

## Edward Abbey to give fourth annual David Marc Belkin Memorial Lecture

**April 5, 1982**

Edward Abbey, novelist, essayist and part-time forest ranger best known for his hardhitting, sometimes bitter, usually irreverent defense of the world's wilderness areas, will give the fourth annual David Marc Belkin Memorial Lecture Thursday, April 22, at the University of California, San Diego.

The lecture, which is free and open to the public, will begin at 8 p.m. in room 2722 of the Undergraduate Sciences Building on the Revelle campus. The title for Abbey's talk is "A Walk Through the Desert Hills."

The Belkin Lectures on environmental issues were established by the parents and friends of David Marc Belkin, an honors graduate of John Muir College at UC San Diego. Belkin lost his life while backpacking in the High Sierra in July 1978. His love for the wilderness prompted his family to establish the endowed memorial fund in his memory.

Abbey has been called "A living American artifact, part maverick, part pastoral extremist, part semi-hermit, part latter-day Jeremiah Johnson." His environment is the desert, the forest or the Australian outback; his people are the Indians and the Aborigines who know how to live in these places without spoiling them.

His targets range from government agencies that authorize the building of roads through wilderness areas and gigantic corporations that engineer the "rape" of the land, to simple-minded tourists who, according to Abbey, defile the solitude with their very presence.

Speaking for himself, Abbey has said, "I've found I can get along comfortably without a four-wheel-drive V-8-powered, gadget-loaded pickup truck. I have survived half my life without electricity, plumbing, central heating, air-conditioning, neon advertising or the microwave oven. But I could no more live in a world without wilderness than I could endure a life-term in prison. I would break-out or die in the attempt."

Abbey, who recently turned 55, has published over a dozen books in the last 25 years. They include "Jonathan Troy," published in 1956, and "The Brave Cowboy," published in 1958 and later made into the movie, "Lonely Are the Brave." Abbey's best-known non-fiction work, "Desert Solitaire," was published in 1968. The book, which is illustrated by Peter Parnall, is an adaption of the journals Abbey kept while working as a ranger at the Arches National Monument in southeastern Utah. It describes his encounters with the desert's natural features, from snakes to heat, and with its human visitors, from tourists to prospectors. The book makes clear Abbey's great respect and affection for the desert, as well as his strenuous disapproval of most visitors to it.

In a review for the "New York Times Book Review," Edwin Way Teale called "Desert Solitaire" "a voice crying in the wilderness, for the wilderness."

Abbey's best-known novel is "The Monkey Wrench Gang," published in 1975. The "gang" in question is a memorable if improbable band of eco-guerrillas who roam the American southwest disabling bulldozers, power lines, bridges and other manifestations of progress.

Abbey's books have developed a solid following among the environmentally committed but, as Brad Knickerbocker of the "Christian Science Monitor" wrote, "it is also good writing - natural science with a soul, poetry rooted in rocks and trees and coyotes."

Abbey was born in 1927 in Home, Pennsylvania. His father was a farmer and his mother a teacher. He received a B.A. degree from the University of New Mexico in 1951 and an M.A. degree from the same institution in 1956. He served as a park ranger and fire lookout for the National Park Service in the southwest United States from 1956 to 1971. He lists his current address as Wolf Hole, Arizona.

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(April 5, 1982)