



# Booming playground for the young and hip

BY BRYAN JOHNSON  
BOULDER, COLO.

**T**HE KID SIPPING a cold Coors beer on the terrace of the Boulderado Hotel has a slogan blazoned across his chest in letters two inches high. "Save The Dolphin," it says, "Boycott Light Tuna."

"Geez," I tell him apologetically, "I've got two big cans at home. Dominion had it on sale just before I left. But I didn't know tuna had anything to do with dolphins." The kid, amazingly well informed on the subject, launches a long explanation.

That night I'm on the porch of the Fleur de Lis restaurant when a tall, blonde, vaguely familiar-looking lady gets up from another table and strolls over to use the phone. Suddenly it hits me—**Joni Mitchell**, that's Joni Mitchell.

## For the young

Yes, the takeover of Boulder is complete. Once a pretty little mining town in the foothills of the Colorado Rockies just outside of Denver, it's now a booming Mecca of the young and hip. Always a University town, Boulder is no longer just influenced by the young, it is theirs.

The huge and historic University of Colorado (CU), of course, has a lot to do with the occupation. Founded a century ago, it now makes up fully 25,000 of the city's 94,000 inhabitants, and has the usual massive impact on the city's economy and social life. But there are hundreds of such University towns—and none of them is much like Boulder.

Fully 71 per cent of the population (or 67,000) is under the age of 35, and it's those 40,000 young non-students who are the real story here. Everything in the city is not merely aimed at them but, more than likely, aimed by them as well. They run everything from a lavish new recording studio, to nightclubs, to record stores, to a nation-wide health-food chain.

Stroll along Pearl St. downtown and everything you'll see is of and for the young. There's The Denim Baron, Cotangent Custom Clothes, Fred's House Restaurant, The Art Cinema, Boulder Arts and Crafts, Good Earth (a nightclub), Earth Shoes, The Little Professor Book Store, Rocky Mountain Records and Tapes . . . "Basically, rich kids are sent here to go to college," explains 22-year-old CU graduate Stephanie Schmitt of Chicago. "But they like it so much they just stay and try to find a job, start a business or something. I'm a perfect example of that . . . and that's why the city's so young."

"Yeah," concurs Rick Blades, also a 22-year-old CU grad who's using his engineering skills to put together a new \$500,000 recording studio. "I was in Europe and the thought of coming back to the States was just awful. But the thought of coming back to Boulder . . . that was different. You always look forward to coming back."

"Me, I know right now that I'm anxious to leave. I've been here four years and I'm tired of it. But I also know for sure I'll be back. Where else is there like this?"

What is the object of all this devotion? Well, first of all, a city of dazzling natural beauty sitting almost exactly one mile above sea level (5,354

feet) against a back-drop of the Flatiron Mountains. To Canadians accustomed to thinking of America as a place people flee for just a glimpse of Toronto's clean streets and safety, Boulder's an eye-opener: infinitely cleaner, greener and safer than anything Torontonians know.

Besides that, there's a nightlife—a collection of terraced restaurants, rocking cellar clubs and a variety of cinemas — that probably outstrips most cities 10 times Boulder's size. And, of course, wherever the young gather, there gather also the trappings of youth — which, in turn, bring still more flocking into the city.

## Limits to growth

"Boulder is a very spiritual place," says Anne Wente, 25, of Wisconsin. "You can find all sorts of religions, cults or whatever here, and a lot of people come for that too."

Indeed, Boulder houses what may be the world's first East-West University, a school called the Naropa Institute which was founded by a Tibetan lama named Chogyam Trungpa and now mixes Buddhist meditation and studies with traditional Western ones.

"I'm typical of a different kind of Boulderite," continues Wente. "I came here six years ago just passing through, camping out and . . . I don't know why . . . I just knew it was the place I wanted to come when I graduated in Wisconsin. I've been here four years."

Naturally, all of this migration has had an enormous, sometimes torturous, impact on the city. Since 1950,

when Boulder was still a relatively sleepy 19,999, the population has nearly doubled every 10 years. And, at 94,000, at least part of the town's population thinks the explosion has gone far enough.

Last month, in fact, city councilman Paul Danish, a 34-year-old journalist in his first term, proposed a controversial plan to impose strict limits on the city's growth.

Boulder, says Danish, is suffering from "a promised-land syndrome", in which everyone wants to live in the city. "There have been surveys done that show 80 per cent of the people in Boulder think growth is the number one issue in the city," he says. "And there's damn few of those folks who think it's growing too slowly."

While permanent Boulderites fret about growth, however, an even larger number enjoy the city every year without any of the accompanying worries. Tourists—again, most of them young—flood through the city every summer on their way to The Coast. And in winter, though Boulder itself has no first-rate skiing, it's the prime stopover point for people on their way to Vail or Aspen.

Many of the transients take advantage of one of the West's most picturesque hotels: the ancient Boulderado. Built in 1905 as an eighty-room luxury hotel, it looks a good deal older, and less luxurious than that. With deep-stained wood everywhere, a huge staircase, cosy carpets and a mezzanine-bar crammed with overstuffed furniture, it gives you a first impression of a place where a gun fight is bound to happen if only you're willing to wait around a half-hour. It's a real Wild

West hotel. And, at \$18 a single room, a cheap one too.

One of the city's best restaurants, meanwhile, is right next door to the Boulderado. The Fleur de Lis, as its name implies, is basically French, with a menu heavy on a kind of crepe which no real resident of Brittany would recognize. It boasts, however, its own excellent variations, a sunny outdoor deck, a superb creme caramel, and a flock of the town's friendliest, best-looking waitresses.

(Male chauvinists, by the way, might be interested to know that, per capita, it is entirely possible that Boulder ranks as North America's women-watching capital. Roughly 36 per cent of the city's population is made up of women under 35, and quality is in no way inferior to quantity).

## A right-wing brew

No story on Boulder is complete without a tip to beer-drinkers that Golden, Colorado is only 20 miles down the road. Golden, of course, is the home of Coors—revered throughout most of the U.S. West as America's best beer and pined after east of the Mississippi, where it's not available.

Even this chauvinistic Canadian had to admit it was an excellent light lager. But, ironically, Coors is seldom drunk by hard-core Boulderites. It seems brewery-owner Adolph Coors is regarded as something of a right-winger in Boulder (he donated heavily to Nixon).

And Boulder, playground of the young and hip, is no friend of right-wingers.