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Staying Alive

By Dick Chapman

Over the low hill or ridge that separated the rough ground from the plain ridges, a canyon thrust its peak high above any points in sight. On its small round top, a bush grew and clung fast waving in the wind but never turning loose of its hold on the gravely peak.

There was grass — just God's green grass, or perhaps it was tall brown grass that was more yellow than brown. Somewhere on a flat plain a spot of several acres was taken over by short curly grass, and here was where the little barking dogs with the twitching tail had settled in.

They scampered from one hole in a mound to another hole in a mound and kept the tops of the mounds round and clean. These den-holes made a bad place for a horse or cow to step in and break a leg.

A rider coming toward the dog-town half a mile away was

unseen by the small animals, but he was spotted by a larger gray animal as soon as he came over the ridge far away, but the coyote wasn't surprised or startled. And it made no move as the rider might change his course before coming to the dog town; anyhow, he wasn't carrying anything in his hand, and the little wolf was sure he could beat the rider to the nearest canyon. And he didn't want to move since the warm sun felt good on his woolly back where the hair hadn't yet shed off, and he stood a good chance to nab a young prairie dog that got too far from its den. The coyote wasn't really hungry, but he was tired of chewing on a tough old winter-killed cow that the buzzards had already worked on, and a fat young dog always tasted good in the spring.

The rider had turned away to avoid riding through the dog town or perhaps had sighted cattle that should be counted, so danger was over from that direction. The puppies were getting closer and more careless in their play, so there was nothing to do except stay quiet and watch and wait. But then a high-wheeling hawk made a dive over the town, which sent the little dogs diving underground at a warning bark from the old ones.

No use hanging around there today as it was getting late, so unless he could catch a jack rabbit, it seemed that he would have to be satisfied with more dried beef. Oh well. Tomorrow would be sunny, and the young dogs would just be a day older and a day bigger. ❖

DICK CHAPMAN, "Uncle Dick" to some of our readers, late "Poet Laureate of Arapaho," continues to entertain us with his homey viewpoint

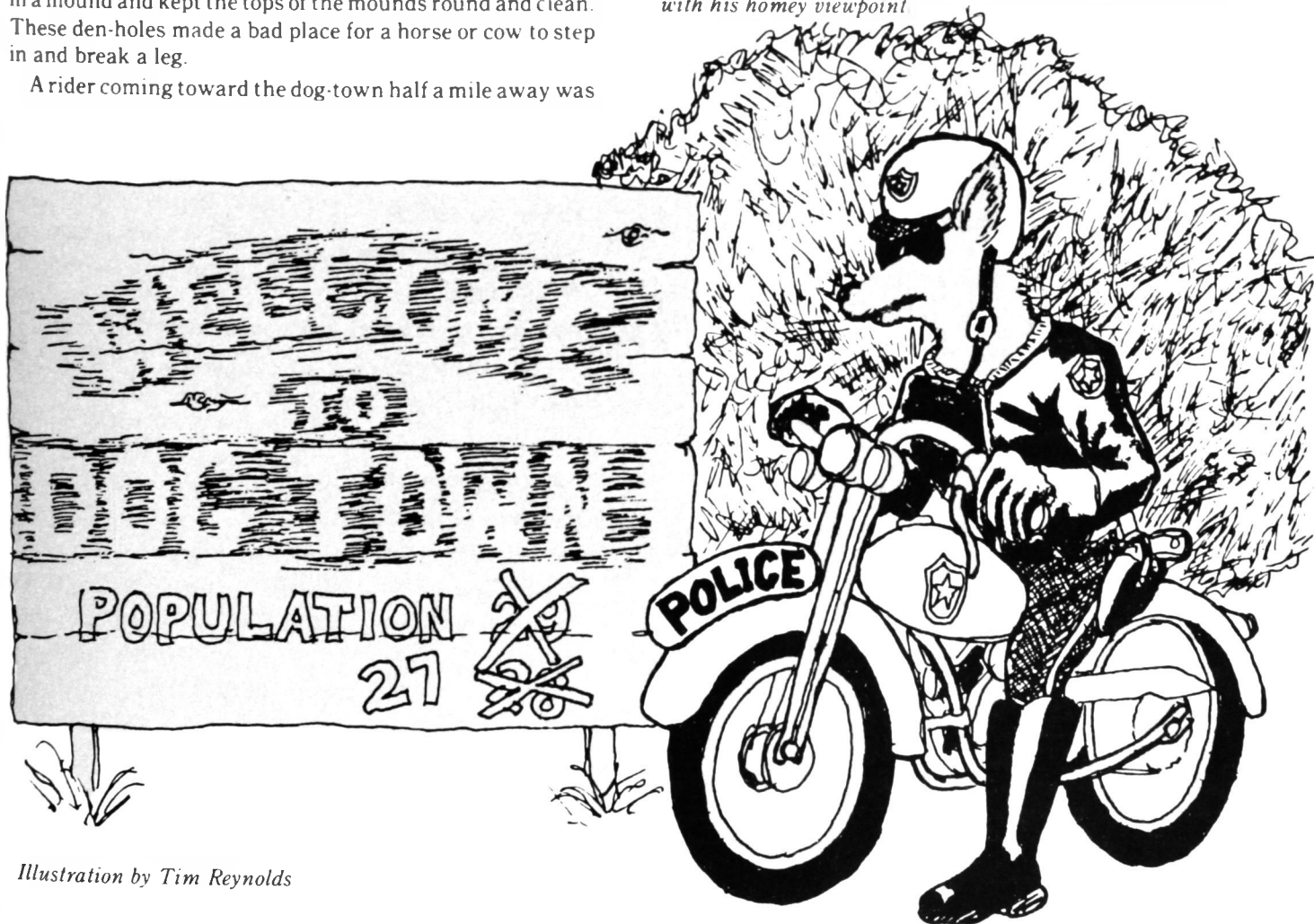


Illustration by Tim Reynolds