

TOP STORY

AP Photo



Big Government & Little Pilgrims

“For the people”—or else



also in this issue:
really uppity; p. 5



borne on
the cob; p. 6

Joseph and Joshua Pilgrim

AP Photo



Big Government & Little Pilgrims

McCarthy, Alaska—Every pilgrim needs a road. But the road to the remote Pilgrim ranch is blocked.

The National Park Service has closed it.

The Pilgrims are now unable to haul in needed supplies for the Alaska winter. They are also unable to bring in building materials to rebuild their main cabin that burned down with most of their possessions last spring.

People across Alaska have been donating supplies for the 17-member Pilgrim family. Papa Pilgrim and his wife, Country Rose, have 15 children ages 11 months to 28 years—all with names from the Bible.

Private bush pilots have been voluntarily flying in the supplies to the Pilgrims. Their 420-acre property on the banks of McCarthy Creek in southeast Alaska includes an abandoned copper mine and its old airstrip.

The Pilgrims are “in-holders.” Their small parcel of private land is inside the 13-million-

acre Wrangell-St. Elias National Park—America’s largest. The Pilgrims bought the site early last year—14 miles up the creek from the small village of McCarthy.

The law guarantees “adequate and feasible” access to in-holdings. But the mine’s 100-year-old access road hadn’t been used for years and was overgrown. Last fall, Papa Pilgrim drove the mine’s old bulldozer down the old road to clear the blocked places. Environmentalists and park officials were outraged. Park officials filed criminal charges against him for “damaging public property” and failing to apply for a permit. They blockaded the road. ❖

THE WIDE-ANGLE LENS

Alaska officials say McCarthy Creek road belongs to Alaska. Federal park officials reject that claim. They've spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars “investigating” the Pilgrims. “We have had it,” says chief ranger Hunter Sharp. “We are not going to back off. We represent the people of the United States.” The Pilgrims, he says, are **cantankerous** and possibly dangerous. “False,” says Rick Kenyon, editor of *Wrangell St. Elias News*. “These folks are a law-abiding, God-fearing family—loving, caring people who have been a real blessing to their neighbors.” ❖

Like all U.S. national parks, the 13-million-acre Wrangell-St. Elias National Park is land taken and controlled by the federal government. It is supposedly land preserved for “the people.”

Do park officials really “represent the people of the United States” as chief ranger Sharp claims? Or do they represent big government bureaucrats with too much power?

More Than Hillbillies

The Bible calls God’s people “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13). That’s why Robert Hale and his wife renamed themselves “Pilgrim” in 1979—the year Christ entered their hearts.

Papa Pilgrim keeps his Bible with him in a buckskin holster. And his idea of living a holy life is literally to do what the Apostle Peter tells pilgrims to do: Flee the sinful desires of the world.

That’s one reason the Pilgrims choose to distance themselves from modern American culture. Before coming to Alaska, they lived in remote New Mexico mountains.

Their “hillbilly” appearance has often led to odd rumors. But, in the words of Dorothy Adler in the *Wrangell St. Elias News*, this “Jesus-loving family” is “quite simply an old-fashioned family living by the Bible.”

Through the Lord

“We’re just modest, simple folks,” says Papa Pilgrim, “not some strange religion.” With

good humor he has named their Alaska ranch “Hillbilly Heaven.”

The Pilgrims don’t watch TV. They work hard together, raise food, tan their own leather, shoot their own meat, make their own clothes and soap, and pray for God’s guidance in all they do. They study the Bible together often. Papa Pilgrim says he wants his family to know “how to use the Scriptures in their own lives.”

“What I wanted my children to learn—and what they did learn—was the character of God, the love of the Lord, and wisdom and knowledge that comes through his word. We learned to do everything through the Lord, to do a job well.”

The Reason

For clearing the road to McCarthy, environmental groups are demanding that the Park Service prosecute the Pilgrims “to the fullest extent of the law.” Park officials have the power and appear anxious to do that.

Is it because national parks are “for the people”? If it is, are the Pilgrims included? Or is it because the earth is holy and shouldn’t be used by humans?

Opening the old road to McCarthy was legal in the state of Alaska. It was also necessary common sense—just as was building it 100 years ago.

“In order for me to love my children, I have to be a provider,” says Papa Pilgrim. “With great reluctance, I took the bulldozer

and used the road. I had no idea what was in store.”

Values

Pushing saplings off an old road isn’t exactly like starting a forest fire or polluting a lake. But federal park officials say the bulldozer could also have hurt some fish when it crossed McCarthy Creek.

Their anger, however, is not really a matter of “damage to public property.” Clearing brush or crossing streams is not damage. Building roads is not evil. Their biggest complaint seems to be that Papa Pilgrim did not ask their per-



AP Photo

Papa

mission—although Alaska officials say federal agents have no authority over the road.

Many people have a wrong view of the earth. Even worse, they have a wrong view of God’s image—a view that puts bushes and fish above people.

The bushes and fish are doing just fine. The Pilgrims need help. ❖

CHATROOM

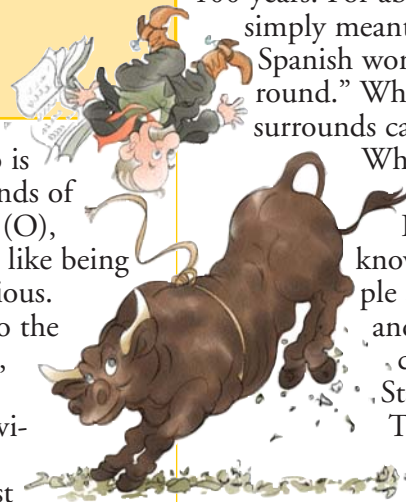
» What common reactions do people have when they see someone “different”?

» What do you think is the real reason park officials closed the McCarthy Creek road?

» Does the federal government have a constitutional right to override the laws of states?

Read: 1 Peter 2:11-12 | 1 Samuel 16:7 | Proverbs 22:6 | 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 | Colossians 2:2-3 | 2 Corinthians 4:4

rodeo



Isn't it perfectly obvious? A rodeo is a place where cowboys "rode" all kinds of farm animals around in a big circle (O), most of which animals didn't much like being "rode" and made that perfectly obvious.

If you answered yes, go directly to the barn, find the biggest, meanest bull, and sit on it for 8 seconds. That's what you get for being perfectly obviously wrong.

If you don't have a mean bull, just hop on a horse and ride figure-8s around a couple of barrels so fast that the horse almost tips over.

The third alternative is to ask yours truly, the illustrious Professor Wordbrain, to clarify the matter so that you never again make such a perfectly obvious mistake.

The word "rodeo" has been used for the wild

West entertainment thing for probably less than 100 years. For about 100 years before that, it simply meant "cattle pen." It came from the Spanish word *rodear* which means "to surround." What better word for a place that surrounds cattle with a fence?

Where did the Spanish get their word *rodear*? From ancient Latin, of course. I'm sure you know why Spanish-speaking people are sometimes called Latinos and why the Spanish-speaking countries south of the United States are called Latin America.

That Latin word was *rotare*, which meant to go around or revolve. The English word "rotate" comes from the same source. The cattle pen meaning of rodeo just referred to a place with a fence going around it.

But if you want to experience a perfectly obvious connection between "rodeo" and "rotate"—even though this one has no connection in word origins—surround yourself with a fence and hop on a bull. ❖

Illustration by Rich Bishop

DEAR EDITOR

▶ Your article on the new [Georgia] alligator hunting season was very interesting. I didn't realize that some gators got that big. It would be quite surprising to find one in your pool.

— DEREK EBERLY
Robesonia, Pennsylvania

▶ About "Books and Fairy Tales," it is wrong for librarians to post warning signs that FBI agents might be spying on peoples' reading habits. It will just make people hate our FBI.

— SARAH DI PUMA
Poplar, Wisconsin

▶ Concerning your story on the no-call list: My parents signed up because we are sick of telemarketers calling us. We have family members

in the telemarketing service and it's not that we don't care about their jobs. We just don't want to receive any unwanted phone calls.

— ASHLEY EDWARDS
Des Moines, Iowa

▶ In "Local Terror" ELF members claimed responsibility for causing millions of dollars worth of damage across the U.S. Is the ELF being forced to pay for the damage?

Thank you for publishing *GWN*. I enjoy reading about issues that never make national news—especially from a biblical perspective.

— NICOLE FRAZIER
Morgantown, Indiana

— *The FBI does want the ELF terrorists to pay. But it has to catch them first.*

— THE EDITOR

We appreciate hearing from you. Send your letters to: Dear Editor, Top Story, God's World News, PO Box 20001, Asheville, NC 28802-8201. Send e-mail to senioreditor@gwnews.com. Please include the name of your hometown.

Each of these words appears in color somewhere in this week's issue. Which meaning best fits its use in the story?



1. cantankerous

a) disobedient b) violent c) feisty

2. insidious

a) sneaky and dangerous
b) strong and stubborn
c) sneaky and fast

3. cogent

a) difficult b) valid c) silly

4. staunch

a) original b) reluctant c) firm

5. array

a) style b) collection c) variety

6. pre-Columbian

a) before Columbus
b) before the South American conquest
c) before the Spanish conquistadors