

# A tale of suspense in 1980s Aspen

New novel details a scenario as old as ski resorts

By Andrew Travers  
Aspen Times Correspondent

Graduating from Middlebury College, Alex Cavanaugh opts to put off entering the real world and instead gets in a car with his girlfriend and drives to the Nevada of Aspen for a year as a ski bum.

Sound familiar? The scenario is as old as ski resorts and has brought countless powder-hungry pilgrims here over the decades for a winter-long — sometimes lifelong — deferment of grown-up responsibilities.

In Jeff Howe's new novel, "Into the Roaring Fork," the carefree entry into ski bumhood prompts an unexpected tale of suspense. Set in 1985, the book has Alex arriving in an Aspen of decades yore, with cocaine shipments rolling brazenly through the private airport at Sardy Field and the rampant public consumption of the drug earning the town its "Toot City" nickname.

Working days at Aspen Mountain Sports for \$6 an hour, Alex picks up a side gig as a low-level coke courier for an acquaintance. That job leads him, unexpectedly, into the local backcountry where he stumbles on a kidnapping plot and crimes far more nefarious than his own.

The novel is the first from Howe, who — like his main character — ski-bummed in Aspen for the winter of 1985-86 with his college girlfriend. Howe sold

## ABOUT THE BOOK

**Title:** "Into the Roaring Fork."  
**Author:** Jeff Howe.  
**Page count:** 336.  
**Cost:** \$14.99, paperback.  
**Available at:** The Bookworm of Edwards.



JEFF HOWE

advertising for KSPN during his stint in Aspen sowing his wild oats. Now 52, he's married with two kids and running his family manufacturing business in Cincinnati.

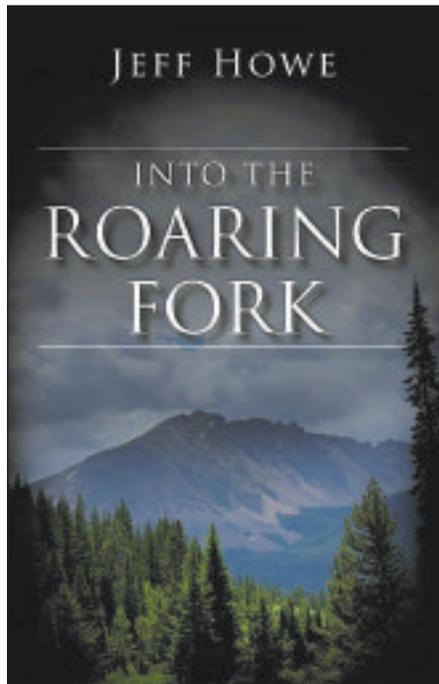
"That year has always stuck with me," Howe says of his Aspen days. "I look at that very much as a coming-of-age period for me. We were on our own, with no rules — it was 'anything goes' and I was living away from home for the first time."

When he heard a story about a late-90s abduction of a young woman, it dovetailed with his Aspen memories and the drug world of the era in his imagination, and spawned the story that would become "Into the Roaring Fork."

"Back then everyone was doing blow," he said. "So I had an idea of Alex Cavanaugh as a character, based on me, and asked 'What if I made a bad decision? What if I got involved in that?' And 'What if this guy was committing a crime and he came upon a crime that was of a much greater magnitude?'"

Written in clipped, no-frills sentences with a breathless plot that deftly fills in backstory as it propels itself forward, "Into the Roaring Fork" is a page-turner.

The book mixes fact and fiction in its



SPECIAL TO THE DAILY

Jeff Howe's new novel, "Into the Roaring Fork," takes place in Aspen in 1985. Howe used his experience ski-bumming in Aspen for the 1985-86 season as an inspiration for the self-published book.

approach to the local landscape. Howe captures the spirit of the ski town and of Carbondale, and he name-drops local landmarks and institutions such as the J-Bar and Obermeyer, but he takes some liberties with the backcountry. Some of the climactic events, for example, take place on an invented midvalley trail near an invented Oar Lake.

## ASTRONAUT MOUNTAIN

From page B3

really want to make sure we have a family-friendly venue. A lot of times you'll see kids running around the brewery and you can bring in your dog and sit on the patio. We're not just catering to the nightclub scene or the young crowd, we have all walks of life come in. That's why we like to do our music a bit earlier."

The brewery plans to host group Jason Daniels Band, of Jackson, Mississippi, on May 31.

"One song sounds like Van Morrison. That's what I think of when I hear them. Other songs sound more folk. It kind of varies," Harrison said.

The brewery opened April 3 with six beers on tap. On Wednesday, there were 10 options, including the fantastic Castaway Kolsch. The beer has bright, clean flavors and a hint of fruit thanks to an infusion of passionfruit tea, sourced from Vail Mountain Coffee & Tea in Minturn. It's the kind of beer you could drink all summer long without losing your thirst for it.

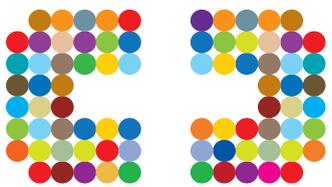
Head brewer Garrett Scahill has lived in the valley for 13 years, and he's been homebrewing for 17 years.

"The goal for right now is to make the best beer we can, really," Scahill said. "We'll sell out of (the brewery) and we want to get into a few restaurants. We want slow growth and to perfect the beer. We want to stay small and stay local."

To learn more about the brewery, stay tuned for a story set to run in Wednesday's High Life section.

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# Praised Be



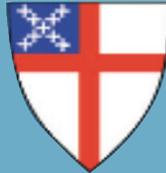
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