

Picking up trash turns into treasured memories

By JAMIE LAMPROS

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MONTE CRISTO — For the past 18 years, members of The Wild Bunch have put their dance shoes aside to lace up their hiking boots and head for the mountains. The members of the square dancing club drive to Mile Marker 33 on the road to Monte Cristo to pick up trash.

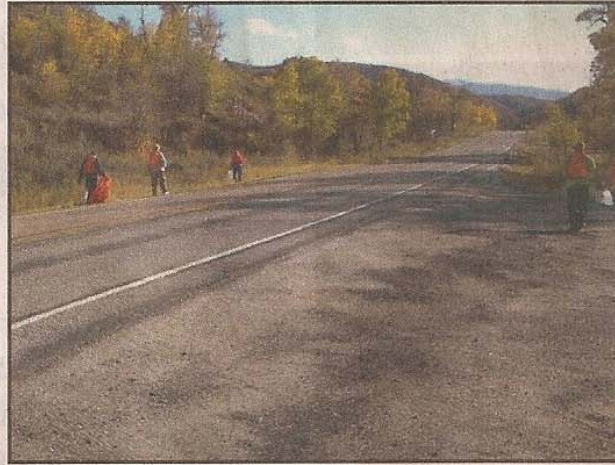
“We’ve found some very interesting things over the past several years,” said club member Doug Swayngim. “Parts of car hoods, trailer parts, steering wheels, snowmobile parts.”

The group also has found sunglasses, cash, underwear and liquor bottles.

“You wouldn’t believe some of the things people throw out their car windows,” Swayngim said.

Bonnie and Lamont Hall said they once found a lawn mower, a measuring tape and a few full bottles of beer.

The group spent the late afternoon and early evening Monday cleaning up a 2 1/2-mile stretch of the road along Highway 39. When they were finished, they sat around a campfire and enjoyed Annette Saxton’s homemade chili and



Contributed photo

Members of the Square Dance Club work to clean up the roadside near Monte Cristo.

Rae Erwin’s fresh-grown fruit.

“People like to eat,” Swayngim said. “So if you have food, you’re likely to get a crowd. That’s the whole secret.”

Kidding aside, however, Swayngim said the dance club members are dedicated to community service.

“The average age of our group is about 75. We have some folks in their 80s,” he said. “We’ve got people who have had both knees replaced, hip replacements, heart surgery, and they still come out every year — twice a year — and participate.”

The group was founded 18 years

ago after splitting away from another dance club. Swayngim said after brainstorming for awhile, they came up with the name The Wild Bunch.

“The older we get though, the more I think we need to turn the W upside down,” he said. “We’re becoming more like The Mild Group.”

Community service projects aren’t the only activities the group does together. Several times a year, they load up their trailers and head to a different part of the country to dance. The group

als, and Ron and Rae Erwin won a bronze medal.

“This club has more fun than anyone I know,” said Bonnie Hall. “No matter where we go or what we do, we find a way to have a lot of fun.”

After picking up trash, the group returned to the campsite, removed their orange

vests and looked inside each other’s orange trash bags.

“We have a good time. It keeps us young,” Swayngim said. “And look at all this great food. We’ve got chili, donuts, fruit, breadsticks, and we’re going to roast marshmallows. See? If you have food around, you really can accomplish a lot.”

recently returned from the Senior Games in St. George, where Lamar and Ruth Bradshaw and Carlos and Maureen Elwood won silver med-