Zane was certain that it was also rich in history that would provide many plots for his novels.

Construction began in 1920. Although Zane had envisioned a rough hand-hewn log cabin, he failed to convey that to Babe. Babe assumed that since Zane was a sophisticated celebrity from the East, he would want an eastern style home.

So pine lumber was sawed into beams and clapboards at a local saw mill, hauled by burros up the road that inclined by 500 feet with 4 miles. Shingles were made for the roof with one worker sawing off his fingertips in the process.

Because there was no equipment to level the ground, the front of the cabin was built upon sandstone piers. A double staircase ascended to the spacious porch, which provided a spectacular view of the Tonto

Basin. The cabin was painted a glistening white and trimmed with green paint.

The interior consisted of one large room with a fireplace, furnished with a table and chairs and camping gear. A kitchen with an iron stove was off the back porch, and a ladder on the back porch lead up to an attic that was used for storage.

Other structures on the property included a tent house used for sleeping quarters, a log cabin reportedly used as a movie prop, and a corral for the horses. Grey and his guests usually slept outside in tents.

During the Fall of each year during the 1920's, Zane spent time at the cabin under what he called the "Tonto Rim" sometimes camping and hunting along the Rim. His guests included his children, brother, secretaries, hunting guides and movie producers. His wife's cousin painted replicas of Indian petroglyphs on the fireplace.

Two movies were filmed at the cabin site and Grey wrote several books there, including the story of the Pleasant Valley Feud, the cattle industry, homesteaders, gunslingers, and moonshiners of the Rim. Always there were the themes of the shaping of man by his environment, the conflict between primitive instincts and intellect as man evolves, and the strength and simplicity of the people who survived in the wilderness.

In spite of his love of the Rim Country, there arose in 1929 a dispute over a hunting licence. Unaware that the hunting season had been changed, Grey arrived a week early with a crew to film him hunting bear. He appealed to the Arizona Game Commissioner, explaining the expense of keeping his crew on hold, and also that the bear they hunted was a rogue who would eventually need to be hunted down at government expense. In a meeting that ensured, Grey was accused of wantonly killing wildlife from the running boards of an automobile. Grey was appalled at the absurdity of these lies and claimed it was his accusers who were guilty of these practices. Insulted and hurt that his integrity was questioned, as well as disappointed in the increasing number of tourist and lumbermen spoiling the wilderness, he left the Rim Country, vowing to never again set foot in Arizona.

He died ten years later, and for thirty-three years his cabin was vacant and neglected and became a victim of the elements. Vandals descended upon it breaking windows, carving names into the beams, tearing apart the steps to use as firewood,

even setting campfires inside the cabin.

On the brink of ultimate ruin, the cabin caught the attention of Phoenix air-conditioning magnate William Goettl. On a horseback ride through the Rim in the 1950's, Goettl passed the cabin and commented to his companions that someone ought to rescue it.

An avid outdoorsman and admirer of Grey, Goettl purchased the property from the Grey family in 1962. Using his own money, labor, time and love, he and his crew restored the cabin to its original status.

Zane Grey's personal affects were purchased and/or donated by collectors and by the Grey family. Photos and books were acquired along with furniture and shipped from Grey's various homes to be displayed in the cabin. Goettl's and Haught's animal trophies were hung on the walls. A new road was blazed to make access easier.

And so the cabin, at one time all but lost to obscurity, was opened for the enjoyment and education of the public, and in 1974 was included in the National Register of Historic Places.

Goettl died in 1979, and a monument in his honor was erected at the foot of the cabin steps.

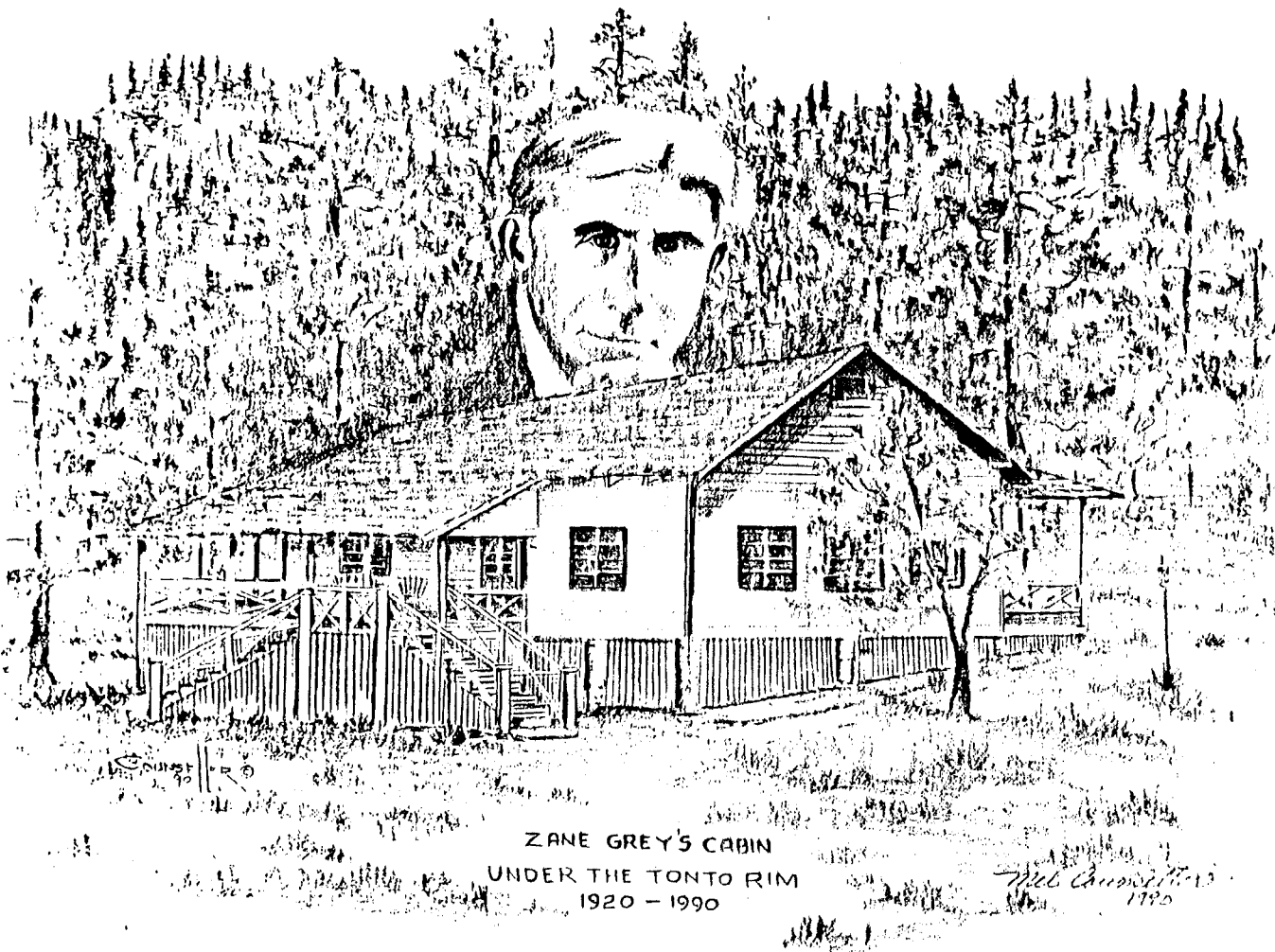
By the 1980's, as many as 20,000 people a year toured the cabin, visitors of all ages, from throughout the country. Many were from other countries where Zane Grey books had been translated.

IN 1988, the Goettl family sold the property to US Devstar, a real estate investment Company based in Scottsdale, AZ. Plans were made to expand, using the Zane Grey Cabin as a focal point, and to build a western art museum, a learning center, nature center, and an amphitheater.

Such plans were suddenly and dramatically altered by the Dude Fire of June 1990. Started by lightening in the Dude Creek area, it claimed six lives, 60 homes, and over 28,000 acres of the Tonto National Forest. The Zane Grey Cabin and nearly all of its contents were included in the losses.

As the fire approached the Cabin, instructions came to evacuate the premises shortly after midnight on June 27. A sampling of the treasures were moved out of the Cabin, including a book autographed by Zane Grey, his hat, chaps, bridle, and guns, about 10 first edition books, Zane Grey movie posters, and a handwritten manuscript.

Approximately 12 hours later, the remaining antiques and memorabilia suc-



cumbled to the flames. Only ash now remains of what was Zane's Morris chair from which he penned so many novels, his hide-a-bed from his California home, his travel truck and Indian rugs, his hand-carved mesquite chairs, his iron stove and kitchen table, the inventory of books, recent editions as well as collectibles, vintage photographs, and animal hides and trophies. And of course the cabin itself and surrounding forest were lost, with its history, lore, mystique, and special aura of seclusion and peace.

Zane had written of the forests of the rim, "The soft, fragrant pine scented breeze is a whispering of welcome from the westland: You are here... Live now!..." Now, with a weak and mournful movement through charred trees and powdery ash, the breeze carries upon it the scent of smoke that heralds devastation. But Zane Grey revered the struggle and the tenacity of life, using as an example, ... a little pine sapling, lifting itself among



Photo by Ken Schulz

millions of its kind toward the light. But that lifting is the great and the beautiful secret."

The fate of the Zane Grey Cabin is to follow this affirmation of hope and strength. US Devstar plans to rebuild the cabin in its original capacity, and has appointed an advisory committee to oversee the rebuilding. Members include Governor Rose Mofford, Representative Jon Kyl, Bill Close of Channel 10 News, Arizona author Don Deder, Zane's son Dr. Loren Grey who is

the President of Zane Grey, Inc., Dr. Philip Rulon history professor at Northern Arizona University, and Dr. James Vickers, President of Zane Grey's West Society.

Through their efforts, through fundraising, and through enthusiasm for our Arizona heritage, the white clapboards of the Zane Grey Cabin will lift themselves toward the light, and once again shine "Under the Tonto Rim."

Beth Counsellor, an active member of the Zane Grey's West Society promotes and lectures on Zane Grey lore from the gift shop at Kohl's Ranch Resort five miles from what was the site of the Cabin.

Photo drawn by Mel Counsellor to be sold at \$15.00 to raise funds for the rebuilding of the Cabin. The Counsellors have a gift shop at Kohl's Ranch where a large selection of Zane Grey books can be found and a continuously running documentary on the life of Zane Grey.