

Closed in Winter

February 6th.

"The road map says that Route 150 is closed in winter. I wonder what that means?"

"I suppose it means what it says."

"Well, let's go up there and take a look. Let's see how far we can get."

Throwing our heavy boots into the back seat of the car, we set out for Kamas, Utah. Kamas is about **forty** miles east of Salt Lake at the edge of two national forests: the Wasatch National Forest and the Uinta National Forest. Here is to be found the highest point in Utah, King's Peak at 13,500 feet, located in an area that is designated as "High Uintas, Primitive Area".

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From Kamas, Route 150 goes east a few miles till it hits the forest, then it turns north and goes about sixty miles through the forest over a pass near Mirror Lake. It terminates at Evanston, Wyoming, a Union Pacific rail center now buzzing with oil and gas. The day was bright and cheerful and we sped up Parley's Canyon on the Dwight D. Eisenhower Highway. So cheerful were we, in fact, that when we came to the famous sign that reads "Cheyenne: 465 miles", a figure that would normally fill the hearts of any easterner with fear and trembling, we felt like dyed-in-the-wool Westerners by conviction and genetic makeup.

Turning south on Route 189, not far from an absolutely empty place where some months later I would be caught in a highway speed trap, we got to a dam on Rockport Lake. We stopped, we got out of the car dutifully, and we read how many acre-feet of water there was or would be. We noted a sailboat logo at a recreational area. Coming from a part of the country where boats are as common as flies and where the Newport to Bermuda and the America's Cup races are run, we scoffed patriotically at the sailing opportunities touted by the Dehydrated States.

From the dam to a small town called Peco. Every

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small town snuggles in a valley. Towns, large or small, are not apt to be located on a mountain peak. Thence to Oakley and Marion at an elevation of 7,000 feet. Here there are lots of stud farms and the horses are out grazing in the light snow. What are all the horses for, we wondered. Race horses, we had heard, came from Kentucky. No horse in Utah pulls the plough, although they may come back to it. Horses for rodeo or for just plain riding around for fun? I suppose horses wonder what people are for.

A few more miles and we were at Kamas. Kamas is large enough to sport two eating places: an informal lunch counter called The High Uinta Lunch & Grille and a more formal place called Mollies. At Kamas we turned left into the National Forest and climbed^b_A to an estimated altitude of 8,000 feet. Looking back to the southwest, we could spot Mt. Timpanogos (11,750 feet). There seemed to be a fair amount of traffic on Route 150, i.e., about one car every five minutes, so we pushed on. A few more minutes and we came to a sign: Road Ends in Five Miles. What should we do; turn around and go back or push ahead without snow tires? Would we get stuck and have to be rescued by dog team and helicopter?

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Other cars were going forward so we followed them. It became clear that we were now in an area of recreational snowmobiling. There were turnouts and Rules were posted:

1. Don't litter
2. Dress warmly
3. Take a thermos of hot coffee
4. Don't go alone

Finally a sign: "Road Ends. Fifty Feet". No sign was necessary. The road in front of us was suddenly blocked by a wall of snow twelve feet high. We couldn't have gotten the car onto it by prayer. We parked and got out.

There was not too much snowmobiling at the end of the road, so we climbed up the twelve-foot wall and found that the snow on the top was packed solid. We walked along the top. Fifty-nine more miles and we would be in Evanston, Wyoming. If a car got snowbound here it wouldn't thaw till summer, and the people would be preserved like mastodons in Siberia. We allowed ourselves the luxury of this thought because the wind was light and the walking easy. Hawks with a four-foot wing span soared in the mountain hollows .

After an hour we drove back to Kamas and stopped

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at the High Uinta Lunch & Grille and ordered two short stacks of pancakes and coffee. A coin box for Muscular Dystrophy decorated the counter. A newspaper from Heber City, Utah said something about "Hostages in Iran".

"Now we know what it means when it says road closed in winter."

"We do. It means that the road is closed. Period."

