

OVER THE PASS



“Almost two years ago, when we went to the Albuquerque Balloon Festival that October. We live in Wiley, 13 miles from Lamar. We usually go to Pueblo or Colorado Springs, or to Fort Collins because my son lives there.”

– Jim Schleining, farmer (Trinidad)



TRINIDAD-RATON CONNECTION

“When did you last cross Raton Pass?”

By Tim Keller
Correspondent
The Chronicle-News

Photos: Tim Keller / The Chronicle-News

“We crossed the pass about a month ago because we were looking for a place to live in either Raton or Trinidad. We’ve lived in Taos and Las Vegas in New Mexico, and Navajo Ranch between La Veta and Walsenburg. We’ve rented a house here and once we’ve explored Trinidad, we’ll go back and explore Raton.”

– Jules Kennedy, doctoral student and writer (Trinidad)



“Two weeks ago we picked up our 16-year-old granddaughter in Pueblo for a trip to the water park in Denver.”

– Lucille Harris, retired, Bank of America (Raton)



“We went over to Gino’s last night. I go a lot, a couple times a week at least. I shop at Walmart and eat at Wonderful House or Taco Bell.”

– James Herrera, caregiver (Raton)



“I just came back from there this morning before I came to volunteer here at the Mitchell. I believe the jeweler in Raton is the only one in our region that will change watch batteries. I ate at Arby’s and shopped at some stores.”

– Jan Giordano, front desk volunteer, Mitchell Museum of Western Art (Trinidad)



“I went to Walmart last week. I also like to go up to Segundo on Highway 12. We have a band that plays up there. We don’t have a name. It’s just me and George and Manuel. We just get together and play.”

– Henry Trueba, artist (Raton)



Colorado Senior Lobby

Colorado Senior Lobby President Ed Shackelford presenting award to Senator Larry Crowder.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Crowder earns praise, presented ‘Serving Our Seniors’ award

Colorado Senior Lobby
Special to The Chronicle-News

Colorado State Senator Larry Crowder (R-District 35) continues to garner praise for a strong three year performance at the Statehouse, with this week’s acceptance of the “Serving Our Seniors” award from the Colorado Senior Lobby, an all-volunteer organization serving senior citizens across Colorado.

Crowder is one of only four legislators to win the honor, presented during the group’s August 22 Annual Meeting in Highlands Ranch. This was the third year the group gave the award.

“Senator Crowder was a key legislator in 2015 for sponsoring important legislation that will benefit the aging population,” said Colorado Senior Lobby President Ed Shackelford. “The Senator’s primary sponsorship of legislation creating the Strategic Action Planning Group on Aging will be an impor-

tant legacy for him.”

This was the second time in as many weeks that Crowder received post-session recognition. Last week he was named 2015 “Rural Health Champion Award” by the Colorado Rural Health Center, a non-profit that works to improve care at rural critical access hospitals and clinics across the state.

Crowder thanked the Colorado Senior Lobby for the award and pledged to keep fighting for older Coloradans in the 2016 session, which begins January 13.

“While my goal at the Statehouse is to serve all my district constituents, working to better the situation for seniors is especially important to me because they’re also often the most vulnerable of the people we represent,” Crowder said in response to the award. “The Colorado Senior Lobby also understands the importance of looking out for Colorado’s older citizens, which is why I’m really honored to get this recognition”.

Migrants flow west on Hungarian trains; 13,000 reach Austria

MARKO DROBNJAKOVIC
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Associated Press

HEGYESHALOM, Hungary (AP) — Hungarian police stood by as thousands of migrants hopped cross-border trains Sunday into Austria, taking advantage of Hungary’s surprise decision to stop screening international train travelers for travel visas, a get-tough measure that the country had launched only days before to block their path to asylum in Western Europe.

Fourteen trains from Hungary’s capital of Budapest arrived at the Hegyeshalom station near the Austrian border, disgorging migrants onto the platform. Police didn’t check documents as passengers, mostly migrants, walked a few yards (meters) to waiting Austria-bound trains, which typically left less than 3 minutes later. Austrian police said more than 13,000 migrants have passed through their country to Germany over the past two days, far more than expected.

Arabs, Asians and Africans who often have spent weeks traveling through Turkey, Greece and the Balkans to reach Hungary, a popular back door into the European Union, found to their surprise they were permitted Sunday to buy tickets to take them all the way into Austria and Germany. Hungary had insisted last week they would no longer be allowed to do this.

Ticket sellers at Budapest’s Keleti station merely rolled their eyes when asked by AP why they were selling Vienna tickets to asylum seekers. Several migrants told the AP they had expected to be rejected, but easily bought international tickets to Vienna without visa checks.

“No check, no problem,” said Reza Wafai, a 19-year-old from Bamiyan, Afghanistan, who hopes to join relatives in Dortmund, Germany. He displayed his just-purchased ticket to Vienna costing 9,135 forints (\$32.50). He was traveling without a passport, carrying only a black-and-white Hungarian asylum seeker ID.

EU rules stipulate asylum seekers should seek refuge in their initial EU entry point. But virtually none of the migrants want to claim asylum in Hungary, where the government is building border defenses and trying to make it increasingly hard for asylum seekers to enter.

Hungarian government spokesman Zoltan Kovacs told The Associated Press that Hungary had decided to drop visa checks on train ticket customers, a measure introduced only Tuesday, because of the sudden drop in migrant numbers made possible by Germany and Austria’s breakthrough decision to take thousands of asylum seekers stuck in Hungary. The country used 104 buses to clear Budapest’s central Keleti train station and Hungary’s major motorway of more than 4,000 migrants and deliver them to the border.

Sunday’s free movement for migrants on trains represented an effort “to return to normality, whatever that is,” Kovacs said.

“Last week the security situation was such that we had to step up in-depth checking,” Kovacs said, referring to Hungary’s effort to require suspected migrants to show valid travel visas when trying to buy train tickets. The rule effectively blocked every migrant from a cross-border train.

“Now anybody can buy a ticket again, and this is nor-

mal. Police typically do not check tickets and railways do not check visas,” Kovacs said.

But complicating the ever-changing picture, Austria’s railway company told the AP it plans to end its connections to Hegyeshalom on Monday. Direct Vienna-Budapest services will take their place, spokeswoman Sonya Horner said. It remains to be seen whether Hungarian or Austrian police will screen those services for migrants traveling without visas.

Hungary, for its part, is making a concerted effort to make it harder for asylum seekers to reach its territory from non-EU member Serbia. Serbia Railways said Hungarian authorities refused Sunday to permit two passenger trains to travel into Hungary citing, for the first time, large groups of migrants aboard.

Serbia Railways said in a statement that migrants refused to disembark from the train before reaching Hungary, the typical practice in recent months. One train was canceled and its legal passengers permitted to enter Hungary by bus, while the second train entered Hungary after migrants aboard were isolated on two carriages that were decoupled and left behind, forcing the migrants to walk to the border.

The week has seen rapid policy reversals: On Monday, Hungary annoyed its EU neighbors by permitting thousands of migrants to storm aboard trains bound for Vienna and the German cities of Munich and Hamburg. On Tuesday, Hungary announced that travelers would require passports and visas to travel west by train to other EU nations, frustrating thousands more migrants who had just bought tickets.