

CutBank

Volume 1
Issue 11 *CutBank 11*

Article 33

Fall 1978

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Recommended Citation

Wild, Peter (1978) "Edward C. Pulaski," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 11 , Article 33.

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EDWARD C. PULASKI

As an old gold seeker from Ohio,
the first thing you do is save your ass.
you lead the men and two horses,
 those bewildered scholars,
into a cave. outside the fire rages;
the men go crazy. but you draw your revolver
and threaten to shoot the first to leave.
they run about sloshing
 hatsful of water on the smoldering timbers
while you stand guard at the door
 holding up a wet blanket against the burning world,
the last to fall from the heat and gas.
when you wake it's hours later,
and you yell to the men stumbling
 over your body "I'm not dead"
you chuckle, just like Mark Twain, and
they lead you out, eyes seared shut,
 touching the charred, falling trunks,
until after years having made love
 to your wife you awake hours later
to invent the tool that makes you famous
 among all rangers, that strange device
 straight from hell
 with a blunt axe on one end
 to hack through roots, and on the other
a short rake, like a bird's claw
 or a man's fingers locked in paroxysm
with which you might happily grub yourself
 across the sky,
 tearing through the beneficent soil of light
 looking for that hiding fire.