

## **The Battlement Mesa Service Association**

### **“A Retirement Community or A Great Place to Live, to Work or to Retire?”**

**By Keith Lammey, President, Battlement Mesa Service Association**

Like many of you, I was fascinated by the 2010 U.S. Census information that was quoted in the “From the Editor” column in last month’s Echo. Judging from comments that I’ve heard, many residents were surprised to learn that the average age of a Battlement Mesa resident was thirty-five years and that the 62 and older age group in Grand Junction (19 percent) and Cedaredge (34 percent) exceeded Battlement Mesa’s (17 percent). Yes, it was interesting information, but it didn’t surprise some residents like Mary Lee and Jerry Mohrlang who see Battlement Mesa as a great place to visit, to live and to retire but not as a retirement community.

Several residents have pointed out that Battlement Mesa was promoted in various ways to the senior population, but from what I have read, not specifically as a retirement community. For example, Battlement Mesa was listed as a “Best Neighborhood” in the fall 1997 issue of *Where to Retire* magazine. Recently I reread the entire four-page article. The article has an obvious slant toward retirement but it does not describe Battlement Mesa as a retirement community. Instead, in my opinion, it simply describes Battlement Mesa as a great place to live; as a “Best Neighborhood.”

The article that appeared in the fall 1997 issue was the second time that Battlement Mesa was featured in *Where to Retire* magazine. Two and a half years earlier, in the spring 1995 issue, the magazine ran an article entitled, “New Life For Old Towns.” The article, written by Claire Walter, described our community’s post 1970’s history by stating, “In the 1970s, when ‘energy crisis’ became part of the American phrase book, extracting oil from shale in western Colorado seemed feasible, but there was no place in this rural landscape to house the thousands of workers needed to build the facility and then house those who would mine the ore and extract oil from it. Atlantic Richfield proposed building a new company town, and when Exxon bought out ARCO’s interest in early 1980, they continued the plan, pouring millions into Battlement Mesa. The new town was expected eventually to have population of 25,000, and streets, utilities, a school, houses, and an elaborate community center which sprang up in 18 months to serve that many people.”

Those were the boom years. Then, as the article explains, the bust arrived when “Exxon pulled out of the oil-shale project in May 1982, stranding 2,300 Battlement Mesa residents. Many pulled up stakes in a pattern that has plagued the western mountains for more than a century. Battlement Mesa went from boom to bust overnight. Exxon’s options were to demolish the town or to find another use for it. Happily for 2,000 retirees, semi-retirees, and others who now call Battlement Mesa home, Exxon decided to sell homes and lots to the active-adult market. To solidify the appeal to retirees, the 18-hole golf course, now considered one of Colorado’s best, was completed and a 25-meter pool was added to the activity center. As a result of these projects and strong promotion, Battlement Mesa attracted 1,000 new residents in a year. In late 1989, Exxon sold the project to Battlement Mesa Partners, which has continued and refined the original concepts.”

Later in the article, the author stated, “Because the 3,200-acre planned community was designed for everyone from laborers to executives, housing in various price ranges was planned from the outset” then continued with, “Battlement Mesa’s population is now approaching what it was when Exxon pulled out...” and “...residents enjoy tennis on four courts, hiking, biking, and horseback riding on miles of nearby trails, and year-round trout fishing.”

It is interesting that neither of the two *Where to Retire* magazine articles referred to Battlement Mesa as “a retirement community.” In contrast, both articles described the area’s mild climate, many outdoor activities, and our many community amenities “designed for everyone.”

It is predictable that residents will debate the retirement versus a great place to retire issue for years to come, but two phrases accurately describe our community: Battlement Mesa is an “adult-active community” and “a great place to visit, to live, to work and to retire.”