

Seeking Y2K getaway, some head for the Ozark Hills

By Claudia Kolker,
Los Angeles Times

SPRINGDALE, Ark. — If it weren't for the bug, F. Paul Haag could really savor the view: icy trees, misted hilltops, a fish-filled lake at his land's edge. But the bug is too present in the 53-year-old computer consultant's thoughts. It keeps him busy filling propane tanks, installing generators, amassing enough grain to feed a family for two years. The bug isn't anything endemic to this swath of the South. It's the Y2K programming glitch preoccupying computer technicians and many others as 2000 approaches.

Last summer, it worried Haag enough for him to move from Sacramento, Calif., to this breathtaking mountaintop, where he thinks he might soon need to live off the land. "It's not a question of if, it's just a matter of how bad," Haag says of the Y2K bug's potential for disruption. "It's not unwise to be prudent." Across the country, small but noticeable clumps of migrants, the far end of Y2K worriers, are relocating to remote areas. No place may be as ready for them as northwest Arkansas.

With cheap land, abundant water and isolated hills and hollows, the Ozarks have long sheltered the culture's refugees. Frank and Jesse James holed up here in the 19th century; veterans from battle-scarred Tennessee struggled in after the Civil

War. In the 1960s, it was the back-to-earthers, or "tick hippies" as locals called them. And in the 1980s came Midwestern retirees and alarming groups of armed, right-wing extremists.

Now the newcomers include Y2Kers, usually wanting five to 40 acres, natural water, land pocked with caves. Like earlier survivalists, they're often devout, with apocalyptic notions. Many are also highly educated. "My clients are mostly businesspeople," said Nathan Parker, who is helping Haag ready his property.

"Almost all of them have money or access to money," added Parker, who is also preparing 16 large properties and about a dozen small farms in the area. "Right off the cuff, I'd say everybody I'm working for has college or advanced degrees." Longtime residents watch such building, digging and stockpiling with bemusement. Some, like Parker, are used to survivalist living themselves and find work helping Y2Kers. Others, such as the ex-hippies who still people these hills, shake their heads at the extravagant take on self-sufficiency.

If the new year dawns tranquilly, migrants often say they'll enjoy the Arkansas Ozarks anyhow. Home to poultry behemoth Tyson Foods Inc., and the Wal-Mart empire, the region has boomed in recent years. Composed of four counties bordered by Oklahoma on the west and

Missouri on the north, the area's rolling mountains, technically, plateaus, and verdant meadows belie the fast growth in its cities.

The millenarians are arriving in handfuls, not throngs. Nick Masullo, manager of the Ozark Cooperative Warehouse, calculates they've nudged sales up 15 percent. While some real estate agents report no change in business, many report up to half a dozen clients in recent months. One Fayetteville real estate agent, Sally Erbe, said she has closed deals on 12 Y2K properties all, she noted gaily, in cash.

"They're not giving up their lifestyles or their homes," she said. "It's mostly people who are looking for insurance," she said. Their concerns spring from a grievous flaw in computer history. Because early programmers denoted dates with two digits, not four, much computerized equipment, ranging from VCRs to military gear, may read 2000 as 1900.

Government agencies, utilities and many big businesses have launched or completed extensive corrective programs. But lack of consensus on what will happen at year's end, mixed with some religious beliefs, have fed a murky subculture of worst-case prophets. Their most common forum, for now: the Internet. Among their darkest predictions: the collapse of the power grid, leading to shortages of food and money supplies, unleashing urban anarchy.

Computer consultant Haag is religious, but his concerns are strictly technological, and he doesn't expect society to unravel. But he began to take Y2K seriously after his own research, which included the work of Y2K pundit Gary North.

The Arkansas-based North, who declines interviews, has prompted much of the Y2K influx to the region. Presiding over a vast Internet system, North is a religious "reconstructionist" who thinks society must collapse before Jesus Christ returns.

Northwest Arkansas, with its natural resources, University of Arkansas library and low crime rate, is an ideal place to prepare for the expected cataclysm, North writes. Last summer, he announced he was leaving his aerie for more land elsewhere in the region. Haag visited the property and snapped it up for \$160,000.

In Haag's view, nuclear power plants will be among the first hit by microchip failures. An energy crisis, he thinks, could halt transportation and food distribution and spark desperation. Pacing his mountaintop, Haag outlined his preparations with a cane. Already, the snug, wide-windowed one-story house has been converted to use mostly propane. In the yard stood three 1,000-gallon tanks of propane and three tanks of diesel. A divorced father of three adults, Haag said he's planning accommodations for the whole

family.

Still to come are solar panels, a garden, goats and perhaps more of the weapons he collects. Haag intends them mostly for barter, but he's also learning to shoot. Soft-spoken and thoughtful, Haag, who has a master's degree in political science, said he worries about Y2K extremists. "There are militants among us. Most of us, most of the Y2Kers, have a lot of arms," Haag said as light snow began to fall. "I think this is a romanticized attempt (for some) to go back to America's religious roots."

To Bob Rutz, who bought 700 acres of land two years ago, social breakdown looks likely. "The stuff that's fixing to happen, if you don't know God real well, you're not in real good shape wherever you are," the engineer from Irvine, Calif., said. Rutz, selling three-acre lots for \$25,000, as well as cheaper mobile-home sites, wouldn't say how many buyers he has had. But his vision for the land includes a buggy factory, hospital, goatherd and airstrip.

Declining to let a reporter visit, he did volunteer, "If you have people that would like to come to a safer place than where they're living now, with the idea of Christian ministry to the people who are going to be badly hurt, you can even use my phone number," listed in the local directory. "We want to help folks."

The out-of-towners' hunker-down ethic is also touching the natives.

Y2K foreman Parker, a former farm supply dealer, began helping millenarians a year ago. He learned his trade, he said, simply by being an Arkansan in the depressed 1970s. "Things were just really, really tough," Parker said. "We gardened and we canned, and we lived and did things very primitively. It kind of set the stage for the rest of my life."

At the Ozark warehouse, Masullo also has been at work, making the distribution system Y2K-safe. But he disapproves of panic-buying of unwieldy parcels of food. He did like a local newspaper headline, "Disciples of Doom," and thinks it's a good name for his bowling team. From their hand-built house on a steep hill in Kingston, meanwhile, back-to-earthers Barbara and Derrick Zimmerman regard their aloof new Y2K neighbors with goodwill and skepticism.

Perched by her wood stove as snow started to turn the air white, Barbara Zimmerer said: "These new people are coming for the right reasons. It's beautiful to be outside working where you don't have sirens, people coming door to door." But, she added, Y2Kers may not fully appreciate the grit it takes to live in this way. "Moving here is easy. Being able to stay here and take care of yourself is a whole lot harder."

Navigator dismissed from Marines in gondola crash

By Shirley E. Perlman,
Newsday

CAMPLEJEUNE, N.C. — After three hours of deliberations, a military jury of nine Marine officers sentenced Capt. Joseph Schweitzer Friday to dismissal from the service, a penalty equivalent to dishonorable discharge.

The jury decided not to incarcerate Schweitzer, which agreed with a plea-bargain negotiated earlier, when Schweitzer pleaded guilty to two counts of conspiracy and obstruction of justice for destroying a videotape taken the day his jet sliced the cable of a gondola in Aviano, Italy, causing the deaths of 20 people.

The terms of the agreement,

which was under seal, were revealed by military judge Col. Alvin Keller after the jury reached its decision. "I respect the decision that was made by my peers," Schweitzer said at a news conference. "This has been a long, painful chapter of my life that is finally concluded."

Asked what he would do next, he said, "My immediate plans are basically to wake up tomorrow morning and not have to deal with this." Schweitzer, 31, of Westbury, N.Y., had been charged with manslaughter, but that was dropped after a military jury acquitted the jet's pilot, Capt. Richard Ashby, of the same charge. Ashby, who was in the courtroom for Schweitzer's sentence, still faces court-martial April 26 on

the conspiracy and obstruction charges for his role in destroying the videotape.

Schweitzer's lawyer, David Beck, criticized the military and U.S. officials for not accepting responsibility for the accident, which triggered worldwide outrage and strained relations between Italy and the United States. "They want to shift the blame," Beck said. "Now Captain Ashby faces charges again about the videotape that had absolutely nothing to do with the accident. When is the process going to stop?"

Schweitzer's plea bargain ruled out incarceration in exchange for the guilty plea, but otherwise the sentence was up to the jury. In military law dismissal ranks as the

most severe of the eight possible penalties. Incarceration ranks seventh.

The jury could have sentenced him to a term of up to 10 years. Because of the plea bargain, any incarceration would have been set aside, but any other penalty voted by the jury would stand. There is an automatic appeal process. Meanwhile, Schweitzer will continue to receive his salary of \$3,484.80 a month.

During the three-day sentencing hearing, Schweitzer maintained that he stopped videotaping about seven minutes before the incident. He and Ashby swapped the tape with a blank because they feared the commanding officer would be upset a videocamera

had been in the cockpit.

After learning of the deaths, he recalled that at one point he had smiled into the camera and that there was footage of slicing turns over the Italian Alps. The maneuvers were authorized, but he feared the tape would be misconstrued by Italian authorities and the media, which had branded the jet crew as "Rambos" and "air assassins."

On Thursday, taking the stand in his own defense, Schweitzer took responsibility for destroying the video. In closing arguments Friday Beck asked for no punishment. "He's got a general court-martial conviction, and he'll have to live with that for the rest of his life," Beck said.

Maj. Vernon Couch, the

prosecutor, called for Schweitzer's dismissal and asked the jury to reject defense pleas to consider stress as a mitigating factor. "They train us to make hard decisions, the right decisions in tough situations," he said. He said the crimes were especially egregious because they were committed by officers at a time when the Marine Corps was under investigation by a foreign government.

"They were guests in that country flying out of that base and then they went and did this, smacked the Marine Corps right in the face. If that's not service-discrediting conduct, what is?"

Melissa' suspect matched Internet sleuths' expectations

By Leslie Walker,
The Washington Post

Cybersleuths had been peering into cyberspace, collecting clues about the Melissa virus author, for eight full days before David L. Smith was arrested in New Jersey Friday and charged with being the culprit.

So it came as no surprise to software analysts when newspapers reported that the 30-year-old Smith was working as a computer programmer, had filed for bankruptcy in Florida three years ago and was now living alone in a Monmouth County, N.J., apartment with two cats and a big pile of computers.

Analysts already had been tracing the digital fingerprints left across the Internet by the creator of Melissa, the

nasty virus that overloaded e-mail systems worldwide. Even as Smith was being released on bail, electronic profiles based on Internet "aliases" were being linked to him through such clues as Smith's private e-mail account DLSmith(a)monmouth.com.

The online persona that emerged, analysts said, was of a "prolific" Internet writer who called himself a "pill-head" and posted thousands of messages to online bulletin boards devoted to music, art, sex and computer viruses.

"We believe David Smith has about a dozen different aliases," said Peter Tippet, chief executive of Reston, Va.-based ICASA.net, one of many computer security firms where virus experts have been working continuously since the first Melissa-infected file was posted to a sex-

related Internet newsgroup March 25.

Smith's lawyer said Saturday that his client would plead not guilty. Tippet said his team uncovered circumstantial evidence strongly suggesting that the person who posted messages online as David L. Smith was the same person who traveled the Internet as VicodinES, a notorious virus writer who spread similar Word viruses in the past.

"The anti-virus community has been miffed with VicodinES for several years," Tippet said, "because he has been so prolific and in-your-face about spreading viruses and developing tools to help other people write them." Even though FBI agents said they had no reason to believe Smith was VicodinES, Tippet said his team's detailed work suggests

they are the same person. VicodinES, whose name stems from a prescription painkiller, abruptly stopped posting viruses and messages to newsgroups last July, he said.

Tippet said his staff reviewed more than 3,000 messages, e-mails and Web pages that he believes were created by the person who wrote the Melissa virus. The messages repeatedly referred to anti-anxiety drugs and painkillers, Tippet said. In one posting to a medical discussion group in 1997, "DLSmith(a) monmouth.com" sought advice and complained that two doctors had described him as "having a problem with anxiety and panic attacks."

In another online "interview" with "Cicatrix" in 1997, VicodinES said

that he named his viruses .Poppy "because I am a pill-head and all the good pills come from the poppy plant." In the same Web publication, VicodinES said his goal was "to annoy countless users worldwide."

Virus detectives uncovered what they believe are Smith's digital fingerprints by comparing telltale signatures on the Internet, including e-mail addresses, names and signatures at the end of bulletin board postings; Internet protocol addresses that identify specific computers; and little-known unique identification numbers called GUIDs (global unique identifiers), which Microsoft Word stamps inside every document it creates.

VicodinES and DLSmith both posted messages suggesting they were 30 years old and had lived in

Florida and New Jersey; both also visited the same discussion groups focusing on music, art, sex and computer viruses, Tippet said. Most of those clues, however, were not what led New Jersey authorities to identify Smith. It was the old-fashioned telephone.

The March 25 posting contained a return address of an America Online account. Although the name on the account was misleading, AOL's logs recorded the telephone line used for the posting. That line, in turn, led to New Jersey Internet service provider Monmouth Internet Corp., where logs showed the call was made from Smith's telephone, authorities said.

Sidney Gottlieb, CIA's Answer to James Bond's Q, dies at 80

By Elaine Woo,
Los Angeles Times

James Bond had Q, the scientific wizard who supplied 007 with dazzling gadgets to deploy against enemy agents. The CIA had Sidney Gottlieb, a Bronx-born biochemist with a Ph.D. from the California Institute of Technology whose job as head of the agency's technical services division was to concoct the tools of espionage, disappearing inks, poison darts, toxic handkerchiefs.

Gottlieb died on March 7 in Washington, Va. He was 80. His family did not divulge the cause of his death. Gottlieb once mailed a lethal handkerchief to an Iraqi colonel and personally ferried a deadly bacteria to the Congo to kill Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba. It wasn't his potions that eventually did in the two targets, but Gottlieb, once described by a colleague as the ultimate "good soldier," soldiered on. His sole preoccupation during 22

years with the CIA was not the poisons and the darts, however. He labored for years on a project to unlock and control the mysterious powers of LSD. Could it be a potent spy weapon to weaken the minds of unwilling targets?

In the 1950s and 1960s, answering that question was one of Gottlieb's missions in MKULTRA, the code name for the agency's secret experiments to probe the effects of mind-altering drugs. Chief among them was LSD, discovered by Dr. Albert Hofman, a Swiss chemist, in 1943. By the early 1950s, the CIA, fearful of its falling into Soviet hands, had cornered the market on the drug, which in minute doses could produce overwhelming sensations, from kaleidoscopic acuity to temporary insanity. The agency also started to fund research, covertly funneling hundreds of thousands of dollars to academics in prestigious institutions around the country who tried the drug themselves and reported the results to

Gottlieb.

Gottlieb and his associates in MKULTRA also went on "trips," although the concept of tripping would not enter the American lexicon for another decade. They laced coffee with LSD and served it to each other without warning, then observed each other's reactions. Later Gottlieb expanded the field tests to subjects outside the agency, drug addicts, prostitutes, prisoners, mental patients, people who were unlikely to complain and even less likely to be believed if they did. Among the dosed were hookers and their clients in a CIA-sponsored brothel in San Francisco, later the epicenter of the LSD explosion.

In the early 1960s, Gottlieb was promoted to the highest deputyship in the technical services operation. By 1967, he had risen to the top of the division, guided by his longtime agency mentor, director Richard Helms. By that time, LSD was not a secret anymore. While the CIA was

secret anymore. While the CIA was still examining the drug's possibilities as a means of mind control, a whole generation of young Americans was dropping the hallucinogen as a vehicle of mind expansion.

It was not until 1972 that Gottlieb called a halt to the experiments with psychedelics, concluding in a memo that they were "too unpredictable in their effects on individual human beings to be operationally useful." He retired the same year, spending the next few decades in eclectic pursuits that defied the stereotype of the spy. He went to India with his wife to volunteer at a leper hospital. A stutterer since childhood, he got a master's degree in speech therapy. He raised goats on a Virginia farm. And he practiced folk dancing, a lifelong passion despite the handicap of a clubfoot.

High-Tech outreach to Bush

By Ceci Connolly,
The Washington Post

A not-so-friendly welcome awaits Vice President Gore when he arrives in California Monday. Fifty prominent technology executives have taken out an ad in the San Jose Mercury News pointedly urging Texas' Republican Gov. George W. Bush, not the high-tech vice president, to run for president.

The ad, signed by Republican members of the bipartisan Technology Network political action committee, cites issues such as education and tort reform as reasons they back Bush the younger. "We're a diverse constituency and no single candidate or party embodies the industry," the ad notes.

The ad reveals a split in the prominent investment firm of Kleiner Perkins. While partner John Doerr is

co-hosting a \$1,000-a-head fundraiser for Gore, fellow partner Floyd Kvamme is one of the driving forces behind the Bush recruitment. Some of the other big Silicon Valley names backing Bush include Jim Barksdale, CEO and president of Netscape Communications Corp., and Jeff Henley, executive vice president and CFO of Oracle Corp.

Gore is expected to spend much of Tuesday in the valley, first at the Tech Museum of Innovation and then at the home of Janina Pawlowski. The co-founder of E-Loan, an online home mortgage provider, Pawlowski is hosting the fund-raiser for the VP. It's being billed as a casual, family-oriented gathering with Tipper Gore and Al. But make no mistake, the poolside soiree is big money: Organizers hope to net \$400,000 for Gore 2000.