

The Journal of the American West

Ranch & Reata

Premiere Issue



Buck and Sundance – *The Brannaman Documentary*

Tom Russell – Essay

By Hand and Heart – *Tom McGuane*

Borein and Lummis, *The Land of Sunshine*

Buck Brannaman at the OW Ranch, Montana, 1997





FRONT GATE

A Short Chase



Cowboys at the J Bar L Ranch in Montana's Centennial Valley take off after a wayward calf.
Photograph by Lynn Donaldson, Livingston, Montana; www.lynn-donaldson.com.

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PUBLISHER
Bill Reynolds

EDITOR
A.J. Mangum

ART DIRECTOR
Robin Ireland

PRODUCTION
Curtis Hill, Javier Munoz

CONTRIBUTORS
Michelle Anderson, Mark Bedor
Ryan Bell, Lynn Donaldson, Emily Kitching
Kathy McCraine, Jameson Parker, Bruce Pollock

Ranch & Reata
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Peter Cuneo, Colin Cuneo, Jim Guercio
Shawn Knight, Bruce Pollock, William Reynolds



EDITOR'S NOTE

Reboot

By A.J. Mangum

When you tell people you're launching a new magazine about the American West, the most astute respond with, "Why?" It's a fair, if blunt, question. Given the variety of Western-themed publications on the market, is there a need for a new addition to the genre?

In a word, yes.

For years, industry analysts have held the attention of publishers with admonitions to gear up for a changing media landscape, one in which the age-old traditions of print would comprise just one piece of an increasingly complex puzzle, one largely defined by new-media opportunities presented by the Internet and emerging technologies that have led to smart phones and the iPad.

This shift came about more rapidly than nearly anyone expected. In 2011, a magazine is no longer a printed, hand-delivered product that arrives in the mail once every several weeks. A magazine is now a multimedia effort, one blending those revered print traditions

with the benefits of a long menu of other media – video, audio, Internet and broadcast. The end result: journalism unlimited by the constraints of any one format.

Ranch & Reata, as you're about to discover, is a true multimedia experience. Our bimonthly magazine features outstanding stories and images from an all-star lineup of writers and photographers, as well as video, audio and hyperlinks to broaden the reader experience. Our magazine's online home is www.rangeradio.com, HQ for a groundbreaking online radio station that's rewriting the rules for contemporary Western music. (You can even take that music with you anywhere, with the Range Radio app, available via iTunes.) And, for those who still





photo by Lexi Reynolds

prefer fiber over cyber, twice a year we produce a limited run of good, old-fashioned printed issues; sign up for your copy at our web site.

Our magazine, though, isn't just about embracing emerging media technologies for the sake of being cutting edge. We'll use these exciting new tools to offer a fresh approach to editorial coverage of the contemporary cowboy culture, which has longed for both a rebooting of its media and a return to fundamental principles of documentary journalism.

We live in an age in which writers and editors steer their editorial ships less frequently, too often surrendering control to executives who see a magazine as nothing more than a marketing tool or brand extension. The noun "content" has come to mean "anything that'll draw attention to the adjacent advertisement." And, these days, any given publication's editorial values, ideals that should be anchored in bedrock, tend to shift depending on the

musings of the consultant de jour, whose livelihood often depends on fueling ongoing chaos rather than guiding a magazine's efforts to serve a particular culture.

With *Ranch & Reata*, we'll do things differently.

Our magazine will not be planned in conference rooms or on corporate retreats. Its content will not be shaped by marketing departments or magazine gurus who wouldn't know a Wade tree from a shade tree. Instead, our magazine will take shape during horseback conversations on ranches throughout the American outback, over coffee in the workshops of our era's great artisans, and in the arenas of the West's most influential horsemen. And steering *our* ship will be a team of veteran journalists and lifelong Westerners equipped with a set of tools for publishing in the 21ST century and a commitment to documenting with reverence a culture we love.

Thanks for coming along for the ride, and please send feedback on this issue to RandREditor@gmail.com.





CLASSICS

Sheridan-Style Carving

Created by the late Sheridan, Wyoming, saddlemaker Don King, the Sheridan style of saddle-leather carving depicts complex patterns of flowers, traditionally wild roses, in the leather, drawing on the geometry that can be found in nature to give order to a saddle's outer aesthetics. Saddlemakers have been inspired by the Sheridan style for more than a half-century, and continue to put their own twists on the tradition.



Here, Keith Valley's "Douglas 38 Wade" features a 15¼-inch seat, 1¼-inch Cheyenne roll, ⅞ flat-plate rigging, 3-inch horn, and Keith's take on a Sheridan floral pattern.



photos courtesy Keith Valley

Jack Swanson, Cowboy Artist

Jack Swanson remembers when he first started art school on the GI Bill. He arrived in Northern California in December 1949, as he says, "...with a lame horse, my saddle and 30 bucks to my name. I slept with my horse in a stall. I looked up at the leaky roof and said to myself "How lucky can a guy get – for \$78 a month, I've got a nice place to live."

Swanson was born in 1927 in Minnesota to creative and hardworking parents. His father was a backcountry guide and his mother an acclaimed ballerina. When he was four, the family made the move west – as so many Americans did during the Great Depression. "I never could figure why they called it 'great,' it was far from great," he smiles. The trip by car opened the eyes of the young Swanson to the vastness of the country ahead of him. Along the way, he watched the West unfold seeing horses and cattle all along the way. Cowboys would stop and help if the family had car trouble and Jack took it all in. He had drawn horses all his young life and, by the age of twelve, had gotten to be pretty

proficient at it. By fifteen he was breaking horses in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley and, a couple of years later, he got the itch to leave, saddled a horse and rode across the Sierra-Madre Mountains, down across the

Mojave Desert and into the vaquero country of Tehachapi. It was there that he acquired his greatest education – watching and learning the silent ways of the old ones – *viejos*. "They rode balanced and straight," he remembers, "with one finger on the reins, in silence. The 'ask' was unperceivable but, when they touched 'em, the horse would run backwards."

That time in the south was inspirational to Swanson. At night, he would hang up his gear and sketch the day's scenes of

the work in which he had participated. It was a passion and he pursued his art with a vengeance. But, the outside world of the 1940s had other ideas and, with strong feelings for his country, he knew he had to participate. "There really wasn't anything to talk over. We had real reasons to get involved in that fight as we didn't want to start speaking Japanese or German."



Throwing A Fit. Oil on canvas

photos courtesy Jack Swanson



Jack Swanson roping on Jedediah at the Parrot Ranch, 1965



Vaqueros Moving Camp. Oil on canvas



A Shepard's Cathedral. Oil on canvas



Romance in Old California - 1830. Oil on canvas



After the Second World War, Jack's life was focused on ranching in Oregon and breaking horses. His artwork, at the time, was a hobby he enjoyed in the evening. He is the first to say how much his wife, Sally, has helped him over the years. In a recent speech he made in Carmel, accepting a Lifetime Achievement Award



Vaquero Sport – 1830. Oil on canvas

with Congressional recognition, he said, “The great old-time painter Charles Russell wrote, ‘Look at the tracks of a successful man and right along side of his tracks will be another set, only smaller.’ My wife, Sally, has been beside me my entire career, through thick and thin. No one knows how ‘thin’ an artist’s life can be at times. His will must be focused on his art and his partner must have faith and the same will as he has or they won’t make it. We have had a blessed life together. I was particularly honored to be named Westerner of the Year by the Western Ranchers Beef Co-Op back in 2001 and more recently, Vaquero of the Year at the Santa Ynez Historical Museum.”

Jack Swanson remains one of the most respected artists of the American West. He just finished a new painting and has a new two-year-old horse he’s starting. At eighty-plus years young, he has been working on his autobiography for a number of years and plans to release it soon. It will chronicle this amazing westerner’s life as viewed through a good

cow horse’s ears. What follows are pieces of text from his upcoming book he has graciously allowed us to share with you. They give a picture of a man dedicated to celebrating the great horsemen he rode with as a young man – helping us understand the traditions and ways of a time long gone. Ways he believed and follows to this day, both in art and in the way he lives his life. As Jack commented about his and Sally’s life,

“We lived by a favorite song, with words that start out:

*‘You who have dreams,
If you act, they will come true.
To turn your dreams to a fact,
It’s up to you.’*”

Jack Swanson’s biography *I’ve Always Ridden My Own Broncs: The Life of Jack Swanson, Cowboy Artist* will be out later this spring.





BY HAND AND HEART

Bladesmith

From his shop in Bozeman, Montana, Thomas McGuane Jr. creates custom knives inspired by nature and reflecting Old World craftsmanship.



By A.J. Mangum

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“There’s always been something about being able to make a knife from nothing,” says Thomas McGuane Jr. “There’s some sort of power trip, a caveman feeling.”

Based in Bozeman, Montana, McGuane has made knives professionally for better than 20 years, and is recognized as one of the leading artisans in his craft. Fashioning his blades from folded steel, using a method partially inspired by the work of Japanese swordsmiths, McGuane adorns his work with firearms-

style engraving, inlaid precious metals, exotic handles, and patterns inspired by the outdoors.

“My style is in the vein of British gunmakers, in that it’s organic, picked up in nature,” McGuane says. “I try to make my knives look like they came out of the forest.”

McGuane’s work is sought after by sportsmen and collectors drawn to a brand of craftsmanship that elevates the construction of a simple, traditional tool to the level of fine art.

McGuane’s fascination with knives took root in his boyhood



Thomas McGuane Jr., with his wife, Michelle, and son, Thomas



“Momiji,” or “maple,” with damascus steel blade, pearl handle and gold inlays.

on a ranch in Montana’s Paradise Valley. Riding, fishing and hunting were dominant themes in his youth, and the variety of knives used in each discipline were objects of intrigue. By the age of eight, he owned an impressive collection of Swiss Army knives – as well as a custom-made tomahawk, a birthday gift from his father, the novelist Thomas McGuane – and had fashioned countless knives on his own, working with files and a handheld drill to turn pieces of scrap metal into functional edged weapons and tools.

Knifemaking remained a hobby for McGuane through his college years, when he became exposed to the work of Barry Davis, a knifemaker known for his

work with damascus steel, an appreciation for Old World techniques, and exacting standards for a knife’s design, functionality and aesthetics. Davis’s approach to knifemaking gave new direction to McGuane’s work.

“I was hooked,” McGuane says, “and every time I made a knife, it hooked me a little deeper.”

After earning an English degree from Montana State University in Bozeman, McGuane went into business as a knifemaker, his passions for handcrafted work and firearms engraving fueling his efforts.

“Dad always had shotguns around when I was growing up, and I was greatly enthralled with their mechanical nature, as well as the engraving and

Stay Sharp, Stay Clean

Knifemaker Thomas McGuane Jr. says knife care needn't be complicated. Keep on hand a little gun oil for the blade, some floor wax for the handle, a chamois cloth and a sharpening stone. How frequently you clean, sharpen and lubricate the knife depends on how much use the knife sees and "how often the blades are telling you something."



"Long Leaf," with damascus steel blade, gold inlays and Siberian mammoth ivory handle.

handwork that went into them," he says. "I still do firearms-style engraving on my knives. I enjoy the exquisite suffering such fine detail work brings."

McGuane also experimented with Japanese-style knifemaking, crafting Samurai daggers and swords and studying centuries-old Japanese methods of smithing steel. In his late twenties, he traveled to Japan to glean insight from some of the country's leading knifemakers.

"The Japanese, as well as the Vikings, would take pure ores – iron sand – and make them better, giving them higher carbon content and folding the steel again and again for greater strength," McGuane says. "I was always fascinated by that ancient tradition, which hasn't changed. In Japan, you can still sign up for an apprenticeship, learn to make swords and be licensed as a swordsmith."

The knifemaking process, McGuane says, typically begins with a long chat, as he and a customer line out details on a knife's materials, shape and style. With such specs settled, construction begins.

McGuane usually works with a raw steel, similar to bandsaw steel, sourced in Sweden. It arrives at his

Bozeman shop in long, black bars. He'll clean and stack a set of bars, weld together the ends, and use a furnace to heat the set to 2,400 degrees. From there, it's a process of a drawing out the heated stack, cleaning it, then repeatedly folding, twisting, gouging and, as McGuane puts it, "otherwise disrupting the layers of metal" to both harden the blade and create a rippled, 3D-like motif in the blade's surface. McGuane's blades often have a pattern akin to woodgrain. The blade will be paired with a custom handle; McGuane's materials of choice include desert ironwood, black rosewood, pearl and mammoth ivory.

A self-taught goldsmith, McGuane inlays precious metal into many of his blades, chiseling a pocket into the steel, then fitting gold to the pocket. The inlay is held in place by the pocket's dovetailed sides and an array of upturned metal spurs that line the floor of the pocket and grip the bottom of the gold inlay. The work is decidedly Old World, requiring an array of files and hammers. Long hours of handwork mean higher-end prices; a folding knife from McGuane's shop averages \$1,600.



“A knife usually takes around three weeks, but I’ve taken as long as four months,” McGuane says. “It’s like a marathon sometimes, falling down and throwing up at the finish line, hoping for a shorter race the next time. Every knife has its challenges, though. I don’t often get cut by the blades, but I’ve never made a knife without bleeding during the process. I can expect to get stabbed by my jeweler’s saw blades, which inevitably break.”

As a vocation (McGuane describes it as more of an “arcane sport”), knifemaking is experiencing something of a renaissance, with classes available for budding artisans and a renewed interest among the public in high-quality, handcrafted work. Even factory-made knives, McGuane says, have never been better. Mentors for aspiring craftsmen, however, have always been scarce.

“Knifemakers find themselves in far-flung places, out of reach,” he explains. “If you’re starting out, you can admire work at shows, or in pictures, but you’ll have to go off on your own and teach yourself many of the advanced techniques.”

McGuane still finds himself applying that principle. He recently began teaching himself the finer points of miniature machining, with the idea of venturing into watchmaking, a craft he says intersects nicely with that of knifemaking, as watch and knife collectors have common aesthetic interests: high-end, handmade work crafted through timeless techniques. Even for a veteran craftsman, though, watchmaking is not without its learning curve.

“I make smallish knives, so holding parts while I work has always been an issue, but with watch parts, it’s a whole new ballgame,” McGuane says. “I’m studying miniature work techniques, which requires magnification.



Pearl-handled “G4,” with damascus steel blade.



“Lithos,” with mosaic steel, damascus steel blade and mammoth ivory handle.

The aging process, unfortunately, finds me now walking around the shop wearing one of those magnifying visors. I try not to leave the shop wearing one.”



Learn more about Thomas McGuane Jr.’s work at www.thomasmcguane.com. A.J. Mangum is the editor of *Ranch & Reata* and the producer of the documentary series *The Frontier Project* (www.thefrontierproject.net).



FROM OUT OF THE WEST

Books to find

The Misfits and *The Making of The Misfits*

In the 1960s, the western as a genre continued to evolve as the first westerns set in the twentieth century were produced. Reflecting the turbulence of the social climate of the 60s, westerns became more and more politicized and concerned with the resulting fallout of the rapid urbanization of the West and the effects it had on both people and the land. But the subject most 60s western filmmakers seemed to depict loped around the perceived contradiction of the steadfast image of the cowboy trying to hang on in a modern world. A world that in many of these films, seemed simply to be finished with the cowboy and his individualistic approach to life. Some of these films included Sam Peckinpah's *Ride the High Country* with Joel McCrae and Randolph Scott, *Hud* starring Paul Newman, and the original version of *Monte Walsh* with Lee Marvin and Jack Palance (the film was remade in 2003 for television with Tom Selleck reprising Lee Marvin's role). In 1962, actor Kirk Douglas portrayed Jack Burns in the film version of Edward Abbey's novel, *Lonely Are The Brave*. Douglas' favorite role, Burns lived in a horseback world that society of the 1960s would just as soon forget about. Shot mostly on location, in and around Albuquerque and the Sandia Mountains, civilization finally caught up with Douglas' Jack Burns – rundown by a semi full of plumbing fixtures as he made a break for the border of Mexico, hoping against hope to find a frontier that still existed.

All these films, good or bad, showed an evolving vision of the West and an aging version of the cowboy. Of someone being pushed aside, of a character whose belief in his own capabilities was being tested – or worse yet – considered obsolete. Brought into question, was the cowboy's belief in a code of honor within a lifelong work tied to animals and the land. This was the world in flux for Gay Langland, Clark Gable's character in Arthur Miller's landmark western, *The Misfits*.

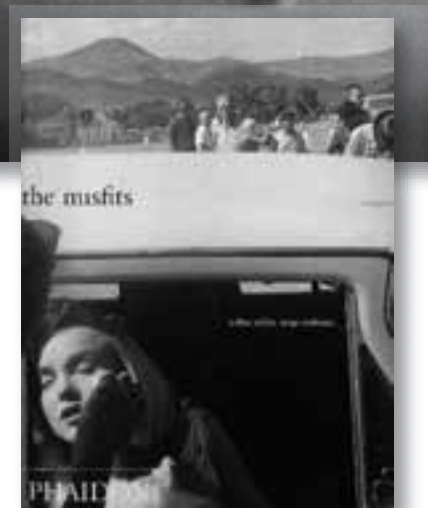
This was a turbulent time in Hollywood and the world, but certainly in the lives of the incredible group of players that made *The Misfits*. It was the end of an era and James Goode's, *The Making of The Misfits* gives every angle and detail

Press kit photo of Clark Gable on location for *The Misfits*





Spread from *The Misfits: Story of a Shoot* by Arthur Miller and Serge Toubiana, (Phaidon Press Ltd, 2000), shows the Erich Hartman image taken during the last scene either actor would play as Gable said the line that would close the film, “Just head for that big star straight on. The highway’s underneath. It’ll take us home.”





of what went into making the picture itself. Difficult shooting locations, an unruly director, a crumbling marriage, an aging leading man, and an unstable leading lady made the behind-the-scenes story of the film's production anything but ideal. The film would turn out to be the final work of both Gable and Monroe and nearly the last appearance of Montgomery Clift. Luckily nine photographers from the renowned Magnum Agency documented this tale of loners in Reno, Nevada; with complete day-to-day access on the set, their work captured a fascinating tableau of life imitating art and vice versa. The stunning Magnum images of Gable, Monroe, Arthur Miller, Eli Wallach, and others are presented in a book featuring the Magnum photographers work. *The Misfits: Story of a Shoot* is a time machine back to the set and filming in 1960. The fabled production is made even more real in the black and photographs by notable photographers including Eve Arnold, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Ernst Haas and Elliott Erwitt – among others.



The final scene of the film, number 269, was shot on November 4, 1960, on Paramount's Stage 2. With John Huston directing, Gable's Gay Langland sat next to Monroe's Roslyn in a pick-up truck on a sound stage, driving towards a new start together – the cowboy way, giving it one more try. The two of them would say the words that would close the film and would be the last professional lines for both:

Roslyn: "How do you find your way back in the dark?"

Langland: "Just head for that big star straight on. The highway's under it – it'll take us right home."

Huston was happy with the first take. Only Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe were left on Stage 2.

These books along with an accompanying DVD give a deep look into the end of an era of the evolving Hollywood western.



The Making of The Misfits

By James Goode

Limelight Editions, 1986

The Misfits: Story of a Shoot

Arthur Miller and Serge Toubiana

Phaidon Press 2000

Vaqueros & Buckaroos

A new e-Book by Jay Dusard

Jay Dusard, a self-taught photographer, hasn't done too badly. Not bad at all, if you consider a 1981 Guggenheim Fellowship, and numerous graphic arts and book awards – plus having studied and taught with legendary photographer Ansel Adams. Not bad for a guy with a degree in architecture who has cashed a few cowpunchin' paychecks in years past. With work published, exhibited and in collections worldwide, Jay Dusard is best known for his black-and-white images of the working cowboys and landscapes of the North American West. Jay taught photography for seven years at Prescott College, Arizona, and has conducted photography workshops for over forty years. In 1992 he was nominated for the Kodak World Image Award for Fine Art Photography.

Jay Dusard would be the first to say he is greeting the “new technology” revolution with a heavy sigh. As one of America's most influential photographers, he is not so much a digital convert as he is an artisan of light and a vision seeker in the darkroom. Dusard's new book moves him – kicking a bit – into the digital arena.

“I have to state right up front that the theme of this book, *Vaqueros & Buckaroos*, is not my feeble attempt to dismiss Cowboys – them mortals my heroes have always been. My first book, *The North American Cowboy: A*

Portrait was more inclusive than this current offering. *Cowboy* is an over-arching, rather generic, term that includes all varieties of good folks who work cows from horseback.

So while you are cussing me for being arbitrarily selective, please know that I hereby fervently apologize to my cowboy friends and heroes: Mack Hughes, Tom Blasingame, Buster Welch, Warner Glenn, Joel Nelson, R. W. Hampton, Larry McWhorter, Buster McLaury...and many, many more.

The subject herein deals with a specific geographical trajectory: Spain to Mexico, through north-western Mexico to what is now California, thence northward

and eastward. That's the general layout of where the traditions and working styles have evolved and flourished. But the boundaries of this “region” have become increasingly blurred over time as certain members of the cattle-tending workforce became curious about different outfits and, yielding to wanderlust, drifted around. Communication and the media have contributed to this diffusion.”

Jay Dusard lives with his wife, Kathie, and their horses near Douglas, Arizona, where he finds time to punch cows and play jazz cornet. Jay's eBook will be available shortly, please check at our website www.rangeradio.com for ordering and release information.



photo by Ron Dalzell

Jay Dusard





Justin Fields, Fields Cattle Co., California, 2002





Ray Ordway, Madera County, California, 2003





Three Generations: Billie Jo and Earline Goettle, Earl Stucky, Stucky Ranch, Montana, 2003



Steve Benbough (Cow Boss), Randy McClure, Jon Griggs (Manager), and B. J. Wachob
Maggie Creek Ranch, Nevada, 2010



Jay Harney, Harney Ranching, California, 2003

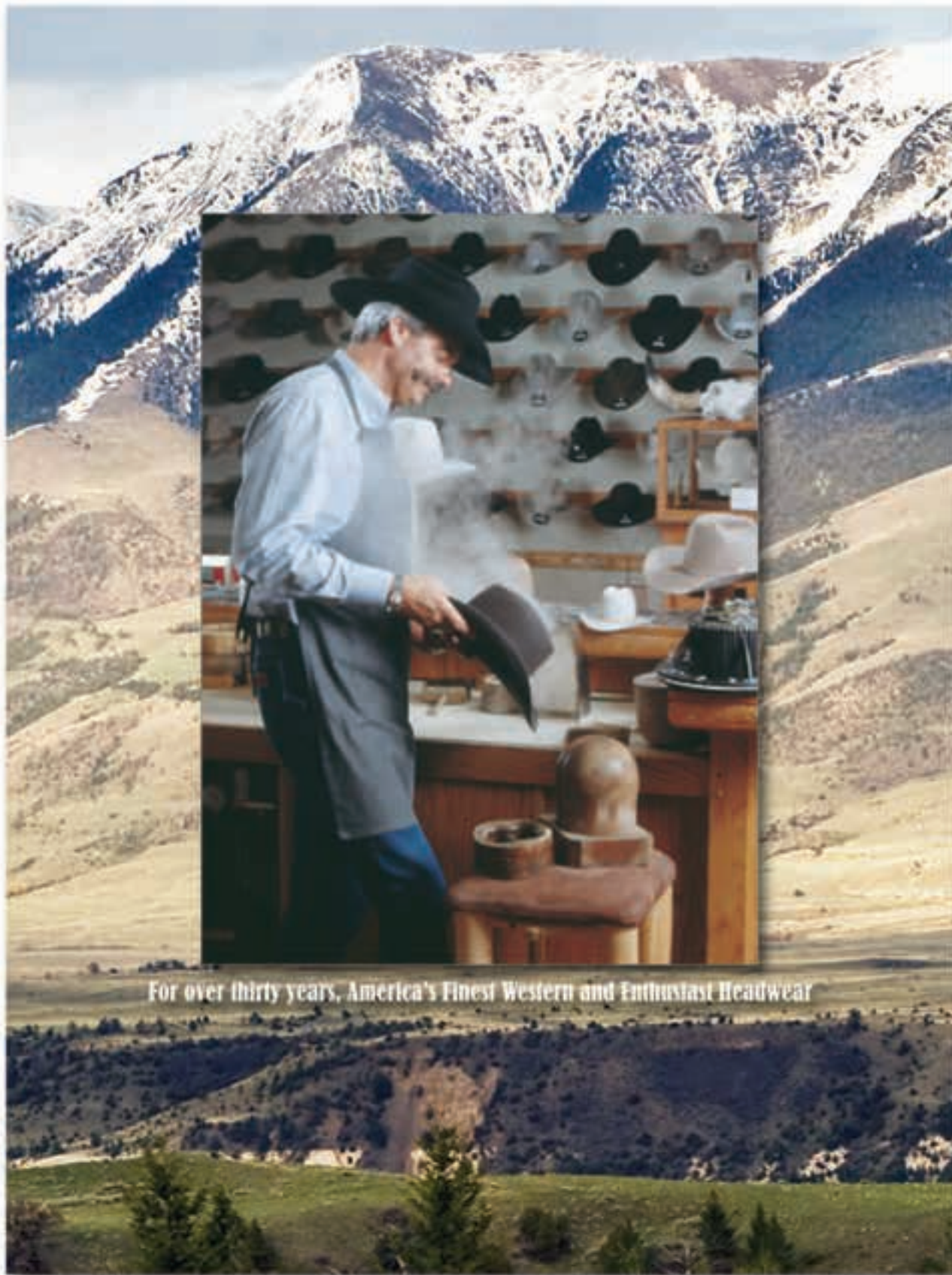




Departure, Spanish Ranch, Nevada, 1999



Range Doctors: Mick and Earline Goettle, Roy Edsall, Stucky Ranch, Montana, 2001



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Billings, Montana www.randhats.com



THE WESTERN WEB

A look at all things cowboy on the information superhighway.



Billings, Montana, saddlemaker Keith Valley builds some of the West's most sought-after custom saddles, working largely in the Sheridan-style traditions of the late Don King. He's also a self-taught filmmaker, using high-definition cameras and professional editing software to chronicle his work. The video archive at his web site, www.cowboysaddlery.com, includes a collection of clips documenting saddlemaking techniques and other facets of the cowboy culture. Some highlights:

Hand-Painting the Sheridan-Style Background

In this clip, Keith hand paints the background on a saddle horn carved in the Sheridan style, using a fine brush to give a rich, black color to the pattern's negative space. As he works, Keith spells out his techniques and offers fellow craftsmen insight on how to complete such a job without ruining the tooled pattern with spilled dye.

YOUTUBE LINK:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cl-bAUG99VQ>





Tooling a Leaf

Keith uses traditional techniques to refine an elaborate tooling pattern. His subtle use of a mallet and tools adds depth and life to a pattern that might've otherwise remained two-dimensional. The footage illustrates how a craftsmen must work with both force and finesse in achieving a design that's elegant yet distinct.



YOUTUBE LINK:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kz6YeGKIUao>

Carving Leather

This clip shows Keith's delicate use of a swivel knife as he makes the initial cuts to a saddle-leather pattern, which began as a detailed sketch. Keith lightly carves the pattern onto the leather, creating the foundation for one of his trademark saddle designs.



YOUTUBE LINK:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6siJ_tZ2lfw

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Browse through Keith's online video archive, and you'll find more unexpected treasures, including a clip about the restoration of Will James' personal saddle by Montana saddlemaker Chas Weldon, and a mini-documentary on a ranch branding at Wyoming's I D Ranch. Of course, the site also boasts a terrific gallery of photos depicting Keith's saddles, and a section devoted to his leather interior-design projects.



Have you encountered a web site that's uniquely Western? Send your suggestions for "The Western Web" to randreditor@gmail.com.



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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Artist Joe Beeler

Joe Beeler was a Western original. He created art from the West he loved and from many of his own horseback experiences.



By Bill Reynolds

On September 9 1966, the Cowboy Artists of America held their first show at the National Cowboy Hall of Fame – “on top of Persimmon Hill” in Oklahoma City. The year before in the summer of 1965 the group had formed, comprised of contemporary western painters and sculptors, banded together to form an association that would help perpetuate the memory and works of the likes of Frederick Remington and Charles M. Russell, among others, as well as to insure authentic representations of the life of the old West. The founding artists included John Hampton, George Phippen, Charlie Dye, and Joe Beeler. In the program of that first exhibition some forty-one years ago, Joe Beeler’s bio stated, *“Joe is only 35 years old but is one of the very best of the present crop of Western painters and sculptors. He was born in southwestern Missouri, spent the greater part of his life in the Indian country of Oklahoma, then he and his wife, Sharon “lit out” for Arizona some five years ago. He recently completed a new studio made of red Mexican adobe bricks on his acreage just outside of Sedona. The future seems to hold a great deal of good for Joe Beeler – and Joe Beeler is capable of contributing much worthwhile material to the future.”* A prophetic statement as Joe Beeler would go on to be one of the most influential and loved western artists of his generation until his passing in 2006, the last of the founding CAA artists. In 2004, Joe’s





friend and biographer Don Hedgpeth wrote *Joe Beeler, Life of A Cowboy Artist*. It was another prophetically timed moment in Joe Beeler's long and productive career. It beautifully summarized a life in art well lived and filled with the love of being horseback. Of Beeler, his friend wrote, "Horses always have been and still are essential in Joe's life and in his art. Horses, like kids, can keep you young. Your kids will grow up and leave, but you can always find another horse who is happy to hang around."

Joe Beeler was like no other. He loved the West as he loved his family – completely. Joe Beeler mattered. He made a difference.



Keeping It Western

Singer-songwriter Joni Harms stays true to her roots.



By Michelle Anderson

The day proved long for country-western singer Joni Harms, who finally settled into her Palm Springs hotel room around 7 that evening. Her alarm rang 1,050 miles away at 3 a.m., beating the rooster to his usual gig of waking Harms and her family on their 50-acre ranch in Canby, Oregon.

A maiden momma heifer had struggled with her new job of nursing an early season calf, and Harms needed to step in and help bottle feed the baby in the pre-dawn hours. Her husband, Jeff, and their kids, Olivia, 15, and Luke, 12, would take care of feeding the calf while she traveled, but Harms wanted to make sure the newborn got a good start on the bottle before she left.

Harms, who'd just returned from performing at the San Antonio Rodeo and Livestock Show, would then pack lunches for her children before loading herself in the car and heading for

the Portland airport on her way to Welton, Arizona. The next night she'd play the Billy Brittian Dinner Show.

The life of a touring performer and full-time wife, mother and rancher is hectic, Harms admits, but moments both on the ranch and the road provide

artistic fodder for the singer-songwriter. And, time at home with family is just as important as her career.

"I don't want to miss much," she says about spending time at home. "The reality of just having a few more years with my children before they go to college has really hit. I want to enjoy as much of it as I can."

The country singer grew up in the ranching lifestyle in Oregon's lush Willamette Valley. She still lives on the same land settled by her family more than 100 years ago in

Canby, located south of the Portland metro area. Today, Harms and her family raise beef cattle, sheep and



photos courtesy Joni Harms

Harms is readying her 11TH album for release. She's also filmed a television pilot about the cowboy culture.



Christmas trees. Her children are active in the FFA, just as Harms was as a teen.

Harms has written lyrics and songs for as long as she can remember, influenced by the traditional sounds of Marty Robbins, Patsy Montana, Gene Autry and Tex Ritter. Harms honed her performance skills as a teen on the rodeo circuit, where she was often asked to sing the national anthem before events.

The opportunity to perform before a crowd of 5,000 at the Future Farmers of America's annual convention proved a defining moment in her young life, and the thrill of singing live and sharing music with others had her hooked. "I knew then what I wanted to do with my life," she recalls.

She later earned the Miss Rodeo Oregon title and ran for Miss Rodeo America, ending up as a finalist. The program introduced Harms and her talent to people influential in cowboy culture and helped launch her music career on a national level. She'd started down a path that would lead to a Nashville record deal, 10 albums, a top-40 hit, and a long-lasting career that would take her to the Grand Ole Opry, Carnegie Hall and around the world.

Frequent trips to Nashville paid off in 1989 when record producer Jim Bowen signed her to MCA and later Capitol Records. Those years offered Harms the



Musician Joni Harms balances a full touring schedule with a hectic home life on her family's Oregon ranch.

opportunity to collaborate in songwriting with some of the industry's top artists. Her hit, "I Need a Wife," charted in 1989, making its way to number 34 on the U.S. country top 40 chart. She released her album *Hometown Girl* with Capitol in 1990.

Harms felt pressure from the label to uproot her family and move to Nashville, but her ranch in Oregon tied her to the Pacific Northwest. "I just felt the land was a tremendous gift my ancestors left my family," she says, "and I couldn't leave that behind."

When she and the label parted ways, Harms realized she'd made the right decision. And, ultimately,



it was one that would define her as an artist and set her career on her current path.

“I got to experience the music industry in Nashville and at that level, and I’m thankful for the experience, but I still had this nest to come back to,” she says. “My roots run deep here. When I’m on the road, people always assume I live in Texas, but I’m proud to tell them I’m from Oregon and remind them we’re western out here.”

Making her way as an independent artist has allowed Harms to create the kind of music she believes in and loves. The title song of her most recent album, *Let’s Put the Western Back in Country*, sums up her idea of where the musical genre stands today. She enjoys much of what she calls modern “radio” country but prefers the traditional sounds of artists such as Alan Jackson and George Strait. “Music,” she says, “with fiddle, steel guitar, swings and shuffles.”

Harms’ goal is to write traditional-sounding music with a fresh, modern meaning. “It doesn’t always have to be about a cowboy or cowgirl,” she says. “But lyrics and a strong message or story are important to me.”

There are no limitations to Harms’ inspiration. She writes songs for fans in the city as well as in rural areas. When she writes, she draws on her life on the ranch and on the road.

“Writing is such a release for me,” she says. “If I’m not writing, I crave putting pencil to paper.”

Though Harms is mainly a singer-songwriter, she’s not opposed to recording songs written by others. And, she finds it flattering when other performers want to record her music. She also enjoys co-writing because, as she says, two heads are better than one during the creative process. Collaboration allows for an exchange of ideas and results in a better end

product. And, she adds, musicians naturally enjoy sitting around, playing off each other’s lyrics, and plucking at the guitar.

Harms is set to release her 11th album, yet unnamed, later this spring and promises more of her traditional sound and tales from ranch life. The new album will also feature a yodeling duet with her daughter, Olivia, whom Harms says “has a wonderful set of pipes.”

Her tour schedule is full, taking her away from home just about every weekend in 2011. She’s headed to Australia and New Zealand in March and will play in Scotland and Ireland this summer.

Harms loves performing in front of live audiences and sharing her music, but traveling reminds her of how fortunate she is to live in the country and raise her children where they can experience the outdoors. “When I’m lying awake listening to the city sounds,” she says, “it reminds me of how good home is.”

In addition to her music, Harms is also involved with a television production titled after her album *Let’s Put the Western Back in Country*. The pilot was filmed in picturesque Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and features segments about the western lifestyle, including music, cowboy poetry and art. Harms is proud of the final product and the show’s message and hopes it finds sponsorship and a home on cable television.

Touring, recording and running the ranch is a constant juggling act, but Harms wouldn’t have it any other way. “The to-do list never seems to get completely done,” she says. “But, I feel blessed to have a wonderful career, family and home. At the end of the day, that’s what’s important, and it makes me feel very satisfied.”



Writer Michelle Anderson lives in central Oregon.

For more information on Joni Harms, visit www.joniharms.com.

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THE WESTERN HORSE

Family Tradition

A sixth sense for horsemanship runs in the Neubert family.



By Jameson Parker

Photographs by Emily Kitching

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“Training a horse and training people are two different things,” says California horsemanship clinician Bryan Neubert, one of today’s leading educators of riders. “Working with a horse is like learning to rope. Nothing anyone can say or do will teach timing or feel, but those can be acquired with practice. Likewise, learning to read a horse can be acquired with instruction and practice. First you have to concentrate, then you have to coordinate, then you have to practice until it becomes like breathing.”

In his clinics, held throughout North America, Neubert tries to show his students – riders possessing both a desire to improve their skills and an awareness of their current limitations – exactly what is possible, presenting to them a level of horsemanship to which they can aspire.



Horseman and clinician Bryan Neubert

Neubert calls himself a “victim of circumstance,” someone born with a passion for horses and blessed enough to have mentors – iconic horsemen Bill Dorrance,



Luke (left) and Jim Neubert partner to start colts at major ranches throughout the West.

Tom Dorrance and Ray Hunt – committed to his progress. Hunt and the Dorrances are credited with helping make mainstream an approach to horsemanship based on working *with*, rather than against, the horse. Many of today’s most influential horsemen trace the lineage of their horsemanship approaches to the three men.

“We had a small family ranch near Salinas, California,” Neubert says. “Bill Dorrance was our neighbor. His sons were in school with me, and he was at a point in his life when he had time for a kid like me who was eager to learn. That led to a job with Ray Hunt, and that led to Tom Dorrance.

“They were real patient. There were times when I didn’t understand what they were telling me. Later, a thousand miles away, I’d suddenly realize what they meant. Sometimes I just wasn’t ready to understand, but the information would stay with me until I was ready.”

In Neubert’s formative years, Hunt asked him if he wanted to gain experience working with horses, or if he just wanted adventure.

“I told him I wanted both, but mostly wanted to learn,” Neubert says. “He sent me to some of the big ranches in Nevada. I ended up on a ranch where all they had to start was wild horses, born out in the brush.

Sometimes those horses didn’t even get started until they were 8 years old.”

Wild horses became an obsession for Neubert, one that he continues to nurture. One of his horsemanship videos, *Wild Horse Handling*, is devoted to “communicating with a young, wild horse fresh off the Nevada range.” His use of that word – *communicating* – speaks volumes of his approach to horsemanship.

“A lot of mustangs don’t fill in gaps the way domesticated horses might,” he says. “It’s more difficult for them to figure things out, so you have to present everything so they can understand it. If you can do it with mustangs, it makes handling domesticated horses much easier.”

To describe Bryan Neubert as modest is a considerable understatement, but his unassuming, low-key attitude about himself – that he is just a “victim” of circumstance – vanishes when he talks about his children. You can practically hear the buttons popping off his vest.

His sons, Luke and Jim, are business partners who make their living on the road, starting colts under saddle for major ranches like the Haythorn, the Four Sixes and the Parker. Bryan’s daughter, Kate, trains cutting horses



Kate and Jim Neubert at a 1997 clinic in Carson City, Nevada. “The biggest thing I learned from my dad,” Kate says, “was the value in trying to figure out how a horse thinks, how to approach a horse, how to communicate with a horse.”

with California-based trainer Morgan Cromer. When she was 25, in her first outing at the National Reined Cow Horse Association Snaffle Bit Futurity in Reno, Kate won the limited open title, as well as the event’s reserve intermediate open championship.

“All three were born good riders and athletic,” Neubert says, “and they got that from their mom.”

The Neubert children grew up on remote ranches, where they were homeschooled by Neubert’s wife, Patty. When they completed their schoolwork for the day, the kids would go out to work with Bryan.

“I paid them a dollar a ride at age 11, two dollars at 12, and so on,” he says, “so they got an unusual amount of experience.”

Neubert observed Jim, Luke and Kate as they absorbed his theories, then added their own interpretations, applying those theories in new ways.

“Now when we get together I ask *them* for advice, and they help me learn,” he says.

“I wonder sometimes how things would have turned out if we had grown up in different circumstances,” Kate says. “But by the time we were high-school age, we were set on a course. We all had a God-given gift and desire, but we also had our parents’ work ethic. The biggest thing I learned from my dad was the value in trying to figure out how a horse thinks, how to approach a horse, how to communicate with a horse.”

There is a metaphysical maxim to the effect that people don’t whisper who they are, they shout it, if we have the ears to hear. Neubert reveals more about himself personally than perhaps he realizes in expressing his pride and pleasure in his children’s accomplishments.

And he reveals much about his philosophy of horsemanship when he says, speaking of the competitive aspect of horse training and the self-promotion that frequently goes with the world of clinics, “I don’t really care what the people think of me. I only care about what the horse thinks of me.”

And, he reveals much about his approach to teaching in an adjustment he makes to his comments about his children and their accomplishments.

“I said they were better than me, but those aren’t the right words,” he says. “They’re further along than me in places. Charlie Russell once said, ‘Talent, like a birthmark, is God-given, with no credit or blame to its holder.’ No one’s better than anyone else. Some people are just further along.”

He can’t shout louder than that.

Learn more about Bryan Neubert at www.bryanneubert.com. Jameson Parker is the author of *An Accidental Cowboy* and *To Absent Friends: A Collection of Stories of the Dogs We Miss*. He lives in California.



Upcoming Clinics

Buck Brannaman

April 8-11, Cave Creek, Arizona; 602-680-7176
April 15-18, Riverside, California; 951-763-9580
April 21-23, Ojai, California; 805-643-2555
April 29-May 2, Stonyford, California; 415-488-1027
May 6-9, Chico, California; 530-892-9816
May 20-23, Fort Collins, Colorado; 970-568-7682

Peter Campbell

April 1-4, Chelsea, Michigan; 734-475-2026
April 8-11, Cabot, Pennsylvania; 724-663-5339
April 15-18, Rutherfordton, No. Carolina; 828-429-9672
April 28-May 1, Goliad, Texas; 361-564-8793
May 5-8, Archie, Missouri; 816-524-4741
May 13-16, Tehachapi, California; 661-822-8802

Joe Wolter

April 28-May 1, Aspermont, Texas;
joewolter@hotmail.com
May 6-8, Carmel Valley, California; 831-238-2869
May 28-30, Ellensburg, Washington; 509-859-4949

Buster McLaury

April 5-9, Spur, Texas; 806-773-2159
April 29-May 1, Palo Pinto, Texas; 214-914-5487
May 7-10, Fort Collins, Colorado; 970-568-7682
May 13-16, Edwardsville, Illinois; 618-692-4823
May 19-22, Indianapolis, Indiana; 317-432-4484

Tom Curtin

April 8-10, Melbourne, Australia; 011-61-352761513
April 15-17, Bakers Hill, Australia;
saltriverwa@westnet.com.au
April 22-24, Benalia, Australia; stevecrowe@live.com.au
May 6-8, Goldsboro, North Carolina; 919-921-7703
May 21-22, Williamstown, Massachusetts; 413-458-3149
May 27-29, Inverary, Ontario; 613-353-6801

Bryan Neubert

April 28-May 1, LaPorte, Indiana; 219-778-2448
May 26-30, Alturas, California; 530-233-3582



Clinician Peter Campbell holds clinics in Arizona, California and Colorado this spring.



Coming Events



The REAL Ranch Horse Sale returns to the Yellowstone Boys & Girls Ranch in Billings, Montana, April 15-16.

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REAL Ranch Horse Sale
Yellowstone Boys & Girls Ranch
Billings, Montana
April 15-16

Legends of Ranching Performance Horse Sale
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado
April 16, 2011

The Californios Ranch Roping & Stock Horse Contest
Reno, Nevada
May 13-15

Miles City Bucking Horse Sale
Miles City, Montana
May 19-22

Jordan Valley Big Loop Rodeo
Jordan Valley, Oregon
May 20-22



Ranching in Russia

Text and Photography by Ryan T. Bell

Over the past winter, seven Montana cowboys traveled east with five saddle horses and 1,400 head of cattle to introduce American-style ranching to southwestern Russia. Montana writer and photographer Ryan T. Bell signed on for the adventure and, in the following pages, documents the winter-long effort to transform a former Soviet collective farm into a thriving cattle outfit run with a cowboy work ethic.



The appearance of blue sky and sun was a rarity this past winter on Stevenson Sputnik Ranch, a cattle operation launched in southwestern Russia by Montana rancher Darrell Stevenson. The property sits on the 51ST parallel; daylight hours are long in the summer and precious in the winter. The ranch's 1,000-foot elevation contributes to a humid climate, marked by fog, overcast skies, continual winter snowfall and temperatures routinely around 20 below zero. The purpose in bringing Montana cowboys to work in Russia is to teach the ranch's Russian crew to handle cattle in cold climates, and to introduce an American-style work ethic. The elements made for cold days in the saddle, though. One positive: a lack of wind – a welcome change for cowboys, horses and cattle hailing from Montana.



Kraig Sweeney of Lewistown, Montana, managed the Stevenson Angus Ranch for many years. He's since gone into business for himself. When Darrell Stevenson knew he would need a reliable man to head the cowboy crew in Russia, he turned to Sweeney.

"I agreed to it so I could see new things in a new country," Sweeney says, "and to help a dear friend."

He traveled with Stevenson to Russia last March to scout the ranch.

"After seeing the lack of horsepower Russia had to offer, I told Darrell that if I was going to come over, I'd bring my own horses," Sweeney says. "I wasn't going to war with a BB gun."

Sweeney returned to Montana and acquired five Quarter Horses he knew would fit the job. They were shipped to Russia aboard a transport ship, along with the cattle herd and ranch supplies.



To stock Stevenson Sputnik, Darrell Stevenson drew from the extended Stevenson family's many Montana herds, drawing cattle from the Stevenson Angus Ranch, Stevenson's Diamond Dot Ranch, and R&S Angus Ranch, as well as from Holden Herefords in Valier, Montana. Cattle and horses bound for Russia were quarantined in Montana for two months prior to making a three-week journey by ship, crossing the Atlantic and Mediterranean, then entering the Black Sea before arriving at the port city of Novorossiysk. Stevenson Sputnik's herd numbers over 1,400 head.

"Fine cuts of meat are practically non-existent in Russia," Stevenson says. "More than 90 percent of the beef produced and consumed in Russia is dairy beef. When you do find a fine steak, like in a Moscow restaurant, it's probably imported and costs \$75 a plate. Our cattle are fully pedigreed and the Russian buyers intend to manage them as such. Our Montana cattle will be the foundation of Russia's future beef industry."



Darrell and Sara Stevenson have sacrificed a great deal to make Stevenson Sputnik work. Sara traveled to Russia for two weeks in January to join the cowboy crew during peak calving season. At home in Montana, their kids, C.J. and Claire, are studying Russian for a visit this summer.

“This project has forced our family to grow in different ways,” Sara says. “The kids have had to learn to be independent and to cooperate with each other, and with me. We’re a unit of three when Darrell’s gone.”

Darrell began traveling regularly to Russia in 2007, when he began work on developing Stevenson Sputnik.

“Cell-phone service is awful in Russia, so e-mail is the best way to communicate. Darrell sends me updates every day so I feel part of his life. I do things like scan the kids’ report cards for him to keep up to date on their lives. We’ve all learned to express ourselves better through writing.”



Sergey Effremov (at right, in blue coat), manager of Stevenson Sputnik, has a degree in dairy management from a Russian university. He hails from Bobrov, a city located some two hours from the ranch. Like the three Russian vets also employed by the ranch, Effremov is representative of the generation of Russians that came of age after the fall of communism in 1989. Younger Russians, it’s often argued, have a greater work ethic and capacity for multitasking than their older countrymen possess.

Effremov’s biggest challenges, so far, have included hiring competent staff from the nearby village of Shestakovo, and getting the ranch’s infrastructure built in time for the arrival of cattle last December. Improvements since spring 2010 include a 10-room bunkhouse, 50-stall calving barn, 26-pen calving lot, 50-stall bull barn, three miles of paved road, a water tower, and miles of electric power lines.



Oxana (Hereford) and Viktor (Black Angus) were the first two calves born on Stevenson Sputnik. Viktor was born four weeks premature, explaining the size difference between he and Oxana. The Hereford cows were expected to calve first, so when Viktor arrived, the running joke was that he couldn’t tolerate the idea of a Hereford setting foot in Russia before a Black Angus.

All cows were shipped pregnant, 600 of them first-calf heifers. At the peak of calving season in late January, we received 30 calves a day. An American ranch can easily handle that number, but on Stevenson Sputnik, where infrastructure was still in development and weather a challenge – and the team of Russian workers still inexperienced – our hands were full.



“I heard about Stevenson Sputnik through the cowboy grapevine,” says Matt Graveley of Avon, Montana. “I wanted to come to Russia for the adventure of seeing a foreign culture up-close, the ‘romance’ of ranching without fences, and the idea of starting a cow herd from scratch.”

Graveley was hired along with two of his friends, Danny Conn and Tim Skinner, both from Hall, Montana. Their adventure doesn’t come without sacrifice, however.

“I’m missing two months of work on the home ranch, including two to three weeks of our calving season,” Graveley says. “My dad and brother are picking up my slack.”

Conn and Skinner struck similar arrangements on their family ranches in order to work in Russia.



The spread of animal-borne diseases is a primary concern when transporting livestock between two countries. Matt Graveley and Kraig Sweeney rope a cow to vaccinate her for rabies, one of many diseases for which the horses and cattle were vaccinated.

The cowboys brought much of their own gear, including ropes, bridles and chinks. Head cowboy Sweeney had five new saddles made by Cactus Saddlery of Texas, and shipped them to Russia for use on Stevenson Sputnik.



Matt Graveley tows a newborn calf in a sled, with the mother cow following close behind. Cowboys take for granted the everyday skills it takes to perform such a task. But for Russians, the learning curve of cowboy work is steep.



Ryan T. Bell is a writer and photographer living in Montana. Read more of his work at www.ryantbell.com.

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A Day on the Ranch

Branding with the Branquinho family



Photography by Kristin Reynolds



John and Brandy Branquinho

Since 1972, John and Brandy Branquinho have been an important force in ranching, farming and rodeo in Central California. John and Brandy's families, the Branquinhos and the Lutons, have a long and colorful legacy within in the area's ranching community.

John's grandfather, Joseph Nunes, was born in the Azores and came to the Santa Maria area of California in the late 1860s where he was in the sheep business, running his flocks on area ranches. He grew his business and ultimately had his own sheep and cattle business.



Brandy is an eighth-generation Californian, tracing her family back to Jose Francisco de Ortega, captain of the Santa Barbara Presidio in the 1750s. So with roots that deep, the Branquinhos are, as you would imagine, all about family.

Today, Brandy is a grandmother of six and works alongside her husband at gathers and at the family brandings. When she can, she gives roping and riding lessons, especially to children. It is a true passion for Brandy, helping the next generations to learn the basics – how to get on a horse, follow a cow, rope a cow and helping kids go on to Junior Rodeo competition if they

choose. “I love what I do,” she says. “I get great satisfaction seeing these kids develop ranching skills that will last them a lifetime.” And her kids prove the point. Tony, the Branquinhos’ oldest son, is the rodeo coach at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo while their middle son Casey starts and trains reined cow horses. The youngest in the family, Luke, is a two-time PRCA World Champion Steer Wrestler and is on the road a great deal.

We thank the Branquinho family for inviting us to one of their brandings. The photographs taken, speak for themselves of their love of their work and family. BR











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By artist Nancy Anderson



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The Frontier Project

An independent documentary series
celebrates North America's cowboy culture.



By A.J. Mangum

The late filmmaker Stanley Kubrick once said, “The screen is a magic medium. It has such power that it can retain interest as it conveys emotions and moods that no other art form can hope to tackle.”

Episode 1 of *The Frontier Project*, a short-subject documentary series I launched at the end of 2010, includes a segment on a Kansas leather craftsman named Tuffy Flagler. Early in the filmed interview, as Tuffy is recounting his entry into his profession, he explains how the early onset of crippling arthritis forced him, at 23, to give up his ambitions of becoming a rodeo champion and instead find a new way to make a living. That surrender of a boyhood dream is still a painful topic. After Tuffy utters the words “new vocation,” he pauses, seemingly to put his emotions in check, and hurriedly looks downward at his workbench to resume cutting leather into carefully measured strips. It’s a poignant moment, one that couldn’t be conveyed as meaningfully in any other medium.

In the same episode, Peter Campbell, one of today’s leading horsemanship clinicians, speaks about his long relationship with his mentor, the iconic horseman Tom Dorrance. Peter’s a high-energy individual, the kind you suspect requires little sleep. When he talks horses or the years he spent working and traveling with Dorrance, it’s with a passion that you know will never wane. One could describe in writing his mannerisms and the rhythms of his speech – and as a lifelong writer, I would never question the power of the written word – but on video, that passion is unfiltered, allowing the viewer to react to reality rather than a secondhand description.



In Episode 2, Arizona bit and spur maker Bill Heisman demonstrates the fundamentals of inlaying silver.



Some months back, I watched an interview with Sebastian Junger, author of *The Perfect Storm* and co-director of the recent documentary *Restrepo*, about a platoon of U.S. soldiers in one of Afghanistan's most dangerous regions. Junger said he'd begun experimenting with the medium of film during earlier experiences as a war correspondent. During firefights, he said, lowering one's gaze to write in a notebook proved unacceptably dangerous. Capturing a scene on video allowed him to stay tuned in to what was happening around him. When it came time to write, of course, his footage proved to be invaluable reference material.

By the time I saw that interview, I had already begun my own experiments with digital video, recording interviews with saddlemakers, painters and horsemen in environments decidedly calmer than a war zone. As I wrote magazine pieces based upon those interviews, I found the filmed interviews to be priceless, providing not just a record of a subject's comments, but the opportunity to take in yet again his or her mannerisms, ways of speaking, and the infinite details of the surrounding environment. It was like screenwriting, but in reverse, with the footage fueling the writing process.



Episode 3 includes a segment on saddle-leather carving with Oklahoma saddlemaker John Willemsma.

arena, ranch pasture, art studio or workshop. Interviews are outlined loosely, if at all, allowing filmed conversations to develop organically. Nothing is scripted; nothing is rehearsed. For the most part, viewers experience exactly what I see and hear in producing a story.



Episode trailers and video-blog clips can be viewed at www.thefrontierproject.net.

As I collected filmed interviews, an idea began to take shape: a short-subject documentary series that could include segments on the West's great horsemen, craftsmen and artists. As I began researching available technology and the rapid advancements in high-definition digital video, I realized that the notion of a one-man operation producing such a series wasn't at all far-fetched. By mid-December 2010, *The Frontier Project*, billed as "an independent documentary series celebrating North America's cowboy culture," was born.

A segment for *The Frontier Project* blends a formal, sit-down interview with footage of a subject in his or her work environment, be it an



The Frontier Project, So Far

Episode 1

Horseman Peter Campbell discusses his approach as an educator, and the influence of his mentor, the great Tom Dorrance. Kansas craftsman Tuffy Flagler shares how personal adversity led him to a career as one of the West's most gifted makers of traditional working gear. Novelist J.P.S. Brown explains the origins of his iconic character Jim Kane, resurrected in Brown's latest novel, *Wolves at Our Door*. And painter Harley Brown offers rare insight into his creative process.

Episode 2

Steve, Bryan and Nick Mantle discuss their work starting mustangs under saddle for the BLM's adoption program, and share many of the techniques they use in training wild horses. Bit and spur maker Bill Heisman demonstrates the fundamentals of silver inlay. Sculptor Herb Mignery brings viewers into his studio, and shares how ranch life inspires his work.

Episode 3

Craftsman Russell Yates explains the artistry behind some of today's best bits and spurs. Historian and publisher J. Martin Basinger sheds light on the lasting legacy of Adolph Bayers, one of the West's most influential bit and spur makers. Saddlemaker John Willemsma demonstrates how to use traditional tools to carve a floral pattern on a saddle. And artist Terri Kelly Moyers shares her inspirations in an interview at her Santa Fe, New Mexico, studio.

View trailers for each episode at www.thefrontierproject.net.



In this 3 minute, 44 second clip from Episode 2 of *The Frontier Project*, Wyoming horseman Steve Mantle explains the early process he and his sons use to gentle mustangs for the BLM's wild-horse adoption program.

Click the image to play.

During the process of reviewing footage, I occasionally run across some incredible moments that I barely remember occurring – the power of the medium, I suppose. Episode 2 includes a segment on Wyoming's Mantle Ranch, where Steve Mantle and his two sons start mustangs under saddle for the BLM's wild-horse adoption program. There's a moment in which Steve, after having worked with a young filly in a round pen, approaches her, his hand outstretched. He gently makes contact with the filly's forehead, a physical connection that lasts less than a second, but is so profound in its subtlety as the once-feral youngster quietly accepts his touch. Again, an event that can certainly be described in words, but to capture and then share such an interaction exactly as it played out is to conjure the magic Kubrick found so enchanting.



A.J. Mangum is the editor of *Ranch & Reata* and a contributing editor for *The Cowboy Way*.





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Painting Cowboys

Montana artist Russell Chatham has described his reason for creating art as “an attempt to search for something beyond ourselves.” Given that, the watercolors in Don Weller’s book, *Painting Cowboys* are, for Don Weller, a series of important steps in Weller’s lifelong and evolving search that he is taking with his art. And while the journey may take many turns, with clarity of direction not always evident, Weller may well have an advantage.

He is, by training, a problem solver and his own story proves that out. I first became aware of Don

Weller back in the 1970s as one of the powerhouse group of graphic designers that were working in the LA design community. I was working as an art director at A&M Records, and Weller’s work was already hugely popular and sought after. Not realizing at the time that this big-time designer had grown up horseback – not near LA, but near the Palouse River close to his childhood home in Pullman, Washington. His creative origins were not found in type books or volumes of Swiss design elements, rather in his drawings of horses and cowboys. He became quite proficient at his art as



Working Hats



Working Cow Horse

he headed into high school – while also “heading” in high school rodeos. Horses and art were what drove Weller, and he continued to rope as he worked his way through Washington State University gaining a degree in Fine Arts.

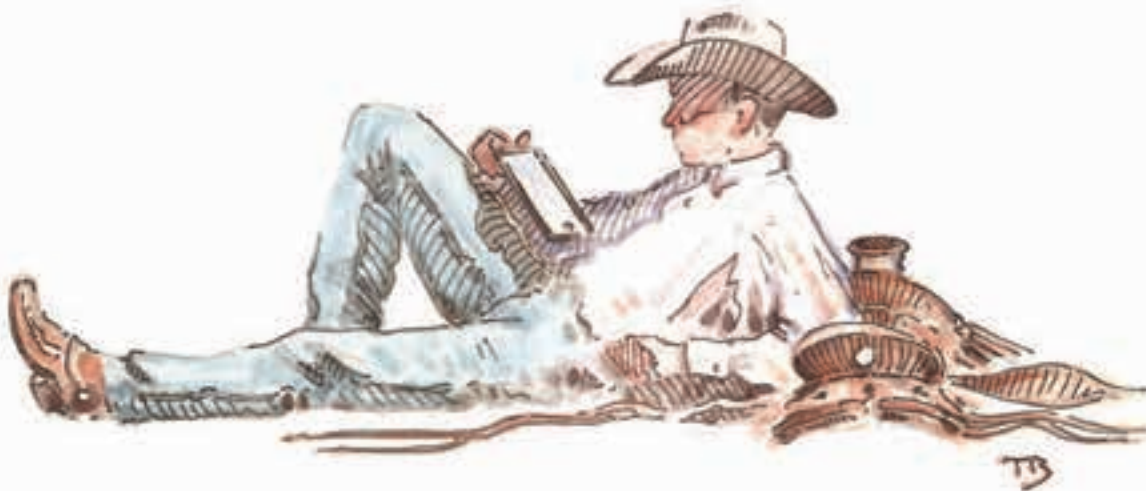
Realizing he needed to make one of those life decisions, he gulped hard and sold his horses, deciding to move to LA. There he embarked on what would become a legendary career as a graphic designer. His portfolio grew exponentially as his works appeared on album covers, posters, in ads in many magazines, as did his illustrations. His work was praised by his peers and given many awards including a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Los Angeles Society of Illustrators.

From magazine covers to posters, Weller designed material for clients from the Hollywood Bowl, The National Football League, The National Cutting Horse Association, The Rose Bowl, and the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

Throughout his long and celebrated design career, horses continued to fill his dreams, and after meeting his wife Cha Cha while he was teaching at UCLA, they decided they were ready to leave the pavement and headed for a little ski town near Salt Lake City. Continuing to work, he did several projects for the National Cutting Horse Association including a landmark book about the world of cutting – the ultimate “dance” between horses and cattle.

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Ahead and a Leg



Brian's Rodear



Little Roan from Idaho



Down to the Colorado

This book is a reflection of years on horseback. Years that Weller has given himself. Stricken with cutting horse fever – a disease for which there is no known cure – he found the only successful therapy was to ride and hunt cattle as often as possible. So now he paints the horses and cowboys he knows and competes with. A group he believes in much more than the life left behind on the streets of LA. “I have been searching my earliest memories and although I can’t find a time I ever believed in Santa Claus, I’m sure I’ve always believed in cowboys,” he says.

The watercolors shown depict moments in time – mostly during the bright heat of the day. Shadows directly underneath. Bright cloudless skies, speckled and

minimal backdrops, push the viewer into the action at hand – ropers roping, cutters cutting or a quiet scene with horses at rest.

Weller’s world is one of depicting competency. His subjects are at peace with what they are doing. Confidence without arrogance. Capability without fanfare. Riders and horses in tune with each other, doing the workday dance of a life in the livestock game.

His horses are broke, not broken. Their timecard punched, ready for a day of work, not silliness. It is a timeless place, where humans and horses work together. BR

www.donweller.com





LIGHTING OUT

The Mill Inn Sheridan, Wyoming

It's always grand to have a welcome place to stay when traveling through the West. And when your travels take you to or near Sheridan, Wyoming, the historic Mill Inn will fill the bill, nicely.

The Mill Inn didn't start out as a hotel. Rather, it was established in the early 1890s as a single elevator, steam powered, wooden milling structure. Later it would be moved and enlarged at its present location due to the large demand for its products. The new mill had the latest milling technology, made of fire resistant masonry and was the largest, most modern of its kind in Wyoming with daily capacity of 1,000

barrels of flour. At one time, the mill was the largest taxpayer in Wyoming. Due to changes in freight rates for grain and flour, the mill could no longer compete with other milling locations. Milling operations were closed and the buildings, equipment and lands

comprising the former Sheridan Flouring Mills, Inc. were sold in 1974. The actual mill building was remodeled into a 45-unit motel and the tower was converted into office spaces. Today, the Mill Inn is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and operates as a hotel. Within its walls are some surprising examples of local art and photography.

LA Huffman is a well-



The Mill Inn in Sheridan, Wyoming is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



The Mill Inn was established in the early 1890s as a single elevator, steam powered, wooden milling structure. The new mill had the latest milling technology made of fire resistant masonry and was the largest, most modern of its kind in Wyoming with daily capacity of 1,000 barrels of flour.



The Inn has a superb collection of local art, including works by renowned early photographers, L.A. Huffman and Charles Belden.

known western photographer and the Mill Inn has over 100 of his photos on display throughout the guest rooms. It is one of the largest private collections of Huffman prints in the West. Another photographer of local interest whose work is displayed is Charles Belden. Born in San Francisco, California in 1887, Belden's family migrated from the east before the gold rush in 1849; California was still territory of Spain.

Interestingly, Charles grew up in California and had an uncle who was a good photographer. This influenced his interest in photography at an early age. Charles's greatest contribution to the Pitchfork Ranch was making it famous through his photos.

Sheridan is an amazing town and the West is all around. For more information on The Mill Inn, visit www.sheridanmillinn.com



Dancing on the Rim of Lorca's Well

By Tom Russell

*With idea, sound, or gesture, the Duende
enjoys fighting the creator on the very
rim of the well. Angel and muse escape
with violin, meter, and compass; the Duende
wounds. In the healing wound, which never closes,
lie the strange invented qualities of a man's work.*

Federico Garcia Lorca

64

In the winter of 1998 a fifteen year old Spanish kid named Julian Lopez walked out into the center of the biggest bullring in the world and called out to a brave little grey bull named “*Feligres*.” The bull came on a run, from a long way off and at full speed, with intent to kill. The kid, nicknamed “*El Juli*,” stood in profile to the charging bull and held the *muleta* in front of himself. At the last moment he swung the cloth back behind his own body, forcing the bull to swerve, change direction and now pass behind his (*Juli's*) back, missing his legs (and femoral arteries) by inches. The pass is called the “*pendulo*” or pendulum, and the business is risky. To be able to execute a pass on a fresh bull coming from a distance – the very first *muleta* pass of the *faena* – indicated extreme braveness in the character of both the torero and the little bull. Something had transpired. Something was coming. There, in Mexico City, the Rome of Western Civilization, this teenaged kid, who looked like



Tom Lea art courtesy Tom Russell



rosy cheeked graduate of a Jesuit secondary school, danced on the rim of the very ancient well of *duende*, and he invited a bedraggled ring of spectators to dance with him.

A few thousand desultory and half-drunk Mexican and *gringo aficionados*, watching a late evening *novillera*, saw the pass, or *thought* they saw it, and felt their incurious hearts jump up into their throats. The bile was rising up from a thousand year old pool of dark blood traced back to coming of the the Moors. The shout of “*Ole*” came up like a besotted, passionate *Andalusian* chorus of approval, and it was followed by more “*Oles*” as the kid proceeded to lead the brave little bull through one of the most phenomenal, artful, and scary *faenas* in recent *taurine* history. The crowd was on its feet. For a moment mortal working men, and even the candy hawking girls, became angels as their boots and sandals were no longer shackled to the concrete earth of beer-drenched aisles littered with cigar butts and pistachio shells.

And *I* was lifted, and pulled back inside the world of the bulls.

I was on my feet in front of an old black and white television screen in a backstreet bar on the border, in *Juarez*, Mexico. The room was filled with *panatela* smoke and the aroma of peppers cooking. It was a weekly meeting place for

old men whose club was called “*Aficionados de Juarez.*” In this holy sanctum I was admitted as a gringo observer. I was sitting at a little beer table, with my barber, the former *banderillero*- “*El Pipo,*” watching the *corrida* in Mexico City. We were with that kid who was dancing on the rim of the well in the center of our western world. God was afoot. It was a gathering of muses and angels; barbers, bullfighters, and bums, and *Duende* was squeezing the juice out of the lemons of death. *Comprende?*

Forgive the ecstatic poetry. I’m misquoting Federico Garcia Lorca. It’s addictive. But it captures some of the inexpressible feeling of that moment.

The *muleta* passes went on and on. The kid knew every elegant pass in the book and his *Duende* – his ability to pull emotion out of himself and the bull and send it like sparks through the crowd, was pulsating at full bore. *He was in the zone.* He passed the bull from the right and left; *naturales* and *manoletinas*. He curved the bull around and around his own body until the black and white television, in this border bar, lit up with the colors of Picasso and Soutine. He was in the *terrain*, down inside the well now, and swirling in the inner ground of spiritual experience that was causing the wind of the spirit to blow gales across the ring and up into the cheap seats and through the airwaves, arcing a thousand miles up to Juarez.

He passed the bull closer and closer until his suit of lights was drenched in blood. After the prescribed time was up, and the *aviso* horns blew, the crowd was shrieking for more and waving handkerchiefs to pardon the brave little grey bull, and the sombreros and ball caps and seat cushions were raining down into the ring.



The kid danced around the sombreros and kept passing the bull until the world of Mexico City and the smoky little bar I was standing in appeared to melt into one shrieking and forceful “Ole!” – which may be traced back to the Moorish “*Allah!*” An ecstatic cry to God. The judge granted the *indulto*, or pardon for the bull, and the brave kid led the brave little bull back to the gate which led into the corrals.

But wait.

The bull trotted through the gate, which swung closed. The kid turned around, tears streaming down his face, and the crowd surged into the ring and seized him and carried him *en hombros*, on shoulders, around the ring and eventually out the main doors,

into the streets of Mexico City. Into history. The kid was crying hysterically with a joy and emotion which had boiled over the top of a very deep kettle. It was something to see. And *feel*.

A thousand miles away, the drunks in that smoky little club in Juarez kept slapping me on the back. As if to tell me: “*See! See Gringo! You didn’t believe! Now you have seen! You must be patient with la Fiesta Brava, but now you have seen!*” In fact I didn’t know exactly what I *had* seen, or why I’d felt so moved. But I was hooked again. Hooked by this “thing” – mesmerized by this shape changing shadow dance which can force the smoldering boredom of daily life up and out of your soul. A momentary glimpse when the door opens a fraction and you experience the possibilities of *Duende* and art. When a man (*in this case a boy*) and a wild animal redefine the boundary between magic and art, and ritual and dance, and *afición*. *Ole! Indeed.* I was charged. And the bull lived.

That night the sidewalks didn’t appear as filthy as I crossed the border bridge into El Paso, on my long walk home. The world had been spray-painted a miraculous white, and new colors were appearing on the canvas. This was many years before Juarez had turned into a drug battle ground called: “*the most dangerous city in the world,*” and before they tore down the Plaza Monumental bull ring to build a *Walmart* store. Before the *end of the world*. That night in a Juarez bar I had rediscovered the lure of *duende* attached to the ancient rituals.

I had seen *corridos* in Spain in 1970 and now I was hooked again, and the only way to understand it, or dis-understand it, and rake all of the civilized false truths out of the marrow; the only way to comprehend the depth of feeling was perhaps by reading Lorca’s lectures on *Duende*. And in reading these thoughts one might come to an understanding of why we are moved by art and music and love, and *La Fiesta Brava*. Why we will suffer dozens and dozens of bad afternoons until magic appears.

All that was twelve years ago; *as I write this*. The kid, *El Juli*, grew up and named his own bull ranch “*Feligres*” in



honor of the brave little bull who led him across the abyss into a temporary eternity. I believe the little bull now lives on Juli's ranch. They will share a memory together, forever. Julian Lopez, no longer the kid genius, is not brilliant now on every afternoon. Bullfight fans, at times, turn against him, as they always will. He has tasted that sour taste of mortality on days when the luck wasn't with him and the bulls were mediocre, and there was no zone or well to fall inside.

But *Duende* is the killer of snakes in the garden of boredom, mortality, and artistic ignorance. I'd been re-introduced to the *corrida* by this kid, and I wanted to see, and feel, more.

Take Two

"When you see a torero whose performance causes you pain; makes you want to leave your wife and children abandon cigarettes, drink or God, and reminds you of your own death, then you are seeing a maestro. You may go to corridas all your life and never see this, but if you are lucky enough to see it just once, to know what torero is all about – why men become toreros and why even if they have no talent they come back again and again."



John McCormick

I decided to go to bullfight school. *Amateur* bullfight school. Bloodless. Let's get that straight, *por favor*. I wanted to see if I could step inside, or at least *near* that deep well, and spin around a bit with the *Duende*. At the very least I might extend my understanding, or a horn might carve out a piece of my thigh and extinguish my desire to get involved. What I didn't want was to run after a small piece of what I call "airplane journalism," where a half-assed travel reporter learns to drive a race car, climb up to a Mt. Everest base camp, or chase turtles in Patagonia, then wrap it up in a pithy, arch-humorous piece for a flight magazine. "*Around the world in eighty days.*" *Travel lit*. These journalists usually leave themselves a very wide back door out of danger, and away from committed art. They end up writing second rate novels where, in fawning introductions, they thank their tortured wives for putting up with the years of living with a whiny hack in the attic. But I *digress*.

I wanted to approach the ring as who I was; a gringo aged 50, or thereabouts, who wrote songs and painted, and had a yen for understanding the depth of passion. Passion as seen and experienced in flamenco, painting, song and the bull ring. This "*thing*" I saw El Juli spin in Mexico City. I wanted to try and follow the poetic footprints of Lorca, and go beyond that by actually facing a bull, albeit a small one. It was better than reading Hemingway on the back porch, pretending you were there in the 1920s drinking your young life away in Pamplona.

And so, as they say, I found myself in Salamanca, Spain, where the central plaza is filled with beautiful women from around the world, and the ancient brick towers are high and likely to be occupied by the nest of giant storks. The cafes were full at sundown, and the little tapas plates danced around the half-filled wine glasses. My ignorance on wine could fill up a book, but I liked the *Rioja*, both *red and white*, or even the touristic *sangria* with its apples and peaches doused

in the blood of the gods. What the hell. The Spanish café chat was usually serious talk: romance, politics, literature, bulls. There was no need to read a newspaper, or watch the television news, if you hung out in the Salamanca cafes and spoke a little Spanish.

I had prepared myself in Mexico in a few sessions with a California based bullfighting academy. I don't recall much



Tom Russell

of the early training, except for long breakfasts in wonderful backstreet cafes and my getting tossed and eating a lot of sand in the practice ring. I was in the air quite a few times, looking back down at the little horns of a brave animal. I learned never to take a backward step. *Always move forward.* The tenets of torero were simple, and yet almost impossible to implement with *finesse*: *Parar; hold your ground.* *Templar: swing the cloth with slow artfulness.* *Mandar: mandate the action and direct the animal* and the flow of passes towards an artistic *denouement*. Looking at old films of my work I've decided I never *ever* mandated an animal. I was usually at *their* mercy, and they could smell it and take advantage of my hesitation. Which they proceeded to do.

My first clear memory is of a football field in the center of Salamanca. We were learning to swing the *muleta* with the instructor. The old Spanish men in their black berets, who sit all day like ravens on Spanish park benches, were quite amused with the gringo students playing bullfighter. It gave the old men much to chatter and laugh about through their tobacco and wine stained choppers.

One hot morning we were swinging away. One student would play bull, the other *torero*, and back and forth the bull would run, a mythical human-beast with a set of practice horns. One of the old black-capped Spaniards kept whistling at us and shouting, "No, No *derecho! Derecho! Con temple! Yi Yi Yi!*" He couldn't stand being a spectator to this offense against the dignity of the art.

His cronies urged him up off the bench and he limped forward in his black slippers. His eyes were gleaming below that black beret. He was an old bullfighter. At least that's what he told us. There are a lot of old bullfighters in the bars and on the park benches of Spain. Many who have never been in a ring. He asked permission to swing the *muleta* a few times and show his stuff. He could have been sixty years old or ninety. Hard to say. He wore the air about him of olive groves and basket-covered gallons of red wine and cigars and hard cheese carved with a handmade knife. And a half century of hard work. He was seriously *of* the country.

He took the *muleta* in his hands. Hands that looked like little broken roots or *raices* of a dry, overturned grapevine. He planted his small feet and focused his eyes far off on the towers of Salamanca, where storks were sitting on high nests. There was an imaginary bull out there and he called to it. "*Hub, toro. Hub!*" The sound came from a cavernous place in his throat that had been coated by a half century of cheap tobacco and second rate brandy. "*Hub, hub. Toro!*"



And then the bull came, and the storks took flight from the high tower and the little man in the beret swung the *muleta* as the imagined bull charged past. Then the man turned and called the bull again and swung around, once again finishing with a high *pase de pecho*, as he dismissed the bull and walked away. He turned his eyes proudly toward us. He thrust his chin up and shuffle stepped.

The “*Oles*” rose up from our throats. The old men on the benches whistled and clapped. The storks circled high above their nests.

He was not finished. He turned and passed his bull from the left side this time, showing us his very good form in the *naturales*; passes where the bull is lured dangerously close on the left side of the man. He linked a set of four passes and finished with a high pass. *Ole!* If I were Norman Mailer, I might say that butterflies flew out of the red cloth, as this little old man *conjured the magic*. He was waving a divining rod over Lorca’s deep well. A cry issued from the empty arches and towers of this ancient city and was floating on the wind, and the wind was “*blowing relentlessly over the heads of the dead...the wind that smells of baby spittle, crushed grass and jellyfish veil.*” Forgive me, again. More of Garcia Lorca’s poetic notion of *Duende*.

Those were the afternoons in Salamanca I’ll never forget. In that little man’s movements I saw a glimpse of what I’d come to Spain to understand. I went on to face a few small *vacas* in the *tienta* ring, and there were brief seconds of slight mastery when the black animal brushed past me and came again and again. But mostly it was awkwardness and fear. Fear of looking stupid. Fear of death and all the other rag tag components of humanness and vulnerability. But for a moment, once or twice, I stood feet firm on the Spanish sand and saw *the glimpse*.

Ah, *yes*, in Mexico and Spain I’d made an attempt to understand the *duende* which, in Lorca’s eyes, was more important than the *muse* and the *angel*. The angel might bring us light, and the muse may help us create artistic form, but the *Duende* arises from the *remotest mansions of the blood*. It foment passion and lights up the dark soul of the *cante hondo* singer. On the rare afternoon or evening it might spark a *torero*, a painter or a troubadour. I *needed* that lesson. I write songs. I sing them.

In that Mexico City *corrida* with the kid “*El Juli*,” and in the expressive, broken hands of an old Salamanca man swinging a red cloth on a football field, I found the echoes of Lorca’s poetical and passionate definition of art. This earthy knowledge resonated in the mansions of my own blood. I would dream on these experiences and try to contemplate *who*



Tom Russell in Spain



we are, as artists and humans, and why we're here, and how we might direct our talents with spark and passion. These moments which create the "healing wound which never closes, and lies in the invented qualities of a man's work."

That miraculous piece of time, *out of time*, when we dance on the rim of the deep well of eternity.

Author's Note: Traditional bullfighting is illegal in the United States, but bloodless bullfighting has made a comeback. One of the first bloodless events took place in 1880 in New York City. Angel Fernandez received permission to stage a bullfight at the corner of 168TH and Broadway. The "judge" was Henry Bergh, who was the founder of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Henry made sure the event was devoid of cruelty. Bloodless events still take place on Portuguese Feast Days, on ranches in the San Joaquin Valley of California, and an organization called "Don Bull Productions" has planned six bloodless events this April – including stops in San Diego, Las Vegas, Chicago and New York. The star of the show is Pablo Hermoso de Mendoza, the great figure who fights via horseback, in the Portuguese style. His magnificent Spanish stallions are worth seeing in action.

Biographical Note: Tom Russell has recorded 25 albums of original songs. He has published three books and is also a painter, represented by galleries in Santa Fe and Austin. His work and tour dates can be accessed through: www.tomrussell.com





WESTERN FILM

Buck and Sundance

By Bill Reynolds

Wyoming horseman Buck Brannaman has been celebrated in a new documentary – aptly titled *Buck* – and the film’s producer and director, Cyndi Meehl, has pulled off an amazing feat by winning the Audience Award at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival. The film was hailed by civilian media from the *Los Angeles Times* to *Variety*. Regarding the film, director Meehl stated, “I hope the audience comes away from this film with a renewed sense of hope and inspiration. I think Buck’s story has a freshness that can be very moving, especially in a time when the world is looking for direction. I think that Buck has a



photo by Cindy Meehl

unique way of encouraging people to do and see things that they thought were impossible. He will also make you see things in your own life that you may or may not want to see. He’s pretty straightforward in a tough cowboy kind of way, but maybe that’s what we all need right now. I am pretty hard to impress, so I thought if someone could inspire me that much, then they would probably inspire others, too.”

The *Los Angeles Times* said, “Is it possible that a documentary film could cross enough cultural, geographic and demographic lines to become a mainstream phenomenon, without a political agenda or shock value? That’s the



photos courtesy Mary Brannaman Collection

For Buck Brannaman, roping has been a lifelong pursuit

question L.A. Times film critic Betsy Sharkey is asking at this year's Sundance Film Festival. "If ever a documentary had that everyman potential," she says, "it is *Buck*, a film with a sensibility like *The Blind Side* that some might underestimate for its plainspoken power.

"A quintessential up-by-the-bootstraps story about a man who actually wears boots that have straps, *Buck* is the tale of a charismatic real-life horse whisperer, an earthy, soft-spoken philosopher who can tame troubled souls, be they man or beast. According to Sharkey, he's the kind of unsung hero that America loves to love." Brannaman's story, *The Faraway Horses* is a best selling book first released in 2001.

The film follows Brannaman throughout a typical year giving horsemanship clinics around the country and over-seas. A mix of mentor, legend and folk hero to the thousands who attend his colt-starting and horsemanship clinics each year, his affect on both horse and human is evident.

Brannaman was also the inspiration for the novel and feature-film, *The Horse Whisperer*, a part of his life he has fun retelling. The film shows Brannaman employing techniques learned from his friends and inspirations – Tom Dorrance and Ray Hunt, Brannaman helps participants reveal themselves through their relationships with their horses. Brannaman's approach is fascinating as he really is working on the people and through that journey the riders help themselves as well as their relationship with their horses. It was the many rider-

based experiences that caused Brannaman to write his second book, *Believe*, from the perspective of the people he has worked with over many years. His is a story of journeys, working with thousands of horses and people – and as for himself, as he describes his journey in the Introduction to *Believe*, it is a constant journey of discovery, of a life that is a work in progress.

"It would have been about mid-morning, the winter of 1968, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. There had been a wet snow, not much of it, but the kind that has so much moisture in it that everything is frigid, right down to the core of every rock, tree, and miserable warm-blooded creature. It was the kind of cold that takes all night to shake off, and by that time you have to go out and brave it again.

On this one cold day, a little boy walked out the door of his house to do his morning chores. As he did every morning, he found himself fighting mightily with about 300 feet of half-frozen garden hose. There were no

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2011
SUNDANCE
FILM FESTIVAL

BUCK

CEGAR CREEK PRODUCTIONS Presents In Association with MOTTO PICTURES and BACK ALLIE PRODUCTIONS
Original Music by DAVID ROBBINS Cinematographers GUY MOSSMAN and LUKE GEISSBÜHLER
Associate Producer SOFIA SANTANA Line Producer ALICE HENTY Executive Producer CINDY MEEHL
Creative Consultant ANDREA MEDITCH Editor TOBY SWIMIN Producer JULIE GOLDMAN Director CINDY MEEHL



outdoor water lines; in order to fill the water tanks of the family's livestock, an enormous hose from the side of the house had to be drawn out for use and recoiled again.

The horses would cluster around the boy as the seemingly endless stream dribbled from the crunchy hose. After watering the horses, the kid manhandled the hose across the yard to water a handful of small-bagged, pitifully poor milk cows, standing at the ready, mooing and grunting for his attention. Every morning, the water had to flow, frozen hose or not - even if it meant he had to beat the hose with a hammer. Every morning before he went off to school, that kid knew what was ahead of him.

Meanwhile, an older boy – the little kid's older brother – would head toward the huge milking barn where his own chores awaited him. (Seen through adult eyes, he would be surprised to find that the family's huge

milking barn was actually only slightly bigger than a one-car garage.) The older boy would swing his milk cans to urge the cows into their stanchions, anxious to get through the morning milking. As he worked, he would occasionally glance through the barn doors to see the hose lurching past, or watch as it got hung up on the basement windowsill. This would invariably be followed by great invisible tugging and whipping about of the hose, accompanied by muffled grunts and curses from his younger brother.

The kid was a pretty sensitive youngster, but nevertheless became quite accomplished at swearing, especially when the hose wouldn't cooperate – something that happened roughly every 45 feet that he tried to drag the darned thing.

Success, while tardy, was never fleeting, and the kid



would finally get the hose out to the last water tank and the water would begin to trickle out of the hose and he would wait and wait and wait. Just standing there waiting, shaking and shivering in the snowy, cold air, waiting for the water tank to fill up. Well, like any six- or seven-year-old would, he'd get a little bored and started looking around, moving around, inspecting, exploring things. On this particular day, he looked up at the far end of the meadow at this Ponderosa pine tree that was sort of two trees in one. It had a deep cleft in it, about three feet off the ground. He saw something in the cleft of that tree and really thought he should investigate. After all, he did have a little time waiting on that water tank to fill up. And even though he could have perhaps walked on over to the milking shed to assist his older brother, he was sure that his brother would get along fine without him.

Adventure seemed more important at this point and he walked to the end of the meadow and investigated this thing in the cleft of the great pine tree. Well, it had snow all over it and he looked underneath the snow to find a tiny flicker. Now, a flicker is a woodpecker-type bird found in the northern parts of the United States. The flicker may be found all over, and there were certainly plenty of them around the boy's country in the summertime, but this was the middle of the winter. You didn't often see birds in the wintertime, not like this.

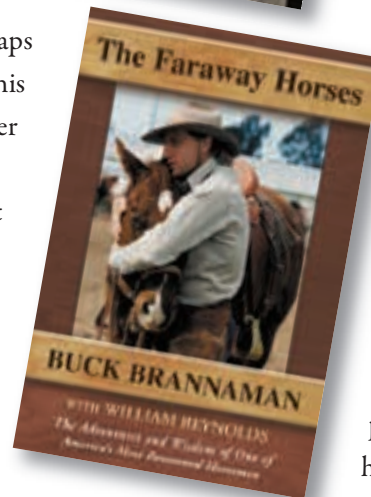
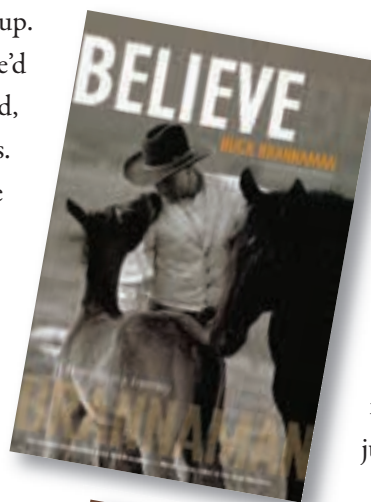
Well, the bird was obviously very cold and very sick. The boy thought he'd bring the bird to the house, hoping that his dad wouldn't think it a waste of time and fall into such a foul mood he wouldn't let him warm the bird up. He picked up the poor, frozen thing and as

he did, the bird, which seemed more dead than alive, let out a horrific squawk and flapped its wings. Naturally this surprised and terrified the boy, and he dropped the upset creature to the ground. His immediate instinct

was to strike back at the thing that had so startled him, and without thinking he stepped on the bird and killed it. He instantly realized his error – that in spite of his good intentions to save a sick creature, his instincts had caused him to kill it. He stood there quite a while, thinking about what he had done, thinking about actions vs. reactions, and the shame poured over him, just as the water spilled from the overfilled stock tank in the distance.

That moment stayed with the little boy and it continued to bother him his whole life. As an adult, he often thought back to that cold morning in Idaho and wondered what it was that made him kill something he was trying to help. He never really forgave himself, even though he knew in his heart that the act wasn't calculated or premeditated or intentional. He believes his immediate instinct to protect himself from that bird at all costs may have had been based on his never-ending fear of his father, someone he and his brother felt the need to protect themselves from every day of their young lives.

When asked years later if he could remember something pleasant or good about his father, he thought and thought and said, "No, I was never not afraid of the man." That fear, the fear that lived within the boy and his older brother, might well have been what motivated the boy to act so instinctively to kill the bird he believed





would hurt him. Who knows? This isn't about blame. But just like the flicker in the snow, growing up in his father's house stayed with the boy, and he never stopped feeling great distress and concern whenever he came across something that was living in fear and despair. The man that boy has become believes that his encounters with fear at an early age led him to a life spent trying to erase the fear and lessen the despair of those around him, be they man or beast.

I don't believe what happened between the boy and the bird happened by accident. I'm sure some would find it strange that such a small, insignificant event would mean anything to me, all these years later, all these miles down the road. But it does, of course. I was that little boy.

I've had a lot of ups and downs in my life. Many of those who read my first book, *The Faraway Horses*, know a bit about my history and have become a part of my present and my future in a way I never would have thought possible. I've been blessed by being able to explain and share an understanding of fear and how to live beyond it with thousands and thousands of people over the years. Complete strangers have been able to recognize that special place with me and create it in their own lives. This doesn't happen with every acquaintance, but often enough that the phenomenon is hard to explain.

The message isn't really about despair or trouble. It's about winning a victory over a lot of things that can be quite a burden in our lives. Do any of us ever really win? Well, I don't know. I don't think so. But we can each gain a little bit of ground, all the time. Hopefully, you gain enough ground that, if you're walking the right

path, lots of little victories appear along the way. There will always be heartaches and despair to deal with, but it's how we deal with them that really shapes us as individuals and determines what kind of an influence we're going to have on those around us. And isn't that really what it's all about?

Horses don't care what color you are, how tall or short you are, how small or large you are, whether you're rich or poor, attractive or unattractive. None of



Mr. Brannaman during a recent clinic

that means anything to the horse. A horse takes you at face value for how you make him feel at that moment. It seems to me this would be a good way for all of us people to behave with each other, too. Lord knows, in this day and age, the whole world could stand a bit more of that."

For more information on the documentary, visit www.cedarcreekmedia.com

Believe and *The Faraway Horse* by Buck Brannaman and William Reynolds are published by The Lyons Press. www.LyonsPress.com



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WESTERN READS

Hidden Water

By Dane Coolidge

***Publisher's Note:** Western writer and photographer Dane Coolidge (1873-1940), cousin of our 30th President, Calvin Coolidge, grew up on a small citrus ranch in Riverside County, California. His was a life filled with the knowledge of knowing old-time cowboys first-hand and wrote over forty western novels and non-fiction books.*

This book was published in 1910 and is a thrilling story of the Arizona cattle country, told by a writer who knew the country and understood the real spirit of its life. The story concerns the classic strife between cattle and sheep men for the possession of the great grazing ranges, and is told honestly and authentically without exaggeration. We will be serializing the story in several issues of which this is Part One.



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CHAPTER 1

THE MOUSE

After many long, brooding days of sunshine, when the clean-cut mountains gleamed brilliantly against the sky and the grama grass curled slowly on its stem, the rain wind rose up suddenly out of Papagueria and swooped down upon the desolate town of Bender, whirling a cloud of dust before it; and the inhabitants, man and horse, took to cover. New-born clouds, rushing out of the ruck of flying dirt, cast a cold, damp shadow upon the earth and the hurried past; white-crested

thunder-caps, piling up above the Four Peaks, swept resolutely down to meet them; and the storm wind, laden with the smell of greasewood and wetted alkali, lashed the gaunt desert bushes mercilessly as it howled across the plain. Striking the town it jumped wickedly against the old Hotel Bender, where most of the male population had taken shelter, buffeting its false front until the glasses tinkled and the bar mirrors swayed dizzily from their moorings. Then with a sudden thunder on the tin roof



the flood came down, and Black Tex set up the drinks.

It was a tall cowman just down from the Peaks who ordered the round, and so all-embracing was his good humor that he bid every one in the room drink with him, even a sheepman. Broad-faced and huge, with four months' growth of hair and thirst of the same duration, he stood at the end of the bar, smiling radiantly, one sun-blackened hand toying with the empty glass.

"Come up, fellers," he said, waving the other in invitation, "and drink to Arizona. With a little more rain and good society she's be a holy wonder, as the Texas land boomer says down in hell." They came up willingly, cowpunchers and sheepmen, train hands, prospectors, and the saloon bums that Black Tex kept about to blow such ready spenders as he, whenever they came to town. With a practised jolt of the bottle Tex passed down the line, filling each heavy tumbler to the brim; he poured a thin one for himself and beckoned in his roustabout to swell the count – but still there was an empty glass. There was one man over in the corner who had declined to drink. He sat at a disused card table studiously thumbing over an old magazine, and as he raised his dram the barkeeper glowered at him intolerantly.

"Well," said the big cowboy, reaching for his liquor, "here's how—and may she rain for a week!" He shoved back his high black sombrero as he spoke, but before he signalled the toast his eye caught the sidelong glance of Black Tex, and he too noticed the little man in the corner.

"What's the matter?" he inquired, leaning over toward Tex and jerking his thumb dubiously at the corner, and as the barkeeper scowled and shrugged his shoulders he set down his glass and stared.

The stranger was a small man, for Arizona, and his delicate hands were almost as white as a woman's; but the lines in his face were graven deep, without effeminacy, and his slender neck was muscled like a wrestler's. In dress he was not unlike the men about him – Texas boots, a broad sombrero, and a canvas coat to

turn the rain, – but his manner was that of another world, a sombre, scholarly repose such as you would look for in the reference room of the Boston Public Library; and he crouched back in his corner like a shy, retiring mouse. For a moment the cowman regarded him intently, as if seeking for some exculpating infirmity; then, leaving the long line of drinkers to chafe at the delay, he paused to pry into the matter.

"Say, partner," he began, his big mountain voice tamed down to a masterful calm, "won't you come over and have something with us?"

There was a challenge in the words which did not escape the stranger; he glanced up suddenly from his reading and a startled look came over his eyes as he saw the long line of men watching him. They were large clear eyes, almost piercing in their intentness, yet strangely innocent and childlike. For a moment they rested upon the regal form of the big cowboy, no less a man than Jefferson Creede, foreman of the Dos S, and there was in them something of that silent awe and worship which big men love to see, but when they encountered the black looks of the multitude and the leering smile of Black Tex they lit up suddenly with an answering glint of defiance.

"No, thank you," he said, nodding amiably to the cowman, "I don't drink."

An incredulous murmur passed along the line, mingled with sarcastic mutterings, but the cowman did not stir.

"Well, have a cigar, then," he suggested patiently; and the barkeeper, eager to have it over, slapped one down on the bar and raised his glass.

"Thank you just as much," returned the little man politely, "but I don't smoke, either. I shall have to ask you to excuse me."

"Have a glass of milk, then," put in the barkeeper, going off into a guffaw at the familiar jest, but the cowboy shut him up with a look.

"W'y, certainly," he said, nodding civilly to the

stranger. “Come on, fellers!” And with a flourish he raised his glass to his lips as if tossing off the liquor at a gulp. Then with another downward flourish he passed the whiskey into a convenient spittoon and drank his chaser pensively, meanwhile showing a double eagle across the bar. As Black Tex rang it up and counted out the change Creede stuffed it into his pocket, staring absently out the window at the downpour. Then with a muttered word about his horse he strode out into the storm.

Deprived of their best spender, the crowd drifted back to the tables; friendly games of coon-can sprang up; stud poker was resumed; and a crew of railroad men, off duty, looked out at the sluicing waters and idly wondered whether the track would go out – the usual thing in Arizona. After the first delirium of joy at seeing it rain at all there is an aftermath of misgiving, natural enough in a land where the whole surface of the earth, mountain and desert, has been chopped into ditches by the trailing feet of cattle and sheep, and most of the grass pulled up by the roots. In such a country every gulch becomes a watercourse almost before the dust is laid, the *arroyos* turn to rivers and the rivers to broad floods, drifting with trees and wreckage. But the cattlemen and sheepmen who happened to be in Bender, either to take on hands for the spring round-up or to ship supplies to their shearing camps out on the desert, were not worrying about the railroad. Whether the bridges went out or held, the grass and browse would shoot up like beanstalks in to-morrow’s magic sunshine; and even if the Rio Salagua blocked their passage, or the shearer’s tents were beaten into the mud, there would still be feed, and feed was everything.

But while the rain was worth a thousand dollars a minute to the country at large, trade languished in the Hotel Bender. In a land where a gentleman cannot take a drink without urging every one within the sound of his voice to join in, the saloon business, while running on an assured basis, is sure to have its dull and idle moments. Having rung up the two dollars and a half

which Jefferson Creede paid for his last drink – the same being equivalent to one day’s wages as foreman of the Dos S outfit – Black Tex, as Mr. Brady of the Bender bar preferred to be called, doused the glasses into a tub, turned them over to his roustabout, and polished the cherrywood moodily. Then he drew his eyebrows down and scowled at the little man in the corner.

In his professional career he had encountered a great many men who did not drink, but most of them smoked, and the others would at least take a cigar home to their friends. But here was a man who refused to come in on a treat at all, and a poor, miserable excuse for a man he was, too, without a word for any one. Mr. Brady’s reflections on the perversity of tenderfeet were cut short by a cold blast of air. The door swung open, letting in a smell of wet greasewood, and an old man, his hat dripping, stumbled in and stood swaying against the bar. His aged sombrero, blacksmithed along the ridge with copper rivets, was set far back on a head of long gray hair which hung in heavy strings down his back, like an Indian’s; his beard, equally long and tangled, spread out like a chest protector across his greasy shirt, and his fiery eyes roved furtively about the room as he motioned for a drink. Black Tex set out the bottle negligently and stood waiting.

“Is that all?” he inquired pointedly, as the old man slopped out a drink.

“Well, have one yourself,” returned the old-timer grudgingly. Then, realizing his breach of etiquette, he suddenly straightened up and included the entire barroom in a comprehensive sweep of the hand.

“Come up hyar, all of yoush,” he said drunkenly. “Hev a drink – everybody – no, everybody – come up hyar, I say!” And the graceless saloon bums dropped their cards and came trooping up together. A few of the more self-respecting men slipped quietly out into the card rooms; but the studious stranger, disdaining such puny subterfuges, remained in his place, as impassive



and detached as ever.

“Hey, young man,” exclaimed the old-timer jauntily, “step up hyar and nominate yer pizen!”

He closed his invitation with an imperative gesture, but the young man did not obey.

“No, thank you, Uncle,” he replied soberly, “I don’t drink.”

“Well, hev a cigar, then,” returned the old man, finishing out the formula of Western hospitality, and once more Black Tex glowered down upon this guest who was always “knocking a shingle off his sign.”

“Aw, cut it out, Bill,” he sneered, “that young feller don’t drink ner smoke, neither one – and he wouldn’t have no truck with you, nohow!”

They drank, and the stranger dropped back into his reading unperturbed. Once more Black Tex scrubbed the bar and scowled at him; then, tapping peremptorily on the board with a whiskey glass, he gave way to his just resentment.

“Hey, young feller,” he said, jerking his hand arbitrarily, “come over here. Come over here, I said – I want to talk with you!”

For a moment the man in the corner looked up in well-bred surprise; then without attempting to argue the point he arose and made his way to the bar.

“What’s the matter with you, anyway?” demanded Brady roughly. “Are you too good to drink with the likes of us?”

The stranger lowered his eyes before the domineering gaze of his inquisitor and shifted his feet uneasily.

“I don’t drink with anybody,” he said at last. “And if you had any other waiting-room in your hotel,” he added, “I’d keep away from your barroom altogether. As it is, maybe you wouldn’t mind leaving me alone.”

At this retort, reflecting as it did upon the management, Black Tex began to breathe heavily and sway upon his feet.

“I asked you,” he roared, thumping his fist upon the

bar and opening up his eyes, “whether you are too good to drink with the likes of us – *me*, f’r instance – and I want to git an answer!”

He leaned far out over the bar as if listening for the first word before he hit him, but the stranger did not reply immediately. Instead, with simple-minded directness he seemed to be studying on the matter. The broad grin of the card players fell to a wondering stare and every man leaned forward when, raising his sombre eyes from the floor, the little man spoke.

“Why, yes,” he said quietly, “I think I am.”

“Yes, *what?*” yelled the barkeeper, astounded. “You think you’re what?”

“Now, say,” protested the younger man. Then, apparently recognizing the uselessness of any further evasion, he met the issue squarely.

“Well, since you crowd me to it,” he cried, flaring up, “I *am* too good!” I’m too good a man to drink when I don’t want to drink – I’m too good to accept treats when I don’t stand treat! And more than that,” he added slowly and impressively, “I’m too good to help blow that old man, or any other man, for his money!”

He rose to his utmost height as he spoke, turning to meet the glance of every man in the room, and he faced them, panting, his deep eyes glowed with passion of conviction.

“If that is too good for this town,” he said, “I’ll get of it, but I won’t drink on treats to please anybody.”

The gaze of the entirely assembly followed him curiously as he went back to his corner, and Black Tex was so taken aback by this unexpected effrontery on the part of his guest that he made no reply whatever. Then, perceiving that his business methods have been questioned, he drew himself up and frowned darkly.

“Hoity-toity!” he sniffed with exaggerated concern. “Who th’ hell is this, now? One of them little white-ribbon boys, fresh from the East, I bet ye, travellin’ for the W. P. S. Q. T. H’m-m – tech me not – oh deah!” He



hiked up his shoulders, twisted his head to a pose, and shrilled his final sarcasms in the tones of a finicky old lady; but the stranger stuck resolutely to his reading, whereupon the black barkeeper went sullen and took a drink by himself.

Like many a good mixer, Mr. Brady of the Hotel Bender was often too good a patron of his own bar, and at such times he developed a mean streak, with symptoms of homicidal mania, which so far had kept the town marshal guessing. Under these circumstances, and with the rumor of a killing at Fort Worth to his credit, Black Tex was accustomed to being humored in his moods, and it went hard with him to be called down in the middle of a spectacular play, and by a rank stranger, at that. The chairwarmers of the Hotel Bender bar therefore discreetly ignored the unexpected rebuke of their chief and proceeded noisily with their games, but the old man who had paid for the drinks was no such time-server. After tucking what was left of his money back into his worn overalls he balanced against the bar railing for a while and then steered straight for the dark corner.

“Young feller,” he said, leaning heavily upon the table where the stranger was reading, “I’m old Bill Johnson, of Hell’s Hip Pocket, and I wan’er shake hands with you!”

The young man looked up quickly and the card players stopped as suddenly in their play, for Old Man Johnson was a fighter in his cups. But at last the stranger showed signs of friendliness. As the old man finished speaking he rose with the decorum of the drawing-room and extended his white hand cordially.

“I’m very glad to meet you, Mr. Johnson,” he said. “Won’t you sit down?”

“No,” protested the old man, “I do’ wanner sit down – I wanner ask you a question.” He reeled, and balanced himself against a chair. “I wanner ask you,” he continued, with drunken gravity, “on the squar’, now,

did you ever drink?”

“Why, yes, Uncle,” replied the younger man, smiling at the question, “I used to take a friendly glass, once in a while – but I don’t drink now.” He added the last with a finality not to be mistaken, but Mr. Johnson of Hell’s Hip Pocket was not there to urge him on.

“No, no,” he protested. “You’re mistaken, Mister – er – Mister –”

“Hardy,” put in the little man.

“Ah yes – Hardy, eh?” And a dam’ good name, too. I served under a captain by that name at old Fort Grant, thirty years ago. Waal, Hardy, I like y’r face – you look honest – but I wanner ask you ‘nuther question – why don’t you drink now, then?”

Hardy laughed indulgently, and his eyes lighted up with good humor, as if entertaining drunken men with his ordinary diversion.

“Well, I’ll tell you, Mr. Johnson,” he said. “If I should drink whiskey the way you folks down here do, I’d get drunk.”

“W’y sure,” admitted Old Man Johnson, sinking shamelessly into a chair. “I’m drunk now. But what’s the difference?”

Noting the black glances of the barkeeper, Hardy sat down beside him and pitched the conversation in a lower key.

“It may be all right for you, Mr. Johnson,” he continued confidentially, “and of course that’s none of my business; but if I should get drunk in this town, I’d either get into a fight and get licked, or I’d wake up the next morning broke, and nothing to show for it but a sore head.”

“That’s me!” exclaimed Old Man Johnson, slamming his battered hat on the table, “that’s me, Boy, down to the ground! I came down hyar to buy grub f’r my ranch up in Hell’s Hip Pocket, but look at me now, drunk as a sheep-herder, and only six dollars to my name.” He shook his shaggy head and fell to muttering gloomily, while



Hardy reverted peacefully to his magazine.

After a long pause the old man raised his face from his arms and regarded the young man searchingly.

“Say,” he said, “you never told me why you refused to drink with me a while ago.”

“Well, I’ll tell you,” answered Hardy, honestly, “and I’m sure you’ll understand how it is with me. I never expect to take another drink as long as I live in this country – not unless I get snake-bit. One drink of this Arizona whiskey will make me foolish, and two will make me drunk, I’m that light-headed. Now, if I had taken a drink with you a minute ago I’d be considered a cheap sport if I didn’t treat back, wouldn’t I? And then I’d be drunk. Yes, that’s a fact. So I have to cut it out altogether. I like you just as well, you understand, and all these other gentlemen, but I just naturally can’t do it.”

“Oh, hell,” protested the old man, “that’s all right. Don’t apologize, Boy, whatever you do. D’yer know what I came over hyar fer?” he asked suddenly reaching out a crabbed hand. “Well, I’ll tell ye. I’ve be’n lookin’ f’r years f’r a white man that I c’d swear off to. Not one of these pink-gilled preachers but a man that would shake hands with me on the squar’ and hold me to it. Now, Boy, I like you – will you shake hands on that?”

“Sure,” responded the young man soberly. “But I tell you, Uncle,” he added deprecatingly, “I just came into town to-day and I’m likely to go out again to-morrow. Don’t you think you could kind of look after yourself while I’m gone? I’ve seen a lot of this swearing-off business already, and it don’t seem to amount to much anyhow unless the fellow that swears off is willing to do all the hard work himself.”

There was still a suggestion of banter in his words, but the old man was too serious to notice it.

“Never mind, boy,” he said solemnly, “I can do all the work, but I jist had to have an honest man to swear off to.”

He rose heavily to his feet, adjusted his copper-riveted hat laboriously, and drifted slowly out the door.

And with another spender gone the Hotel Bender lapsed into a sleepy quietude. The rain hammered fitfully on the roof; the card players droned out their bids and bets; and Black Tex, mechanically polishing his bar, alternated successive jolts of whiskey with ill-favored glances into the retired corner where Mr. Hardy, supposedly of the W. P. S. Q. T., was studiously perusing a straw-colored Eastern magazine. Then, as if to lighten the gloom, the sun flashed out suddenly, and before the shadow of the scudding clouds had dimmed its glory a shrill whistle from down the track announced the belated approach of the west-bound train. Immediately the chairs began to scrape; the stud-poker players cut for the stakes and quit; coon-can was called off, and by the time Number Nine slowed down for the station the entire floating population of Bender was lined up to see her come in.

Rising head and shoulders above the crowd and well in front stood Jefferson Creede, the foreman of the Dos S; and as a portly gentleman in an unseasonable linen duster dropped off the Pullman he advanced, waving his hand largely.

“Hullo, Judge!” he exclaimed, grinning jovially. “I was afraid you’d bogged down into a washout somewhere!”

“Not at all, Jeff, not at all,” responded the old gentleman, shaking hands warmly. “Say, this is great, isn’t it?” He turned his genial smile upon the clouds and the flooded streets for a moment and then hurried over toward the hotel.

“Well, how are things going up on the range?” he inquired, plunging headlong into business and talking without a stop. “Nicely, nicely, I don’t doubt. I tell you, Mr. Creede, that ranch has marvellous possibilities – marvellous! All it needs is a little patience, a little diplomacy, you understand – *and holding on*, until we can pass this forestry legislation. Yes, sir, while the present situation may seem a little strained – and I don’t doubt you are having a hard time – at the same time, if we can only get along with these sheepmen – appeal to



their better nature, you understand – until we get some protection at law, I am convinced that we can succeed yet. I want to have a long talk with you on this subject, Jeff – man to man, you understand, and between friends – but I hope you will reconsider your resolution to resign, because that would just about finish us off. It is n't a matter of money, is it, Jefferson? For while, of course, we are not making a fortune—

He paused and glanced up at his foreman's face, which was growing more sullen every minute with restrained impatience.

"Well, speak out, Jeff," he said resignedly. "What is it?"

"You know dam' well what it is," burst out the tall cowboy petulantly. "It's them sheepmen. And I want to tell you right now that no money can hire me to run that ranch another year, not if I've got to smile and be nice to those son of – well, you know what kind of sons I mean—that dog-faced Jasper Swope, for instance."

He spat vehemently at the mention of the name and led the way to a card room in the rear of the barroom.

"Of course I'll work your cattle for you," he conceded, as he entered the booth, "but if you want them sheepmen handled diplomatically you'd better send up a diplomat. I'm that wore out I can't talk to 'em except over the top of a six-shooter."

The deprecating protestations of the judge were drowned by the scuffle of feet as the hangers-on and guests of the hotel tramped in, and in the round of drinks that followed his presence was half forgotten. Not being a drinking man himself, and therefore not given to the generous practice of treating, the arrival of Judge Ware, lately retired from the bench and now absentee owner of the Dos S Ranch, did not create much of a furore in Bender. All Black Tex and the bunch knew was that he was holding a conference with Jefferson Creede, and that if Jeff was pleased with the outcome of the interview he would treat, but if not he would probably retire to the corral and watch his horse

eat hay, openly declaring that Bender was the most God-forsaken hell-hole north of the Mexican line—for Creede was a man of moods.

In the lull which followed the first treat, the ingratiating drummer who had set up the drinks, charging the same to his expense account, leaned against the bar and attempted to engage the barkeeper in conversation, asking leading questions about business in general and Mr. Einstein of the New York Store in particular; but Black Tex, in spite of his position, was uncommunicative. Immediately after the arrival of the train the little man who had called him down had returned to the barroom and immersed himself in those wearisome magazines which a lunger had left about the place, and, far from being impressed with his sinister expression, had ignored his unfriendly glances entirely. More than that, he had deserted his dark corner and seated himself on a bench by the window from which he now looked out upon the storm with a brooding preoccupation as sincere as it was maddening. His large deer eyes were fixed upon the distance, and his manner was that of a man who studies deeply upon some abstruse problem; of a man with a past, perhaps, such as often came to those parts, crossed in love, or hiding out from his folks.

Black Tex dismissed the drummer with an impatient gesture and was pondering solemnly upon his grievances when a big, square-jowled cat rushed out from behind the bar and set up a hoarse, raucous mewling.

"Ah, shet up!" growled Brady, throwing him away with his foot; but as the cat's demands became more and more insistent the barkeeper was at last constrained to take some notice.

"What's bitin' you?" he demanded, peering into the semi-darkness behind the bar; and as the cat, thus encouraged, plunged recklessly in among a lot of empty bottles, he promptly threw him out and fished up a mouse trap, from the cage of which a slender tail was wriggling frantically.





“Aha!” he exclaimed, advancing triumphantly into the middle of the floor. “Look, boys, here’s where we have some fun with Tom!” And as the card players turned down their hands to watch the sport, the old cat, scenting his prey, rose up on his hind legs and clutched at the cage, yelling.

Grabbing him roughly by the scruff of the neck Black Tex suddenly threw him away and opened the trap, but the frightened mouse, unaware of his opportunity, remained huddled up in the corner.

“Come out of that,” grunted the barkeeper, shaking the cage while with his free hand he grappled the cat, and before he could let go his hold the mouse was halfway across the room, heading for the bench where Hardy sat.

“Ketch ‘im!” roared Brady, hurling the eager cat after it, and just as the mouse was darting down a hole Tom pinned it to the floor with his claws.

“What’d I tell ye?” cried the barkeeper, swaggering. “That cat will ketch ‘em every time. Look at that now, will you?”

With dainty paws arched playfully, the cat pitched the mouse into the air and sprang upon it like lightning as it darted away. Then mumbling it with a nicely calculated bite, he bore it to the middle of the floor and laid it out, uninjured.

“Ain’t he hell, though?” inquired Tex, rolling his eyes upon the spectators. The cat reached out cautiously and stirred it up with his paw; and once more, as his victim dashed for its hole, he caught it in full flight. But now the little mouse, its hair all wet and rumped, crouched dumbly between the feet of its captor and would not run. Again and again the cat stirred it up, sniffing suspiciously to make sure it was not dead; then in a last effort to tempt it he deliberately lay over on his back and rolled, purring and closing his eyes luxuriously, until, despite its hurts, the mouse once more took to flight. Apparently unheeding, the cat lay inert, following

its wobbly course with half-shut eyes—then, lithe as a panther, he leaped up and took after it. There was a rush and a scramble against the wall, but just as he struck out his barbed claw a hand closed over the mouse and the little man on the bench whisked it dexterously away.

Instantly the black cat leaped into the air, clamoring for his prey, and with a roar like a mountain bull Black Tex rushed out to intercede.

“Put down that mouse, you freak!” he bellowed, charging across the room. “Put ‘im down, I say, or I’ll break you in two!” He launched his heavy fist as he spoke, but the little man ducked it neatly and, stepping behind a table, stood at bay, still holding the mouse.

“Put ‘im *down*, I tell you!” shouted the barkeeper panting with vexation. “What – you won’t, eh? Well, I’ll learn you!” And with a wicked oath he drew his revolver and levelled it across the table.

“Put–down–that–mouse!” he said slowly and distinctly, but Hardy only shook his head. Every man in the room held his breath for the report; the poker players behind fell over tables and chairs to get out of range; and still they stood there, the barkeeper purple, the little man very pale, glaring at one another along the top of the barrel. In the hollow of his hand Hardy held the mouse, which tottered drunkenly; while the cat, still clamoring for his prize, raced about under the table, bewildered.

“Hurry up, now,” said the barkeeper warningly, “I’ll give you five. One—come on, now—two—”

At the first count the old defiance leaped back into Hardy’s eyes and he held the mouse to his bosom as a mother might shield her child; at the second he glanced down at it, a poor crushed thing trembling as with an ague from its wounds; then, smoothing it gently with his hand, he pinched its life out suddenly and dropped it on the floor.

Instantly the cat pounced upon it, nosing the body eagerly, and Black Tex burst into a storm of oaths.

“Well, dam’ your heart,” he yelled, raising his pistol



in the air as if about to throw the muzzle against his breast and fire. “What—in—hell—do you mean?”

Baffled and evaded in every play the evil-eyed barkeeper suddenly sensed a conspiracy to show him up, and instantly the realization of his humiliation made him dangerous.

“Perhaps you figure on makin’ a monkey out of me!” he suggested, hissing snakelike through his teeth; but Hardy made no answer whatever.

“Well, *say* something, can’t you?” snapped the badman, his overwrought nerves jangled by the delay. “What d ‘ye mean by interferin’ with my cat?”

For a minute the stranger regarded him intently, his sad, far-seeing eyes absolutely devoid of evil intent, yet baffling in their inscrutable reserve—then he closed his lips again resolutely, as if denying expression to some secret

that lay close to his heart, turning it with undue vehemence to the cause of those who suffer and cannot escape.

“Well, f’r Gawd’s sake,” exclaimed Black Tex at last, lowering his gun in a pet, “don’t I git *no* satisfaction—what’s your *i-dee*?”

“There’s too much of this cat-and-mouse business going on,” answered the little man quietly, “and I don’t like it.”

“Oh, you don’t, eh?” echoed the barkeeper sarcastically; “well, excuse *me*! I didn’t know that.” And with a bow of exaggerated politeness he retired to his place.

“The drinks are on the house,” he announced, jauntily strewing the glasses along the bar. “Won’t drink, eh? All right. But lemme tell you, pardner,” he added, wagging his head impressively, “you’re goin’ to git hurt some day.”





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THE COOK HOUSE

Cow Country Cooking

Red Wine Chili



By Kathy McCraine

I am a ranch girl with three passions: ranching, writing and cooking. Ranching came first. I grew up on a small ranch in Walnut Grove, Arizona, and my only desire was to be a cowgirl. By the age of 9, though, I was publishing my own hand-written and illustrated newspaper, circulation: 2 (my grandparents in Texas).

My mother gave up early on ever teaching me to cook, as I was good at slipping out of the house and escaping on my horse whenever domestic chores threatened. Only after I married my husband, Swayze, did I begin the difficult and often disastrous task of learning to cook on my own – after Swayze put his foot down about being served a cheese crisp for dinner that first week (“What! A meal without MEAT?”). Besides, I liked to eat too, and after moving to the ranch he managed outside of San Antonio, the harsh reality set in. There wasn’t a good restaurant for miles.

Over the years I edited and wrote for numerous horse and cattle publications, collaborated on a number of books, and taught myself to cook. Today, Swayze and I own and operate Campwood Cattle Company, running commercial cattle and registered Quarter Horses on about 70,000 acres in northern Arizona.

For years I dreamed of publishing a ranch cookbook, so as I wrote freelance stories, I also collected recipes and funny cowboy stories everywhere I traveled. It all clicked into place when two years ago my friend, noted Texas artist Mark Kohler, offered to collaborate on the project with his beautiful Western watercolors. The book, *Cow Country Cooking: Recipes and Tales from Northern Arizona’s Historic Ranches*, has been a great success, and that led to the opportunity for me to write this column.

My goal here is to take you into the kitchens of ranch cooks, men and women I’ve met at ranch houses, cow camps and wagons all over the West. We’ll share their personal recipes, many handed down for generations, and get a glimpse into their lives on the ranches where they work. Many of the women, like myself, do double duty, riding and working cattle alongside their husbands all day, then cooking up a hearty meal for the crew at night.



This time around, I want to share one of my own recipes from *Cow Country Cooking*, one of the first dishes I learned to cook many years ago. I have adapted it over the years from the first cookbook I ever bought, *The Cattleman's Steak Book* by Carol Truax and S. Omar Barker, published in the 1970s.

It's a somewhat unorthodox chili recipe, and yes, I know, the Texans out there will be offended by the inclusion of beans; Mark Kohler is even more aghast at my use of *red* kidney beans. The red wine in it is really off the wall (I love wine in everything!), but, believe me, it's good. And it's got lots of beef. Even Swayze approves.



Red Wine Chili

2 large onions, sliced
6 tablespoons oil
3 pounds ground beef (preferably 15 percent fat)
2 bell peppers, chopped
6 cloves garlic, minced
1 28-ounce can tomatoes, chopped
3 teaspoons salt, or to taste
6 whole cloves
2 bay leaves
2 4-ounce cans chopped green chiles
6 tablespoons chili powder, or to taste
Chopped jalapeños to taste

1 15-ounce can red kidney beans, drained
2 15-ounce cans pinto beans, drained
1 cup dry red wine
1 small bunch cilantro, chopped

Brown the onion in oil. Add the beef, bell pepper and garlic. Brown, stirring as the meat cooks. Drain off the grease. Add the tomatoes, wine, salt, cloves, bay leaves, chiles, jalapeños and chili powder. Cover and simmer at least 2 hours. Add the beans and simmer until heated through. Add fresh chopped cilantro right before serving.

Kathy McCraine's book, *Cow Country Cooking: Recipes and Tales from Northern Arizona's Historic Ranches*, is available at www.kathymccraine.com.



The Storyteller

Texas artist Mark Kohler tells a story in every painting.



By Kathy McCraine

Mark Kohler is used to uncomfortable situations. Like the September day three years ago when he visited the O RO Ranch north of Prescott, Arizona, to photograph cowboys for his paintings. The wagon on this historic, 257,000-acre outfit was camped close to headquarters, so around noon the crew filed into the bunkhouse for lunch. Each man filled his plate and grabbed a chair on the sprawling screened-in porch.

Beyond a polite acknowledgment of the guest, hardly a word was spoken, each cowboy intent on polishing off a plate of chile verde and tortillas. Toward the end of the meal, Mark handed them copies of his art book, *Mark Kohler: Working Cowboys*. As they thumbed through watercolor paintings of fellow cowboys, the tension seemed to lift almost imperceptibly. Mark had taken the first step toward acceptance. Eight months later when he returned to photograph them branding, everyone was comfortable.

“That’s typical of these big outfits,” Mark says. “They’re naturally hesitant because they don’t know you or what your gig is. I never push, just try to open the door real soft and let the book do the work. Then next time they realize you’re authentic.”

Mark readily admits that he is no cowboy, but his passion for portraying the modern cowboy and telling their story shines through in every piece. You won’t find a lot of wild thundering wrecks in his art. Instead his paintings frequently capture the cowboy’s quiet reflective side.

Mark now posts a little story next to each painting, giving the viewer insight into the personality of the cowboy and even sometimes the horse pictured. The little sidebar evolved because so many people at art shows would look at his work and ask,

“Who is this guy? What’s the story here?” Then he would end up repeatedly explaining every painting to every potential customer.



Artist Mark Kohler documents the independent spirit and pride of the modern cowboy through his watercolor paintings.



This painting, titled “Heel Trap,” captures Babbitt Ranches cowboy Clay Rodgers dragging calves. It was used on the cover of the cookbook on which Mark collaborated, *Cow Country Cooking: Recipes and Tales from Northern Arizona’s Historic Ranches*.

“I’ve always been a documenter and story teller,” Mark says. “Sometimes it’s a challenge to figure out a guy’s story, because he may be aloof and keep you at arm’s distance, but everybody has a story to tell, and that’s what makes him interesting.”

A big man with a salt and pepper goatee and trademark flat-brimmed hat, Mark was born in Austin, Texas in 1963. He picked up his meticulous style early on from his grandfather, William “Duke” Beasley, who painted, and also made fiddles and grandfather clocks. Mark was an artist from day one, and a “terrible student,” he admits, because he spent his time drawing

in class instead of paying attention. During high school he had the opportunity to study under the now famous Southwestern artist Amado Peña, who started him thinking seriously about art as a career.

During college and after graduating from Southwestern State Teachers College in San Marcos, Mark worked at a graphic-design studio, where he specialized in illustration. “I never enjoyed it,” he says. “You’re just a hired pencil. Then the Mac (computer) came in, and I could see how the business was changing. I didn’t want to sit in front of a box all day.” Burned out on art, he quit and took a side road selling insurance for a few years.

He had married Pam, a fellow artist at the studio, in 1986, and they were living in Houston, where he donned a coat and tie every morning to be an insurance salesman. The cowboy world seemed very far away, but then he met a cowboy named Maurice Chambers, a guy he describes as “larger than life.” He became fascinated



In “Fresh Shirt and a Fast Horse,” Mark painted one of his favorite subjects, Shawn Goemmer, now of Battle Mountain, Nevada. About Shawn he wrote, “Shawn is direct and plainspoken and pulls no punches – not with townies, colts, cowhands, cow bosses or cow dogs, not to mention the hard country Nevada and Arizona offer him. He carries himself with buckets full of confidence, and I’ve come to realize that this confidence comes from the comfort he finds from following his true passion.”

with painting him, and one day he told Pam, “I just want to paint cowboys.” They agreed that if he was able to sell a painting for \$1,000, he would quit his job and take the plunge. It happened much faster than they anticipated. In 1995 Mark became a full-time fine artist.

It was a struggle in the beginning. Fortunately Pam kept her job and kept them afloat until Mark was able to make a living out of his art. Now she handles the marketing end of the operation. It was also frustrating at first to find the right subjects for the paintings he wanted to paint. Everyone seemed to be depicting scenes on classic outfits like the Pitchfork and the Four Sixes, and many other Texas ranches were being split up and run by corporations, so Mark began to look west for ranches that still hung on to the old ways.

Exhibiting at a trade show during the NFR in Las Vegas, Mark spotted Arizona rancher Shawn Goemmer visiting at the booth next door. Shawn was just out of the hospital after a bad horse wreck and was on crutches, but he looked to be all cowboy. In his characteristic outgoing manner, Mark boldly walked up and introduced himself. Before the conversation was over, he had asked if he could come take pictures when they were branding.

Shawn said, “Sure,” then never gave it another thought. “Next thing I knew, Mark showed up at my door,” he now says.

As Mark gained Shawn’s respect for his work, the two became friends. Mark credits Shawn and his wife Mindy with opening many doors for him and giving him the credibility to earn invitations to many big ranches in the West.

“He’s a stickler for detail, and that’s what we like about him,” Shawn says. “He paints it like it is.” Other cowboys have expressed the same sentiment. They’ll thumb through his book and see someone they know, and a big grin will break out. It’s his talent for drawing



Cisco Scott of the O RO Ranch, Prescott, Arizona, epitomizes the silent aloof type Mark finds fascinating to paint. "I understand that these people value their chosen lifestyle," he says, "so I do my best to maintain a low profile and respect their wishes, while at the same time experiencing and sharing a fantastic story with my collectors."



and penchant for accuracy that have earned him the admiration of cowhands and art collectors alike.

Today he can say he has been invited to big outfits like the Pitchfork, the King Ranch and the O RO Ranch, where the old cowboy ways are still very much alive. His work is in several top galleries, and he's shown his work at many of the top art shows in the nation, including the prestigious Coors Western Art Exhibit in Denver, the Charles M. Russell Art Auction in Montana, and the National Western Art Foundation in San Antonio.

Always looking for new ways to promote his work, Mark recently collaborated with Kathy McCraine on



Mark visits with Cisco Scott, longtime cowboy at the O RO Ranch north of Prescott, Arizona. Cisco has a reputation as a top hand who doesn't have much to say to outsiders and could care less about being photographed or painted. Mark was grateful for the opportunity to strike up a short conversation with him at the headquarters corrals.

the cookbook, *Cow Country Cooking: Recipes and Tales from Northern Arizona's Historic Ranches*. His paintings from some of Arizona's biggest outfits turned the book into a one-of-a-kind coffee table book that has been highly successful.

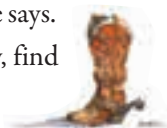


Even when they're camped near headquarters, the O RO wagon crew uses the handheld rope corral to rope their mounts for the day. Mark is careful to stay out of the way when photographing such work.

Mark works out of his studio in Yorktown, Texas, and spends about two months of the year traveling to remote ranches in the Texas panhandle, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Montana, and northern California to photograph and get to know the cowboys who will become his subject matter. Collectors love the glimpse he gives them into what many perceive as a vanishing way of life.

Mark worries sometimes what the future will bring for cowboys as the big outfits are taken over by corporations. "What will be left of ranching in 15 years that will be interesting to paint?" he muses. "It's changed so much just in the time I've been painting it. When I started, there wasn't a black cow to be found. It was all crossbred cattle, and now with everybody running black cattle, it presents new challenges. Black cows don't paint so good. Everything changes."

For now though, he'll continue to document the independent spirit and pride of the modern cowboy, happy to have found acceptance and approval from this discriminating breed. "I just play it cool," he says. "I keep my mouth shut, stay out of the way, find a corner, and use a long camera lens."



Kathy McCraine lives and writes in Arizona. You can see more of Mark Kohler's work at www.markkohlerstudio.com.

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Lummis, Borein and *The Land of Sunshine*

By Bill Reynolds

In 1894, while working as a *vaquero* on Santa Barbara's Rancho Jesus Maria, a young Ed Borein (1872 – 1945) was persuaded into sending some of his sketches to Charles F. Lummis (1859 – 1928). Lummis was the Southwest's renaissance man, helping to keep the region's romantic Spanish influence alive through a variety of creative efforts. One was publishing a little magazine that celebrated California and the West, called *The Land Of Sunshine*. No one was more surprised than Borein when he received \$15.00 for the drawings. Lummis would later write regarding these first drawings, "Way back in '94 a bashful vaquero up on the 45,000 acre Jesus Maria Ranch, began sending my magazine

pen drawings of cowpunchers and cattle. They had the mystery of a pie plate looked squarely in the face, but there was something about them. I suggested to this young man that he soak these animals, split them from one another and let in some air between; and it would be better to have the distant ones not much larger than the ones in front. He was an obliging lad and let me have my way. But what warmed me to him was that he had a conscience. Expect that in a cowboy, but in an artist?"

Lummis followed through and used a number Borein's drawings in his magazine and the two would go on to be close friends.

An equally unique individual is Flora Haines Loughead who wrote the story that carried Borein's first drawings. Loughead (1855-1943) was a woman ahead of her time. She was a journalist, married three times, had five children by two husbands, worked her own mining claims, farmed thirty-five acres, wrote many articles, short stories and more than a dozen books. Today, she is probably best remembered



images courtesy William Reynolds Collection

Charles F. Lummis



as the “Mother of Lockheed Corporation.”

Her first marriage to architect Charles E. Aponnyi ended in divorce after years of physical abuse. The marriage yielded three children, May Hope, Victor Rudolph and John Haines, who died as an infant. In 1886 she married John Loughead (pronounced Lockheed), who adopted the children. Loughead was of Scots-Irish descent, the name indicating that his family lived at the head of a lake. John and Flora had two sons, Malcolm and Allan. Her third husband was David A. Gutierrez, of whom little is known.

In 1902, Flora moved the children, without her husband, to a thirty-five-acre ranch near Alma, California where she raised grapes, prunes and other fruits.

At the turn of the century, making a living on a ranch of this size was difficult, so she began writing feature articles for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Sunset* magazine – an opportunity that led her to meeting Charles Lummis and Edward Borein. She also embarked on a successful book-writing career, writing both fiction and nonfiction. Her novels included *The Man Who Was Guilty*, *The Black Curtain*, and *The Abandoned Claim* – the last one a children’s book featuring a girl heroine named “Hope” after her daughter. She had a scientific as well as a domestic bent, writing *The Natural Sciences* and *Quick Cooking*, the latter dedicated to “busy housewives.”

In 1912, her sons Allan and Malcolm Loughead founded the Alco Hydro-Aeroplane Company. This company was renamed the Loughead Aircraft Manufacturing Company and located in Santa Barbara, California. In 1926, following the failure of Loughead, Allan Loughead formed the Lockheed Aircraft Company (the spelling was changed to match its phonetic pronunciation) in Hollywood, California. In 1929 Lockheed sold out to Detroit Aircraft Corporation. In her eighties and living alone, Flora returned to mining and prospected for opals in mines near the Nevada-California border until her death in 1943.

The story she wrote for *The Land of Sunshine* in the August, 1896 edition was titled simply, *The Old California Vaquero* and is a charming explanation of the ways and lore of these “curious” yet highly skilled horsemen.



Edward Borein



Flora Haines Loughead

The Old California Vaquero

By Flora Haines Loughead

C lad in short jacket and slashed trousers of velvet, glittering with buttons of silver or gold, broided waistcoat, gay silken sash, steeple-crowned hat, soft leather *botas* embroidered in fancy patterns; with great silver spurs, a silver-mounted bridle, a Spanish bit (framed in silver) fretting the mouth of his untamed steed, silver-mounted saddle of leather wrought by hand with many a fantastic and beautiful device, on which he sat as never sat king upon his throne – the California vaquero of the olden time was a sight to rejoice the eye on fiesta days.

Yet those who saw him at his best beheld him when he had discarded his festival trappings, and in more sober but no less characteristic garb, demonstrated his superb horsemanship, his wonderful agility, his splendid courage and endurance at the *rodeo*. In those times great bands of wild cattle, thousands upon thousands, roamed the valleys, and twice a year vaqueros went out to round up the stock, brand the young calves, and perchance “cut out” a certain number of steers for slaughter. The world has never witnessed horsemanship surpassing that of the California vaquero. The cowboys of Arizona and New Mexico today perhaps equal him in hardihood and skill; but only one trained to sit a horse from infancy can ride

with the unconscious grace, the matchless ease, of the Spanish-American. Flying like the whirlwind over the valleys, racing up and down the steep hillsides, plunging down crumbling barrancas, tearing through chaparral, wherever the maddened cattle sought to escape, there followed the vaquero. There was reason for the *armas* or apron of leather or hide; there was reason for the *chaparreas* or legging of hide, reaching from ankle to waist, never-falling adjuncts to his working costume. No cloth ever woven in a loom could withstand the raking thorns of chaparral, in these wildest of cross-country rides.

When the scattered herd was finally brought together (“bunched,” in the frontier parlance) the serious work of the *rodeo* began. Like flying serpents the long reatas whirled through the air, settling, with unerring precision, upon their appointed victims. The terrified animal would make one fierce spring for freedom, the coil would tighten, horse and rider moving with one impulse in opposite directions; the sturdy little broncos brace themselves for the strain, the reatas pull taught, and the ensnared animal falls.

The impression has gone abroad that the California vaquero was a man set apart for this especial work. In fact, every gentleman was presumed to be able to act as





vaquero. It is of course true that every wealthy old Don, in the days before the Gringo came, had upon his estate men who were more capable than their fellows in this particular vocation. But the company which set out was largely made up of volunteers, and these volunteers came from the most aristocratic families. Gay young cavaliers of the day, men who were counted well educated and accomplished, by the acquirements and opportunities of the time, were only too eager to put their physical prowess and equestrian skill to the proof on such occasions. The California vaquero was no stupid, dull-witted, uneducated peon, who worked under orders or for hire, but a daring, ambitious fellow, who no doubt welcomed this rebound from an aimless though delightful social life.

In work of this nature, where so much depends upon instant and certain action, a rider's equipment becomes of paramount importance. Hence it was that the vaquero's bridle and saddle, although fashioned with the rude facilities of the day, serve still as models for the control of a spirited horse, and to insure the ease and safety of a rider. The so-called Spanish bit, in universal use by the Spanish-Californian, and which has so often been denounced for its cruelty, has in reality often saved the lives of rider and horse, and no native pony, bred to its use, is happy without it. Like all good things, its use may be abused, but employed as a severe check only in case of genuine emergency, and for the most part left to rest loosely in the animal's mouth, the latter receiving its direction by the touch of the reins on the neck, it is no more uncomfortable than a heavy curved bar of steel sawing the mouth. Indeed, the ingenious artificer strung large metallic beads along the frame, and it was the olden custom to place in the hollow space in the center a small lump of salt, so that the untrained colt would learn to rub his tongue against the bit and roll the little copper rings in his effort to reach the delicate saline



morsel. The habit, once formed, is persistent, and the bronco's pretty custom of tossing his head and apparently champing at the bit when standing, is merely an evidence of the power of habit. The vaquero saddle is of necessity ponderous, to withstand the strain that comes upon the reata, wound around the horn, when it tightens upon the struggling steer. But they were not capable of pure utilitarianism in any direction, those light-hearted, beauty-loving old Californians! Hence it is that the old saddles were frequently masterpieces of ornamentation, exquisite devices being wrought by hand upon the leather, the horn being fashioned into fantastic and artistic shapes, while gold or silver mounters frequently contributed to the outward splendor. In one well verified instance an old Don actually had his saddle-tree constructed of gold. The magnificence of these old saddles did not always strictly comport with the estate of their owners. I think it is Ross Browne, the most charming narrator among all California's host of early writers, who alludes to the richly attired horsemen, with spirited steed, and rich trappings, who often had not the price of a single meal in his pocket.¹ Work of this sort is not calculated to

¹ Why should he? Meals did not need to be bought, in that patriarchal time.

develop a considerate spirit in man toward the beast. Ten-year-old boys found amusement in stationing themselves outside of corrals as the wild cattle rushed out, escaping from unused restraint, when by a dexterous movement they grasped fleeing steers by the tail, and spurring their horses forward flung the cattle literally tail over head. To perform this feat adroitly, successfully, was the height of a lad's ambition. Every other consideration was sacrificed to the one accomplishment of skillful horsemanship.

With the intrusion of civilization and the growth of villages and cities, the old-time vaquero is passing away. When the Americans, who now have possession of all the land, give their great flower festivals in our Southern California towns, they usually introduce upon their program a field day of athletic sports, and one of their widely advertised features is in true circus style:

“Breaking and riding of broncos which have never known bridle or saddle. Lassoing and throwing of wild cattle! By the celebrated old-time vaqueros Romero, Vasquez, Dominguez, Garcia” – and the like.

A half dozen sad-looking elderly men ride into the arena. Two or three of the number are clad in quaint costumes, a trifle moth-eaten, it may be, and with tarnished buttons, taken from old inlaid chests, where a few relics of the past have been preserved, in spite of woe and want and the bribes of the curio seekers; but they ride, for the most part, in every day costumes, much the worse for age and wear. The stamped leathers of their saddles are dark with age, and their mounts, well

trained although they be, have the same meager, out-of-date look as their masters. An untamed colt, from one



of the mountain ranchos, bursts into the ring, terrified at the sight of the circle of staring faces and the shouts that greets him. There are a few graceful turns around the cramped arena, reatas flash through the air, and the frightened beast is snared and thrown. He is saddled and bridled. An old man springs upon his back and keeps his seat as the animal plunges madly about the arena, bucking with every leap; spurs and lash are freely applied, and after a few brisk rounds the rebellious spirit is curbed, and the animal canters peaceably, to the

accompaniment of mild applause. Other unruly animals are driven into the ring and brought under subjection. Lastly a handful of gold pieces is tossed upon the ground. The vaqueros, riding at a slow gallop, and without any unseemly greed, lean from the saddle and pick them up. They cannot refuse the coins, nor cavil at manner of their earning, for they sorely need them; but I suspect they agree beforehand to divided them equally, and this explains the total absence of striving. Then they ride slowly from the ring, without once bestowing a single look upon the spectators. This is the tragic feature of our gay fiestas, could people but know it.

The skilled vaquero did not always confine his operations to horned cattle. One aged man, Jose Antonio Ruiz, tells an amusing tale of how he started out on the Conejos Rancho, one morning sixty years ago, and riding ahead of his companion came unexpectedly upon two grizzlies taking a matutinal



stroll. One was a monstrous fellow, and opened its huge jaws with such snarl that Ruiz concluded to let it pass unchallenged; but he cast his reata over the smaller bear and tightened the noose about the animal's neck. Here arose a dilemma. He could not dispatch the animal without leaving his horse, and thus giving the creature more or less leeway, when the chances would be about even for beast and man in a hand-to-hand tussle. So he dragged the grizzly back and forth, choking it until his companion finally came up and dispatched the big game with his knife.

Santa Barbara county possesses one pure and undegenerate survival of the old-time vaquero, in the person of Ramon Ortega, who has retreated before the encroachments of civilization, and today, in dignity and solitary independence, lives the life he loves, in the fastnesses of the San Rafael range. Ramon Ortega is the man who has lassoed no less than half a dozen grizzlies, his own approved method of dealing with this ferocious beast. He dwells in one of the wildest localities known within the State – a last stronghold of the grizzly bear, and where mountain lions and coyotes are as common as dogs in the populous valley below. The great condor builds its nests in the cliffs of the San Rafael, and you may travel for a day and a night along the trails and see no print of a white man's foot. Ramon Ortega is an old man, but big and stalwart, and the best guide in all this wild mountain region, although he has never been known to compromise his dignity by speaking a word of English. When the young Englishmen who have squatted on cattle ranges in the vicinity find their herds getting inextricably mixed,



they usually send for old Ramon, who forthwith organizes a band of expert horsemen of his own race and himself takes the field with them, never leaving until the missing cattle have been found and rounded up and parted upon their several reservations. But if he ever accepts compensation for such service, it is through some third party.

In Santa Barbara the braiding or weaving of the reata is by no means a lost art. Several old Mexicans earn a precarious living by means of this ingenious handiwork. Indeed, their annual output far exceeds the consumption of the market, in spite of the demands of aspiring young tenderfeet from beyond the Rockies, who do not consider that they are

properly equipped to ride down State street without immense *tapaderos* of stamped leather, clanking spurs and a reata coiled below their saddle horn.

These reata-makers are for the most part aged men with a look of true gentility in their grave faces, and present a pathetic sight as they stroll along the curb, courteously calling the attention of strangers to their wares. They work for the most part in the privacy of their homes, but in the bar patio of one shabby cottage on Chapala street the entire process of reata manufacture may be observed. A fat, one-legged Mexican of middle age may be seen, sometimes cutting the narrow strips from the hide in an endless ribbon, following round and round the margin in a spiral curve, until the center is reached. Then he fastens the long strands to a fence post, and deftly manipulates the bobbins on which they are wound. The reata often extends the entire length of the dooryard before the end is reached.



Rescued to Ride

Colorado horse trainers educate the public about the hidden potential of rescue horses.



By A.J. Mangum

In the past decade, the U.S. horse population has doubled, skyrocketing from an estimated 5.3 million in 1999 to more than 10 million today. The equine population explosion, combined with a weakened economy and record job losses, has created an environment in which, for many, horse ownership has gone from a blessing to a burden. As a result, the country's horse-rescue operations – facilities where unwanted horses are cared for until they can be matched with new owners – are filled to capacity, the work of finding adopters hampered by the same weakened economy that led the horses' original owners to surrender them.

A group of Colorado horse trainers, though, has started a grass-roots movement to reverse that trend and increase interest in rescue horses among potential adopters. During horsemanship demonstrations at high-profile horse expos, these horsemen and -women start rescue horses under saddle, prepare them for fresh starts with new owners, and raise awareness of the often hidden potential of such horses.

The effort began five years ago, when horse trainer Jason Patrick conducted a horsemanship clinic in Cortez, Colorado, in the state's far southwestern



photos by A.J. Mangum

Diane Panetta is the executive director of Rescued to Ride, a non-profit group working to establish a nationwide program in which qualified trainers will start rescue horses under saddle at equine events.

corner. Among the locals who brought horses for him to work was the manager of a regional horse-rescue group. She asked Patrick to work with a young mare, a horse that he recalls performed well during the clinic. Afterward, Patrick learned the rescue operation had no





Steamboat Springs, Colorado, horseman Jason Patrick and his colleagues at Whispering Willows Ranch devote many of their clinic appearances to starting rescue horses under saddle. The effort highlights the hidden potential of rescue horses and raises awareness of the challenges faced by horse-rescue groups.

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less than 20 two- and three-year-old horses that couldn't be caught and haltered, much less trimmed, vaccinated or ridden. The horses were essentially unadoptable, consuming the rescue group's precious space, feed and financial resources.

"Most of them were decent horses," Patrick recalls, "and some were really nice."

Following his experience in Cortez, Patrick learned that many other rescue groups had an abundance of young horses with the potential to make good saddle horses. All they lacked was handling.

"Ten years ago, a two- or three-year-old horse would've been adopted instantly," Patrick says. "Not now. If they don't have good breeding or training, it's tough."

Patrick, a Steamboat Springs-based horseman who starts around 150 colts each year for some of the country's top performance-horse trainers, decided to tailor some of his clinic appearances toward working with rescue horses – evaluating their potential, starting them under saddle, and highlighting for the public the opportunities rescue horses represent.



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“I figured if I was going to be out in front of people,” he says, “I could use those clinics to give these horses a proper start and some exposure.”

Patrick and his colleagues at Steamboat Springs’ Whispering Willows Ranch – Jason Burns, Diane Panetta and Scott Whinfrey – conducted the first “Rescued to Ride” demonstration in the spring of 2010, at Denver’s Rocky Mountain Horse Expo. Two rescue groups – Colorado Horse Rescue and Front Range Equine Rescue – provided nine horses for the event, during which the horses were started under saddle and ridden over the course of four days. The following week, the group of trainers started another seven rescue horses under saddle at Cortez’s Four States Ag Expo. Of the 16 rescue horses started that spring, 11 were adopted shortly after being started at the expos. The group repeated its efforts in Denver and Cortez during the 2011 expo season.

“People attach a stigma to horse rescues, thinking they don’t have animals anyone would want,” says Panetta. “I’d been volunteering at Colorado Horse Rescue [in Longmont] for four years, so it was great to see horses I knew get presented to the public in a positive light. It felt like a step toward getting horses adopted and making room for more at the rescue.” Some rescue horses, she adds, wait years for new owners.

“I had always thought of rescue horses as being on their last legs,” Patrick admits. “Years ago, that might’ve been the case. Now, though, there are so many young horses that are healthy, sound, decently built. Some even have a little bit of breeding. And there are a bunch I wouldn’t mind owning.”

There’s no typical profile for a rescue horse. They come in all ages and backgrounds. Many are grade horses, some are registered; some have had considerable training and handling, others arrive with cloudy



provenances, leaving handlers unsure as to their suitability as saddle horses. At the Rescued to Ride demonstrations, Patrick and his team assume each rescue horse is a blank slate, an unstarted animal or one in need of a fresh start.

“A rescue horse is like any other horse,” he says. “When someone brings you a horse to work with, they tell you a story. Then, you compare that story to what the horse tells you. You spend a little time having that conversation and, if you’re any good at what you do, that horse will tell you something. He’ll tell you if he’s been abused, if he’s been ridden before, and how much.”

Over the course of a horse-expo schedule, the Whispering Willows group will work to put three to four good rides on each horse, getting them comfortable under saddle, accustomed to contact with the bit, and at ease carrying a rider at a walk, trot and lope. Hopes and expectations, though, vary by horse.

“Many young horses are begging to learn something,” Patrick says, “and in a short time, you can have them loping circles. Many older horses are begging to find out you’re not going to beat them. In an hour, maybe you can touch them. It’s your job as a horseman to know where that horse needs to go today. In front of an audience, you can get caught up, thinking you have to ride a horse within an hour. None of it is a race or competition. It’s about what’s best for the horse.”

At minimum, spectators at Rescued to Ride



Colorado horsemen Scott Whinfrey (horseback) and Jason Burns participate in the Rescued to Ride demonstrations. The inaugural events took place in Denver and Cortez, Colorado, in 2010.

demonstrations leave with an increased awareness of rescue horses’ potential. At best, horses started during the demonstrations are adopted.

Diane Panetta, who began working with Patrick in 2009, has assumed the role of Rescued to Ride’s executive director, and has established a non-profit organization to take the program nationwide, qualifying trainers throughout the country to start rescue horses at expos and other major equestrian events.

“Our goal is to decrease the horse overpopulation by giving rescue horses positive recognition and showing people the value of horses that are already available,” she says. “These horses can’t do anything on their own. They have to wait on someone. If we can get them trained and get them with the right people, we can give them better lives.”



Learn more about the Rescued to Ride program at www.rescuedtoride.org. A.J. Mangum is the editor of *Ranch & Reata* and the producer of the documentary series *The Frontier Project* (www.thefrontierproject.net).



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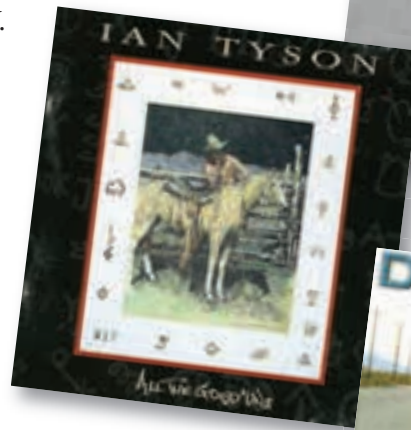
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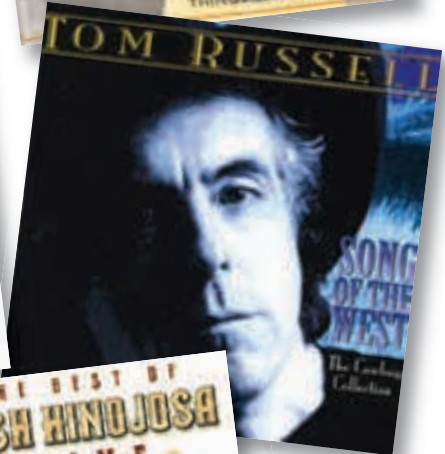
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Summer Camp at Mountain Sky Guest Ranch

Photos and Story by Mark Bedor

It's like a G-rated version of *The Big Chill*. Or another one of those feel-good movies that just make you glad to be alive.

Some might describe it as that perfect week of summer camp you'll never forget. It's Mountain Sky Guest Ranch.

There is a kind of movie-magic quality to this place. Perhaps that's why some of its guests include people from Hollywood we'd all recognize. It's a place with a feeling of life as it should be. You can sense it when you first arrive, that you've come to some kind of a special refuge.

The property is pretty close to perfect. Tucked away in a mountain valley just off Montana's gorgeous Paradise Valley, the ranch is just 30 miles north of Yellowstone National Park. Mountain Sky's 9,000 acres of private ranch land is surrounded by 1.2 million acres of pristine National Forest, all within

one of the most unspoiled areas of the American West. Moose, elk, grizzly and black bear make their home here.

Just down the road are the wild herds of buffalo that roam Yellowstone.

At the heart of the Mountain Sky is its main lodge. Inside there's the impressive stone fireplace in the Great Room, rustic dining room with ox yoke chandeliers, and a long inviting porch out front. Luxury cabins are nestled in the surrounding wooded hillsides. And it's all centered around the near-by horse corrals and barn.

The place is beautiful. But what makes it come alive are the people who work here. "I always joke and say without the staff, it's just a piece of real estate," laughs

General Manager Yancey Arterburn. "That's what makes the difference."





There's no bright line between staff and guests here. In fact the only time staffers wear official Ranch shirts is on check-in day, so guests will know who actually works here. The rest of the time, whether it's dance night, yoga, the talent show, or splash ball, staffers are joining in the fun, and making sure the guests are having a good time.

"The people that run it are so down to earth... and they just make it completely worth working here," Brooke Draves told me, as she lead a morning hike. "They're all so friendly... we're all really close... like a big family."

Owner Arthur Blank, who owns the Atlanta

Falcons after co-founding Home Depot, sets the tone. "You saw it last night at the dance," he smiled. "I mean 50-percent of the people dancing were staff!"

"We encourage it," he continued. "And the guests really like that. They like to talk to the wranglers... a lot of our staff come from this area... raised as a cowboy... cowgirl... people find that stuff really interesting."

The staffers are bright and impressive. Two of the wranglers working here for the summer were students at Cornell. . But Yancey says that's not what gets them hired. "We hire great personalities. That's who guests want to see," he says.



“We use the word ‘caring’ a lot,” he confided. “You gotta really care. You gotta believe. You gotta be concerned about people’s experience to really push it over the edge.”

Another key ingredient that gives this place such a sense of life are the children who come here. This is a kid’s paradise. First, it’s completely safe. And under the supervision of a terrific children’s program, the kids just have a ball. “The parents come here and have like, great concerns... ‘Oh my kids... what’s gonna happen with my kids!’, shares Arthur Blank. “I tell ‘em after the first day, your child’s not gonna want to see you! That’s the kind of good time they’re gonna have!”

What do the kids do? There are lots of activities to choose from, but it’s pretty much up to them. “Today we went and attacked housekeepers with water guns...

this huge battle,” smiled Amy Gradland, a graduate student who runs the children’s program. “It was pretty funny.”

The ranch is set up to take care of children of all ages, from babies to teens. Which means Mom and Dad can have a vacation too. Billy and Lindsay have been coming here with their four children for ten years. “It’s like, ‘When is kid’s program?! When is kid’s program!’, Lindsay says of her brood.. “So it’s just so liberating. Even when I came with an infant they gave me somebody dedicated for the baby... so I could relax.”

“The first day we leave my kids wanna know how many days it is until they can come back,” says Billy. “And that’s what you want... When they grow up, this is what they’ll remember.”

The kids themselves are great fun to have at the



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Ranch. One afternoon Billy and Lindsay's daughter Vinnie ran up and grabbed my hand to show me the bird's nest she and her friends had discovered. Another evening Lindsay, Vinnie, my wife and I took off to catch a glimpse of a moose spotted in some woods near the lodge. And on a warm Saturday afternoon, adults and children alike teamed up for a battle of 'Splashball' on the big lawn, pelting each other with big soaked sponges. Fun day!

I'm always partial to the horses. And the riding opportunities here are fabulous. After all, this is Montana. The ranch has all kinds of terrain, from quiet woods, to wide open prairies and spectacular mountaintop vistas. The ride I took to a spot known as the 'Top of the World' was especially memorable. As we soaked in the view, a small herd of elk jumped a fence below before running off. Very cool! You can even take a horseback day trip to Yellowstone.

But riding is just one of many activities here. There's also white water rafting, rock climbing, skeet shooting, mountain biking and great hiking. In the ten years Billy and Lindsay have been coming here, he's never been on a horse. "But he just loves the scenery and the hiking and the reading," tells Lindsay. "If it's a rainy day, you get to stay in your cabin with a fire and read."

"It took three or four years for us to figure out all the things that we could do," adds Billy. "The bike riding, hiking, fishing... So once people figure that out, they never go anywhere else... which is pretty amazing. I mean, you don't go to the same grocery store for ten years."

I gave yoga a try. And was I ever glad I did! What a way to wake up and start the day. As I stepped out of my cabin that morning into the refreshing mountain air, I was greeted by a couple of young mule deer emerging



from the woods. A few steps later, I was at the fitness facility for the session. Talk about invigorating! "Oh yeah! That's what it does!," said instructor Brad Moyel. "You do feel invigorated."

However you spend your day, you share the adventures with new friends over meals that are truly extraordinary. Pie night, seafood night... even the orange juice is amazing. There's even a dedicated pastry chef who's been here eighteen years. Words can't adequately describe the menu. You just have to come here and taste it.

As great as those meals were, and the riding, and lodge, and the elk and the mountains, what I remember best about Mountain Sky was the feel of the place. Kind of like being in a movie where everything is perfect all week long. All those happy kids. Relaxed adults. Special moments. Like a great week at summer camp you'll never forget. www.mtnsky.com • 800-548-3392

The preceding is a excerpt, used with permission, from Mark Bedor's new book, *Today's Wild West: Great Ranches*, available at www.todaywildwest.com or 626.403.1317.

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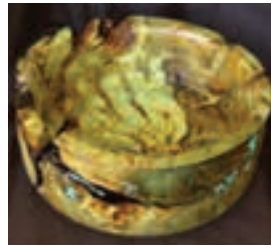
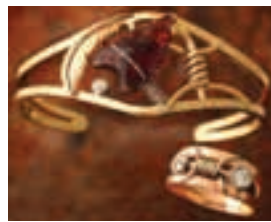
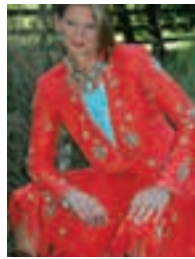
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Skyhorse Saddle Company

An unbridled passion for creating functional elegance



By Jayne Skeff

Everything they create is a work of art. Two contemporary masters working side-by-side. Their work is a confluence of the elegant traditions of the past and the high-designs of today. Functional yet beautiful, traditional yet cutting-edge. That's the work of Lisa and Loren Skyhorse – the brains, the brawn and the beauty behind Skyhorse Saddle Company.

But don't let their company name deceive you. Skyhorse Saddle is far more than just about making some of the finest saddles in the world. In part, it's a reflection of Lisa Skyhorse, who, for over 30 years, has been a bit of a maverick herself. One of the few women working in a field that has been traditionally dominated by men, her recognition as one world's best

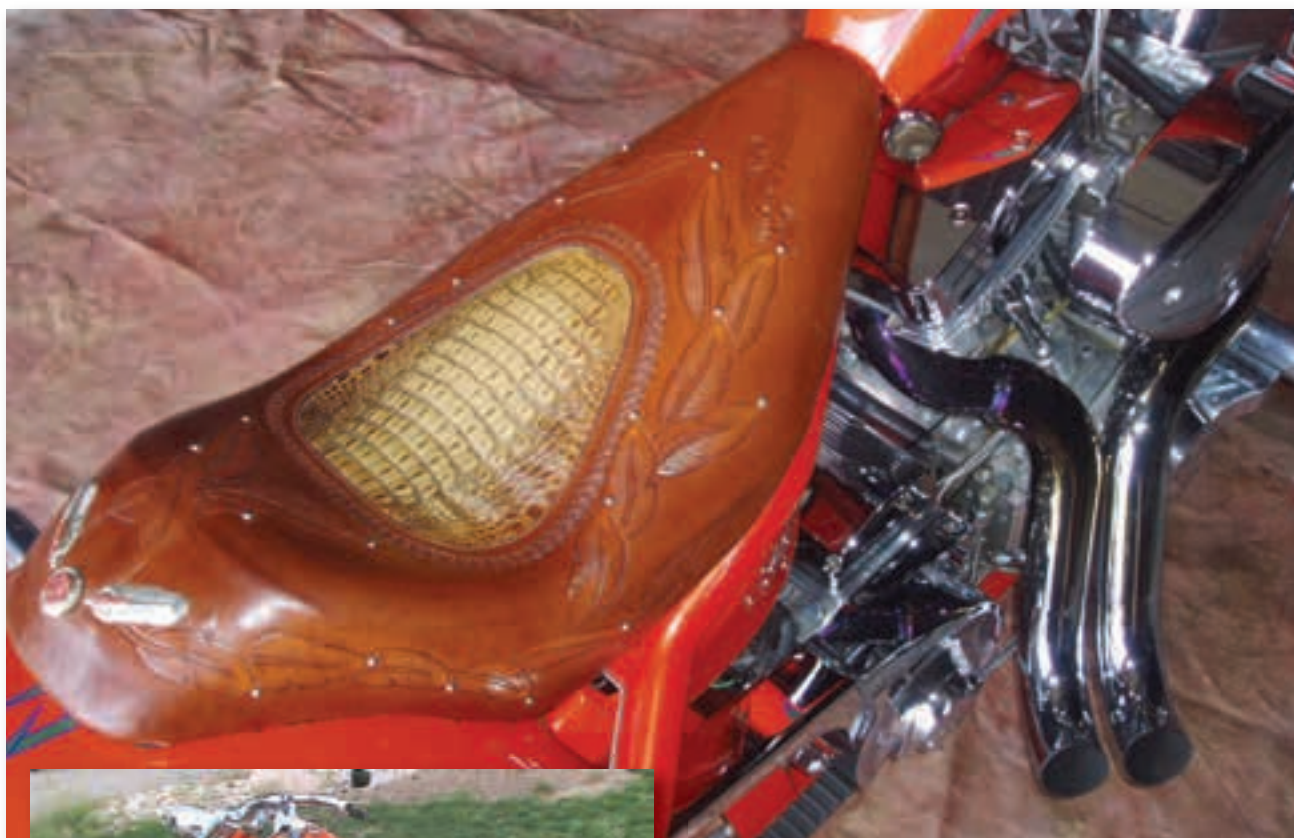
leatherworkers is a distinction she has worked hard to achieve. In the end, it was all about her art and her passion that has allowed her to be embraced and honored in this “good ol’ boys world.”

Loren Skyhorse, the other half of this world-class team, comes from a long line of saddlemakers and in addition is a master braider. Loren still uses his grandfather's and great-grandfather's tools, some 160 years old. Loren and Lisa work side-by-side and nothing leaves their studio until both their hands and hearts are involved.

While Skyhorse Saddle may not be just about saddles, their saddles are award-winning works of art,

designed and built to ride. A look at their most recent award-winning piece reveals over 700 hours of work.





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A Skyhorse saddle is a singular work of art, created specifically for horse and rider by master saddlemakers Lisa and Loren Skyhorse. The Number 4 Saddle in the Skyhorse Collection Series took over over 700 hours to create.

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Entitled “All You Need Is Love,” this cowboy’s piece of Western romance won the Best Western Spirit Award

at the 2009 Western Design Conference. Saddles for the “urban cowboy?” Indeed. And what they create would make any Harley owner proud. From custom designed saddlebags to seats, they’re masters at creating the “iron steed” of your dreams.



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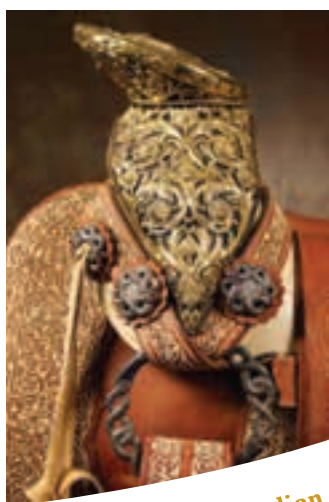
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Artist of the West: Buck Taylor

By Mark Bedor

If they're making a Western, chances are, Buck Taylor is in it. He's featured in the trailer to this summer's upcoming major motion picture, *Cowboys & Aliens*, a sci-fi take on the genre starring Harrison Ford. (Taylor's stuntman son Matthew also appears in the movie.)

It's the latest role in an acting career that's lasted a lifetime. The son of legendary character actor Dub Taylor, Buck grew up on movie and TV sets. After studying art at the University of Southern California, and then trying his hand at stunt work, Buck followed his father to Hollywood, where he's worked in film and television for 50 years. Taylor's appeared in all kinds of programs. But it's Westerns that he's best known for, especially his eight year run as Newley O'Brien on television's *Gunsmoke*. And while the genre is pretty scarce on the silver screen these days, Buck has played memorable roles in most of its major recent

incarnations, including *Tombstone*, *The Alamo*, *Comanche Moon* and *Conagher*, just to name a few.

Many of the characters in those shows have inspired Buck's other passion - Western art. On those early Hollywood sets, he often made the most of his spare

time with a sketch pad. And in recent years, his prolific and original Western art has made him almost as famous as his acting. The Texas ranch and horseback lifestyle he shares with his wife Goldie is another steady source of inspiration for that work.

Buck's easy going and friendly presence is a treat for fans at rodeos and cowboy festivals across the West, where you can often find him signing the prints and paintings he offers for sale. The artist has also been commissioned to create the official poster for a number of major events,

including the Pendleton Round-Up, the National Finals Rodeo, and the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo. "I



Matthew and Buck Taylor





images courtesy William Reynolds Collection



Buck Taylor and his poster art for the Fort Worth Stock Show

love the spirit of the West and the Western culture,” he told me in Fort Worth. “And it’s just a labor of love comin’ here and meeting all the different kids and their parents. I love everything about it!”

For fans, the feeling is mutual. Taylor’s been recognized over the years with a number of prestigious honors, including induction into the Walk of Western Stars in Santa Clarita, California; the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame; and the Hall of Great Western Performers at Oklahoma’s National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum.

More movies are in the works. You’ll see Buck in the upcoming *The Big Valley*, *The Hard Ride*, and *The Last Horseman*. And in between acting and art, Taylor squeezes in one more passion - team roping. He hopes to be the oldest heeler to make the National Finals Rodeo.

But it’s hard to think of Buck as getting older. Ageless is a better description. Whether it’s movies, art, or just his friendly presence at all those festivals, he’s a true friend of the West. And the West is lucky to have him. www.bucktaylor.com



Mentored by Chuck

Great adversity can lead to life's most important lessons.

By Ryan T. Bell

On the map, Wyoming's Chief Joseph Highway looks like it was surveyed by the kid in the *Family Circus* cartoon. It hops across river gorges, zigzags up steep mountain passes, and generally dilly-dallies its way between Cooke City, Montana, and Cody, Wyoming.

As I drove along, the handsome vista distracted me from the melancholy purpose of my journey. I was on my way to visit Chuck and Kerry Gunther, husband-and-wife managers of the 7D Ranch, a historic dude ranch near Yellowstone National Park. Chuck had been diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's Disease, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

I'd worked for the Gunthers in Colorado a few years back, but Chuck was more than a former boss; he was a mentor and friend. When I heard about his condition, I felt the urge to visit him while he was still

strong enough for us to saddle up and ride together one last time.

If I thought the visit would be a solemn affair, I'd forgotten that nothing gets Chuck down. I pulled through the 7D's entrance gate just as Chuck came roaring out of the Sunlight River in a tractor. The waterway was swollen with spring runoff, and

Chuck had been working to divert a channel of water to save a building.

He stepped down from the tractor to greet me.

"I'm happy to see you," Chuck said, shaking my hand. "It's been a long time. You're not going to believe this, but if you'd have visited two weeks ago, I would've broken

down either crying or laughing at the sight of you."

Chuck suffered from the "pseudobulbar affect," an ALS symptom whereby a person can't control their emotions. The slightest stimulus – a funny joke, the



Photos by Ryan T. Bell

Gunther continues to fight ALS, both as an ALS patient and as a fundraiser and activist promoting ALS research.

smell of a favorite horse, a visit from an old friend – caused an involuntary, and frequently inappropriate, response. Chuck could sob uncontrollably at something funny, or laugh hysterically at something sad. As a dude rancher for whom personal interactions were paramount, the betrayal of his emotions was maddening. Fortunately, he qualified to participate in a clinical trial of an experimental medication to counter the pseudobulbar affect, and the drug was working.

Chuck parked the tractor at the barn and we hopped in a yellow golf cart that he used to get around the ranch. In classic Chuck style, he'd outfitted the golf cart with racing stripes and an oversized muffler. We stopped at the dining hall, and as Chuck worked the crowd, cracking jokes and making the 7D's guests feel at home, I was reminded how good he was at his job.

"Nice shirt," a guest teased him. Chuck sported a shirt that fell somewhere on the color spectrum between pink and magenta.

"Thanks, I call it my 'bear shirt,'" he said, gamely. "In the wild, bears know that bright colored berries are poisonous. I figure a bear will take one look at me and run the other way."

"Yeah, because his eyes hurt," the guest countered. Chuck laughed, hard.

We grabbed two sodas, sat at a corner table and Chuck recounted the events of the previous year that led to his diagnosis with ALS.

Chuck does not drop the reins. An accomplished horseman of 20 years, it's laughable to think that a pair of split reins would slip through his hands by accident. But, that's what happened on a spring day in June 2008, while Chuck rode in the Absaroka Mountains that rim the 7D Ranch. "What the hell? You klutz," Chuck scolded himself. He rode on and thought no more of it. But one week later, the reins slipped again. Chuck's horse Rowdy stood quiet while he gathered the strips of

leather and sorted himself out.

"Looking back, it was one of many little signs that something wasn't right," Chuck reflected. "But what motivated me to visit a doctor were the changes in my speech."

Chuck noticed that at the end of a long day spent talking to guests and staff, his speech started to slur. It became so noticeable that one evening, when he stopped his truck on the dirt road to speak with a neighbor, the neighbor thought he was drunk and threatened to call the sheriff. But Chuck hadn't had a drop. (He now wore a button on his vest that said, "I'm Not Drunk...I Have Lou Gehrig's Disease.")

Around that time, the pseudobulbar affect appeared. He remembered turning to make a joke to Kerry and breaking out in hysterics before he got the words out. He was paralyzed with laughter, and it didn't stop, as if the "laugh switch" in his brain couldn't turn off. When the fit subsided, Kerry looked at Chuck and said, "That was weird."

Fast-forward to the day after Christmas, when Kerry's mother, a nurse, called their house.

"She'd done some investigating and suggested we look up Lou Gehrig's Disease," Chuck said. "The symptoms are weird puzzle pieces, but when you put them all together, they only make one picture. There wasn't a doubt in my mind that it was what I had.

"We spent two days crying. Then I said, 'I don't have a lot of time left and I'm not going to spend it crying.' In a way, being diagnosed with ALS has been a blessing. It's kicked me in the butt to wake up and smell the coffee. Quit worrying about stuff, quit yelling at the kids. Smile and live.

"When people hear my story, they think, 'Poor Chuck. He won't be able to ride horses anymore.' Yeah, I won't. But I've ridden more horses in my lifetime than most people ever get to. I've gotten to do so much of





Chuck Gunther holds court with the wranglers at Colorado's 7D Ranch.

everything in my life, in a short period of time.”

Chuck was raised near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he was on track to follow in his father's footsteps in the paper-printing industry. But a family vacation to a dude ranch when he was 15 stuck in his mind. He vividly remembers the first Western horse he ever rode – a gray mare named Tina – and the head wrangler, Howard, who made and sold boots and saddles out of his van. The experience impressed Chuck so much that after graduating from high school he turned down a job offer at the printing factory in favor of a summer job at Black Mountain Ranch in Colorado.

“As a teenager, my father told me two things,” Chuck says. “First, he didn't care what I grew up to

become, so long as I was good at it. And second, that there are a million ways to make a buck, so find one that I enjoy. I'm doing both.”

The next morning, Chuck and I walked to the corrals where the 7D wranglers were saddling the day's horses. The six-person crew was in good spirits, excited that Chuck would join them on the trail – a rarity that spring, since he needed to conserve his energy.

“I've been reduced to the 12-year-old girls' arm wrestling league, and I'm not doing real good at that,” Chuck joked. “My muscles are constantly deteriorating. Normally, the brain sends an electric nerve impulse that tells them to rebuild. But with ALS, that nerve impulse doesn't arrive. When my





muscles break down, they don't regenerate."

Chuck stood by while one of the wranglers threw his saddle on Rowdy. It was a gesture of respect, not pity. "Thank you," Chuck said, and then told me that those were the two hardest words he'd had to learn as a result of ALS.

"In a way, ALS has made me a better mentor and a boss," said. "It's forced me to train my wranglers better, and to trust that the work gets done."

From my summer working for him in Colorado, I remembered how Chuck led by example, and gave polite and plainspoken orders. He was firm in his discipline, but not overly castigatory. Once, when I cut off a circular saw's power cord by accident, Chuck said, "You think I've never damaged a power tool?" He added, "But I keep the occurrence to a minimum."

Kerry arrived at the corrals, delivering a dozen 7D guests for the day's trail ride. She lingered at the corral fence, keeping a watchful eye on Chuck. The couple met during Chuck's summer at Black Mountain Ranch, where Kerry also worked as a housekeeper.

"There was beauty in the fact we found each other at a dude ranch," Chuck commented later. "It brought two like minds together."

Their marriage seemed fated and over the ensuing 20 years, they perfected a tag-team management approach that made them seemingly everywhere at once.

"Make no mistake, Kerry runs this ranch," Chuck says. "I just help her. I like to think that I'm nice to have around, but I know I'm not essential."

Self-deprecating humor aside, horses and outfitting were Chuck's realm of expertise. He proved a talented student of natural horsemanship, and an even better ambassador of the Western life for guests. His one-hour horse orientation was so in-depth and well-presented

that it shed light on aspects of horsemanship that even experienced riders hadn't grasped.

Chuck Gunther has taught many people many things. And his final lesson is universal, extending beyond the realm of the dude-ranch industry. It's not a lesson he communicates in words, but through his actions. It's the example of how to be brave in the face of adversity, of living fully, and of facing death with courage and grace.

"It's not the end of the world," Chuck said, as he rode Rowdy up a trail into the Absaroka Mountains. "I could still get bucked off, land on my head and die a glorious wrangler death. It's part of God's plan, and I'll live as long as he means for me to. This is just my current state of being."

Rarely does a magazine story warrant an epilogue. But in the case of Chuck Gunther, it does. Since visiting the Gunthers during the summer of 2009, their lives have revolved around the progression of Chuck's ALS. In March 2010, they retired from the 7D Ranch. It was one of the hardest days in their lives.

The family moved to Cody, where their boys, Ethan and Eli, are excited to live "normal" city kid lives. Chuck volunteers for the Muscular Dystrophy Association as a fundraiser and activist promoting ALS research. A television segment titled "Chuck's Story" aired during the Wyoming broadcast of the 2009 *Jerry Lewis MDA Telethon*. It raised \$3,000 in donations. Last year, the MDA awarded Chuck the prestigious Robert Ross Personal Achievement Award, commending him for "putting a face" on ALS.

Five thousand Americans are diagnosed with ALS every year. Their life expectancy is 3-5 years. To learn more, or to make a donation for ALS research, visit www.mda.org.



Ryan Bell is a Montana-based writer. Read more of his work at ryantbell.com.



TWO WRAPS AND A HOOEY

We welcome you to the first issue of something quite different, a publication that is part of a new presentation of the West. *Ranch & Reata* is the publication/written content portion of a fresh idea in the world of media. The idea was to create as broad an access point as possible for a passionate audience to superb content about the American West. And it all starts at www.rangeradio.com. You read earlier in the magazine of just how Range Radio was started and evolved. The website is an integrated combination of radio and digital content created to celebrate and perpetuate the life and ways of the American West. *Ranch & Reata* is a digital magazine, a web experience, and a limited edition, fine-printed biannual. Range Radio is Internet radio and a syndicated, terrestrial radio service. Both cross-market each other in a listening, reading and viewing experience unlike another available today – worldwide.



Beyond the new delivery and access, we put great attention on the quality of content. All of the people involved in this publication have been in the traditional paper and ink types of western genre publishing for many years and have watched the comings and goings

of some great periodicals. Along with those publications, there were some truly original publishing types. One such original was Willard H. Porter. Many of you might remember him.

He was a rodeo journalist and former rodeo director of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame between 1979 and 1986. Born in 1920 in New Jersey, he served as editor of *The Quarter Horse Journal* from 1949 to 1953 and was editor and publisher of *Hoofs and Horns* during the mid 1950s. Porter wrote a weekly rodeo column in the *Sunday Oklahoman* newspaper between 1930 and 1991. In 1982 his book *Who's Who in Rodeo*, an informational work on the Rodeo Hall of Fame inductees, was published and in 1967 he



published *13 Flat*, a book of stories about thirty great rodeo ropers and their horses. He wrote for many magazines and was considered one of the best. Porter died at his home in Port Salerno, Florida on April 24, 1992. I bring Mr. Porter into the picture because he was one of those types that if he were publishing today, he probably would have operated the same today as he did then – with the exception of how he delivered his writing. He would love the iPad. Porter was a detail man and made sure he went as deep into a story as necessary to get it beyond right. His stuff was great. His magazine *Hoof and Horns* was the place to go for news and results on rodeo. It too was great as he loved his subject beyond it being a job. Rodeo was his passion.

My late father always told me, “Kid, be passionate about what you do. Passion is the wood putty of life.” He was right of course. When you love what you are doing, it can fill in the cracks when the going gets a little tough. *Ranch & Reata*, like Range Radio took quite a while to create and refine but we are convinced

of the quality of the content we are bringing you. As you can see in the magazine, we believe you enjoy reading – not just short little blurbs but real stories – of depth and length and great fiction from today and the past.

We hope you enjoy every issue of *Ranch & Reata* – be they the Limited Edition printed issues or the digital versions available at www.rangeradio.com. You may have noticed the little watercolors throughout the issue – including the two jackalopes at the top of this page. The very talented, young artist, Teal Blake, did them. Thank you, Teal. Please visit his website at www.tealblake.com to see more of his artwork. At the end of each issue I will have this chance to visit with you like this. On the last page of *Hoof and Horns*, Willard Porter enjoyed the same opportunity to visit with his readers on a page titled – “Two Wraps and a Hooey.” A calf roper to the end. We celebrate Porter’s legacy by naming this page after his wonderful words written long ago. BR



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