



Loving it to Death

Panorama Photographs by Marshall Mayer

“Loving it to death” is a phrase that has been widely used in the environmental and conservation movements for several decades. It usually refers to the contradiction of encouraging recreational access to a fragile natural resource to the extent that the environment is damaged. It may have originated with Bernard DeVoto or Wallace Stegner, but it came of age in the 1970s in the Intermountain West. I first heard it shortly after moving back to the region from Los Angeles.

Being part of the problem, that phrase struck a nerve. I’ve driven well over a million miles around the region since moving from Iowa to Colorado in 1970. In my travels, I often pulled off to take pictures, especially at wide spots that a highway department deemed worthy of a sign announcing a “View Point” or encouraging a stop to take a photo. The “loving it to death” contradiction had been made visible.

I started making panoramas of these vistas when I discovered the new feature on my iPhone in 2012. It’s a simple (if often wrenching) process: start the image, pan across the scene, and stop when you think you have the whole view (or can’t rotate anymore!). Consistent with my photographic ethic, I make no adjustments to the image in the camera or on the computer: what you see is what the camera got.

Marshall Mayer has lived in Helena, Montana, since moving there from Southern California in the mid-1980s. He was awarded an MFA in Photography and Performance Art from the University of California at San Diego in 1981. He also studied photography at the University of Colorado Boulder and the University of New Mexico, after earning a BA from The Colorado College in 1974. A collection of these panoramas is at <https://take-note.com/collections/loving-it-to-death>.