

The Journal of the American West

# Ranch & Reata

Volume 4.6 \$15.00



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## FRONT GATE

“There ain’t nothin’ that defines the West like the heart of a bucking horse.”

—Tom Russell



photo courtesy Arne Esp

Our friend Arne Esp from Hardin, Montana sent us this shot of his dad, Hank Esp during an RCA Rodeo in Great Falls, Montana in 1956. Hank was in his early 30s when this photo was taken as he was “leaving” the great bareback horse, “Come Apart.” Come Apart had no set pattern of bucking and the rider never knew what to expect as the horse literally exploded into the arena. Come Apart was inducted into the ProRodeo Hall of Fame in 1979. And Hank? Arne reports at 90 years young he is well and still ranches with his family.

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**Cover image:** *Three Down, One Up*, Poolesville, Maryland. Photo by Nadine Levin.

# Ranch & Reata



Volume 4, Number 6 • February/March 2015  
[www.ranchandreata.com](http://www.ranchandreata.com)

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*Ranch & Reata* is a bimonthly journal of RangeWorks, LLC

PO Box 714, Santa Ynez, CA 93460  
[www.rangeworks.com](http://www.rangeworks.com)

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View issue at [www.ranchandreata.com](http://www.ranchandreata.com). Limited Edition print journals published six-times a year. Subscriptions are available at the website. Current individual, Limited Edition copies are available for \$14.95 and are sold in U.S. dollars with appropriate postage for destination additional. Some hard-copy back issues available. All online editions are available with a subscription. Copyright 2015 by RangeWorks, LLC.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

# The Drought of '78

By A.J. Mangum

Certain memories of 1978 remain vivid to me, chief among them that it was a make-or-break year for our family's small ranch in Central Oregon. We'd purchased the 400-acre property just four years earlier, and had spent months clearing tons of volcanic rock from pastures that we would transform into hayfields. We'd built miles of fences, using those gathered rocks to create "rock jacks," or "rock cribs," to serve, in the region's tradition, as corner braces. We'd restored an aging barn and, with significant investment, installed an extensive pipeline system.

Then, in '78, a drought hit. Ponds remained low, or dried up altogether, and alfalfa went without irrigation. The conservancy district's ditch water, descending from mountain snowpacks and springs, arrived in a reluctant and useless trickle.

Unlike the perpetually green country on the west side of the Cascades, Central Oregon is high desert. While Portland might get better than 40 inches of precipitation in a year, we were accustomed to expecting

around 14. 1978 brought less than half that.

Farmers and ranchers in our area began contemplating drilling new wells, triggering in the community a short-lived but fanatical infatuation with waterwitching, or dowsing. For the uninitiated, dowsing could be described, with considerable generosity, as a pseudoscience – one on par with the reading of tea leaves – in which a practitioner uses a rudimentary handheld device – perhaps a bent metal rod or even a forked stick – to locate underground water or a promising well site. Google it and you're likely to come across the phrase "no more reliable than random chance."

The alleged principle behind dowsing was never clear to me – magnetism, magic, a reading of the earth's chi. The practice bears shades of alchemy; as alchemists tried to turn lead to gold, dowsing devotees seek to conjure water with bullshit.

Folks became obsessed. They collected short, thin copper rods, which they'd bend at perfect 90-degree angles, the pistol-grip configuration being the dowser's



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photo by Mary Mangum

The end of the drought of '78. I'd like to think the celebratory atmosphere prompted my dad (on the right) to treat himself to a new hat.

preferred spec when working with metal. They gathered small tree branches and snapped, trimmed and whittled them to symmetrical Y shapes; the short ends of the Y were handgrips; the extended third arm would purportedly react to the vibes emitted by an aquifer. (I think if you take an incorrect hold on a Y-shaped dowsing rod, you actually run the risk of traveling backward in time, or inadvertently hexing an innocent bystander, Voldemort-style. But as I mentioned, my understanding of the principles at work were, and remain, limited. Don't take my word for it.)

Sympathetic visitors to our ranch – thankfully, none ever asked for money – would offer to witch well sites for us. (*Witch* – that's a *verb*!) They'd slowly walk across pastures, watching intently for any telltale signs – downward tugs, sudden twists or rotations – from the dowsing rods they held in front of them. More theatrical dowsers could elicit stronger reactions; divining rods would

come to life, practically dragging their users across fields.

Even a skeptic couldn't help but experiment. I recall gripping an L-shaped copper rod as I made my way by degrees across a hayfield. With the most invisible of gestures – a subtle squeeze of my fist – I could send the rod spinning. True believers must've thought I had a rare gift.

I don't know how the site for our new well was chosen, or if there had been any input from dowsers. I recall the drilling process as a source of great emotional and financial stress. In better years to come, it seemed you couldn't dig a posthole on our ranch without hitting water. But as that drilling rig dug deeper into the earth – 100 feet, 200, 500 – with no results, it appeared the rapidly accumulating expense invested in the effort would be for nought. In the mythology that would come to surround that well, my dad simply tells the driller to keep digging, adding something about not stopping until he hits China. In poker terms, we were all in.

At close to a thousand feet, the rig hit water. The ground surrounding the new well became a bog as my dad and the driller took turns posing for celebratory photos, feeder hose in hand, as a pump brought up hundreds of gallons. Our drought was over.

A neighbor happened to be on hand. He had a dowsing rod in the back of his truck. As water pooled on the ground around the well, I borrowed the Y-shaped stick and, beginning on dry ground, marched slowly toward the developing mud patch, water-witching device in position. I stepped into the muck and my feet disappeared beneath inches of water freshly sourced from deep below where I stood. The dowsing rod offered no reaction. It didn't angle downward on its own. It didn't become heavier in my hands.

It was as if it were nothing but a stick.

Maybe I just wasn't doing it right.



“The Gift,” contributing writer Deanna Dickinson McCall's essay on the subject of drought, appears elsewhere in this issue.



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## Interesting Things and Stories from Out West

### WRANGLER EXPANDS ONLINE NETWORK TO INCLUDE PRO-RODEO AND WESTERN LIFESTYLE CONTENT.

Following its successful launch in early 2014, the Wrangler Network, an online and mobile destination for fans to engage in Western lifestyle content, has grown its viewership to reach hundreds of thousands of viewers. A previously unfulfilled market for online rodeo content, the Wrangler Network has responded to fan demand by offering live streamed events and live scoring, country music, blogs on a wide range of Western lifestyle content, relevant news, and more. This online network allows fans to access content regardless of their geographical location or cable access, expanding coverage of the western lifestyle and the sport of rodeo.



You can download the free app at iTunes. Here are some of the events scheduled for 2015.

- |                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Fort Worth Rodeo                | Reno Rodeo               |
| Fort Worth Extreme Bulls        | Reno Rodeo Extreme Bulls |
| Brighton Rodeo                  | Ponoka Stampede          |
| Brighton Rodeo Extreme Bulls    | Cody Rodeo               |
| Dixie National Rodeo – Jackson  | Cody Extreme Bulls       |
| San Antonio Rodeo               | Pendleton Rodeo          |
| San Antonio Rodeo Extreme Bulls | Ellensburg Rodeo         |
| George Strait Team Roping       | NILE Rodeo               |
| OKC Rodeo HOF Induction         | WPRO Rodeo               |
| Cloverdale Rodeo                | With more to be added.   |

Learn more at [www.wranglernetwork.com](http://www.wranglernetwork.com)



## REAL RANCH HORSE SALE

Once again this year, the Montana Ranch Horse Association will hold its “real” ranch horse sale at the Yellowstone Boys & Girls Ranch in Bridger, Montana.

Great ranch horses, horses that work in partnership with their riders, are always in demand. A true ranch horse has always been a very desirable commodity in the West and also the rest of the equine world. A horse started and used on the ranch has a significant advantage over those that are not. They have been exposed to many different situations, terrain and, most importantly, many different jobs. They learn to travel long distances in rough country, and they learn how to work hard. Like it has been said “Wet saddle blankets make good horses.” A “true” ranch horse, therefore, can go to work in many different disciplines. These are the type of horses being offered.



The people who make these horses are also a desirable commodity. To produce this horse, they must start out looking for what the horse has to offer, and not what they demand of the horse. They strive to work with their horses to make them better, always seeking to find the best in them. Thusly, their horses learn to enjoy life and their work, making it best for both of them.

### Ranch Horse Criteria

- Horses will be 4 years old or older. Geldings or Mares.
- Will have spent a significant amount of time on a ranch or livestock operation.
- Will participate in a preview that will expose them to work day ranch activities.
- Should be able to go to work the next day.
- Will be screened by a vet, and any significant blemishes will be called.
- Will be absolutely NO TRADER OR FIXED UP HORSES.

### Young Ranch Horse Criteria

- Horses will be 3 years old or older. Geldings or Mares.
- Should have 90+ rides on them.
- Should have some roping experience (videos encouraged).
- Will be previewed at walk, trot, and lope. Some roping possible.
- This sale, held on April 17 and 18 always draws lots of bidders. To learn more about the sale, visit [www.realranchhorses.com](http://www.realranchhorses.com)

## PINTO RANCH CELEBRATES FINE BOOT MAKERS



As we go to press, Houston-based western retailer, Pinto Ranch Fine Western Wear is hosting six trunk shows featuring the finest handmade boot makers, including Lucchese Classics, Rocketbuster, Rios of Mercedes, Old Gringo, Stallion, and Liberty Boot Co. Trunk show events will also include guest appearances by jewelry artisans, silversmiths and western apparel designers.

A handmade boot trunk show is a unique opportunity to meet the designers, learn more about the traditional art of boot making and special order a dream pair of boots. All trunk show events will be

from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the store's Houston location at Post Oak and San Felipe just north of the Houston Galleria.

Here are some of the great boot makers to be hosted at Pinto Ranch:

### **Rios of Mercedes Boots Trunk Show**

Friday, February 20th and Saturday, February 21st

Guest designers include local artist Julie Stevenson of Rhed Lucy and Cindy Beller of Treasures of the Ozarks Jewelry in town all the way from the Ozarks.

### **Old Gringo Boots Trunk Show**

Saturday, February 28th

Special guests include Texas jewelry designers Ticklebutton Jewels and Tuya Jewelry and New Mexico silversmith Bruce Erickson of Chacon Belts & Buckles. Texas fine shirt maker, Stubbs, and ladies apparel designer from New York, Vintage Collection, will also be in-store for the event.

### **Stallion Boots Trunk Show**

Saturday, March 7th

Pedro Muñoz, owner and designer for Stallion Boots brings his luxury boot collection to Houston. Also shop the extended collection from Tuya Jewelry – all made in the USA.

### **Liberty Boot Co. Trunk Show**

Saturday, March 14th

Liberty Boot Co., owner and designer, Tony Benattar, is in-store from Canada with his rock star-inspired collection of handmade boots. Browse the extended jewelry collection by Dallas designer, Sweet Tea Jewelry.

Pinto Ranch Fine Western Wear is a tribute to the great ranches of the American West and the spirit of that lifestyle. For more information, visit [www.pintoranch.com](http://www.pintoranch.com)

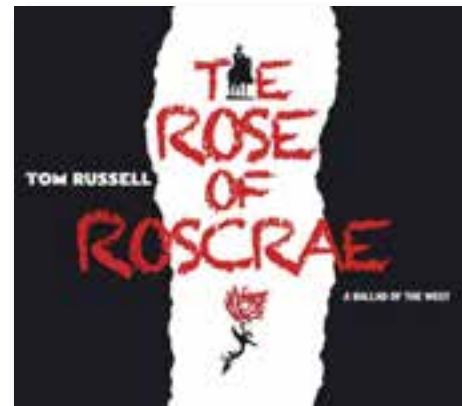


## RUSSELL’S ROSE

“An American Masterpiece isn’t strong enough to describe the significance of this saga... there’s never been anything like it on the American music scene.”

— Mike Hurshman,  
KAFM Radio, Colorado

Our own Tom Russell in conjunction with Frontera Records has released his highly anticipated double-album folk opera, *The Rose of Roscrae*, that features literally a who’s-who of legendary Americana icons including: Jimmie Dale Gilmore, David Olney, Johnny Cash, Joe Ely, Augie Meyers, Fats Kaplin, Barry Walsh, Jimmy LaFave, Gretchen Peters, Ramblin’ Jack Elliott, Walt Whitman, Moses “Clear Rock” Platt, Jack Hardy, David Massengill, A.L. “Bert” Lloyd, Finbar Furey, Sourdough Slim, Blackie Farrell, Tex Ritter, Glen Orhlin, Pat Russell, John Trudell, Henry Real Bird, Thad Beckman, Maura O’Connell, Eliza Gilkyson, The McCrary Sisters, Ian Tyson, Bonnie Dobson, Lead Belly, Guy Clark, Dan Penn, Gurf Morlix, and Pat Manske.



Overture performed by the Norwegian Wind Ensemble, arranged by Mats Hålling, composed by Tom Russell. Produced by Tom Russell and Barry Walsh.

“Tom Russell’s songs count in a sea of songs that don’t count for much. The reason is both craft and a strong sense of the epic, the heroic, those things that put us humans on the line. And it’s those song lines from the front lines of life that make Tom a great songwriter.” — Hal Cannon

For more information, visit [www.tomrussell.com](http://www.tomrussell.com)

## FANDEK STIRRUPS

Aaron Fandek builds saddles and stirrups out of his Pinedale, Wyoming shop. For 15 years Aaron has made some extremely cool stirrups. His stirrups are made of solid oak, bent right in his shop, and then covered with 24 gauge metal (monel or brass) for added strength and durability. The metal is hand-fit to the stirrup and then rolled over the stained and lacquered edges of the wood for a high-quality finished appearance. The metal is then polished to a mirror



finish. Available in Visalia, Bell and Moran styles. Stirrups come standard with a capped bolt head and acorn nut. Optional engraved sterling silver bolt caps are available. See more of his work at [www.fandeksaddlesandstirrups.com](http://www.fandeksaddlesandstirrups.com)

## AUCTION SEASON



photos courtesy Leslie Hindman Auctioneers

Saddle F.O. Baird silver and gold tooled saddle with corona.



A Kurtzmann Baby Grand Piano used by Carl Wilson of the Beach Boys on his Youngblood and self-titled Carl Wilson album.



A Wm. Knabe & Co. Baby Grand Piano. This piano was used by nearly everyone who stayed at Ouray at Caribou Ranch including Michael Jackson, Elton John, Frank Zappa, Stephen Stills, Dan Fogelberg among many others. On this piano, Elton John wrote "Don't Let The Sun Go Down on Me" – an incredible artifact.



Auctioneers and offered items related to artists and music recorded there.

From Billy Joel and Michael Jackson to Tom Petty and U2, more than 150 artists recorded music at Caribou Ranch. During that time, the studio released 45 Top 10 albums and 20 No. 1 hits. These are a few images of the amazing items sold from the catalog – a jewel in itself and standing O's go to Jim Guercio, his family and Leslie Hindman Auctioneers. Please visit [www.lindahindman.com](http://www.lindahindman.com).

Tom Horn's Winchester was the top seller at Brian Lebel's High Noon Auction in Mesa, AZ, that same weekend. The last Winchester owned by old west outlaw, Tom Horn, sold for \$149,500. The 25th annual High Noon Auction realized over \$1.8 million in total sales.

The second highest priced lot was the catalog cover lot, a Charles Russell letter to his friend the actor Harry Carey, which was one of numerous items from the Carey Family estate. The letter, which featured a Russell drawing and referred comically to buried booze on Carey's ranch during Prohibition, sold for \$126,500, which



was slightly above its presale estimate of \$90,000 - \$115,000. It sold to a phone bidder after a spirited bidding war between the phones and the floor.

Fine art brought respectable prices as always, for both contemporary and deceased artists. The surprise artwork sale of the night was the original mixed media painting by Richard Amsel for the movie poster for John Wayne's

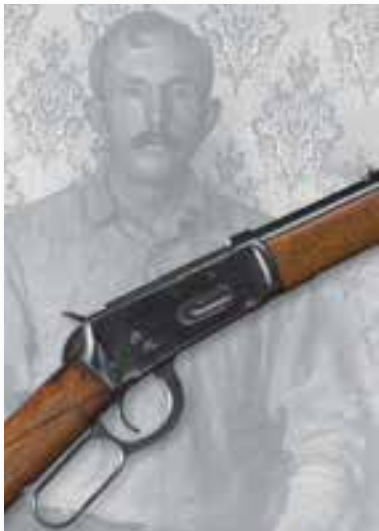
final film, "The Shootist." It sold for \$18,400, which was more than twice its low estimate of \$8,000.

Featuring over 165 vendors, the show hosted record numbers of attendees – a good sign for the genre. For more information about Brian Lebel's High Noon Show & Auction, or the upcoming Old West Show & Auction to be held June 6-7, 2015 in Fort Worth, Texas, please visit [www.oldwestevents.com](http://www.oldwestevents.com)



Charles M. Russell illustrated letter to his friend, actor Harry Carey. Dated Feb 25, 1921, the letter – written during Prohibition – jokes about digging up buried booze on Carey's ranch, and includes a colorful drawing of an excited cowboy with his dug-up "treasure."

Sold: \$126,500



Tom Horn's Model 94 Winchester .30-30. The last Winchester owned by notorious frontiersman Tom Horn, it was in his possession the night he was arrested for the murder of Willie Nickell, the legendary crime he may or may not have committed.

Sold: \$149,500



John Moyers oil on canvas. Titled, "Trade Musket" and measuring 48" x 34"

Sold: \$28,750



1930s Edward H. Bohlin spurs. Rare, double-mounted, silver overlaid parade spurs.

That they are mounted on iron is indicative of their early age and extreme rarity.

Sold: \$8,850

## ABOUT OUR ADVERTISERS: RANCH MARKETING ASSOCIATES

We are very proud of our advertisers and we thought we would start to let you know a little bit more about them in each issue. We'll start with Ranch Marketing Associates in Colorado.



It's been said that there is nothing better for the inside of a man than the outside of a horse. Ron Morris, Broker and Co-founding Partner of Ranch Marketing Associates (RMA), agrees. Owner of Morris Performance Horses, LLC and Board Member of the Roundup Riders of the Rockies, Ron has been a horseman all his life.

Morris Performance Horses, LLC, a family-operated Quarter Horse operation, is located on a small horse ranch on the outskirts of Johnstown, Colorado, just thirty five minutes north of Denver. Initially breeding for performance from proven champion bloodlines, it evolved to bringing along all-around horses.

As a Director with the Roundup Riders of the Rockies, Morris is involved in scouting for locations and trail check for the annual week-long rides for 150 riders. The Roundup Riders of the Rockies is a non-profit organization formed in 1948 dedicated to the perpetuation of Western Tradition symbolized by the American cowboy and his horse.

14  
PHOTO

An advertisement for Nathalie's Western Wear. On the left, a black and white photograph shows a woman in a black cowboy hat and outfit riding a dark horse, with a man in a cowboy hat and plaid shirt standing next to the horse. The background is a dark, textured wall. On the right, a black vertical banner contains the following text in red: "WESTERN WEAR", "COWBOY BOOTS", "BUCKLES", "JEWELRY", "ART &amp; ANTIQUES", "HOME FURNISHINGS". Below this text is a red circular logo with a cross and four arrows pointing outwards, with the name "NATHALIE" in the center. At the bottom of the banner, in red, is the address and contact information: "+ 503 CANYON ROAD + SANTA FE, NM + 505-982-1021 + NATHALIESANTAFE.COM +". A vertical watermark "ARNOTPHOTO.COM" is visible on the left side of the photograph.





RMA Broker Associate Christy Belton, along with her husband and son, operate a cow-calf and 1,000+ head yearling herd on over 25,000 acres north of Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Christy enjoys the constant adventure ranching life offers – adventures that often revolve around each changing season.

After a long winter, spring welcomes baby calves and grass peeking through the snow. Checking on cows to prevent calving problems is a round-the-clock vigil but a deeply satisfying experience knowing you’ve helped a calf live to feel the warm summer sun. The forgiving weather of summer brings the area’s tall grass known for putting big gains on cattle.

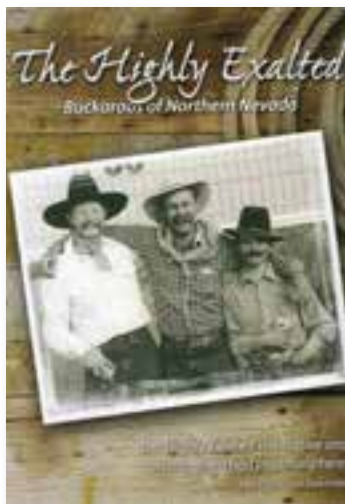


Gathering and shipping yearlings in the color-explosion of fall is a privilege some people pay for. As the days shorten, it’s a rush to finish the hay production for winter feed. The cold, crisp winter magnifies the sound of the bells on the harness as the horses pull the loaded feed sled. Pregnant cows will calve in the spring and start the cycle over again, bringing with it the rewards of new life and new challenges.

Because individual RMA brokers live the life of ranchers, they offer true insider perspective, knowledge of the land and the ranch real estate business. RMA brokers are seasoned business executives who listen to and understand each client’s needs, concerns and desires. For more information, visit [RMABrokers.com](http://RMABrokers.com). These are good folks.

## CLASSIC VIDEO

### *The Highly Exalted*



Released in 1984, *The Highly Exalted* is a window into the misty depths of the buckaroo past as it documents the life of working cowboys on one of the last horse drawn wagon outfits in modern America. Shot against the spectacular backdrop of northern Nevada, nine cowboys and their cook tell colorful stories of six months roaming the half-million acre ranch where they work. These are horse-back specialists: men unwilling to do the haying and maintenance work and who are not looking for job security or a permanent home. *The Highly Exalted* presents a vestige of

the past, a portrait of a nearly extinct way of cowboy life. Directed by Kim Shelton, it is a superb film. Available at [www.thehighlyexalted.com](http://www.thehighlyexalted.com)



## WESTERN STYLE WITH ASHLEY RIGGS

Elko Weather in New York

Ranch trucks are beacons of necessity for cowboys – filled with ropes, tools, fencing supplies and a myriad of other items one might need hours from headquarters. In my Dad’s pickup, while growing up, one of these essentials was outerwear. Being from Nevada, folks here in the big city assume that the cold weather is a new, novel thing for me. Little do they know that the high-desert has two seasons; summer and winter. Winters in the Great Basin are long and bitter cold. Even in August a jacket at dusk is welcomed.

I have a deep love of outerwear, it is my weakness. I cannot go for one winter season without purchasing at LEAST one piece (closely followed by sweaters, but that can wait for another story). I love the details and functionality of a great coat. Heavy canvas, tweed, waxed cotton, blanket lining, sueded leather all have a substantiality to them that makes a person feel impenetrable to the elements when temperatures plummet, and they only get better with time and wear.

My new favorites are the British label Belstaff and the Swedish Fjallraven. The Belstaff Roadmaster jacket, with its lightweight oilcloth fabric and lots of easy access pockets, make it perfect for riding motorcycles (it’s original use), but horses as well. From Fjallraven I bought a down-filled poncho that I love because it was easy to wear when I was pregnant, easy to get on and off, is incredibly warm and but more interesting to wear than a parka.

My greatest hits in western outerwear are the Carhartt barn coat, a Filson tincloth, a heathered wool blazer, and a denim jacket with a corduroy collar from either Wrangler or Levis. As American heritage brands have become popular again, I see variations of these here in downtown New York. Outerwear has exploded in popularity with many luxury brands. The Italian label Moncler with their shiny down jackets or Stone Island pea coats, both are offering their versions of performance outerwear that has stood the test of the west and folks are snapping them up.

Whatever the temperature or wherever I might be, I know there will be one of Dad’s quilted shirt jackets in the backseat of the truck waiting for me. Wadded up with a border collie snuggled on it perhaps, but it will be there... Stay warm this winter!

Follow Ashley on Pinterest at [Ashley\\_e\\_Riggs](#) and on Tumblr at [nynv-ashleyriggs.tumblr.com](#)



photo by Fryd Fryden Dahl



“A cute Tomboy look with a Carhartt-esque barn coat” – photo via Anais & Dax

*Some favorites...*



“Comparisons in well-worn oilcloth: a Filson Thicket Coat and the Belstaff Roadmaster. When it comes to gear, buy the best and it will last.”



“I love how this man wears a peak-lapel wool blazer with workwear in this vintage photo from 1939 Waco, TX.”



“Vintage Lee Storm-Rider Jackets, they don't make them like they used to!”



“How do you make a down-filled capelet look punchy? Wear boots! Fjallraven Luhkka Poncho and Tony Lama 3R cowboy boots.”

## NEW BOOKS FROM MEMBER AUTHORS OF THE WESTERN WRITERS OF AMERICA

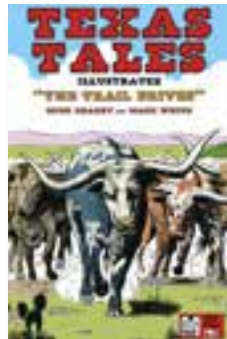
This is a grand organization that celebrates and educates about the historic characters and events of the American West. Support reading paper and ink as well as eBooks!  
Here's what's on this month's bookshelf.



In *Winchester 1886* (Pinnacle), a lawman tracks down the murderer who stole his nephew's .50-caliber repeating rifle as the best-selling **William W. Johnstone** – **J.A. Johnstone** franchise debuts a series in which each novel focuses on a famous Winchester firearm.



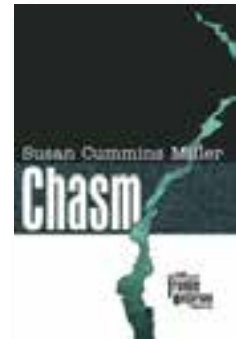
**Howard Kazanjian** and **Chris Enss** keep score of one of the West's wildest baseball stories – Wyoming State Penitentiary inmates who earned national attention playing ball in 1911 – in *The Death Row All Stars: A Story of Baseball, Corruption, and Murder* (TwoDot).



Author **Mike Kearby** and artist **Mack White** retell the cattle drive story in *Texas Tales Illustrated: The Trail Drives, #2* (TCU Press), aimed for use in Texas seventh-grade history classes.



*Ranch & Reata* regular **Rod Miller**, a Spur Award-winning poet, gives us cowboy poetry, rodeo poems, literary verse – even a few haikus – in *Goodnight Goes Riding and Other Poems* (Pen-L).



Geologist **Frankie MacFarlane** has her hands full in Grand Canyon country with murderers, rapids, wildfires and eco-terrorists in *Chasm* (Texas Tech University Press), the sixth installment of **Susan Cummins Miller's** mystery series.

## WWA AWARDS WIN BLEVINS 2015 OWEN WISTER AWARD

Author Win Blevins is the 2015 recipient of the Owen Wister Award for Lifetime Contributions to Western Literature. The award is given by Western Writers of America as its highest honor and will be presented during the organization's annual convention in June in Lubbock, Texas.

The author of more than 30 books, including the Spur Award-winning novels *Stone Song* and *So Wild a Dream*, Blevins started his writing career as a music and drama reviewer for the *Los Angeles Times*. He then became the entertainment editor and principal theater and movie critic of the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*. His first book, *Give Your Heart to the Hawks*, was published in 1973 and since then he has made a living as a freelance writer. He has written articles for magazines and essays, and worked for 15 years as an editor at Macmillan Publishing and spent two years as Gaylord Family Visiting Professor of Professional Writing at the University of Oklahoma.



Blevins lives in Bluff, Utah, with his wife, mystery novelist Meredith Blevins, with whom he has written his newest novel, *Moonlight Water*, released in January by Forge Books. His historical novels include the Rendezvous Series published by Tor-Forge Books, including *So Wild a Dream* (2003), *Beauty for Ashes* (2004), *Dancing with the Golden Bear* (2005), *Heaven Is a Long Way Off* (2006), *A Long and Winding Road* (2007) and *Dreams Beneath Your Feet* (2008). For the Rivers West series published by Bantam he wrote *Powder River* (1990), *The Snake River*



(1992) and *The High Missouri* (1994). He also created, edited and co-published the series *Classics of the Fur Trade*, published by Mountain Press Publishing Company. This series included the two-volume *The River of the West: The Adventures of Joe Meek* by Frances Fuller Victor; *Journal of a Mountain Man* by James Clyman, *Edward Warren* by Sir William Drummond Stewart; *The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie* by James Ohio Pattie; and *The Long Rifle* by Steward Edward White.

The Wister Award is a bronze statue of a buffalo created especially for Western Writers of America by artist Robert Duffie. It will be presented June 27. For more information, log on to [www.westernwriters.org](http://www.westernwriters.org).

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At 71, Joni Mitchell is still crafting life altering music and this new release is her project from start to finish. Like all of Ms. Mitchell's albums, she touches everything. Of this special, 4-CD package/book, she says, "I am a painter who writes songs. My songs are very visual. The words create scenes – in cafes and bars – in drab little rooms – on moonlit shores – in kitchens – in hospitals and on fairgrounds. They take place in vehicles – planes and trains and cars.



What I have done here is to gather these scenes like a documentary filmmaker, and by juxtaposition, edit them into a whole new work.

It was a daunting task to distill all I have written about love and the lack of it – at least four times this much material – down to this length. I tried to reduce it to one disc for a ballet. I tried for a year and a half – but no matter what songs I chose – no matter what sequences I put them in – all I had was a mere collection. At this length, four discs, themes and ideas have time to develop – to augment and contrast – to interact with each other in a whole new way." Mitchell fans own all of her 17 albums and these songs are all out there – "River," "Both Sides Now," "A Case of You," "Hejira," and "Blue" but in this latest work, Ms. Mitchell has provided us with a higher visual experience as she has positioned her songs – in her own image. She paints with her music and it is an experience like no other. [www.jonimitchell.com](http://www.jonimitchell.com)

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- Open Ranch Horse Competition 9 a.m. Friday April 17th, followed by **TEAM ROPING PREVIEW** of sale horses at 2 p.m.

Photo courtesy of Mary Williams Hyde



## TIME PASSES



Remember: Shania Twain released her album, *The Woman in Me* some twenty years ago this month. Just thought you should know.

## DESTINATIONS

### Restaurants That Have It

By Donna Stegman

Every year shortly after Christmas and we ring in the New Year, I unwrap my shiny new calendar and start to plan our trips. My husband is a frequent flyer, traveling for business on average 9 plus trips a year, and then there's *our* vacations to boot. He often extends an invite for me to join him on one of his expeditions, some I tag along with, some I graciously pass on; after all Miami in March sounds more appealing to me than Denver in December.

Several things come into play for me when choosing a travel destination; perhaps it's simply a region that speaks to me, or a particular hotel that I love that draws me back. Or I ask myself if I'm in the mood for mountains or longing for a beachfront lounge chair complete with an adult beverage in a coconut? But no matter where we go, restaurants seem to play a very important part of the perceived success of our latest adventure.

Some eateries just seem to imprint themselves on our heart. But is it the food, the ambiance, location or is it simply the all-illusive X-factor? What mystifying recipe must a dining establishment possess for us to crave its company and make me giddy with anticipation pulling into the parking lot?

For example...we have a little family-run Italian joint in our neighborhood that makes me smile just walking into its vestibule. The *one* waitress is the twenty-something daughter of the chef – if you stand still long enough she'll tell you why her job sucks – but we inexplicitly seem to find her charming nonetheless. I can customize anything on the menu to fit my mood, and they have a Bucatini Carbonara that I'd walk a mile in a blizzard to dine on. My little slice of Italian heaven is located in a cheesy strip mall with only mildly stylish décor; it's never going to make *Zagat*, yet I love it all the same. It has the mythical X-factor I can't put my finger on. All things considered, I would go back tomorrow and recommend it to every one of my pasta-seeking friends. I can't give you the definition of the X-factor, I can only tell you who has *it* and who doesn't. From oysters in a little whole-in-the-wall to the finest of dining experiences, I give you my list of the best restaurants I've ever experienced in my travels around the west, these establishments have *IT*. Time is too precious to waste on bad restaurants, so here's to eating better!

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#### The Grand Union Hotel – Montana

Road Trip! History comes alive in this out-of-the-way destination. This grand dame was built in 1882 during the railway boom and is now run under the watchful eye of the U.S Parks Dept. and Montana State Historical Society. Step back in time with the Grand Union while enjoying a marvelous dinner and drinks from their innovative menu while perched above a fabulous view of the Missouri



River. It's a bit of a drive, but worth the trip. If you're hiding from the law (or work), this place is for you, no one will ever find you here. [www.grandunionhotel.com](http://www.grandunionhotel.com)



#### Gold Creek Salmon Bake – Juneau Alaska

If you just can't get enough BBQ salmon that were just swimming early that morning, this place is for you. But it's not *actually* a restaurant; the only





building on the property is the restrooms. The entire show is pulled off picnic style, no buildings, just a tented area of tables with BBQ pits and bonfires. All of this is set amongst the most breathtaking surroundings of Alaskan forest complete with rushing waterfalls. You will never see another view like this anywhere in the lower 48 I guarantee it. Be sure to save room for the Alaskan berry crumb cake, I still think about it! [www.bestofalaskatravel.com](http://www.bestofalaskatravel.com)



**The Edge at the Four Seasons – Denver**

This place is sexy, sleek lighting with edgy ambiance, and it just screams, “date night.” Order the Wagyu beef and ahi tuna appetizer, along with your raw ingredients they bring you a large super heated river rock, yep a rock. You and your date then cook your proteins on the stone. It’s fun and if it’s overdone, it’s your fault. My husband could eat the mussels with wine and chorizo every day if he could. If you’re lucky (like I was), you can be seated next to a big table of Denver Broncos; it’s one of the teams’ favorite hangouts. [www.edgerestaurantdenver.com](http://www.edgerestaurantdenver.com)

**The Capital Grille – Denver**

I’m the last person to ask about chains, it’s



not my thing usually. But the Capital Grille Steak house in Denver has done it right. Order the lamb lollipops off the bar menu – they’ll serve them in

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the dining room, and why, because they come in at number one for the best staff suck-ups. Never underestimate the appeal of great service. [www.thecapitalgrille.com](http://www.thecapitalgrille.com)



### Ruth's Diner – Salt Lake City

Established in 1930, you'll step into an actual vintage trolley car for the best breakfast around. Pulled pork benedict seated high upon their famous mile-high biscuits and topped off with a poached egg and local green chilies, all smothered in Holy Smokes BBQ sauce. If that sounds a bit heavy, try the fresh red trout and eggs.

### Little River Inn – Mendocino California

What's great about this? Everything. *Tous le monde!*

The old Inn completely embodies that, "home-away-from-home" feeling, but only if your home had this amazing in-your-face view of the Pacific Ocean out its front window. Who doesn't like a little whale watching while sipping a perfectly made martini? Upscale and Zagat rated, you'll find yourself daydreaming about going back. [www.littleriverinn.com](http://www.littleriverinn.com)



### Sierra Mar – Big Sur California

The drive from Carmel to Big Sur is worth the price of admission alone, be sure to go early so you can watch the sun set over the crashing white waters of the Pacific Ocean below. The unbelievable four-course Prix Fixe menu changes daily depending on what chef finds fresh at the market. Enjoy your grilled squab breast after slurping down a few fresh local oysters while gazing out at all of God's beauty. Once again, Sierra Mar made the list for The Top 10 View Restaurants in the U.S for *Travel & Leisure* magazine. [www.postranchinn.com](http://www.postranchinn.com)

### Cattlemen's Steakhouse – Oklahoma City

Meat, meat, meat – everyone loves this divey steak joint, from Presidents to whole NFL football teams. Located in the heart of the stockyards, Cattlemen's has consistently made the top 20 list of best steakhouses for years. Standing shoulder to shoulder with other highbrow names such as Peter Luger in New York and Pappas Bros. in Dallas, I love the flavor of the meat and that I can show up in jeans, t-shirt and boots and fit right in. [www.cattlemensrestaurant.com](http://www.cattlemensrestaurant.com)





### S&D Oyster Company – Dallas

This long time Dallas staple is located in a refurbished historical building, reminiscent of seafood shacks along the Gulf Coast. The seafood is as addictive as it is fresh and the southern hospitality is warm and inviting. Just so you know, they don't take reservations and there is almost always a wait, so get there early, because it's worth it. [www.sdoyster.com](http://www.sdoyster.com)




### El Charro Café – Tucson

People far and wide flock to sample the delectable Carne Seca. Angus beef marinated in hand ground spices, fresh squeezed orange and lime juice all cradled in a freshly made tortilla, and they even dry their own meat on site. Sit on the sunny deck and enjoy a real, from scratch, margarita. If you haven't tried one, you don't know what you're missing. They've been making the best Mexican food in the West since 1922, be sure to eat at the original location downtown for the full El Charro effect.


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### Le Ferme – Genoa, Nevada

I saved the best for last, Le Ferme. You're gonna have to want this one, it's almost as out-of-the-way as you get. Genoa is the oldest town/settlement in Nevada, with a killer view butted up against the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range just outside of Minden. It's an hour from Reno and an hour from Lake Tahoe, it's a drive but oh so worth it. Gilles LaGourgue, once the owner of an upscale French Bistro in Beverly Hills, packed up his sauce pans and moved to the remote outpost of Genoa to enjoy farm life in 1998. The food is traditional French country made with absolute expertise and the menu changes with the seasons. Sitting at a table adorned with French linens, I'm always enchanted with the little fat hens scratching in one of the massive flower gardens right outside the old original windows. Gilles runs the show, this hyper little Frenchman delivers each plate to your table with a flourish and a viola, I think we like the owner as much as the food. Words could never do Le Ferme justice;

it's just simply as charming as it could want be. [www.lefermegenoa.com](http://www.lefermegenoa.com)

In the next chapter of "Best of the West" we'll be visiting Taverns, Bars and the revival of speakeasies. If you have one you're dying to tell us about, send your suggestions to [Dstegman@aol.com](mailto:Dstegman@aol.com).

## AMERICAN QUARTER HORSE ASSOCIATION TROTS OUT A COMMEMORATIVE WINCHESTER



After unveiling a rifle for their 50th anniversary, the American Quarter Horse Association decided to commission a new rifle to celebrate 75 years of the Association. The Association contacted Cimarron Firearms to develop a working replica of the famous 1866 Winchester rifle, which was affectionately given the nickname of "yellowboy" by Native Americans.

Cimarron Firearms in conjunction with their supplier A. Uberti, Italy, have updated the gun to a popular .45 colt. Using laser-assisted hand engraving for the logo and pattern, they chose nickel plating on the steel parts and gave the already beautiful rifle a yellow belly. The result is stunning, and the gun is a limited edition item with only 500 numbered rifles available.

Like the American Quarter Horse, the 1866 Winchester has its roots deep in western heritage and culture. The rifle was used by Native Americans, Mexicans and Cowboys alike and played a pivotal role in major historical events like the Battle of Little Big Horn and against the French when they attempted to colonize Mexico.

While the Winchester was one of the major tools that settled the West, the American Quarter Horse was the vehicle that made it possible. Both gun and horse have played vital roles in American history. It is only fitting that a commemorative 1866 Winchester rifle encapsulates the celebration of America's treasured companion. In addition to the rifle, additional celebratory items are available from Breyer, Justin boots, and Montana Silversmith. Join the American Quarter Horse Association in celebrating the horse that settled the west by visiting [aqha.com](http://aqha.com).



## REMEMBERING MONA

Lida Mae “Mona” Gammel died in Reno, Nevada on January 3, 2015. She was 79.

Mona ran the Club Mona Lisa in Elko, Nevada where photographer Kurt Markus took this photograph that would later appear in his book, “Buckaroo,” published in 1987.

Of Mrs. Gammel, Mr. Markus wrote in his book, “She was in her teens when she took the train to Montana and began work. She remembers the train was stalled for three days in the mountains, nearly buried in snow. She remembers waving goodbye to the conductors and the porters when she stepped from the train and into the great sea of the prairie that engulfed a town so small she scarcely believed it existed. Nonetheless, men visited her.

Ten years afterward, Mona came to Nevada. She attended Penny’s finishing school for working girls in Winnemucca’s red light district, where Penny demanded that her girls dress and behave like ladies, and, accordingly, they were treated as such. Mona later left Winnemucca to run her own house in Elko, and she brought with her a sense of decorum and a partiality for buckaroos.”



Mona Gammel, madam, Club Mona Lisa, Elko, Nevada

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## THE STYLE OF FRONTIER CLOTHING COMPANY'S LARRY BITTERMAN

For over twenty-five years, Los Angeles-based designer Larry Bitterman has focused on his passion of creating fashion based on classic and elegant western style – a style that celebrates the west, without screaming it. Over the years Bitterman's clothing, now under the Frontier Clothing Company label, has been worn from Wall Street to Main Street to dirt roads and on the big screen and television. Bitterman's apparel has been a natural source for period film makers and he has supplied clothing for such films and television productions as *Appaloosa*, *Lonesome Dove*, *The Quick and The Dead*, *Young Riders*, *Wyatt Earp*, and *Dr. Quinn: Medicine Woman* among many others. He has dressed many musicians and bands through the years including The Charlie Daniels Band, Ian Tyson, Waddie Mitchell and Don Edwards. He was even asked to assemble clothing for Michael Martin Murphey and his band playing at the David Lauren/Lauren Bush wedding held at the venerable RRL Ranch in Colorado.



“It was never my intention to be involved in the fashion business,” he said, on the phone from his Los Angeles design office, “even though nice clothing has always been an important aspect of my life.” A retired lawyer, Bitterman said his life changed after visiting a friend's ranch outside of Los Angeles and riding horses. “I was captivated by the western-lifestyle and dove in head first. My designs have evolved over the years and

yet many items such as my vests and frock coats are true classics. I am currently furthering my women's line, using rich brocades and really glorious fabrics that remind me of elegant salons and the smoking jackets of the 30s. Maybe my designs are classic western or part of a cultural flashback to a more romantic time. Whatever, they work here and now in 21st century terms. And I am having a great time.”

To learn more visit [www.lawrencescottdesigns.com](http://www.lawrencescottdesigns.com) and [www.oldfrontier.com](http://www.oldfrontier.com).



Larry Bitterman at the RRL Ranch for the David Lauren and Lauren Bush wedding, September, 2011





Blue Sky Riders: Kenny Loggins, Georgia Middleman, Gary Burr



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—Michael Martin Murphey

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BY HAND AND HEART

# Conley Walker

The Idaho saddlemaker emerges onto the national scene.



By A.J. Mangum

It wasn't until a few minutes into my phone conversation with Conley Walker that I realized I'd likely called at an inconvenient time. It was an early afternoon in mid-December, and the Weiser, Idaho, saddlemaker was at work finishing Christmas orders, custom leather projects that included a pistol case, a doctoring bag, a breast collar and an assortment of belts. He'd taken a rare break for my call.

Walker's schedule has likely never been busier. A full-time craftsman since graduating from Oregon State University in 2005, he's earned a reputation as one of western Idaho's leading saddlemakers, building saddles for working cowboys in the Great Basin and inland Northwest.

In 2013, he raised his profile by winning the saddlemaking division of the Traditional Cowboy Arts Association's inaugural Emerging Artists Competition,



photos by Boots & Bling Photography

Walker's winning entry in the 2013 Emerging Artists Competition featured a flower-shaped cantleback concho that appears to grow out of the underlying leather.

now held annually at the High Noon Western Americana Show in Mesa, Arizona. Much of his work is still built for cowboys in his region – Idaho, Oregon,



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Nevada, Washington – but Walker’s market has grown to include customers throughout the West.

A fifth-generation Idaho stockman, Walker grew up on his family’s cattle ranch outside Weiser. A fascination with leathercraft took hold during his boyhood. By the time he was in high school, he was building chaps and headstalls to give away as Christmas presents, and selling his work on consignment through Boise retailers. The work attracted attention, leading to his first orders for custom work. A family friend happened to be a saddlemaker, and provided Walker’s first instruction in the craft.

“Building my first saddle was a whirlwind tour,” he says. “I’d taken saddles apart and had a general idea, but it takes a few attempts to learn the basic steps. The entire focus then was on construction. The end results were mid-range, for the local market, nothing spectacular.”

Walker paid his way through college – an OSU outreach program in La Grande, Oregon – building saddles and other leather goods in a makeshift shop he set up in his apartment. As the final step in earning his bachelor’s degree in ag economics, he interned with Portland-based Oregon Leather.

“It was a placement program, and led to a job offer, but I wanted to get back to Idaho,” he recalls. “The internship gave me a chance to see the other side of the leather industry, though, and to learn the importance of understanding cycles in the leather market – how to keep material in when you need it and scale back when you don’t. You can tie up a lot of money in inventory, but there’s a happy medium where you have enough leather on hand to stay ahead, and still have cash available to operate.”

Walker completed his internship, earned his degree and returned to Idaho, where he set up shop as a self-employed saddlemaker and developed a loyal following in the region’s ranching community. At the time, Walker



A slick-fork saddle by Walker won the inaugural Emerging Artists Competition at the 2013 High Noon Western Americana Show.

recalls, basket-stamped saddles were in demand; his customers seemed to have little interest in other decorative approaches. Still, in an effort to expand his repertoire, Walker took a flower-stamping class from Salmon, Idaho, saddlemaker Cary Schwarz.

“I’d never carved flowers before, but I liked the look of Cary’s work,” Walker says. “It was different, with multiple layers of interest, rather than the same flower repeated over and over. His approach to design made sense to me, and I ended up taking other classes from him.”

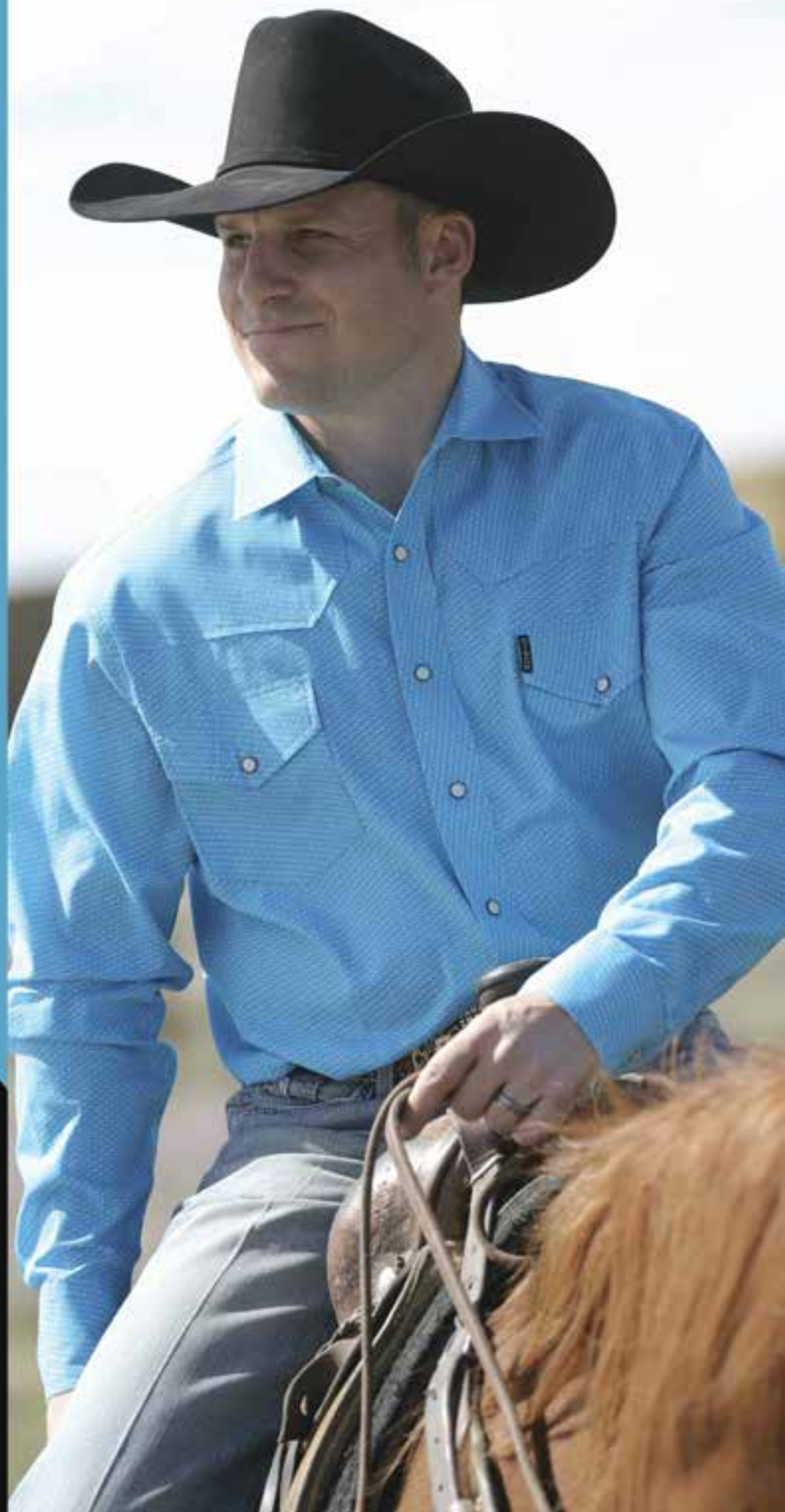
Walker’s timing was good. Since his early days in business, his market has evolved, with customers showing greater interest in floral patterns. Most of the

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saddles he's made in the last four years, he says, have been flower-stamped.

"That basket-stamped saddle used to be the 'high-end' effort," he says, "but now I might build a 'partial basket-stamp' only twice a year. Everything else has some kind of flower-stamping."

In 2012, TCAA announced the creation of its Emerging Artists Competition, a contest judged by TCAA members and showcasing the work of up-and-coming western craftsmen. The first contest would include saddlemaking and silversmithing divisions. Walker recognized a unique opportunity to get feedback on his work from some of the West's most influential saddlemakers.

"I wanted a fair, honest assessment," Walker says. "Was my work getting good, or was I fooling myself?"

The craftsman spent six weeks designing and



Saddlemaker Conley Walker at work in his Weiser, Idaho, shop.

building a flower-stamped slick-fork saddle, which would become the contest's winning entry. Silver embellishments to saddles wouldn't be judged, but Walker felt his saddle's aesthetic called for precious metal. He had no experience with silversmithing, as there had been no demand for it among his customers, but with the help of instructional videos he discovered online, Walker fashioned silver conchos for the saddle, and created a distinctive flower-shaped cantleback concho.

"I wanted that silver flower to have the shape and style of a flower that had been carved in leather," he says. "The silver flower needed to look like it was growing from the leather."

As validating as his Emerging Artists victory might've been, Walker says the win was overshadowed by the learning experience the contest offered, and by feedback he received both from judges and his fellow competitors. He recalls sitting with the group of saddlemakers – elder statesmen in the craft, as well as young upstarts – for what became a three-and-a-half-hour, informal chat about each saddle in the contest. Makers exchanged unfiltered constructive criticism and shared ideas on construction and design, details that once might've been closely guarded trade secrets.



Early in Walker's career, his customers demanded basket-stamped saddles. Today, he says, virtually all his saddles feature at least some flower stamping.

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Walker's influences include Cary Schwarz and Pedro Pedrini.

Last year, TCAA awarded Walker a \$12,000 fellowship to fund a series of one-on-one mentoring sessions with the group's members. He recently spent two weeks in northern California, studying with saddlemaker Pedro Pedrini.

"We spent an entire day on nothing but hand-sewing techniques – how to set up a piece like a leather case, construction techniques, sewing corners," Walker says. "That stuff is phenomenal. Pedro told me it wasn't something I'd use every day, but that it wouldn't hurt to have it in the toolbox. I try to study everything I see, to learn if I can use it or adapt it. When I left Pedro's, I wasn't down the road an hour before I had a call from someone ordering a case. One hour away from Pedro's shop, and I had an opportunity to use what I'd learned."

Artists begin their careers abiding by the rules of their media, and creating work that's heavily influenced by their mentors' efforts. Time passes – years, decades – and those artists begin favoring some rules over others. They begin consciously breaking rules, even writing their own. Only then does a style emerge, silently, without fanfare, and

only after much, much work. Walker is at a stage of his career in which his personal style – a creative approach informed by, but not imitating, his mentors' work – is becoming clearer. His recent work features complex floral patterns, intriguing marriages of floral- and basket-stamping, and new takes on the "silver flower" experiment he undertook with his saddle for the 2013 Emerging Artists contest. Still, each saddle exudes an unmistakable utility, a trait Walker would seem to value even if his clients weren't putting his saddles to hard use.

"I'm out riding a lot, and I actually use everything that I build," he says. "Riding gives me an opportunity to see how the horse is responding, to see if any piece of the equipment is hindering him. It's a chance to dissect, to find components that could be problems. If there's something in a design that isn't working, that saddle won't make it to a customer."

It's possible Walker developed that ethic – the mindset that great, even good, craftsmanship suggests work in which utility is never compromised, that aesthetics should be worthy of what's underneath – in his early days building, as he put it, "mid-range" working saddles "for the local market." I'd wager, though, that the mentality has its roots in Walker's ranch upbringing. On a working cattle outfit, utility comes first. And likely second and third.

My conversation with Conley Walker comes to a close as he lists the work he still has ahead of him. Once the smaller Christmas projects – the belts and breast collars – are out of the way, he'll focus on completing saddles he'll take to the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko. He'll line up another mentoring session with one of the masters in his craft. And, he'll take the next steps in refining an emerging creative identity all his own.



A.J. Mangum lives in Colorado Springs. He is the editor of *Ranch & Reata* and the author of *Undiscovered Country: Dispatches from the American West*, available in paperback at Amazon.com.





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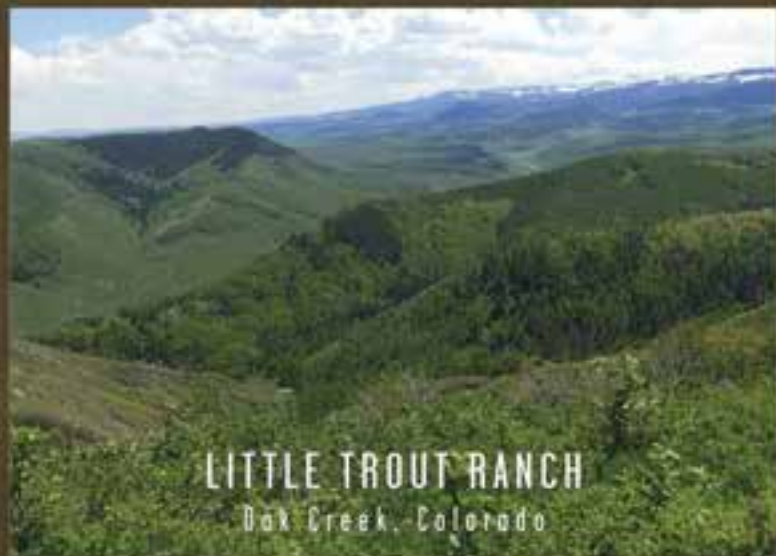
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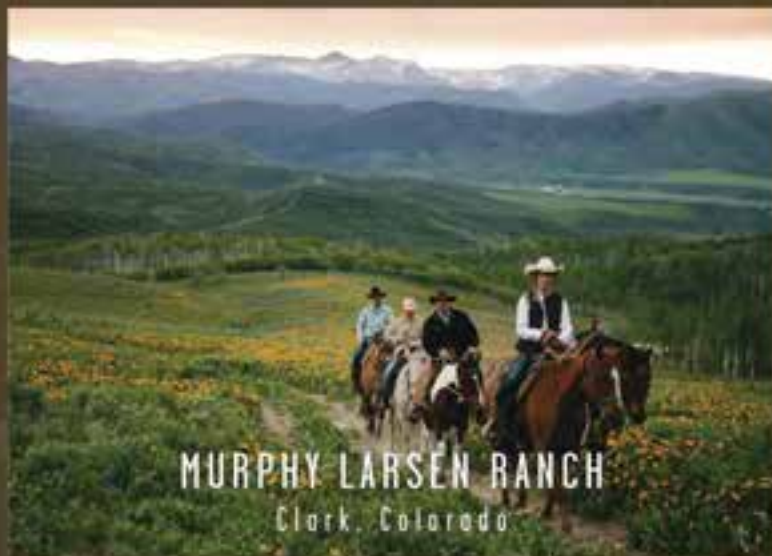
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MURPHY LARSEN RANCH  
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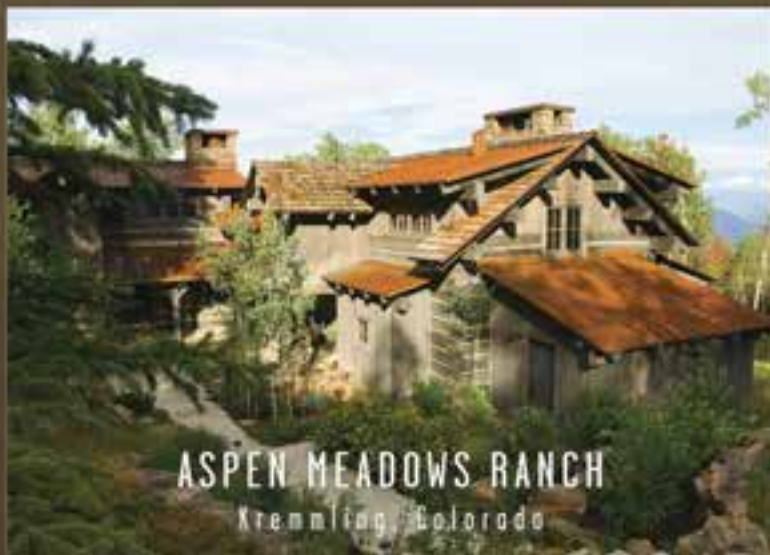
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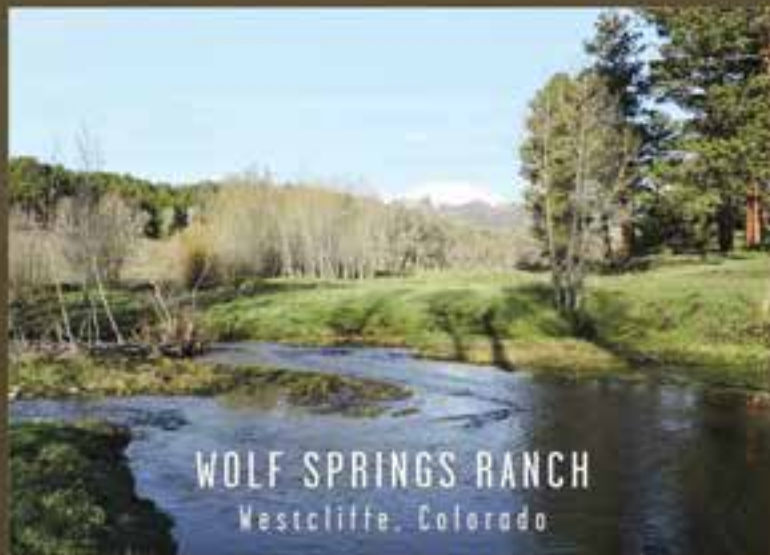


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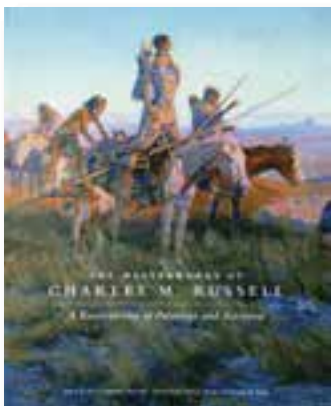
## BOOKS TO FIND

# More CMR, Zen and Temple Grandin

### Back to the World of Charlie Russell:

#### Where *The Artists* and *The Antelope* Play

In issue 3.6 we shared the incredible book by Charles M. Russell scholar, Larry Len Petersen. His book illustrated the artist himself in previously unseen photographs. It was a treasure to say the least. Several years earlier, two books appeared on the scene that chronicled several perspectives on the artist's life and cultural contributions. They are equally important. Of course numerous volumes have celebrated CMR's life works and depicted the imagery he created over a way-



too-short lifetime. His only protégé, artist and visionary, Joe De Yong, did not let the guide-on of CMR's vision falter, even after Russell's death in October of 1926. He, along with Russell's widow Nancy, would work

tirelessly to keep Russell's importance alive in a world trying to recover from an economic catastrophe. And they did pretty well – with much of the success due to the network of many friends and acquaintances – and customers – Russell himself nurtured over the years.

In his paintings, drawings and sculptures, Russell depicted the West that he knew. A West, he felt that was rapidly disappearing around him. After his death, DeYong and Nancy Russell worked at keeping Russell's world a relevant place. Almost ninety years later, these two books – *Charlie Russell & Friends* and *The Masterworks of Charles M. Russell*, illustrate not only the relevance of Russell's life works, but affirm Russell's position as a catalyst for western artists that were emerging at the time.

In *Charlie Russell & Friends*, (an issue of the *Western Passages* publication by the Petrie Institute of



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photo courtesy the William Reynolds Collection

Charles F. Lummis and Charles M. Russell, like-minded westerners.

Western American Art at the Denver Art Museum), we find, even with Russell’s apparent uneasiness around strangers, that he had an ability to make lasting friendships – especially among his fellow artists. The book explores his relationship with – not only his protégé Joe De Yong – but with singularly important artists coming up the ranks with their own efforts. Relationships between Edward Borein, Philip Goodwin and Maynard Dixon among others are fascinatingly reviewed giving us a much broader picture of a man whose iconic imagery helped shape the nation’s visage of the west throughout the twentieth century and beyond.

This well-illustrated volume, researched by Russell scholars such as Brian Dippie and Peter Hassrick allow us a look into a life filled with self-driven talent. Russell himself had very little in the way of formal training. According to writer John Taliaferro, Russell’s school-type art education consisted, at most, “of several days’ enrollment in classes at the Art School of Washington University in his hometown of St. Louis – an experience the young art student found to be tedious and irrelevant to his subject.”

The book goes on to illustrate that no other artist, save George Catlin (1796 -1872), had an impact on the art of the West comparable to Russell. Other great western artists discussed include Carl Oscar Borg, Frank Tenney Johnson and Edgar Paxson and are placed among the important artistic saddle pals that Russell ran



photo courtesy the William Reynolds Collection

Charles M. Russell and Edward Borein – “waddie pards” to the core.

# LEGENDS OF THE WEST

## 75



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photo courtesy The Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma

John Young-Hunter, Charles M. Russell, and Nancy Russell, Lake McDonald, home of the Russell's Bullhead Lodge. 1915.

with. But it was Russell's imagery and purity of color – and – *oh, the light!* he could create on canvas – that truly put him in a place all his own. It is apparent that Russell loved being with his “waddie pards” as they were as much of an inspiration to him as the West he saw fading from the scene.

In *The Masterworks of Charles M. Russell*, editor Joan Carpenter Troccoli gives us an important grouping of Russell's most iconic images that have helped define the West for more than a century. Editor Troccoli corralled eight essayists – including the aforementioned Dippie and Hassrick – all of whom give important and diverse views on the artist and his major works. One of the essays, by James Ronda, focuses on the importance that the Lewis and Clark expedition played in Russell's life. “I am not an historian,” Russell stated on more than one occasion but the fact that Russell chose the subject for nineteen of his paintings shows the event's

importance – especially to a son of the Big Sky state – especially since the expedition spent more time during its journey in Montana than in any other place. It becomes apparent when viewing the many glorious images he created on the subject, that Russell did not view the journey as American empire building but rather he placed Indians at the center of most of his significant expedition works allowing Native peoples to tell the story of our nations' first “road trips.”

Within that context he brought balance and perspective to an event so important – not only to Montana but the nation as well.

*Masterworks* is worthy of its subject – timeless and inspiring, yet friendly and accessible. Both of the books described here would be a must for any student of Russell and his contribution to our true root-based culture in the West.

Both books are available through the University of Oklahoma Press. For more information, visit [www.oupres.com](http://www.oupres.com). And while you're looking at these two, do not forget B. Byron Price's landmark volume, *Charles M. Russell, A Catalogue Raisonne*. This book won a Wrangler Award from the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum and features over 200 color and black and white images. The big extra is the book gives the reader an online link to view over 4,000 of Russell's works. (You can pick up Larry Len Peterson's book on Russell there as well.)



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## A Few Words About Myself

Charlie Russell would not live to see the publication of his book of short stories, *Trails Plowed Under*. A fond picture of the West that was going away, even the venerable magazine of the rich and famous of the time, *Vanity Fair*, gushed over the book in its review which stated, "If you have ever loved the West, if there is any loyalty in you for the finest page that ever turned in American history, then this authentic collection of yarns and pictures of the old-time cowpuncher is your book." *Trails Plowed Under* has been in print continuously since its publication in 1928 and Russell's introduction, "A Few Words About Myself," is at once descriptive as it is a statement of his own mortality. It was written by the author just a few months before his death.

### *A Few Words About Myself*

The papers have been kind to me many times more kind than true. Although I worked for many years on the range, I am not what the people think a cowboy should be. I was neither a good roper nor rider. I was a night wrangler. How good I was, I'll leave it for the people I worked for to say there are still a few of them living. In the spring I wrangled horses, in the fall I herded beef. I worked for the big outfits and always held my job.

I have many friends among cowmen and cowpunchers. I have always been what is called a good mixer I had friends when I had nothing else. My friends were not always within the law, but I haven't said how law-abiding I was myself. I haven't been too bad nor too good to get along with.

Life has never been too serious with me I lived to play and I'm playing yet. Laughs and good judgment have saved me many a black eye, but I don't laugh at other's tears. I was a wild young man, but age has made me gentle. I drank, but never alone, and when I drank it was no secret. I am still friendly with drinking men.

My friends are mixed preachers, priests, and sinners. I belong to no church, but am friendly toward and respect all of them. I have always liked horses and since I was eight years old have always owned a few.

I am old-fashioned and peculiar in my dress. I am eccentric (that is a polite way of saying you're crazy). I believe in luck and have had lots of it.

To have talent is no credit to its owner; what man can't help he should get neither credit nor blame for it's not his fault.

I am an illustrator. There are lots better ones, but some worse.

Any man that can make a living doing what he likes is lucky, and I'm that. Any time I cash in now, I win.

CHARLES M. RUSSELL

Great Falls, Montana

THE OLD WEST



## Zen and the Art of Archery

Eugen Herrigel

Vintage Spiritual Classics

This little volume has been around since the early 50s – 1953 to be exact. It raises its head from time to time and I have read it through the years more times than I can count. The author Eugen Herrigel was a German professor of philosophy and for a number of years taught philosophy in Japan. It was there he studied *kyudo* – the art of the Japanese bow under a master named Awa Kenzo. Kenzo’s approach to teaching archery placed great emphasis on the spiritual aspect. Herrigel’s book lays out the master’s methodology – for example, “...that through years of practice, a physical activity becomes effortless both mentally and physically, as if the body executes complex and difficult movements without conscious control from the mind...” In other words, the archer must become the bow and between the two, the arrow and its path become the result of the relationship – the archer and the bow, a single entity. The doing of a single task may have a spiritual dimension.

We include this book as it is a superb read for anyone involved with horsemanship and can help the rider simplify his approach to the horse as one of focus and bonding – or as writer Thomas McGuane has written regarding fine horsemanship as a place – and I am paraphrasing here – where “horse and rider become a third, larger entity.”

This little book’s metaphorical approach can be applied to almost any task that one may confront. Buy several copies and pass them around.



## Animals Make Us Human

Temple Grandin

Mariner Books

Temple Grandin should be given the title of National Treasure – like they do in Japan for significant humans within the culture. Her personal experience with autism has opened new doors for the rest of us humans to the ways of animals and how we interact with them – whether we grow them to love, or to eat. Her groundbreaking, best-selling book *Animals in Translation*, drew on her own experience as an animal scientist to deliver extraordinary insights into how animals think, act, and feel. In *Animals Make Us Human* she attempts to help us give our animals the best and happiest life – on their terms, not ours.

Knowing what causes animals physical pain is usually easy, she says, but in this book she helps us to see the essential emotional needs of animals and then explains how we can help fulfill those needs –for pets at home, horses, farm animals, zoo animals – even wildlife by how we interact with them. Grandin teaches us to challenge our assumptions about animal contentment and honor our bond with our fellow creatures. She states her cases with wonderfully simple, declarative statements that do not invite rebuttal, such as: “Cattle hate being yelled at;” “Pigs are obsessed with straw;” “Cows like to learn new things.” And there you are.

The simplicity of these statements is further illustrated by her view of the importance of having and training smart, sensitive people to work with livestock. Just as her ground breaking approach of being non-threatening when moving cattle; her view is all animals deserve our respect and kindness. She says, “No animal should spend its last conscious moments in a state of terror.” This is a very important and insightful book – from a significant human – for every other human.





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## THE COOK HOUSE

# Lenny McNab's O RO Wagon Beef



By Kathy McCraine

**T**he e-mail that popped up in my inbox last April was a surprise: “Jeez-Louise!!! Check it out, Kathy. What you started about eight years ago with that article you wrote about me has turned into me being on Food Network this summer.”

The message was from Lenny McNab, one-time wagon cook for the O RO Ranch near Prescott, Arizona. He was a fascinating character, and I had written a magazine piece on him when he was cooking there. I hadn’t heard from him in years, and though he was a great cook – arguably the best that wagon ever had – for a wagon cookie to wind up on national TV is pretty amazing.

If you’ve never watched Food Network, it is described as “a unique lifestyle network, website and magazine that connects viewers to the power and joy of food.” With a TV distribution of 100 million U.S. households, it offers an unending flow of programs featuring everything food-oriented, from famous chefs demonstrating their prowess, to cutthroat cooking



photos by Kathy McCraine

Wagon cook Lenny McNab, circa 2006



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Funded by Dr. Kent Robert & Ilene Roberts Balliett  
Foundation with additional support from the Haythorn  
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competitions. Lenny had made the competition finals on a show called *Food Network Star*.

It was a long winding journey for this 43-year-old New Hampshire native who got his introduction to cooking when he worked in his brother's restaurant as a teenager. At 18, he joined the Army, became a medic, and wound up in Germany, where he stayed on to work in restaurants and to attend culinary school.

"I was way over my head there," he told me. "The most German I could speak was, 'Bring me two beers,' but I made it through class with my German dictionary and paying attention."

Back home, Lenny drifted wherever the wind blew him, at one point playing his guitar for change on the streets of Nashville. Then one day he woke up and decided he wanted to see the bright lights of Las Vegas.

He headed west in his 24-year-old Ford Explorer, but the dilapidated truck bit the dust at Winslow, Arizona. Completely broke, he wound up working as a mule wrangler at the Grand Canyon, where he befriended a young cowboy who was headed to work on the spring wagon at the O RO Ranch. This remote 257,000-acre ranch is one of the last in Arizona to run a real wagon, though their original mule-drawn wagon has been replaced with a 1946 Army truck.

"I figured the only opportunity I'd ever have to see a real wagon would be to cook for it," Lenny said, "so I tagged along and applied for the job." Lenny told cow boss Wes Foote he didn't have a 'punchy' bone in his body, and that all he could bring to the table was food, ending his pitch with, "You know, you can't trust a skinny cook."



# Cowboy Tough Hats

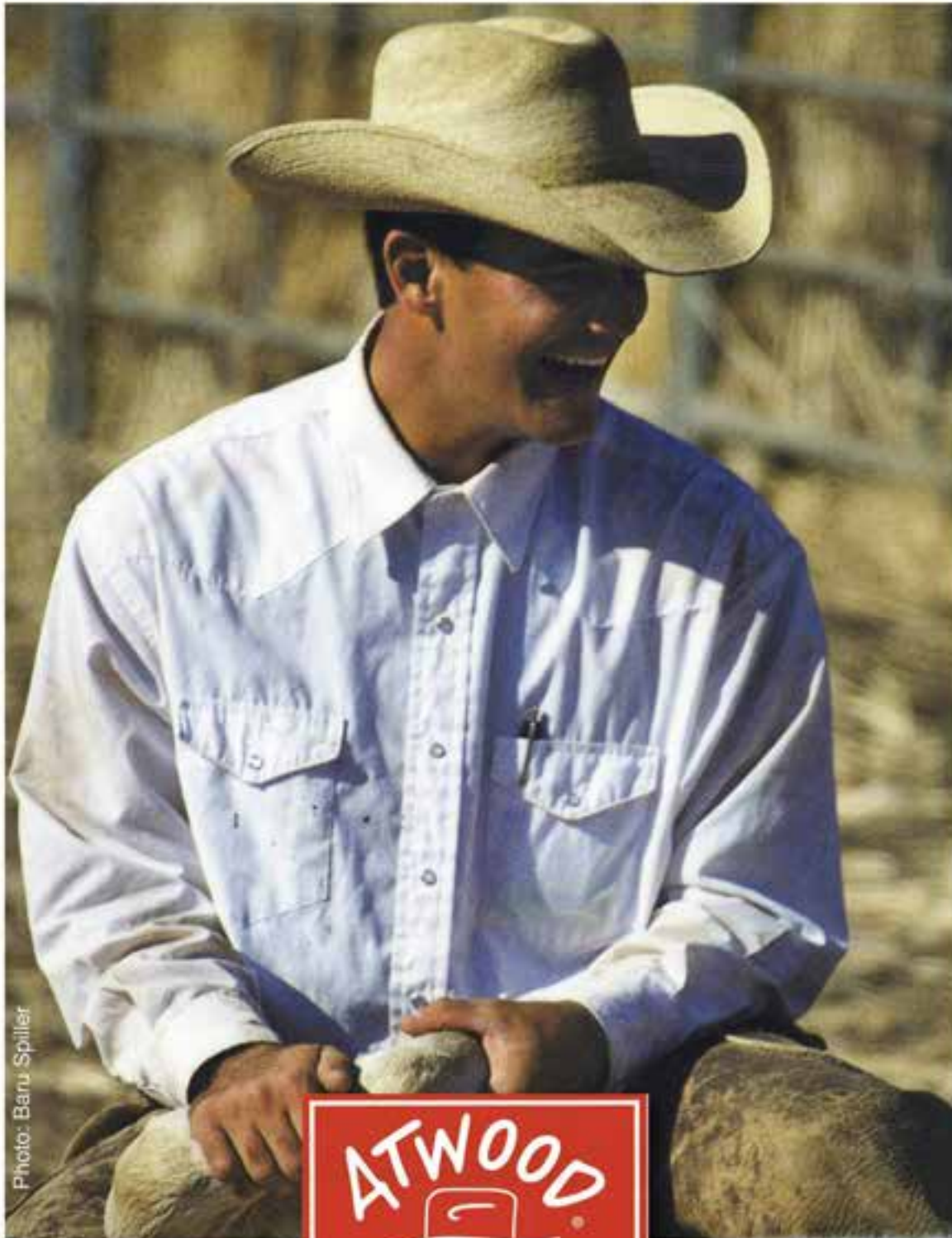
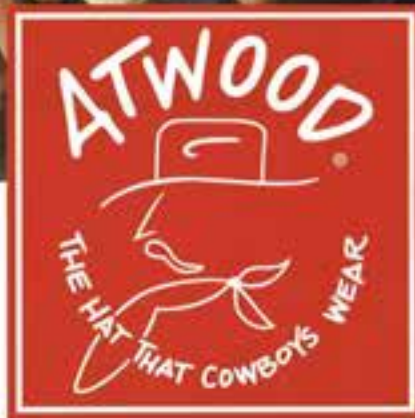


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Wes took one look at Lenny's well-rounded physique and hired him.

Being around a crew of hardcore cowboys, Lenny figured he would look like a "gunsel" in a cowboy hat, so he outfitted himself in overalls and a cheap, black derby hat he bought on Whiskey Row in Prescott. He had never cooked in Dutch ovens before, but he quickly taught himself, and soon he was cooking up gourmet meals these cowboys had never dreamed of, things like sauerbraten and prime rib roast with sweet onion shiitake mushroom sauce. (I'm sure he invented this after I brought him a big jar of dried shiitake mushrooms from Costco.)

With his genius for innovation, Lenny even concocted a salad made from a young mescal (century plant) stalk he had the boys cut down on the range. He

peeled the stalk, chopped it up, made a vinaigrette with a little diced onion, and swore it tasted just like jicama.

"I couldn't tell you if any of my meals have failed," Lenny said. "The cowboys are good people. They always say 'thank you,' and would never tell me in a million years if it didn't taste good."

The RO crew loved Lenny, but after two wagons, wanderlust bit him again. Late that November, when the wagon pulled in, he began to contemplate the cold months ahead.

"I'm going to Key West and lounge around like a beached whale," he said, "but I'll be back next spring." It was the last they saw of him.

Fast forward a few years, and Lenny turns up as executive chef at the exclusive, 23,000-acre Kessler Canyon hunting lodge near DeBeque, Colorado. There

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he has traded his overalls and derby for a black Stetson, embroidered cowboy shirts, and a belt buckle the size of a platter. A natural entertainer, he's not only a certified gourmet chef now, he's also known to put on his rhinestone jacket, strap on his guitar, and perform for guests as his country-singing alter-ego, "The Black Mamba."

With Lenny's personality and talent, it's not surprising he was invited about a year ago to appear in Guy Fieri's Food Network show *Guy's Grocery Games*. He lost that competition in the final round due to an undercooked piece of lamb, but the experience inspired him to apply for the ultimate Food Network competition, *Food Network Star*.

For a suspenseful three-and-a-half months, the 11 finalists were presented each week with a variety of

sometimes incongruous ingredients and situations, challenging them to prepare a standout dish for judges Bobby Flay, Giada de Laurentiis, and Alton Brown, all celebrity chefs. Each week the judges eliminated one finalist. Lenny's quirky sense of humor and food sense carried him through triumphs and near failures, but he persevered.

Perhaps his crowning moment came during a pool-party episode, in which the contestants had to prepare appetizers for a crowd of swimsuit-clad partiers gathered around a Las Vegas pool. When Lenny was announced the winner that day, he flipped out, stripping off his shirt and, to everyone's astonishment, executing a huge belly flop into the pool.

In the end it came down to three finalists, with the winner to be determined by an online vote from the

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fans. Lenny garnered over 11,000 votes to become this season's Food Network Star.

Bob Tuschman, senior vice president of Food Network, was quoted as saying, "Lenny's magnetic personality, culinary chops and cowboy swagger made him stand out in this very talented crowd from the beginning. He has a true passion for great food and the great outdoors."

Lenny may not have made it to the bright lights of Las Vegas on that trip eight years ago, but he's sure in the limelight now. Some have grumbled that he's a "phony" because he's not a *real* cowboy, but after all, was Roy Rogers a real cowboy? Lenny is above all an entertainer, and he sure can cook.

The following is a dish he was cooking in a Dutch oven over coals one day when I showed up at the wagon. I have adapted it to cooking on a regular stove.

### Lenny McNab's O RO Wagon Beef

5-6 pounds hindquarter roast, cut in chunks the size of a fist

Salt and pepper

2-3 tablespoons oil

1 small can tomato paste

¼ cup vinegar

1 cup brown sugar

½ cup molasses

Tabasco sauce to taste

3 tablespoons garlic salt



Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Salt and pepper the meat and brown in the oil. Add about 2 cups water, cover, and cook 3 hours, adding water if necessary. Take the beef out and chop it up. Add back to the pot with the rest of the ingredients and cook another hour. This is good served over rice.



<http://youtu.be/QkTbVEnWOVY>

The Food Network shares this look at Lenny McNab's experience in *Food Network Star*.



Kathy McCraine is the author of the award-winning cookbook, *Cow Country Cooking: Recipes and Tales from Northern Arizona's Historic Ranches*. Visit her web site at [www.kathymccraine.com](http://www.kathymccraine.com).

# A City Girl in the Rural World

A horse-obsessed childhood and a journalist's eye help shape the artwork of Denver's Jill Soukup.

Essay by Elizabeth Train

Artwork by Jill Soukup

Jill Soukup has been drawing and painting horses since she was a little girl. The daughter of a veterinarian, she drew animals of all kinds as a young artist, but her true love was equine subjects. Even before Soukup became an artist full time (she made her living as a graphic designer for 11 years prior) she would seek solace by finding a field and sketching horses.

A full-time painter for the past 10 years, Soukup primarily explores city themes, western life, and what she refers to as “the architectural art of things” through her work. The structural elements in cityscapes and urban scenes influence the way she sees and paints organic forms, like horses, and she notes that her seemingly divergent subjects truly complement and enhance one another.

“*Purple Charge* and *In Stride* offer complex and dynamic compositions, which are in part influenced by complex architectural paintings I’ve done,” Soukup notes. “*Zapata Grays* was also inspired by my interest in architecture – in complex and linear elements.”

Over the past five years, Soukup’s work has evolved toward a nearly singular focus on ranching – specifically the animals that are central to the landscape and lifestyle of the West. She produces powerful renderings of

horses, cattle, bison and the ranchers who work with them, and her pieces range in size from tiny studies to life-sized works.

Though she’s careful to note that she doesn’t live a rancher’s life, Soukup paints the lifestyle with the insight of one who’s been deeply immersed in it. She sees herself as a journalist of sorts, recording the day to day of ranch life through her paintings. “I’m not a true cowgirl,” she admits. “I’ve never wrangled a calf...but I’ve been an observer.”

In fact, Soukup has spent the last 12 years of her life visiting the Chico Basin and Zapata ranches, participating in artist retreats there and, more recently, serving as an instructor and guiding other artists through the intricacies of capturing equine subjects on canvas. (Though she says she’s not a cowgirl, she’s spent a fair bit of time in the saddle along the way.)

“Just being there and taking part in the activities – moving cattle, bringing in the horses, riding, hanging out with the people who run the ranch – you feel how different that lifestyle is.”

On an emotional level, Soukup is drawn to what she describes as a “down-to-earth-ness, calmness, and don’t-sweat-the-small-stuff” quality she feels when



*Doubleback*



*Orange Repose*



*Fall Grazing Cow & Calf*

60

spending time with ranching people and animals. She appreciates the contrast to her urban life in Denver, which she admits can sometimes feel frantic, neurotic, and out of touch with the bigger picture.

“I’m a city girl who gets to dip her toes in the rural world and bring it back to the city and share that with others. That’s my part.”

But really, at the heart, it’s about a girl’s love for horses. Soukup admits that her favorite time at the ranches is spent in the corrals, studying the horses – the way their ears move, their joints bend, their coats glow

in the sunlight – and taking images and sketches back to her studio, where she produces final paintings.

“I always wanted a horse of my own when I was little, and I couldn’t have one,” she muses. “I love the concept of being able to have a horse in our living room, especially one life-sized.”

Jill Soukup’s work can be seen at Saks Galleries in Denver, Colorado; Ann Korologos Gallery in Basalt, Colorado; Astoria Fine art in Jackson, Wyoming; and Eisenhower Gallery on Martha’s Vineyard. Upcoming exhibits of her work include:



*White Horse in Gray*



*Morning Bull*

**The Russell**

Exhibition and Sale, March 19-21  
CM Russell Museum, Great Falls, Montana

**Cowgirl Up: Art From the Other Half of the West**

Invitational Exhibition & Sale, March 20-May 3  
Desert Caballeros Western Museum, Wickenburg,  
Arizona

**The Renaissance of Realism**

National Symposium for Collectors, November 13  
Gallery 1261, Denver, Colorado

**Aviation of the American West**

Art Show & Auction Event, November 13-15  
Southwest Gallery, Dallas, Texas





*Purple Charge*



*In Stride*



*Saddling Up*



*Dashing Dandy*



*White Grip*



*Hold Steady*



*Dark Passages*



*Bull Scratch*



*Boots Abiding*



*Zapata Grays*



*Coyote Trot*



<http://youtu.be/onOSUU8p22M>  
Saks Galleries produced this interview  
with Colorado artist Jill Soukup.



# Better and Better

Rancher, competitor and entrepreneur Kimberlyn Fitch.

By Rod Miller

No one would fault Kimberlyn Fitch for resting on her laurels. Her list of accomplishments is both long and wide.

Deserving, you might say, of a rest. But it seems doubtful Kimberlyn knows the meaning of the word. Or, if she does, is unfamiliar with the concept.

She has taken on athletics, animal husbandry, riding, roping, rodeo, education, ranching and marriage, and seems to have conquered them all. But, she says, she's not done yet.

Kimberlyn was born and raised in an American Falls, Idaho, farm family in which potatoes ruled the day. But her mother, Heather Fehringer – having grown up with jumping horses – thought her little girl needed a pony. Kimberlyn took to the saddle like spots on an Appaloosa. “She went to her first little rodeo when she was five,” he mother says, “and we’ve been on the road every summer.”

Roping didn't come until later for Kimberlyn. She

waited until the ripe old age of seven to pick up a lariat. “I took to it pretty quick,” Kimberlyn says. “I liked it, so I practiced every time I had a chance.”

And Kimberlyn, being Kimberlyn, decided if she was going to swing a loop she might as well get good at it. A family friend drilled her in the basics, wearing out several lariats and putting a lot of wear and tear on a roping dummy. “One hundred times a day,” she says. “He'd sit there and count, with a pen and paper, and check them off. That was probably when I was in third or fourth grade to probably seventh or eighth grade. I was determined to get it down.”

She got it down. Her first national championship in break-away roping came in 2007 when Kimberlyn won the junior high division in the National High School Rodeo Association. Her

roping wins since could fill a book. She excelled in high school rodeo, on the Intermountain Professional Rodeo Association circuit, and roping for Idaho State University



photos by Rod Miller

Jesse the cowdog and Kimberlyn

L i m i t e d E d i t i o n

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J. N. Swanson

(1927 - 2014)



Mission Cattle, 30 x 40, oil

J.N. Swanson

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His is a captivating story of a western original, a man who would rather be horseback than anything else.

Available at [www.jnswanson.com](http://www.jnswanson.com)



Brody and Kimberlyn Fitch pull a trailer to move cattle on Midnight Creek.

in the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association.

Her second national championship came in 2013, when she won the NIRA buckle for breakaway roping. And that's in addition to contributing to a women's team championship for Idaho State University and placing second in women's all-around, on top of a passel of other wins in NIRA's Rocky Mountain region.

Not bad for a young woman not born with rodeo in her blood. In fact, her mother believes that might have been an advantage. "Since we didn't know, we were able to take her to the people who did know," she says. Kimberlyn lays claim to assistance from a lot of ropers, particularly Jull Lufkin and Gaylen Brower and, lately, PRCA standout roper Matt Shiozawa and his father, Kent.

"That's how I've been able to improve. You rope with people better than you and try to learn from them," Kimberlyn says. On learning from the Shiozawas, she says, "Once you can rope, you can *kind of* rope. But there are little things you can do to adjust – the way you score

your horse, the way you start your rope, to the point of handling your slack and how you stop your horse. They want everything to be perfect, so they break down every section and superanalyze it."

She also throws a pretty mean head loop as a team roper, and her barrel racing accomplishments are on par with her success with a rope. But, as mentioned earlier, there's more to Kimberlyn Fitch than rodeo.

"I like to win. I'm very competitive," she says. She graduated from high school

with a perfect grade-point average, was a standout basketball player, was named to the all-state soccer team, and earned the FFA state degree with an FFA national degree in the works.

FFA, and 4-H before that, are responsible for another of Kimberlyn's accomplishments. She raises cattle as co-owner of K-Diamond-K Club Calves, breeding show animals. That business venture, too, is a result of her competitive nature. "Even with my show cattle, I wanted to breed better and better calves," she says, "cause I wanted to win the fair."

She has been in the cattle business since seventh grade, when she showed her first steer. She says, "When I bought my steer, I also bought three heifers that were bred." With, of course, help from her parents. "They've supported me 100 percent in everything I've wanted to do."

Later, Kimberlyn says, "I decided I wanted to go bigger." That led to the formation of K-Diamond-K





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Brody Fitch grew up horseback on his family's ranch in Arbon Valley, Idaho.

with her uncle, Rob Geisbrecht, as her partner. "He partnered with me 'cause I couldn't afford to buy a bunch of cows. We bought the grand champion pen of heifers at the Fort Worth Stock Show. Twelve of them. We slowly built from there, and I'll calve 34 cows this spring."

That first batch of heifers proved a good one, as only three outside cows have been added to the herd since – most of the growth has come from retaining heifer calves and raising them for breeding. The cattle are Maine-Anjou/Angus cross.

Keep in mind that K-Diamond-K started while Kimberlyn was in junior high school and has continued through her high school and into her college years. Being in the cattle business in a serious way at that age is, to say the least, unusual. And it meant a different kind of life from what other girls that age usually experience.

"She couldn't afford to buy a bull so she had a neighbor lady of ours teach her how to artificially

inseminate," Kimberlyn's mother, Heather, says. "So by the time she was a freshman in high school she was inseminating all her own mama cows. Instead of asking for something really cool for Christmas, she wanted a tank that keeps semen frozen. I was teasing her because one year all her friends were looking at prom dresses and she was looking at what bulls she was going to buy [semen] straws to."

Kimberlyn is matter of fact about that aspect of the business. "I AI'd my cows for

quite a few years," she says. "Then as I got busy in college and rodeo and a lot of things, I bought some pretty nice bulls."

Heather tells another story. "For Christmas one year we bought her a [closed-circuit] camera that would be out in the barn, out in the calving shed. She would lay in her room and watch her mama cows and when they got close, she would be up at night – I mean as a freshman in high school, a sophomore, 15, 16 years old – with her cattle, helping them calve out."

While K-Diamond-K calves are still winning ribbons, you won't find Kimberlyn in the show ring. "I don't show anymore myself," she says. "I had to pick and choose what I wanted to do. I sell a lot of my calves to 4-H kids. A kid I sold a calf to, the steer won the Blackfoot [Eastern Idaho State] Fair." Other K-Diamond-K steers have won ribbons at county fairs across southern Idaho. "I've had calves win quite a bit, so that's helped."



Kimberlyn Fitch makes last-minute preparations before competing at a college rodeo.

Somewhere, in the midst of all this activity, Kimberlyn found time to climb to the top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, where her childhood sweetheart, ranch kid Brody Fitch, proposed marriage. She accepted the offer, and they've set up housekeeping on the Fitch family ranch in southern Idaho's Arbon Valley. Being there will one day change her approach to the cattle business. "We'll wean away from show calves – not anytime soon, but sometime, because that fits the operation a little better," Kimberlyn says. Her cows now run with the Fitch herd most of the year, but, "we have

to sort my cows and send them to a different pasture during breeding season so they get bred by my bulls and not Angus or Hereford bulls."

It seems Kimberlyn approaches ranch life much as she does everything else. "Her father-in-law always says, 'I've had a lot of guys work for me, but none of them are as handy as she is,'" Heather says. "What she'd really love to do is be on the ranch all the time." And she's on the way. Kimberlyn and Brody have started acquiring land, and have already added a few commercial cows to the herd.



Spur Award-winning author Rod Miller writes poetry, fiction, and nonfiction about the West. His latest books are *Goodnight Goes Riding and Other Poems* and the novel, *Rawhide Robinson Rides the Range*.

# The Gift

Reflections on a long, unrelenting drought.

By Deanna Dickinson McCall

The leaves crumble beneath my horse's hooves, scattering into flakes onto the gray rock as we climb the trail. We've labored upward, hoof striking rock to dust repeatedly, through oak brush that never turned green, algarita too dry to produce the berries I cherish for jelly, and rust-colored cedar and piñon stands. The stunted grass is buried in dust.

We are riding to the high country today, hoping enough rain fell at this elevation to make a little grass, enough grass to hold at least some cows over. Signs of feral hogs appear; they've rooted up prickly pear and made divots under the trees. We're surprised to see how high they've traveled; elevations like this are not

common hog environments. So many animals are displaced with this phenomenal drought, all seeking food and precious water.

We stop the horses, letting them catch their breath. I view the river bottom far below, winding through the serpentine canyon. The riverbed is gray rock, reminiscent of dead rattlesnakes turned on their backs in belief the gesture will bring rain. Nothing remains to show it was once a life-giving stream.

I am gifted with the remembrance of the music of the stream, the graceful green willows, elms and cottonwoods that used to flourish there. I also recall this mountain, knee-deep in dew-laden gramma, blue stem and side oats, swaying with wildflowers in a gentle breeze. Calves and their mothers, sleek and fat, frolicked up and down the mountainsides.

We turn the horses and continue our journey in search of feed. We study the hillsides, seeing stands of grass in protected areas, under the trees, beside boulders and brush. Brown, dry grass, but feed for the cows we're trying to hang on to. The further we climb, the thicker the grass becomes. The rocks and altitude enabled this country to hang on to moisture long enough to let something grow.

Water is the next issue; the spring went dry a year ago. The nine miles of pipeline strung across the mountains and canyons feeding dirt ponds and fiberglass tanks are useless. Running the dozer up the



photo courtesy Deanna Dickinson McCall

"The river bed is gray rock, reminiscent of dead rattlesnakes turned on their backs in belief the gesture will bring rain. Nothing remains to show it was once a life-giving stream."



trail will be the next chore, making a crude road so water can be hauled for the cattle we will push up here to winter.

We tie our horses to a tree limb and pull out the lunch we've carried in the saddle bags. I settle on the ground, with a rock for back support, while the horses tear the dry grass into mouthfuls they can eat around their bits. The only clean area on the saddle is where I sat; the rest is covered in the grayish red dust of the mountains. The dust that leaves grit on my skin, in my clothes and in my house. Even here, moving a boot raises the eternal dust.

Back at the ranch, I pull my dusty saddle off the horse, whose sweat is dried and stiff, to find brown leaves and needles that have worked their way under the blankets from the brush we've gone through. I know I will find the same in my clothing later. I watch the horses munch on hay, wondering if they've lost track, like I have, of their last bite of green grass.

The cows in the next pen mill around, hoping I'm bringing hay to them. These cattle know me; I've fed cake to them for months in the mountains, some coming close enough to take a cube from my hand. They recognize my face, and my stance, and call to me. I've had to fend some off at times, big Brangus cows pushing and shoving to get to me and the feed sacks I carry on my hip as I scatter the feed on the ground.

They've been brought home so we can cull them, again. I am tired of having to choose which cows will stay and which will go. I wonder if this drought will dictate when it is our turn not to make the cut, and we will have to leave the ranch.

I finish throwing hay, and scooping grain, watching the birds surrounding the water troughs as I walk toward the house. I start the water in the garden, wading through rows of vegetables in knee-high boots and spurs, chasing

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out a hen who craves the green, as well.

We've been through droughts, some short, some lasting years. The current drought is too severe, too long, reported to be drier than the infamous Dust Bowl years. This drought has a death-hold.

Deer come into our corrals, no longer fearing the horses and cattle that used to hold them at bay. A chip downloaded from the game camera placed above the trough displays foxes, coyotes, javelina, raccoons and other creatures, a far wider range of wildlife than we had believed were coming in. The bear and lions lumbering up were indisputable signs of desperation.

We will be horseback in the morning, studying cows and bulls, making up yet another load for the sale. The cow whose calf disappeared, the big-eared one whose calf

didn't grow out, but "burned up," are first choices. Big Tits, who we've kept – despite her appearance – because she grew such good calves until this year, will go. There will be others, including bulls no longer needed for the reduced herd size. The dust will hang in the early light, creating a haze over the corrals we'll ride through with grim, lined faces and eyes tearing.

Yet, we have a gift. We must have above-average memories, to remember where things are in a vast land, which cow hangs with what group, what canyon runs into a larger canyon, and where water may be found. It is this memory that sustains us, memories of green grass, creeks spilling over, cattle rolling in their fat, shiny hides. Memories of what was and what we pray will come again.



Deanna Dickinson McCall is the author of *Mustang Spring: Stories and Poems*, which is available on Amazon.com and at the author's Web site, [www.deannadickinsonmccall.com](http://www.deannadickinsonmccall.com).

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*All Standing, Shumway Ranch, Juntura, Oregon. Joan, Anna Rose, Gabriel, Claire, Luke and Martin (standing on the horn)*  
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## THE WESTERN HORSE

# The Delay in Me

An excerpt from the horsemanship memoir *Passing it On*.



By Tom Moates

I really had no idea that there was a big fat delay in me when I went to ride Niji forward. I did, however, recognize a drag in him.

78 The second week of the Floyd, Virginia, Bible/horsemanship clinic was underway in early September 2013. Niji was my main mount that week partly because the gelding remained a real challenge for me in many ways. This chronic drag in him was one of them.

On Tuesday, the second full day of the clinic, I was in the round pen riding Niji. I was playing with riding him forward and mentioned to clinician Harry Whitney the gelding's lack of willingness to go.

"Well...there's a delay in you," he responded, matter of factly.

Hmmm...really? I cogitated on that for a moment, but I must admit I had a really hard time seeing it. How

could I be late in asking for forward if I'm sitting up there asking and waiting on Niji to go, I wondered?

I knew enough about Harry to know that if he said there was a delay in me that there surely was one, but that didn't mean I could see it. No doubt Harry could tell I was surprised at his remark and that I was struggling to grab an understanding of how it could be.

"Get ready," he said, "and when you want to go forward, do something drastic right then and go to the trot."

I sat there translating his words into visual frames in my head. I studied those, doing my best to string them together like a movie to see if I could predict just where this was heading.

"Get the end of your split rein ready in your hand and when you ask for forward, whack yourself in the chaps," he said. "And get big enough to get a trot. But be





ready and slap at the exact moment you ask for go, and be trotting.”

I considered Harry’s suggestions and knew that the chap slap wasn’t to drive or frighten the horse so that he fled forward. It was rather to help me immediately get big enough to break loose Niji’s thought of not going when I asked him to go. Plenty of drag already was established in him from my previous puny attempts, so I needed to break that pattern.

I prepared myself. With the end of a split rein readied in my right hand and holding the reins where they crossed atop Niji’s neck in my left, I sorted out in my mind how it should go. I gave it a try...

The result was a discombobulated mess!

I lifted my left hand a touch and asked the gelding to trot off, but I got way too wild with my legs and body trying hard to up the energy of my request, and thus I flapped around all over the place. Then, to top it off, I didn’t get my chap slap accomplished. I must have been four seconds late – that’s like an hour and a half in horse time!

The first attempt was so comical I just stopped everything, cracked up, leaned forward in the saddle, and hugged Niji around the neck. Sure, it sounds easy enough doesn’t it – just go forward big and slap that chap simultaneously, right?

Even though getting started with this proved to be a rather dramatic failure, it was also a triumph. The success was that I actually perceived the delay in me that Harry was speaking about.

I felt I was up against an incredible dullness in my mental/physical coordination. There existed a chasm between my thought (accompanied by a half-hearted attempt) to suggest that Niji go and my own actions to seriously get myself and Niji going. This realization came as a flash when I made the first honest attempt at



photo by Carol Moates

On his Virginia farm, Tom rides Niji along a road.

Harry’s plan and failed utterly. It was as if the arm attempting to slap that chap with the rein was in thick mud and I couldn’t synchronize my appendage to my brain.

So, I set myself up and gave it another go.

The timing was a little better this time, but it felt like an incredible effort was required of me to get the chap slap anywhere near the moment when I would attempt to ask Niji forward. It is hard to explain this conundrum I found myself in. It wasn’t physical. It was rather like Harry said, a delay in me. I had a delay – a



photo by Olivia Wilkes

Tom works on upping his energy and getting Niji to go while Niji ambles along unaffected.

sort of unconscious unwillingness – that blocked me from asking and expecting the gelding to *go*!

The irony is that I thought all along I was asking Niji to get the lead out of his hind parts and go right now! The problem was that my “right now” wasn’t really right now at all.

“It’s like you’re waiting on him to go,” Harry described to me as we discussed the situation, “and then you’ll catch up and go with him instead of you going first. You’re just sitting there like you’re in your easy chair waiting to see what’s going to take place and then go with it – and that puts delay in it. You’re just behind the action. You’ve got to make a believer out of him that you’re serious, and then you’ve got to be going.”

Reflecting on this situation makes me realize now that these days I’m also getting the opposite side of this type of experience. Sometimes I’m seeing problem spots between people and their horses. Then it’s me looking for a way to help people see how they are missing something which works against the horse shaping up. For example, I constantly coach people to avoid walking backwards when asking a horse to circle around them on a lead rope. I had this problem at first, too, but now I can see that particular situation a mile away. Again it goes back to that saying of Harry’s I’ve so often quoted, “Until you see it, you can’t see it, and then when you see it, you wonder how you never saw *that* before!”

So, back in the round pen, I concentrated extra hard



and got a few decent consecutive forward-ask/chapslaps accomplished. When my timing and intensity improved, Niji obliged with a newfound willingness to go forward with gusto, and immediately. Then Harry said, “Now put the tail of the rein down and just ask him to go forward.”

I did.

I nearly tumbled backwards out of the saddle, so unprepared was I for this new first gear he had. Again, I busted out laughing (along with everyone else) – this time at my own surprise at just how ready and willing Niji was to go. I’d traded in a Chevette for a Corvette!

The thing that really struck me at that moment was how my poor timing and lack of initial intensity had produced a real mental change in Niji that caused the drag in him. I’d been the real problem here.

The fact that I was so unprepared for Niji to really go freely forward after a little work must have meant that at some level I didn’t believe the gelding would be any different than before if I asked with less intensity. The pattern was so established in me (and thus between us) that when it did change, I simply was unprepared for it. I was so accustomed to the drag and my peddling him along to get forward that it just wasn’t part of my reality even though it was what I sought.

Harry’s coaching helped me get a real mental change in Niji – he was now thinking forward. Once thinking forward was on the list of options, all I had to do was ask him to go and there he went! When he wasn’t thinking forward, I could have asked him to move out all day long and it wasn’t going to get rid of that drag.

This is a lesson that has stuck with me. I now also recognize such delays in other areas of my horse work. If I can be consistent with what I ask a horse, whatever it may be, it’s a disservice to the horse if I don’t get him through to a mental change at the start. That puts a distance between us and keeps the horse from feeling the best he can about me. I’m also now better able to see delays in the horse work of other folks I work with. Having Harry state what was obvious to him sure made a huge impact on me!



<http://youtu.be/4b1J2-I9RE0>

Travel back to fall 2014 and tag along with Tom Moates and Niji on an intra-farm excursion.

*Passing it On* is the fifth book in Tom Moates’ *Journey into Honest Horsemanship* series.

Learn more at [www.tommoates.com](http://www.tommoates.com).



## Upcoming Clinics

### Buck Brannaman

[www.brannaman.com](http://www.brannaman.com)

February 27-March 2, Stillwater, Oklahoma;

(918) 244-5698

March 6-8, Fort Worth, Texas;

[www.alegacyoflegends.com](http://www.alegacyoflegends.com)

March 13-16, Farmersville, Texas; (972) 784-7037

March 20-23, Belton, Texas; (325) 396-2461

March 27-30, Cave Creek, Arizona; (602) 332-5038

April 10-13, Del Mar, California; (858) 755-5022

April 17-20, Riverside, California; (909) 289-2485

April 24-27, Santa Barbara, California; (805) 641-0676

### Peter Campbell

[www.petercampbellhorsemanship.com](http://www.petercampbellhorsemanship.com)

March 6-8, Fort Worth, Texas;

[www.alegacyoflegends.com](http://www.alegacyoflegends.com)

March 12-15, Austin, Texas; (361) 510-4884

March 13-27, Wheatland, Wyoming; (800) 349-7078

April 10-13, Reidsville, North Carolina; (919) 802-1320

April 16-19, Negley, Ohio; (724) 663-5339

April 23-26, Chelsea, Michigan; (743) 649-5706

April 3-May 3, Archie, Missouri; (816) 524-4741

### Tom Curtin

[www.tomcurtin.net](http://www.tomcurtin.net)

April 10-12, Cummins, Australia; [info@sanjoqh.com](mailto:info@sanjoqh.com)

April 17-19, Howlong, Australia;

[stevecrowe@live.com.au](mailto:stevecrowe@live.com.au)

April 24-26, Windy Station, Australia;

[brittanyflinn@live.com.au](mailto:brittanyflinn@live.com.au)

### Paul Dietz

[www.pauldietzhorsemanship.com](http://www.pauldietzhorsemanship.com)

March 27-30, New River, Arizona; (602) 332-5038

April 17-20, Fort Worth, Texas; (927) 837-3987

### Buster McLaury

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March 31-April 4, Paducah, Texas; (806) 492-2711

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### Ricky Quinn

[www.rickyquinnclinics.com](http://www.rickyquinnclinics.com)

March 6-8, Fort Worth, Texas;

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March 30-31, County Louth, Ireland;

[marina.hope@binternet.com](mailto:marina.hope@binternet.com)

April 3-5, County Galway, Ireland;

[janehedge@gmail.com](mailto:janehedge@gmail.com)

April 10-12, Herndon, Virginia; (703) 929-5711

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# Never Leave Home For Second:

## The Ballad of Casey Tibbs

*If you wanna say a prayer from my purple angels,  
you can do that. But I'm gonna make it. And for all  
you youngsters that's gonna be a world's champion,  
never leave home for second. Adios.*

Casey Tibbs, August 10, 1989

(Recorded by Ivan Daines, five months before Casey passed on.)

I was twelve years old when I met Casey Tibbs. It was one of those childhood encounters when you know you're rubbing up against something greater than blood and bone. You're colliding with history. Against a force which reshapes the way we think or feel about life. I never met Muhammed Ali, but he was one of those humans. People who dance to their own radical music and lure us into applauding it.

I've met Bob Dylan once, and the Beatles, sang with Johnny Cash, and shook hands with John F. Kennedy. How's that for name dropping? Bob Dylan asked me where the nearest liquor store was. I was fifteen years old. I told him I was too young to know. Bob told me to check back when I grew up. Encounters with history. Before all that there was Casey Tibbs.

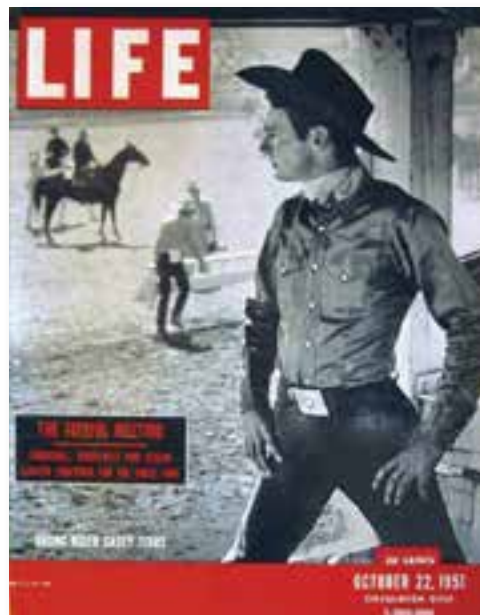
The scene was Hollywood Park Racetrack. Late

1950s. My father was still on his high-end swing of buying cheap claiming horses and turning them into winners. My brother worked as a hot walker and rode bulls on the weekend. Our family explored the odd angles of the Los Angeles horse and rodeo scene. It was in our bones. We descend from Irish horse traders. As did Casey.

That afternoon my father brought Casey Tibbs up to our box to meet me. Casey looked as if he'd just stepped off the cover of *Life Magazine*. Which indeed he had. Seven years before. I'd cut out that *Life* cover and taped to my bedroom wall, next to Willie Shoemaker and Duke Snider. It was the October 22, 1951 *Life*

*Magazine* issue. The cover declared the *Life* circulation at 5,200,000. The magazine cost 20 cents.

Five million people held that cover and viewed



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young Casey Tibbs, his hands on his hips, looking out at the world, high above a rodeo arena. Cocksure and ready to ride. The greatest bronc rider of all time.

In the lower left hand corner of the *Life* cover was an inset box which declared the news in the rest of the world: *Fateful Meeting: Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin*. And there stood young Casey Tibbs, above it all. It looked like he was on a high wire, and as the great wire walker Karl Wallenda said – *life is on the wire, the rest is*

*just waiting*. Casey would have loved that quote.

A few weeks ago I flew over what was left of Hollywood Park racetrack in Inglewood, California. I looked down on heavy equipment bulldozing the dry lakebed, knocking down the grandstand. Bulldozing childhood dreams. I remembered that moment, almost sixty years ago, when I met Casey Tibbs.

A magic afternoon. Silky Sullivan was running that day in the late 1950s. I'd bet on it. The legendary come-





from-behind racehorse. Silky would close from forty lengths off the pace to win. His stretch runs took your breath away. They called him *the heart attack horse*. On February 25, 1958, Silky Sullivan came from 41 lengths behind to win a short 6½ furlong allowance race by a half-length. Think of it.

And there before me was Casey Tibbs. He stuck out his hand. “How you doin’ kid?”

He looked over my head at a blonde, two boxes away. Casey Tibbs – with a high crease in his grey hat, the silver dollar bolo tie, the purple shirt, the perfect Hollywood-stitched western suit, the white boots with purple wings on the toes. His purple Cadillac was probably out in the park lot guarded by valets.

He smiled, nodded a quick goodbye, and moved off into the backslapping crowd to make a bet, for he was a

betting man. And a drinking man. And a woman’s man. And a saddle bronc rider. And damn good bareback rider, and a hell’uva bull rider.

In 1949, at age 19, Casey Tibbs became the youngest man ever to win the national Saddle Bronc-Riding crown. Between 1949 and 1955, he won a total of six PRCA Saddle Bronc-Riding championships, plus two All-Around Cowboy championships, and one Bareback-Riding crown.

In 1958 Casey temporarily retired from rodeo and tried the movies. When an ignorant director told him to dress “more cowboy” for a commercial Casey was insulted and went back to the saddle broncs. He won the first nine rodeos he entered and won the world again in ’59.

Charlie Daniels called Casey Tibbs *the greatest*

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*cowboy who ever lived.* I wouldn't argue with that, if *greatest cowboy* entails a unique western force, a human who has carved out a lasting and memorable presence, *horseback*. Casey mastered the art of riding saddle broncs artfully, all of it washed in a charisma which made rodeo attractive to the wider public. He was the Mickey Mantle and Muhammad Ali of his time.

He was the man who *floated bucking horses*.

Anecdotes on Casey Tibbs are legion. Below are a few of my favorite yarns about Casey, formed loosely as an oral history, or a ballad. Real folk talking American lingo. This is our heritage, spilled off the tongues of savvy old bronc riders. Goin' down the road with Casey Tibbs. Minced words be damned.

Let's dance.

## I Casey at the Bat – Beginnings

*There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into  
his place;*

*There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile on  
Casey's face.*

*And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly  
doffed his hat,*

*No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at  
the bat.*

*Casey at the Bat*

**Ernest Thayer, 1888**

**Tom Russell:** He grew up on the Cheyenne River in South Dakota, fifty miles from the nearest town. The youngest of ten kids raised in a log shanty. His father, John Tibbs, was a tough Irishman who knew horseflesh. Casey's father liked to recite Ernest Thayer's famous baseball poem, *Casey at the Bat*, so he named his youngest son Casey. Their log cabin bordered the



Cheyenne Indian reservation and the Indian kids were horsemen and bronc riders.

**Casey Tibbs:** My old man wasn't very sociable and there was a gulch out there made a kind of natural corral where we could work horses. If you ever seen pictures of the old homestead it looked pretty rugged, but I never knew I was poor 'til I left home. I never went hungry 'til I rodeo'ed for a little while. I might of got hungry at home a few times when my horse bucked me off and I had a long ways to walk. My dad raised ten children and we weren't church goin' people, because churches weren't there, but he taught us the religion of The Golden Rule and I think he done pretty good.

**Jim Hannum:** I ate many a dinner and slept many a night in that old log house of John Tibbs. Hell, that



was horse country. Old John was running horses one day and his horses was running wide open, and his horse broke it's leg, and he's hollering to one of his kids, "Rope something!" And one of the boys roped a horse, running wide open, and drew him over to the old man, and old John choked him down and rode him right off the ground, and away they went. Running their horses.

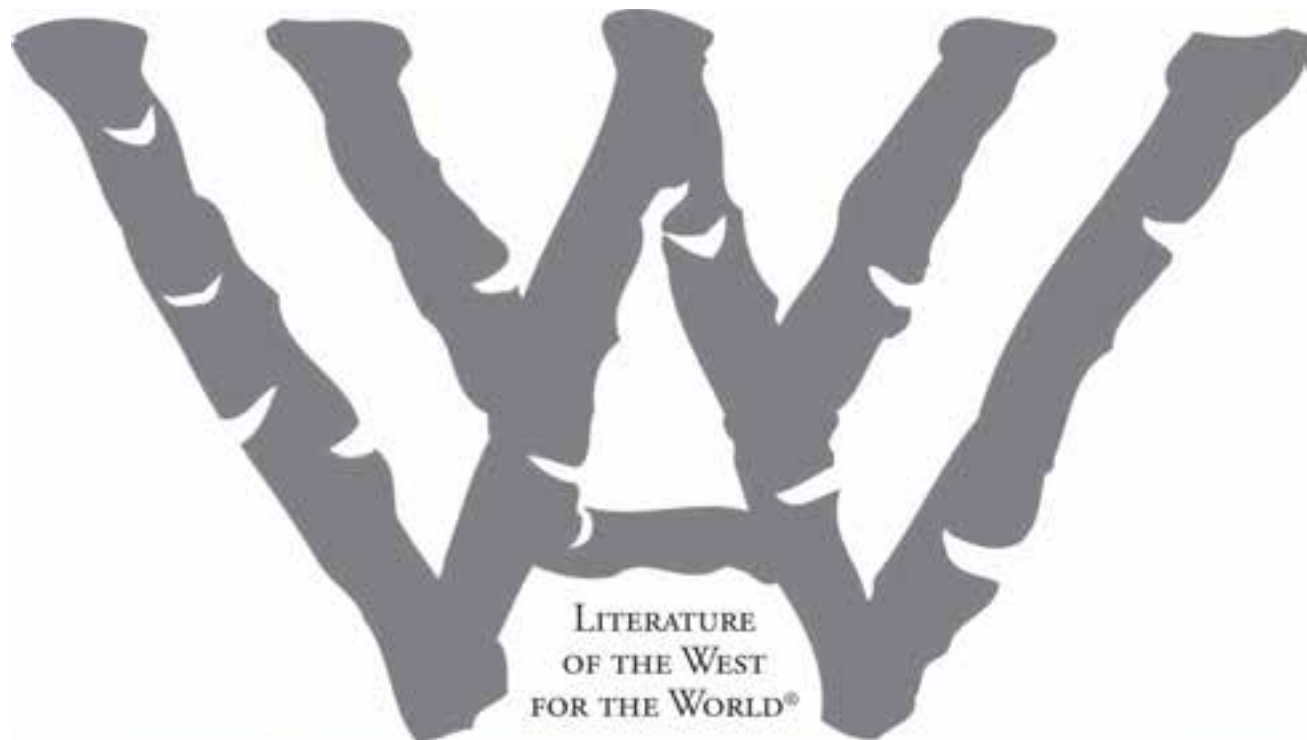
Casey was raised on the Cheyenne River and I was raised on the Bad River. My dad's brother was married to Casey's sister. Me and Casey grew up together. You know their whole family could ride broncs. Men and women. Casey ain't the only one. He's just the only one that left there. And the old man, John, was one hell'eva bronc rider.

There was another brother named *Short Log*. He

was my favorite. Frank Tibbs was his name. *Short Log*. A little bow-legged son-of-a-bitch. His legs was all bent around and he walked around funny like that.

It's a different world now, see. I worked for Casey's brother, Johnny Tibbs, and we broke horses for the government. Johnny done it for 25 years. I worked for him in 1951 the last year the government broke horses. 20 dollars a day and room and board. I got on 25 to 30 head a day. They were bronc sons-of-bitches. All you had to do was tame 'em down so you could ride 'em up and trot up back down a stockyard alley. For the Army. Them horses were not very broke. (*laughter*)

Kids like Casey and Billy Meyers rode broncs to school. Five miles. Slapping 'em over the eyeballs when they wanted 'em to turn one-way or the other. It was a



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Tibbs at left, Jim Shoulders in center.

different time. We learned to ride on them old meat-hook horses.

There was an old French Canadian guy there on the Cheyenne River name of Bullet Pierman. Old Bullet, he weighed 300 pounds. He had them meat-hook horses. They was a bunch of bad rascals and me and Casey learned to ride on 'em. They'd pitch, and you bet your bottom dollar they'd part your hair. They was bad sons-of-bitches on the ground.

We rode them horses to school. Twenty-four kids in a one room school and twenty-three of 'em road horseback to school. The other kid lived across the road, so he walked. One gal rode eight miles to school, 16 miles a day, and some days was 20 below zero, and she'd come on an old white horse. Different times, eh? Another little gal's horse got spooked by a jack rabbit and he bucked her off, and she got hung up in the stirrup, and he drug her all the way back home. Broke her arms and all.

**Casey Tibbs:** I'd start off every morning with a wild horse, and since I never knew what direction they'd take off in, I'd have to start out two or three hours early. When times were good my old man ran 2000 head of horses.

**Rusty Richards:** It's interesting for several reasons why Casey became an expert in his field. Consider the tremendous amount of rank bucking stock he climbed aboard. One year Albert Lopez paid him for breaking sixty head of horses. Once, in trying out horses for Ken and E.C. Roberts, Casey rode an incredible thirty-three head of bucking horses in one day.

**Jim Hannum:** We learned starting them colts. Some of them government horses we broke, were four or five years old. They didn't start horses 'til then. Four to seven years old. Solid colored horses. They did it different. They run a horse into a round corral and just neck 'em down, and forefoot 'em, choke 'em down, roll 'em around 'til he got down, roll him in a saddle.

Yeah, all summer long you ride him and he might not even be halter broke. And when he was caught he knew to stop. Didn't want no more. So if you was gonna work on one of them outfits and you couldn't ride him, well they'd put you to pitchin' hay or fixing a fence.

You toughened up and got 'em rode. I went to work for Johnny Tibbs. First horse bucked me off 34 times that first mornin'. And John come a riding up and he said, "I got more to do then keep catchin' your damn horse all mornin'." I toughened up.

**Rusty Richards:** It's almost unimaginable how many



brons Casey rode (early on). That he did so without much injury gives silent testimony to his great skill.

**Jim Hannum:** Horses have changed. They got horses bred today so athletic and smart. But they bred the grit out of 'em. Everything is a product of the environment. You take this horse that's been raised in a pen all his life, from the time he was a colt to the time you start him, he ain't never stepped on a rock. He ain't got no sole to his foot. He ain't been able to go but thirty feet and hit a fence, so he don't know how to travel.

A lot of things have changed. Back when they raised horses (in South Dakota) there was lots of country and there was lots of horses, and a mare would go off by herself to have her colt. And she'll stay with that colt maybe three days before she goes to water. Well, just think about that. A product of the environment. The first day that mare goes to water, that colt follows her to water. He went fifteen miles. Maybe further. He went further on his first day than the other horse (the modern horse in the pen) went in a year.

It's survival of the fittest. These modern horses don't have no sense of survival. He's thinkin' you're gonna take care of him all his life. Them older horses were smart enough not to drink too much water and colic themselves. These newer horses you're always callin' the vet, cause they got a bellyache.

**Casey Tibbs:** It was a godforsaken place so I took off from there. I left at age thirteen and broke horses for the Diamond A, a big New Mexican outfit, then a cook shot a foreman (for getting into the biscuits too early), which is a long story, and they wanted me to work on the fence crew, which I didn't want to do, so I drifted around some, and when I was fourteen or so I started hittin' the rodeo pretty fair, and after that I just sort of busted loose.

**Ernest Thayer:** *From 5,000 throats and more there rose a lusty yell,  
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell,  
It knocked upon the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,  
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.*

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## II Busting Loose: The Man Who Floated Bucking Horses

*When I nod  
and they throw the gate open to the same  
gravity, the same 8 ticks  
of the clock, number 244 and I  
will blow for better or worse  
from this chute – flesh and destiny  
up for grabs, a bride's bouquet  
pitched blind*

**Paul Zarzyski,**  
*All This Way For the Short Ride*

**Jim Hannum:** (Jim is pointing towards a wall of bucking horse photos in his ranch house.) See that picture of Casey? He's ridin' blindfolded for a thousand dollar bet, and he's looking over his shoulder and telling the guy who bet him to get his money ready. Yeah! Look at that!

**Childhood Friend:** I grew up with Casey, you know. He started winning bronc ridings right out of the eighth grade and went on the road with Billy Meyers. Another great bronc rider. (Meyers died in a car wreck.) Nobody ever told Casey to save money, or behave himself or nothin'. He just ran off with the wild bunch and never looked back, as long as the money rolled in.

**Rusty Richards:** Casey devised ways to take what he'd labeled a *mediocre horse* and make him look better (extra slack in the bucking rein, loose cinch to make the horse think he was winning, and full stroke spur licks) all this combined gave Casey the reputation for what became known as "floating" his horses. He had to ride on almost pure balance and agility. Many people in the rodeo

business today give Casey credit for being the first to full-stroke a saddle bronc.

**Winston Bruce:** Casey took it to the next level.

**Jim Hannum:** Those was a different kind of bucking horses back then in the 40s and 50s. Big rank horses. You can't ride rank horses the way some of these guys today ride these little blooper horses. They got their toes turned down like this and they're missing them all the way back, the stirrups are a hole too long and the rein is way up high. Yeah it's fine on them blooper horses, but when a big horse is giving you a thrashin' and jerking you and sashaying this way and that, you can't be liftin' and you got to let him pull you through it to have contact. You can't float them big rank horses.

**Pat Russell:** Casey was the best. A natural. There was also Gene Rambo, Enoch Walker, Winston Bruce, and Marty Wood. And great buckin' horses like *Scene Shifter* and *Wild Portugee*.

**Jim Hannum** (When asked: *how did Casey float those big, rank horses?*) You're talkin' about a different kind of individual. Casey rode them out of the ass of his pants. There aren't many of them guys come along who have that natural ability. It's just like Michael Jordan (*pro basketball*). He could jump up in the air and float on forever.

Well, Casey, I've seen horses jump plum out from under Casey and he'd just jump and stick them, and pull himself back to them. Like I said, he rode them out of the ass of his pants. There was only a few guys who could ride broncs like that, guys like Casey and Marty Wood.

**Casey Tibbs:** The name of the game is *try*.



### III Wide Open and Roaring – The King of the Practical Joke – The Man with the Hair Trigger Heart

*A man is seen in fragments,  
A scar, a limp, tattoos, and broken teeth  
Scratch the surface on most men out here  
And you'll find three men hiding underneath...  
Cowboys we are, cowboys we shall always be.*  
**Tom Russell, Hair Trigger Heart**

**Jim Hannum:** I travelled with Casey a few years. He never drove. He slept. He'd buy a pint of whiskey and pretend he was drinkin' it, so he'd tell us he was too drunk to drive. But he wasn't drinkin' much of it at all.

That son of a bitch, he wouldn't drive and he'd let you drive forever. You'd drive 'til you couldn't see no more, and finally if you made him take over, he'd pull out and buy another pint of whiskey and pretend to start suckin' on that whiskey, but he wouldn't really be drinking it, but he'd be swerving and swishing into the gravel, so we'd be worried and have to take back the wheel.

You travelled 60 to 80,000 miles a year in them little cars back then. Lincolns and Chevys and Studebakers. 80 miles an hour, just wide open and roaring.

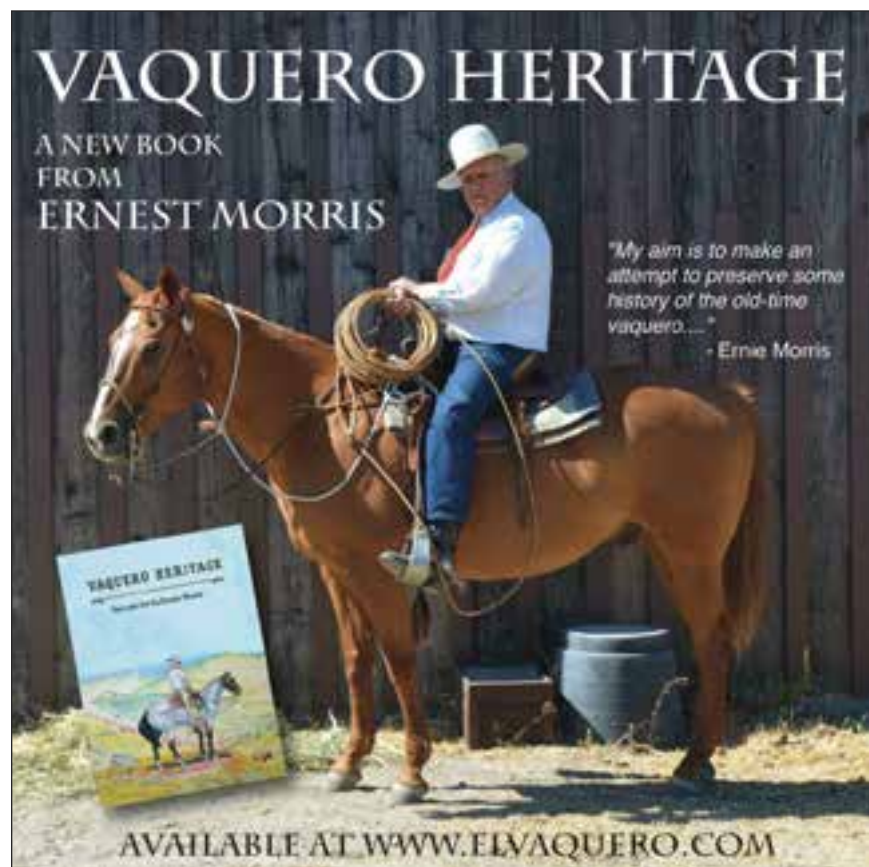
**Harry Tompkins:** If there was nothing going on, Casey would throw a firecracker at your feet.

**Tom Russell:** Casey was addicted to

practical jokes. There's no better word for it. *Addicted*. Like any addict he sometimes blurred the line between a good old practical joke on your buddies and something that was over-the-line dangerous. Caught up in the adrenalin rush of a scheme, the jokes could get out of hand.

**Glen Orhlin:** Casey was pretty much always involved with the business of bein' Casey.

**Jim Aplan:** We'd been out at the ranch playing with dynamite and then drinkin in the Hopscotch bar. Billy Meyers and Jim Hannum decide they're gonna blow up the bank. I was startin' to sober up real fast, cause I knew they do it, and anybody knows 'em knows they would do it. We had a lot of wild guys in Fort Pierre. You know they had Casey on the Tonight Show eating a glass?



**Jim Hannum:** How do you eat a glass? You just bite a chunk out and start chewin' that's how. With your teeth. I just used it as intimidation when they told me I was cut-off at a bar. There were nine bars on one street in Ft Pierre where we grew up. The Hopscotch, and the Indian bar was called the Snake Pit. The Indians got off the reservation and they'd come to town. The Sioux was some good bronc riders. There was one guy named Johnny Iron Lightning. That kid rode a bronc called Broken Bones that Casey could never get covered. Johnny got kicked in the face by a horse so he had a hair lip. Talked funny. Tough bronc riders. At the Snake Pit.

**Tom Russell:** My sister in law Claudia gave me a bunch of old magazines Casey was in. He was on the cover of the June 1956 issue of *Western Horseman*. I opened to the article and out falls an old newspaper clipping someone had stuck in there. It shows a photo of Casey in a hospital bed, recovering from *self-inflicted abdominal knife wounds*.

Casey had fired a blank gun into a phone booth where Jim Shoulders was talking to his wife, and Shoulders was so pissed off he pulled out a knife and jammed it into Casey's gut. Severe wounds. Casey took the rap and told the police they were *self-inflicted* wounds. He and Shoulders eventually became friends again.

**Casey Tibbs:** I had it coming. My morbid sense of humor had finally caught up with me

**Childhood Friend:** He never grew up. When the money dried up he was living off women and trick horses. He died penniless. He could have made money in Hollywood but he was always playin' practical jokes at the wrong time. He almost killed a lot of people with his practical jokes. Never grew up. Nobody ever really figured out how he could ride broncs so well – he just

did it. He always landed on his feet like a cat. Until one day, you know, you don't land on your feet.

**Tom Russell:** The reverse side of it was Casey went out of his way to visit sick kids and do charity work and lend money to broke bronc riders. He was a big-hearted kid for sure.

#### IV **Captain Midnight and his Trick Horse – actor, drinker, gambler, stunt man, and rodeo producer.**

*His boots were purple, the Cadillac was purple  
The sky was 1950s Blue  
Green was the color of the greenback dollar  
And he rode those broncs with a hoop and a holler  
Casey you're a Rainbow rider...*

**Casey Tibbs,  
Ian Tyson**

**Jim Hannum:** Casey was trying to quit rodeo in 1957 and he became Captain Midnight, cause he had this trick horse named *Midnight*. And he finally decided that wasn't gonna work and he came back and won the world in '59. The last time.

**Pat Russell:** It was about 1959 or '60. Andy Jauregui gave Casey about 40 head of horses. So Casey put on about five rodeos at Devonshire Downs. He was the promoter. He used to take his introduction on a little saddle bronc named Johnny Cake. He was a longhaired little brown horse who just jumped and kicked and Casey would just spur and drag the fur off of him. He could float him forever.

The announcer would say, "Here's your rodeo producer, Casey Tibbs." And he'd come out of the chute on that little bronc and jump off and land on his feet





after a few bucks and tip his hat.

One time Johnny Cake got crippled and I told Casey there's this black mare that bucks pretty good, so he uses the black mare for his intro. Now Casey was gettin' a belly on him, he was fat and out of shape, and this mare really bucked and got Casey standing up in his left stirrup. Casey took the bucking rein, threw it over the horse's nose, when she was in the air and he was gettin' bucked off. He pulled the rein over her neck and when she hit the ground he cradled her head in his arm, took the flank off, took the saddle off, let her up and tipped his hat.

I never seen anything like it. Slim Pickens was there – Slim said “I never in my life seen anything like that.”

**Harry Tompkins:** In Fort Worth once they introduced Casey and he came out on that buckin' horse Johnny Cake. It was the classiest ride. When he jumped off he landed on his feet and he held the bronc rein. He worked the horse in a circle just like he was on a long line, then he threw the rein to Slim Pickens and took off his hat and bowed as he left the arena. The applause just rained down.

**Tom Russell:** The director Budd Boetticher lured Casey back into the film business. When Boetticher died I picked up a box of his memorabilia at an auction. Stacks of signed photos from Anthony Quinn, Gilbert Roland, Audie Murphy, and Casey. They were all running around together. Casey was doing films, commercials, and Levi's magazine ads. He was in every Western magazine you opened up.

Then there was Casey's documentary *Born to Buck* where he swims a herd of horses across a river in South Dakota and almost drowns. Around 1977 Casey helped invent *Team Rodeo* (which didn't fly) where towns had different rodeo teams. He got Steve Ford, President Ford's son, involved.

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**Steve Ford:** Team rodeo was a concept they came up with to make rodeo a team sport like football. Casey was a coach. One night in Salt Lake City one of our bronc riders from Canada couldn't show, so we were short a man.

Casey was drinkin' quite a bit back then and I think he was drinkin' before the rodeo. And he said, "Aw, hell! I'll just ride him!" He was listed as a player/coach so they could substitute him in the bronc riding. Here he was, thirty pounds overweight, drinking, and he hadn't been on a bucking horse in probably ten years.

He borrowed some guy's saddle, and he got some spurs and another guy's chaps. He takes his hat off and spits in it, then pulls his hat back on and calls for the gate. The gate opens, and for the first couple of jumps no one knows who's gonna get the best of it. Everybody's holding their breath, but about the third jump out, Casey starts reaching and spurring that bronc like it was fifteen years earlier. I mean it was just beautiful! He spurred the hell out of that horse.

He made the buzzer and it was a good ride, but he was feeling so good that he waved the pickup men away, and started fanning his horse with his hat. Well he was gonna jump off like he used to in the old days, and he jerked the flank strap off. But when he went to bail off the horse ducked to the right on him.

It just stuck him in the ground like a post. I thought he'd really hurt himself. We rubbed liniment on him for about three days – but he rode the hair off that horse.

**Rusty Richards:** (concerning Casey's drinking) At this point (1983) the old champion spirit rose again in Casey and he began to sail with the A.A. program.

**Casey Tibbs:** I went into A.A. to save my ass, but I found out that my ass was connected to my soul.

## V When the Legends Die – The Last Go Round

*We drank the rivers, we rode the twisters  
We tumbled down to the ground  
But we'll rake and ride, we'll spin to Glory  
On our last go round...*

**Rosalie Sorrels, *My Last Go Round***

*When the legends die, the dream ends.  
When the dream ends, there is no greatness.*

**Hal Borland, *When the Legends Die***

**Tom Russell:** Thirty years after meeting Casey at the racetrack I was living in a storefront in Brooklyn. Driving a taxi and playing honkytonk music. I heard Casey was hurting, fighting a terminal sickness in San Diego, where he was a "greeter," more or less, at a new ranch-housing development. I couldn't believe it. It was like hearing Joe Louis ended up as a greeter at a Casino in Las Vegas. I guess Casey was broke.

I wrote him a note about how much it meant to me to meet him when I was a kid. He sent me back a card and a signed photo of himself riding a bronc called *Easy Money*, high above a pole corral in South Dakota. Full





circle. It's the greatest bronc photo of all time. "Luck to Tom Russell," he said. Damn. He had no self-pity in him. He was all heart right to the end.

**Casey:** I want to send a word out to all you who heard I was on the down side. I'm gettin' better every day, and if you want to say a prayer to my purple angels you can do that, but I'm gonna make it.

**Jim Shoulders:** Back then a lot of the media wouldn't have talked about rodeo if it wasn't for Casey. He did a lot for rodeo. He dressed the part. He lived up to whatever he said.

**Tom Russell:** Casey Tibbs died in front of a television while watching the Super Bowl in January, 1990. He probably had a bet on the game.

Inscribed on Casey's grave was a quote from his last speech at the Rodeo Hall of Fame: "Thanks for makin' me look good...Hell, I *was* good."

In Congress on Monday, February 5, 1990, Congressman Duncan Hunter stood up and read this into *The Congressional Record*: "Mr. Speaker, one of America's greatest champions, Casey Tibbs, died this week in California. He will be greatly missed by all of us who treasure America's heritage of the Wild West cowboy."

**Casey Tibbs:** I was just another cowboy who done the best he could. I was blessed. And for all you youngsters that's gonna be a world champion, never leave home for second. Adios.



\*\*\*\*\*

**Note:** Rusty Richards' quotes, some Casey quotes, and the Steve Ford quote, taken from Rusty's fine book: *Casey Tibbs: Born to Ride*. Hard cover copies autographed by Rusty available at: [rustyrichards.com](http://rustyrichards.com)

Jim Hannum quotes were taken from our afternoon conversation at his ranch. Jim Aplan quote from the book: *Badlands: An Oral History of Rodeo – Doug and Kathy Jory*. Several quotes taken from Ivan Daines' interview with Casey, 1989, at The Rodeo Hall of Fame.

Tom Russell's Ballad of the West, *The Rose of Roscrae*, will be released April 2015. All Tom Russell tour dates, CDs, books and art available: [www.tomrussell.com](http://www.tomrussell.com)

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## YOUR HORSE'S FEET, A SERIES

# The Perfect Shoeing

By Pete Healey, APF

**W**hat is the perfect shoeing job? When you get your horse or horses shod, do you expect the perfect job? I have strived to perform the perfect shoeing but the closest I've come was maybe really good. To think I could do the perfect shoeing would be extremely arrogant considering I am working on a complex organ developed and refined over millions of years of evolution. To do the perfect job, one would need a perfect foot under the perfect leg, which is attached to the perfect horse.

Nobody should expect a perfect job but they should expect the best the farrier can do taking into consideration his or her skill level and how the horse is presented to them, both physically and mentally. It's very hard to do a quality job on a horse that can't stand still or hold their feet up, but it is amazing how many people expect that to happen.

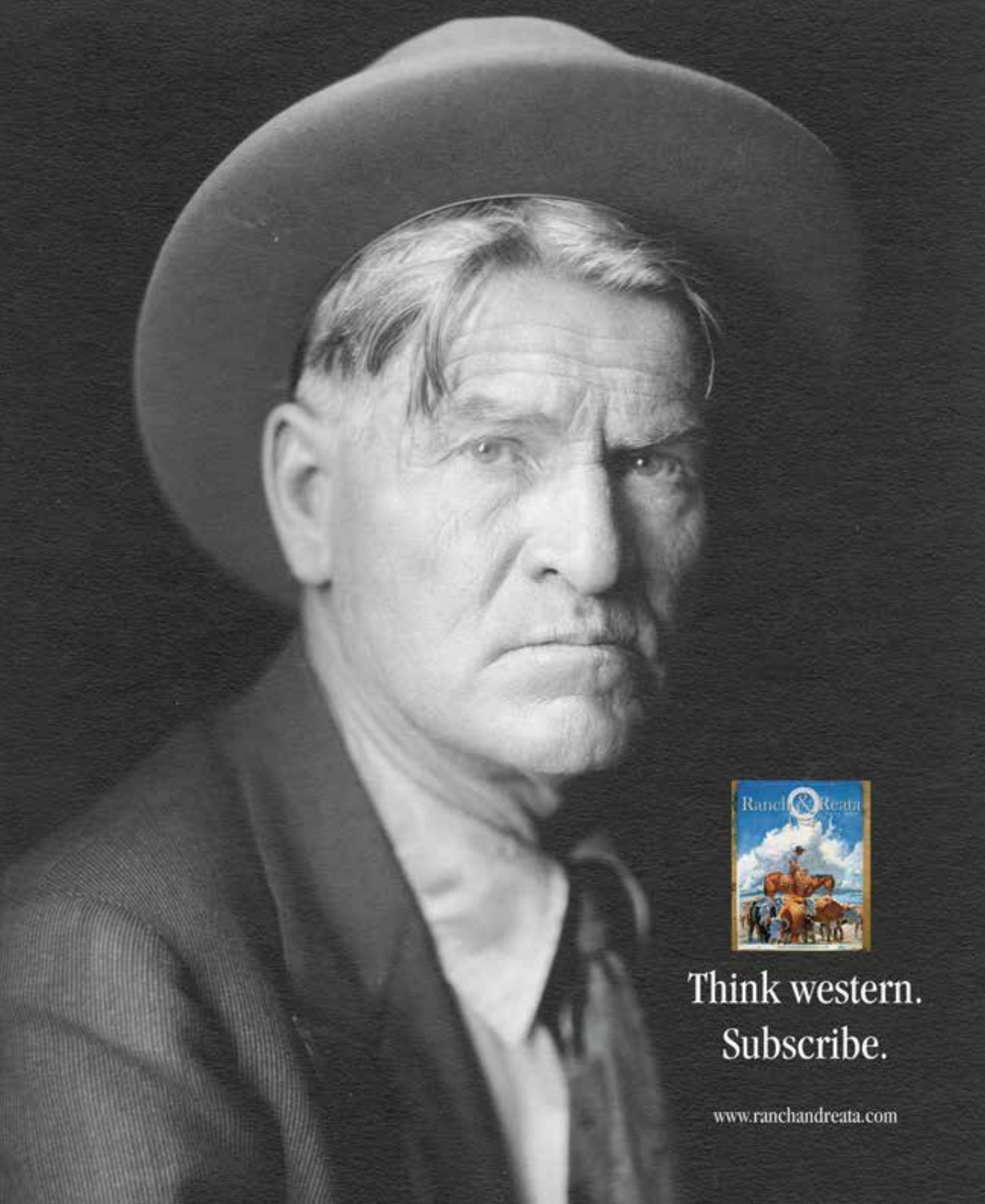
Some people think the more expensive shoer produces the better job but this is not necessarily true. Often demographics dictate the price of the job. I have seen horses that have had a \$400 shoeing with the same biomechanical problems as a horse with a \$100 shoeing. A fancy shoeing rig or a vet degree doesn't always mean a superior job either.

The key to the perfect shoeing is having a horse that doesn't need one. A really good-footed horse may not need shoes or at least has the feet that can put up with mechanical imbalances without falling apart. Beyond traction or protection the key element to trimming and shoeing is to produce equilibrium to the organ so it functions properly. Every trimming or shoeing has an expiration date; it could be six weeks, four weeks or the day it was done. The mechanics of the trim or shoeing affects the biomechanics of the horse. Biomechanics are the mechanical laws relating to the movement and structure of living organisms. One of the biggest factors affecting the biomechanics of the foot is the horse itself, conformation. Mismatched feet always have mismatched limbs. The long low angled foot usually has a low degree bone angle. The high foot usually has a tight flexor muscle. The foot that is misshaped from side to side and doesn't land flat usually sits under a crooked leg. A lot of these conformational imbalances can be managed but not miraculously fixed.

There is still a lot of misconception in the industry about the form and function of the equine foot. As a farrier this can be very frustrating but also exciting and interesting because it offers up an opportunity to learn and teach. We all need a lot of learning; the bottom denominator to the perfect shoeing is education but in all areas of the industry; breeders, owners, trainers, veterinarians and farriers.

Ray Hunt said "You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear but you can make a sow's ear purse that can hold just as much money as a silk one." Until next time, [www.balancedbreakover.com](http://www.balancedbreakover.com).





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# Waddie, Mid-Career

Cowboy poet Waddie Mitchell enjoys a renewed addiction to his craft.

By Hal Cannon

Waddie Mitchell has a new book of poems and it's a beauty, his most comprehensive collection yet, and coming 20 years since his last book. "I always hated the idea of putting out a book," Waddie recently told me. When I asked why, he replied, "Because it's so hard for me to consider my poetry *done*."

Waddie has recorded many CDs of poetry but, for him, a recording is about the performance, the recitation. Words on a page – that's different. They're permanent, timeless. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, Waddie endlessly fiddles with his poems, never quite satisfied.

It's not the ideas that are perpetually unsettled, nor the structures of his poems, often not even the words. It's the smallest things – syllables and how they build Waddie's desired structure of meter and rhyme. It's the craft of the poem that keeps him chipping away. And, unlike a handcrafted saddle, a poem isn't hard to undo. The poem is malleable. It can be taken apart anytime and put back together with new parts.

Waddie is always at work on new poems, several at once. This was not always the case. When I first knew him, he recited classic cowboy poems. That love of the classics remains, but he's best known today for his original works. The first original poems I saw from

Waddie came on homemade, illustrated Christmas cards he posted each year when he was a working buckaroo in northern Nevada. Many of us on that mailing list still treasure those homespun cards. He was encouraged to publish those Christmas stories in verse, and that became his first book of poetry, a slim volume published in 1987.

When I began collecting poems for my first anthology, *Cowboy Poetry: A Gathering*, I remember being shocked at how different the poems I loved so much, as recited by cowboys, looked when they were transcribed and put on the page. It was a challenge to select poems that had both the honesty and true-to-life experience evident in the telling and the craft that allowed them to hold up on the page. When you read *One Hundred Poems*, that's what jumps out immediately. Waddie could read a phone book and make it sound interesting, but there's a leap of faith between the page and the voice. Waddie's poems take that leap beautifully.

I asked Waddie about his writing process. He explained that he first identifies the story or philosophy he wants to impart. Then, he says, "I have to craft the storyline in my head. I have to figure out what's the start and what's the end result. How many phases is it going to take to get there? When I've got that figured out, I've got a front, I've got a middle, I've got a back, and I'm



photo by A.J. Mangum

Waddie Mitchell performing at the Warehouse Theater, at Colorado Springs' Western Jubilee Recording Company.

excited. Then it becomes a crossword puzzle. I find what will fit and the fastest way to get there, but still have the feeling of being thoughtful, laid back." Good endings, he added, have to be strong, but don't have to be abrupt, like a punch line. An ending should instead sit *just right*, like the aftertaste of a fine wine.

Writing poetry, for Waddie, is an addiction. "It's getting worse," he says. "I wake up at six a.m. and stop working at midnight. Then I get up and do it again until I have that story. It's then I cut back to eight or 10 hours a day, editing and refining."

After 30-plus years as a professional entertainer, Waddie has heard what his performances and the poetry and music of other cowboys mean to audiences. "People

come up and say this is life-changing," he says. "They thought we weren't looking for anything, but when they found this, they realized they'd been looking for it all their lives."

Given such revelations, there must be serious external pressure for artists of Waddie's caliber to produce new and meaningful work. But there is also an internal pressure that grows as artists get to a certain age. They begin to realize what it means to have a "life's work." And life, unfortunately, is finite.

Waddie and I are both in our mid-60s. Our mutual friend William Matthews, who painted the wonderful portrait of Waddie on the cover of *One Hundred Poems*, is about our age. The Denver Art Museum recently

mounted a retrospective of Willy's work. He describes this collection as a view of his art up to mid-career. I like the idea that we're all in *mid-career*. And that's how Waddie's collection of poems feels: mature, but ongoing.

Three years ago, I retired from the Western Folklife Center in Elko. I told folks I was retooling, rather than retiring. What I didn't realize was that, about the same time, Waddie was retooling as well. "I've found a new love of writing," he recently confided. "It was a chore for years. I never felt I had time. Now I've gotten addicted to the adrenaline it gives me."

All this started about the time I talked him into touring Australia with me. It was my own first act of retooling. We went off on a monthlong adventure, performing and exploring. We rented a car, and I did most of the driving. Waddie's dear wife, Lisa, and my wife, Teresa, helped me pass the long Outback drives with conversation. Waddie, on the other hand, stayed engrossed in his iPad, writing and editing poetry. This was a new Waddie. I knew he was prolific, but I had no idea he had such a work ethic when it came to writing.

Waddie has always had a philosophical bent, and that's where many of his poems take him these days. I believe people are looking for stories and words that ground them, that put them in touch with common sense sorely lacking in our confused world. Rather than hitting you over the head with prescriptions for life, Waddie's poems tell us stories that give gentle guidance. Many are parables, a time-tested way to impart wisdom.

I asked Waddie where he sees his career and life going. He started his answer by revealing how lucky he feels to have been granted a life of entertaining people. He's also grateful for being in on the ground floor, a founder, of two important cowboy revivals, the cowboy poetry movement and the ranch rodeo movement.

Waddie has been entertaining people, writing poetry, and writing the words for top-notch cowboy

songs for over 30 years. He's traveled all over the world. He loves exploring with his beloved Lisa. He has friends everywhere. He's built an incredible home on a nice chunk of land in northern Nevada, close to where he grew up. Lisa has convinced him that when it gets cold in Nevada, there are warmer places to hide out. "How could I want more?" Waddie asks. "I don't want to think about not doing this. It's not only fun. It's my way of making friends and seeing the world."

*One Hundred Poems* is nothing but poetry – no forward, no blurbs from famous people, no explanations. It's literally 100 poems bookended by a lovely William Matthews cover portrait. The first 75 poems, Waddie says, were easy to pick, then the process became difficult. His quandary: stick with cowboy stuff or go with philosophical material that's always interested him? The end result is a nice blend, with "a good opening, a good closing."

The book's hundred works had already been selected when Waddie began writing a new poem that, in the end, he wanted to add. So, if you're counting, there are actually 101 poems in *One Hundred Poems*, the final addition being "Another Day," written about Waddie's friends, principally fellow performers Don Edwards and Michael Martin Murphey. The poem is a thoughtful glimpse into the performer's life.

Waddie's most recent poem, though, written since *One Hundred Poems*, is titled "On Quitting the Road," and is a commentary on Baxter Black's recent decision to take a hiatus from speaking appearances. Baxter makes it clear on his Web site that he'll continue writing and producing. Waddie and Baxter have, arguably, introduced cowboy poetry to more people than any other poets in the history of the tradition. My hat's off to Waddie, for his new book, and to Baxter, for all the reasons Waddie points out in "On Quitting the Road," published here for the first time:





## On Quitting the Road

He was the first, we watched him  
Blaze through doors and over waves  
Exposing us to multitudes  
And setting ample stage

New crowds left liking country folk  
His wisdom hit a chord  
His fans can tell he's been there  
Did and seen it all before

We've been in wrecks he rhymes about  
We ride his train of thought  
His characters are friends we know  
His set up is the art

He takes on touchy issues  
Waxing sage with charm and wit  
Then weaves the tales we see and smell  
That tickle us to fits

His columns are a bright spot  
In the mags and rags we read  
His gift of verb and metaphor  
Leave pictures with no need

His mind has long been loping  
In a twistful, wistful way  
And he makes the world look better  
With the things he has to say

He leads imagination  
Where the real and almost touch  
Then makes sure the combination  
Doesn't clarify too much

This country had Will Rogers  
As a force to lean upon  
And with his death a hole was left  
'Til this guy came along

He makes us proud to be us  
Through his take on common folk  
And treats the same the millionaire  
As ranch hand down and broke

Word's out he's out to lighten load  
The road won't be the same  
The whole of us who've seen him live  
Will miss what brought him fame

He'll still do radio and columns  
As a fix to ease our loss  
And we'll see him on our TVs  
His rock never gathers moss

But farm bureaus and cattlemen,  
And festivals will lack  
The western states ambassador  
The master, Baxter Black

©2015 Waddie Mitchell



[http://youtu.be/-l8IsaovF\\_M](http://youtu.be/-l8IsaovF_M)  
Waddie Mitchell partners with Don Edwards and  
Cowboy Celtic in this Western Folklife Center video

Hal Cannon is a folklorist, musician and journalist living in Utah.

# The West That Is

With his novel *Painted Horses*, Montana writer Malcolm Brooks puts a new spin on the mythology of the American West.

by Melissa Mylchreest

The tradition of western literature is longstanding in America, spanning from Owen Wister's *The Virginian* and Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* to Larry McMurtry's unforgettable *Lonesome Dove* and Cormac McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses*. Household names, these writers tapped into the part of the human psyche that longs for adventure and adversity, stories of self-reliance and survival out beyond the leading edge of civilization, where men are men, the land is ripe for the taking, and the white hats always best the black hats at the end of the day.

Almost by definition, a western contains horses and laconic cowboys, wide-open range, Indians and outlaws. But what happens when a writer decides the world these stories represent is only a small sliver of what the West is about? What if that writer decides to pen a western that contains all those iconic pieces, but also casts as its protagonist an upstart, East Coast anthropologist, who happens to be a 23-year-old woman? What if it brings its reader far beyond the geographic and temporal scope of the traditional western setting – to World War II Europe, to ancient Rome, to the cultural landscape in Montana 10,000 years ago?

What then? Can such a book still be considered a western? And perhaps just as intriguingly, who is it that would write such a book?

“The people who think this book is going to be a straight-up western are really pissed off that it’s not,” says Malcolm Brooks. “I wanted to put the western experience on the continuum of the whole vast, great, migratory human experience.”

Seriously, who is this guy?

Taking a swig from his pint glass and settling back in his chair at a bustling Montana brewery, Brooks blends in with many of the other patrons: worn jeans, plaid shirt, battered ball cap and work boots. Wiry and fit, mid-40s, he wears glasses and a perpetual wry smirk, as though the world has just dished up an unexpected but delightful surprise. And in a way, it has. His first novel, *Painted Horses*, is currently taking the literary world by storm: It’s been listed on Amazon’s 100 Best Books of 2014, lauded by Barnes & Noble, and favorably reviewed by just about every major newspaper in the country.

Brooks is as unlikely a hero as the characters in his novel, rocketing out of anonymity and into the national spotlight in a matter of months, and in many ways, he’s just as complicated and contradictory as the great, vast, messy realities of the political, geographic and social landscapes he writes about. A carpenter by trade, he’ll gladly frame your house, fix your electrical problems, and install your trim. But he’ll also talk about

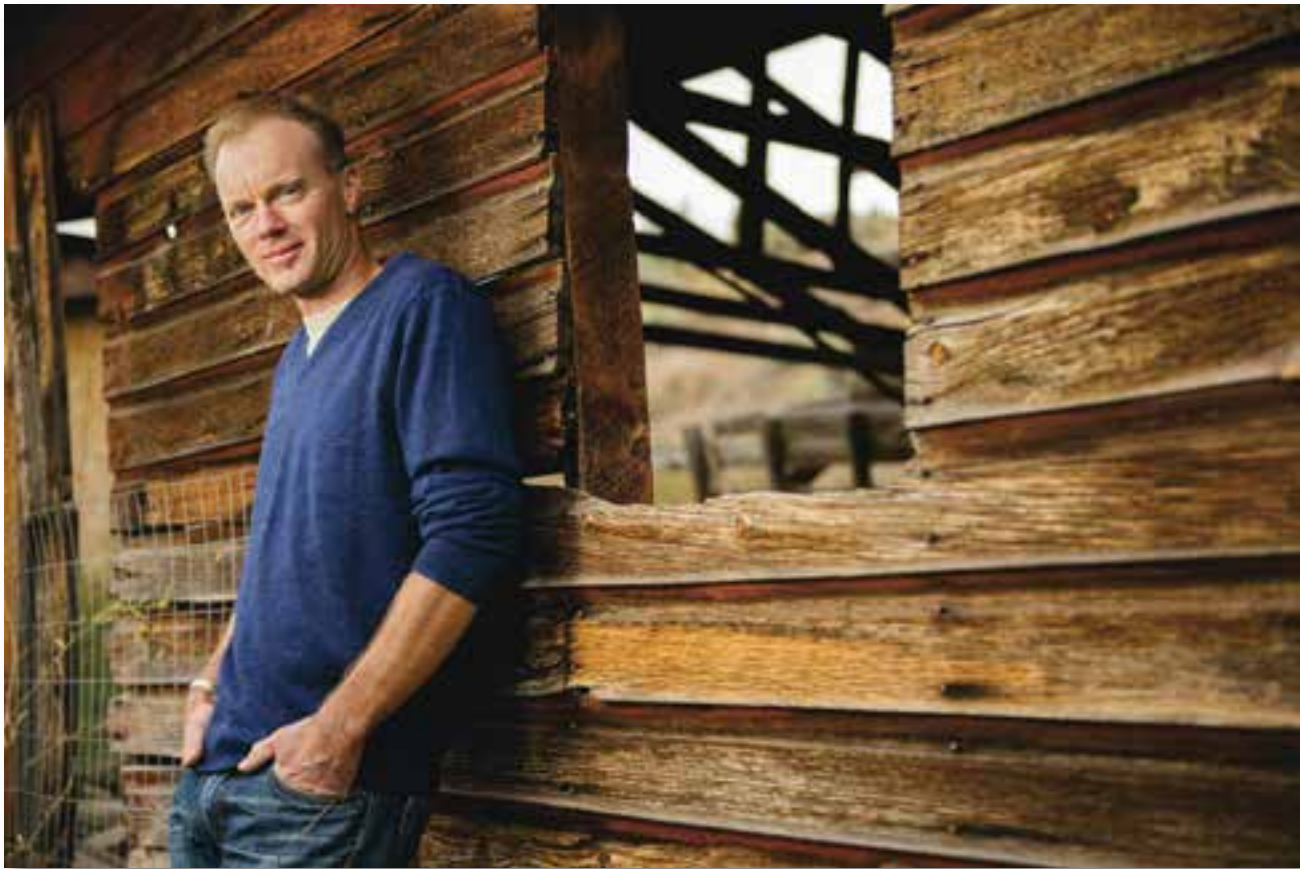


photo by Jeremy Luggio

Malcolm Brooks, author of the novel *Painted Horses*.

contemporary trends in literary fiction, and sling around big words like “polymath” (which he is) and “post-structuralist” (which he’s not), and bemoan the fact that nobody knows the correct usage of the words “lay” and “lie.” He’ll sincerely compliment you on your scarf, and in the very next sentence swear like a sailor. He can hold his own in a room full of publishing’s top muckety-mucks, but would prefer to spend his time hunting birds and big game in the wide-open of eastern Montana. He’s enthralled by old guns and saddles, likes to ski and cook. He’s a self-proclaimed hopeless romantic. He adores women. He loves horses. His primary inspirations include Thomas McGuane and the Beatles.

In many ways, Brooks is the perfect person to write

a nontraditional western, one that reflects the West of our imagination as well as the one that exists in reality. “I really embrace the mythology of the American West,” he says, “but I accept that it’s only one aspect of the whole truth. Yet it’s a truth that was so formative for me that I simply cannot dispense with it. It’s part and parcel of who I am.”

He credits a few things – books, horses and the lure of the West – with helping him endure a difficult childhood. Raised by evangelical Christians in New Jersey, he knew from an early age he didn’t believe in the things he was being taught. “It was this anti-intellectual, anti-popular culture environment, but somehow I knew there was more to the world than end-times prophecy

and church parking lots and jello casseroles,” he says. He had little contact with the outside world – no public school, no TV – so he devoted his time to horses (his grandparents had a farm, and his mother owned a Palomino), and books, which in turn compelled him to try his hand at writing. “I wanted to see the world, and I knew that my surest bet for getting to do that was to write my way into it. Because writing might get me sent to Europe or Africa. I thought I might be able to go see something really cool because I have this ability to put words on the page.”

He didn’t make it to Europe or Africa, but he did wind up in southern California when the family moved. His father took a position as a pastor in a hospital, but was unprepared for the toll that working in a trauma ward would take on him. “He’d come home at the end of the day and all he’d want to do was watch baseball on TV. So we got cable. We went from zero to 100 like that,” Brooks says, snapping his fingers and referencing his family’s sudden immersion in the world of pop culture. “I was 12 years old and suddenly, here on the screen, was the world I always knew existed.”

After a move to rural northern California – which further cemented his infatuation with the West – Brooks’ love of writing took off. His eighth-grade teacher, to whom *Painted Horses* is dedicated, gave him a copy of *Lonesome Dove* as a graduation present, a gift Brooks says changed his life. “I read it three times my freshman year of high school, because I had a two-hour bus ride each direction,” he says. “It was like nothing I’d ever encountered before on the page. I was so floored

that a book could be like *that*.”

As the years passed and he continued to write – he has a number of complete, unpublished books filed away – he also learned carpentry from his father and

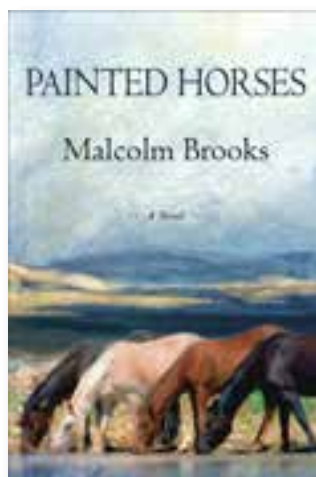
found it a decent way to make a living. In his early twenties he relented to his lifelong desire to live in Montana, the place that to him represented the “real” West, the one that existed in McGuane’s and McMurtry’s and Harrison’s novels.

After arriving, though, he realized Montana was just as complicated as everywhere else he’d lived, and that the myth of the West was largely that – a myth. But it was one that continued to resonate with him, just as it does with so many others, and with good reason. He took it upon himself to write a novel that took cues from the mythology, but also encompassed a broader view of the West and our fascination with it.

“The myth of the American West is a continuation of really ancient myths.

Migration and the idea of a frontier have always been central to the human condition. It’s archetypal,” he says. “All of humanity is a diaspora. There’s always been a personality type that wants to go see what’s on the other side of something, whether it’s Columbus or the people who came across Beringia or came out onto the savannah. And it’s as ancient as the human psyche. I wanted to take the stereotypical genre of a western story, and install it in the continuum of a human story.”

At nearly 400 pages, *Painted Horses* casts its net wide. “I knew I needed to go big or go home, so I started taking all this stuff that I was really interested in, and throwing it all together,” Brooks says. “I’d freak myself



With *Painted Horses*, Brooks “wanted to put the western experience on the continuum of the whole vast, great, migratory human experience.”



out all the time, wondering, is there a thread to this? Or do I just have a random array of stuff, and it's all whirling around in a blender, and the lid's about to pop off and it's going to go flying everywhere?"

The book is set in the 1950s and follows the path of Catherine Lemay, a young archaeologist fresh out of school, hired to complete a survey of a Montana canyon slated to be the future home of a massive dam. Precocious, determined, and entirely out of her element, Catherine serves as the reader's guide into unfamiliar territory: the long history of human settlement in the West, the conflicting priorities within the Crow tribe, the intimidating landscape and its denizens. We also meet John H, a complex and intriguing character who is a horseman, a hermit, a world traveler, a soldier who went AWOL, and an exceptionally talented artist who taps into humanity's deepest and oldest aesthetic traditions. The rest of the book is populated by Basque shepherders and horse thieves, corporate executives and thugs, sassy teenagers and hardworking rural Montanans, London archaeologists and East Coast sophisticates. There is lust and love and death and wonder and humor. And horses. If nothing else, this is a book about horses.

"In American culture and the myth of the West in particular, the symbiosis between man and horse reached its absolute zenith. Whether it's the horseman or the cowboy or the Comanche or the Crow, man and horse are this absolute fixture," Brooks says. "And it's the continuation of what's been going on in civilization for thousands of years. The horse has allowed humanity to reach heretofore unknown places. And really, horses are transportation in more ways than one. They're literal,

physical transport, but they're also a kind of mystical transport. There's a certain beautiful weirdness to harnessing an animal's abilities and fusing with that. We become a centaur, essentially."

There's a certain beautiful weirdness, too, to hearing these thoughts emerge from a humble, slightly astonished Montana carpenter, who spent the past decade mulling over and then crafting a novel that corrals a thousand disparate pieces of the human experience into a coherent and resonant whole. The result is a book and a person that speak not just to the romantic, idealized West we imagine, but to the West – and the world – that actually is.



<http://youtu.be/-KCZC5j4mvmk>  
Malcolm Brooks discusses *Painted Horses* in this video from his publisher, Grove Atlantic.

Melissa Mylchreest is a writer living in Montana.

Learn more about Malcolm Brooks and his novel, *Painted Horses*, at [www.malcolmbrooks.net](http://www.malcolmbrooks.net)



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## A VISIT WITH BUCK BRANNAMAN

# Battling Our Dark-Side

**I**t was about the middle of November this past year, I had just gotten home from being on the road and finished my last clinic for 2014 when, out of the blue, I received a phone call from a District Attorney in the Midland/Odessa area of Texas. After exchanging pleasantries; she asked me if I would be willing to help her on an animal abuse case. I had been home only a couple of days and I told her, “Well, number one I’m home very little with my family so it’s a pretty precious time to me, and number two, I just don’t normally get involved in other folks’ legal actions.” And yet she pressed on, “Well, I need you as an expert on this unusual case regarding what are acceptable and proper training approaches and you are the expert.” So, reluctantly, I asked, “Ok, what is the case?” And so she told me the story about this individual, (who will remain unnamed) that was working with a young horse, and apparently wasn’t getting results – wasn’t able to get the horse to lead. He was so frustrated, he had tried to make him lead by hooking him to the back of a four wheeler and – long story short – ended up dragging the young horse on his side after the horse had pulled back

and fallen. If that wasn’t enough, as the horse was being dragged along – apparently as motivation – the individual’s dog attacked the horse while being dragged and just about tore his ear off. After a bit the individual tried to make the horse get up by beating him with a long polo mallet. Still the horse wouldn’t get up so the guy poured water down his ears...it went on and on. If all this was true, it was pretty barbaric.

So after hearing the story, I had no choice, and before I could really think, I said, “Yes, I will come down and testify for you.” So she told me it would only be for a day and she would arrange transportation for me. I said OK and she said she would get back to me. And that set me to thinking about how just maybe this was an opportunity for me to do some real good. It was obvious that through my testimony I wasn’t going to approve the “training” things I had heard.

My family agreed I should go, and I also spoke to my foster mother about it. She taught me you never give up. You try to help people, to help themselves. I told her that I hoped I could come up with the right things to say that might make a real change within this individual



photo courtesy Buck Brannaman by Monica Adams



– regardless of whether he goes to jail or is fined or whatever his punishment is – if there was any. I had this feeling that I was going down there and could do more than just testify.

So, flash forward a couple of weeks and there I was in Texas for my testimony. And through the process of the questioning by the district attorney and the cross examination by the defense attorney, I think it became clear to everybody that this fellow's approach was not how you work with young horses. They clearly understood that it's just not acceptable – whether you subscribe to the horsemanship of Ray Hunt or Tom Dorrance or some other kind, that kind of behavior is barbaric and simply not acceptable. This was not the way to treat any animal.

By the time we got through everything, and I had wrapped up my testimony, they asked me if I had anything else to say. So I looked at the defendant – who turned out to be older than I had figured – and thought, you know, he's too old to spend a bunch of time in jail. So I told him that I had labored quite a bit over what I

might say to him if I got the opportunity. So looking right at him, I just started in, "I hope I am not stepping out of line here in court, but I might not get this opportunity again. I spoke to my 91-year old foster mother about you and what I might say if this opportunity arose, and I hoped the words would come that could help you to change your heart and help you realize what you had done and that it was wrong. And that those words would inspire you to become something different than what you are. Because I don't believe that you want to be the way you are. I don't approve of what you did and I am sorry for whatever demons you

have in you. The best thing I can tell you, friend, is that I will pray for your heart to change, as the only thing that can change you is the Holy Spirit. You can become something different. Good luck to you."

With that, I walked out of the court and was shaking hands and visiting with some of the district attorneys and sheriffs in the hallway and during all that, the individual who was on trial and his attorney walked right up to me. His attorney shook my hand, and said, "I was very impressed with what you had to say about horses and how one might work with a horse; I feel like I want to be in one of your clinics." I laughed. Then he said, "My client wanted to meet you." I looked at his client whose shoulders were slumped and his head was down, he shook my hand and was sobbing. I felt like he was truly ashamed of what he had done. I shook his hand, and I said, "God bless you man," and walked away.

Before leaving, I had a brief chat with one of the prosecuting attorneys, "Well, good luck with the rest of the trial. You are doing a good thing here to bring things like this to people's attention. I don't know if you will



prevail on the case or not, but you have already done a good thing. And I hope from what happened today, that the defendant would learn. Those words are never going to go away to him. And so I think you have already made a change regardless of how the trial turns out.”

A couple weeks later I got in touch with the District Attorney and she said, “Well, he wasn’t convicted. They let him loose.” I said, “Well, you know, I thought about it, and it’s ok. Because the change you are hoping for is to stop a person from showing this kind of behavior and get him to think about it and feel shame for those actions and come out of it a different person. I think we have accomplished that.” Now maybe that’s just me being an eternal optimist. But I think we got that done. I didn’t want to see that old man go to jail. But being an

old man doesn’t excuse treating a horse that way. So you keep your fingers crossed and hope that the good side of that person starts to prevail.

We all have demons, and it’s getting harder for me to be overly critical of anybody. I think every human has a dark side to him or her that we wrestle with and try to control. And, so it was a great lesson for me. Twenty years ago, I would have approached a man like that with anger and fury because of how much I love horses, feeling like I needed to defend the horse, in a way that promoted the same aggression and violence that he had pushed on the horse. So, maybe through the whole deal I learned more than anybody else. And if that is the case, it was certainly was worth the trip to go through it all.



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## THE HEN HOUSE

# On the Near Edge of Excellence: the Life of a B+ Student



By Reata Brannaman, Nevada Watt, Ceily Rae Highberger and Hannah Ballantyne

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**W**e all know them; they don't sit in the front of the classroom. Running late to class with coffee stained, muddy muck boots, hair strategically placed under a hat with hay stuck in their sweatshirt hood. Mentally planning which class is more feasibly skipped so that they can actually do something productive with their lives outside of academia. There are a lot of things going on behind the scenes that their classmates might not always be aware of. College is simply not their one and only priority. And yet, they continue on, they appear time after time, semester after semester; and maybe a few extra semesters thrown in there. These are the B+ students; including us.

Now before you jump to conclusions **WE ARE NOT** saying you need to slack off and aim for less than excellent, we are simply saying that life is a culmination of interests

and is made up of more parts than a perfect GPA.

Having an outside passion is what supports your mental stability. Often professors say "when you're in the real world" and we find this ridiculous. What are we in, fantasyland? Pretty sure we live in reality. There is nothing fantastic about having to deal with walking to class every morning in the freezing cold on the solid 4 inches of ice all over campus...Trying to maintain the ice shuffle that we all hope will save our lives. (This is the point where we crack a open a bottle of wine and continue on writing this article: because naturally we procrastinated writing this bad boy till the night before it was due; like a B+ student; but naturally it will be epic because we don't ever achieve less than excellence)

One of the most difficult things about college has been trying to explain to professors that we (and those



photo by Audrey Hall

like us!) are not just simply “skipping” a class.... But we have other priorities that pertain to our lives and businesses. You would think that business professors would relate to this, but in most cases not. They always say that you need real world experience, but when we propose such an opportunity to them, their sixty minute lecture proves more important than the success of their students. We understand why that is, we just don’t think it’s the way it should be.

All of us in the Hen House have our own businesses; whether it be teaching, creating, marketing, developing public relations; we all are pursuing our own careers and while trying to further our academic education. Our education may not be exclusively in the classroom, it’s actually in this illusionary world that our professors speak of called “reality.”

College is not meant to be a shielding factor in your life, but a stepping-stone to future goals. Quit using it as a cushion, and get out there!

For all of us, and our B+ brethren, we are at the 3-4 year mark, and we have dropped a lot of classes to balance our busy schedules. We’ve gotten a lot of good grades in hard classes by working our tails off, traveled around the world, built a lot of leather and silver goods, ridden a lot of horses, taught a lot of people and met some great people along the way.

Some may look at our lives and think we have too many irons in the fire, but we call it living in reality and are enjoying every minute of it... even if it means getting a B+.



# The West is Art

## The photography of Nadine Levin

It happened the first time I went to Colorado with my husband, nearly 15 years ago. For many years before we met, he had gone to a ranch outside of Colorado Springs every fall to gather cattle. Although I had studied photography for about 10 years at that time, and had been shooting pictures of wildlife and landscapes, when I got on a horse, strapped a camera across my body, rode through those Colorado mountains and began shooting cowboys and the western landscapes, I knew I had found my passion.

Pretty soon I was traveling to artist shoots in Arizona and South Dakota, and staying with friends on their cattle ranch in Rocky Ford so that I could take photographs of ranchers, their families and their stock. Watching the children riding across the open range with their parents and practicing their roping skills, it occurred to me that today's youth don't just decide that they want to be ranchers when they grow up. They are born into it, and learn ranching by working with their fathers and grandfathers. Both boys and girls have their jobs at the spring branding, and being able to capture those images of generations of ranching families working together has been a privilege.

It is these everyday images of the West, and the cowboy culture, that I try to present as art. Whether it is the majesty of the bison in Jackson Hole coupled with the backdrop of the old Mormon barns and the Tetons, or the multiple generations of ranching families working together – the West is art.

No matter how many times I see horses running, I always marvel at their beauty and want to capture it. And rodeo too, with the cowboys riding for eight, the wildly competitive chuckwagon races, cowgirls barrel racing – all beautiful images to be preserved forever.

My goal is to not only capture and present these images as art, but to do it in such a way that evokes emotion. Whether you look at my work and feel a sense of peace, or a longing to be in the spot that I have photographed, or just enjoyment from looking at a particular scene, I want my viewers to feel something.

It is also important to me that people understand that photography is an integral part of history. Where a painting is an artist's interpretation of a time and a place in history, my work is a factual representation of an instant in time that will never be repeated. There are millions of images and occurrences in everyday life. My challenge is to choose those moments that are inspiring enough to be reproduced and worthy of presenting as art.



*Always Have a Spare*  
Rocky Ford, Colorado



*Long View*  
Longview, Alberta



*Cottonwood Church*  
Cottonwood, South Dakota



*South Dakota Station*  
Cottonwood, South Dakota

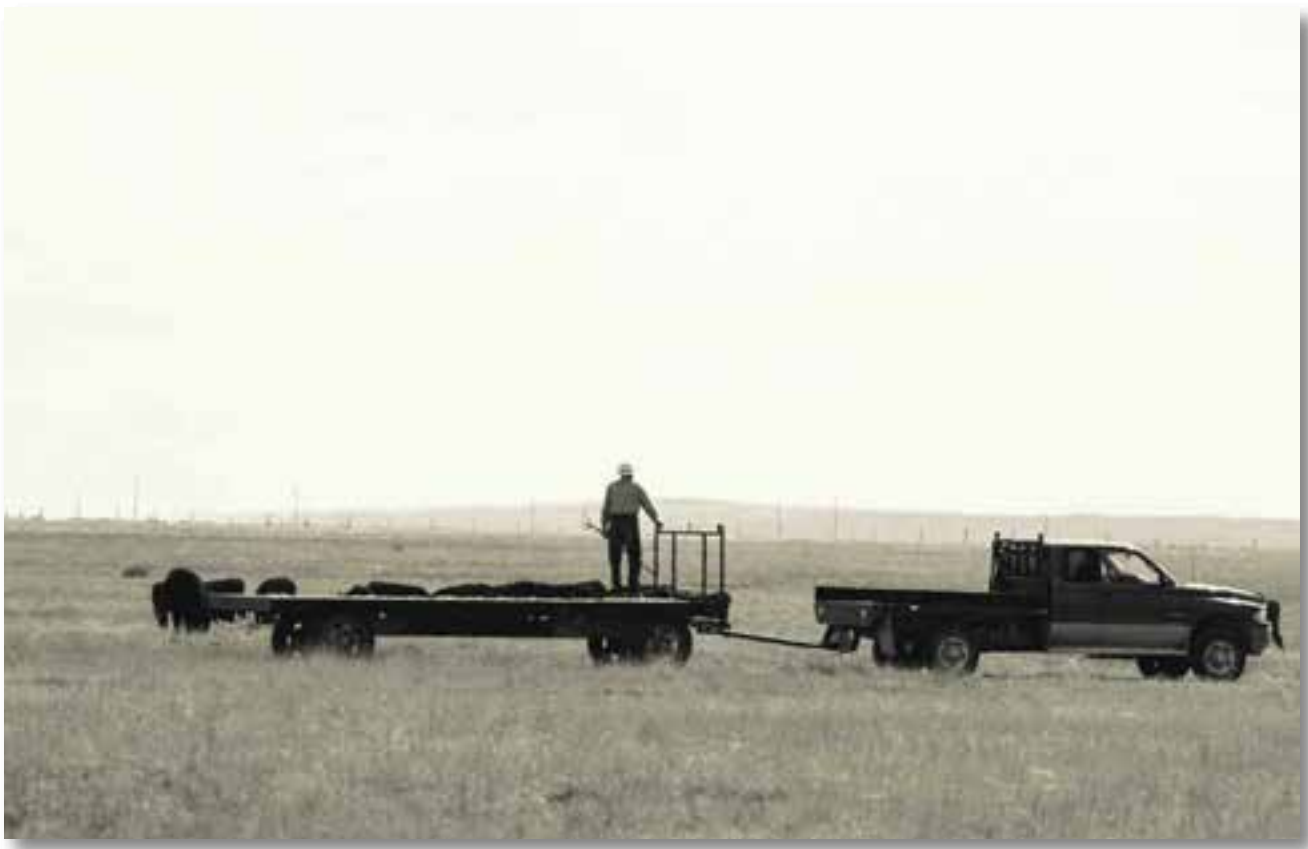


*A Long Way to Go*  
Rocky Ford, Colorado



*Forgotten*  
Cottonwood, South Dakota





*Time to Reflect*  
Rocky Ford, Colorado



*Perfect Stretch*  
Rocky Ford, Colorado



*Rising from the Dust*  
Jackson Hole, Wyoming



*Camouflage*  
Rocky Ford, Colorado



*Old Wagon*  
Rocky Ford, Colorado



*Red Cup*  
Douglas, Arizona



*On the Run*  
Wall, South Dakota



*Dream Girl*  
Guthrie, Oklahoma



*Doin' the Dance*  
Calgary Stampede



*Blizzard Ride*  
Sedalia, Colorado

Learn more about Nadine Levin's work at [www.nadinelevinphotography.com](http://www.nadinelevinphotography.com).





# Fain in Focus

Photographer James Fain has documented the sport of rodeo for more than five decades.

By Rod Miller

From the High Uintas to Delicate Arch to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon (subject of his master's thesis in photography) James Fain's scenic studies inspire awe. His documentary photographs of ranch life capture timeless moments with artistry and imagination. But, remarkable as they are, it is not in those arenas that Fain's fame as a photographer has flourished. Rather, it is in the rodeo arena. Perhaps no other rodeo action photographer can lay claim to the skill, creativity and endurance Fain has brought to the art.

It all started with a childhood interest in rodeo. Fain straddled his first bucking chute, one containing a feisty calf, in 1955 and soon started collecting envelopes stuffed with prize money at junior rodeos around Arizona. Advancing age and increasing skill led to entry, with a "high school letter" credential, into Rodeo Cowboys Association-sanctioned rodeos. At the same time, an interest in photography developed, and Fain's first professional rodeo photograph made the pages of *Rodeo Sports News* in 1961. Since then, his work has graced the pages of numerous magazines.

Fain's art also graces the walls of prestigious venues such as the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame and the Autry National Center of the American West, appears in films and on television, on billboards and book covers,

postcards and programs, advertisements and album covers, and numerous other places.



Doug Holston, Helldorado Days, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1986. There's a bulldogging steer somewhere in that dust storm.

But the vast majority of Fain's photos are in personal collections, in scrapbooks and on the walls of the homes of cowboys and cowgirls who compete in rodeos at every level across the United States. And few of his subjects have chalked up the miles Fain has logged pursuing his chosen profession, or spent as many hours inhaling arena dust. His wife, Karen, has been at his side for most of those miles, acting as his assistant and running the business end of the business.



Ronnie Rossen, Douglas, Arizona, 1961. The first of many Fain photos that would appear in the pages of *Rodeo Sports News*, later *ProRodeo Sports News*.

The statistics are mind-boggling: Thirty-eight years at the Days of '47 Rodeo in Salt Lake City. Thirty-four years at Tucson's La Fiesta de los Vaqueros. Thirty years at the World's Oldest Rodeo in Prescott. Twenty-five years at the Indian National Finals, twenty-four at the Dodge National Circuit Finals; the same at the PRCA Wilderness Circuit Finals. Fifteen years at the National Finals Rodeo.... The list goes on and on and on. Fain's flash lights up the action at some 30 to 40 rodeos a year,

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photo by Rod Miller

A 2010 print of a 1961 photo – Fain's first published image – hangs on his darkroom wall.

virtually all of them featuring multiple performances over a span of days.

Fain's longest streak is 49 years and counting at the Evanston, Wyoming, Cowboy Days rodeo – a run that almost came to an end in 2014 with the untimely death of his mother-in-law in Arizona. The photographer and his family left Phoenix on a late afternoon, after the funeral, with Fain at the wheel.

"I drove to Orderville [in southern Utah] then



Andy Miliate, Blythe, California, 1961. Another of Fain's early publications in *Rodeo Sports News*, October 1961.

Dusty [Fain's son-in-law] took over and drove on to his home in West Haven [in northern Utah]," Fain says. "We got in there at ten after five on Saturday morning. We put all my stuff into the back of the truck, hitched up, and I think we were up to Evanston about 11:30, and the rodeo didn't start 'til six. So we made it. It worked out about as good as it was going to work out." He's already booked for his 50th year at Cowboy Days come Labor Day weekend.

Going down the road has been fraught with adventure for the Fains, as it is for traveling cowboys. And, as with contestants, the rodeo arena isn't always



Monte Eakin, La Fiesta de los Vaqueros, Tucson, Arizona, 2013. Surprisingly, everyone walked away from this wreck unhurt.

friendly. Fain has been knocked down and run down and bumped and battered and bruised by broncs and bulls, and was nearly run over once by a Miss Rodeo America. But, for the most part, he has avoided serious injury. “I’ve been really lucky,” he says. “Or really quick.”

The most serious incident occurred at the National Finals Rodeo during its Oklahoma City run. Fain tells the story: “I think it was the first year we went into the Myriad Center. About the second or third bareback horse out – I don’t think it was the first go-round,

maybe the second or third – the pickup men are running an empty bareback horse back down the arena and all of a sudden, boy, I get hit in the right eye. It just snapped my head around, knocked my glasses off – broke my glasses. I thought somebody threw something.”

That “somebody” was one of the horses, who flipped up a clump of arena dirt hard-packed in the bottom of a hoof.

“So I’m looking for my glasses and there are some guys along the fence that saw it happen and one of them

picked up my glasses and helped guide me out the gate. We loaded into the truck and Karen drove me to the hospital. They cleaned the dirt and glass shards out of



Garrett Walters, Utah State University Rodeo, Logan, Utah, 2014. A Snow College saddle bronc rider looking for a place to land.

my eye, put a patch on it, and we got back in time for the calf roping. Shot the calf roping, barrel racing and bull riding from outside the fence.”

Fain reckons his experience aboard bareback horses and bulls and as a bulldogger – he gave up rough stock in the late 1960s and steer wrestling in the ’70s in favor of full-time photography – informs his art. But, more

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Jeff Kobza, Frontier Days, Prescott, Arizona, 1991. An unusual worm’s-eye view of this PRCA bullfighter getting a hoof massage from a feisty bull.



Zach Currin, Pony Express Days Rodeo, Eagle Mountain, Utah, 2013. This aerial image topped the charts when it was named photo of the year by *ProRodeo Sports News*.

importantly, he believes, are the years of experience he has accumulated behind a camera, one shutter click at a time. “With experience,” he says, “you see things setting up and you know what’s going to happen.”

That practiced eye has captured countless remarkable moments. The first of which, perhaps, is a 1961 photo of world champion bull rider Ronnie Rossen. Fain captured the bull in a fierce leap, with the cowboy sitting pretty. “It was one of Andy Juaregui’s feature bulls, one that everyone wanted to get on,” Fain says. “I had a little Kodak camera. The camera only had a 250th-of-a-second maximum shutter speed, which would have been fine because I caught the peak action – but my focus is off.”



Shane Stansfield, Strawberry Days Rodeo, Pleasant Grove, Utah, 1992.  
This bareback rider has ahold of Bar-T Rodeo bronc Whiz Bang and doesn't want to let go.

Still, the photo made the pages of *Rodeo Sports News*. And, beyond the action it captures, the picture has historic value as Fain's first professionally published photo.

Another iconic image from Fain's collection captures a bull rider, hung up and weathering a storm. "As the cowboy bucked off, his spur hung in the flank. And this bull is, I mean, crackin' 'em. He was hung up for quite a while, and he'd swing under and he'd swing back out, he just went whop, whop, whop. It beat him up



photo by Rod Miller

As the years on the road piled up for Fain, so did stacks of rodeo photos.

pretty good, but he was able to walk away," Fain says. Then, the story takes an interesting turn.

"The *Sports News* printed the photo as a double spread and Baxter Black must have been hurtin' for material one day, so he describes the photo, in print. It created calls to the *Sports News*, so they ran it again, with Baxter's article. Shortly after it came out, we were up at Heber City doin' a college rodeo and the dadgum cell phone rings. It's Baxter Black. He says, 'You're gonna make me famous!'



I guess he got all kinds of calls on it. I said, ‘Yeah, I’m gonna make *you* famous.’”

Fain is no stranger to fame. He has photographed, and become friends with, most all the rodeo legends over the years – before they became stars, and after. Take renowned all-around champion Larry Mahan.



photo by Rod Miller

Fain studies scenic images on a computer screen.

“Last time I saw him, he was grand marshal at Prescott. I think it was three years ago,” Fain says. “Prescott had called earlier, wanting some pictures of Larry to put on their poster ‘cause he was grand marshal. I got him to autograph a poster for me and he wrote, ‘Thanks for making me look good,’ which I thought was a compliment.”

Fain cannot imagine how many rodeo action images he has recorded. Figure 350 to 400 shots at each rodeo performance, two to three performances at each rodeo, 30 to 40 rodeos a year over a period of 50 years and you’ll get an estimate, probably on the low side.



photo by Rod Miller

Media credentials from decades of rodeos decorate Fain’s bulletin board.



photo by Rod Miller

James Fain awaits induction into the Utah Cowboy Hall of Fame.

The honors Fain has earned are likewise numerous. Among them is the National High School Rodeo Association’s Kenneth Ivester Memorial Award as “Man of the Year.” He was named PRCA photographer of the year in 1996 and 2006. In 2014, Fain was inducted into the Utah Cowboy Hall of Fame at the Utah Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. “For over 50 years, Jim Fain has been snapping photos of high school, college and PRCA rodeos,” the induction announcement states.

“Jim started out as a rodeo cowboy and his participation in various events gave him an eye for the best action shots. Those who have known and worked with him over the years feel like he is one of the best rodeo photographers in the West.”

That, no doubt, captures Fain’s continuing legacy in sharp focus. But it is still, perhaps, a mite underexposed.



Spur Award-winning author and Western Writers of America member Rod Miller writes fiction, nonfiction and poetry about cowboys and the American West. His latest book is *Goodnight Goes Riding and Other Poems*.

Visit him online at [www.writerRodMiller.com](http://www.writerRodMiller.com).

# Road Trip List

## Sultry, Solid, Serene

### Diana Krall and The Milk Carton Kids

Diana Krall

*Wallflowers*

“Wallflower, wallflower, won’t you dance with me? /  
I’m fallin’ in love with you”

— “Wallflower” by Bob Dylan



Diana Krall

On February 2nd, the sultry, piano-playing chanteuse, Diana Krall released her long-awaited new album, *Wallflower*.

Produced by 16-time GRAMMY<sup>®</sup> Award-winning producer David Foster, *Wallflower* finds Krall breaking new ground with her interpretations of some of the greatest pop songs of all time. The album features popular classics from the late 60s to present day that have inspired Krall since her early years, as well as an unreleased composition from Paul McCartney (“If I Take You Home Tonight”).

The album’s release coincides with her highly anticipated supporting tour. “Wallflower World Tour” will feature Krall performing pop classics such as The Mamas and the Papas’ “California Dreamin’”, the Eagles’ “Desperado,” and Bob Dylan’s “Wallflower,” which inspired the upcoming album’s title track, among others. Krall will be accompanied onstage by Anthony Wilson (guitar), Dennis Crouch (bass), Stuart Duncan (fiddle), Karriem Riggins (drums) and Patrick Warren (Keyboards).

As for Krall, she is the only jazz singer to have eight albums debut at the top of the Billboard Jazz Albums chart along with having garnered 5 Grammy<sup>®</sup> Awards,





eight Juno Awards and earned nine gold, three platinum and seven multi-platinum albums.

All that said, which ain't bad, she is simply a huge talent who has the chops to deliver – no matter how many times you hear her live, no matter the venue. She grew up in a musical family – her father played piano at home and her mother sang in a community choir. She was playing piano at the age of four and playing jazz in a local restaurant at 15. She released her first album, *Stepping Out* in 1993. Her third album – *All of You: A Dedication to the Nat King Cole Trio* was released in 1996 and was nominated for a Grammy and stayed in the Billboard jazz charts for seventy weeks.

The new album had me from the first notes, we listened to in the pick-up taking some folks to the airport and they almost missed their plane as it also

features more recent gems like Crowded House's "Don't Dream It's Over" and that wonderful new composition from Paul McCartney "If I Take You Home Tonight." Yeah, the album's that good.

Her catalog of albums and her unique thoughtful, throw-back style is the stuff of memories – not only of place but of time. Her unique artistry transcends any single musical style and has made her one of the most recognizable artists of our time. In her 2004 album, *The Girl in the Other Room*, she focused on songs co-written with her husband, Elvis Costello. Here are links to two songs from that album that are true stand-outs, so when you buy *Wallflower*, buy this one too.



"Narrow Daylight" –  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXZxlnkJWUQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXZxlnkJWUQ)



"Departure Bay" –  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=7gormVRwcl0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7gormVRwcl0)





## The Milk Carton Kids

### *Prologue*

“...and we walked off to look for America.”

— Paul Simon

The folk revival of the last few years has been generally a refreshing, yet evolving, return to acoustic, “wooden” music along with sensitive songwriting and performance. Today’s difference for many is that grandeur and arena style presentation has replaced the intimate, close-quartered performance of the late 50s and early 60s-era folk scene. Then along came a couple of guys from Eagle Rock, California – right next to Pasadena.

The Milk Carton Kids are Kenneth Pattengale and Joey Ryan – two guitarist, singers who have emerged as powerful voices in further refining the continuing folk tradition of flat-picking harmony. The difference is their virtuosity in the playing of their vintage Martins and Gibson J-45s.

*Prologue* is a studio album that was released back in 2011. The album was given a boost on social media when Grammy-winning piano-pop star Sara Bareilles gave the band a shout-out via Twitter by stating “Do yourself a favor and pick up the Milk Carton Kids’ new record.”



When some of a certain generation listen to the album there is a natural tendency to think of their gorgeous writing and performance as a throwback to Simon and Garfunkle or The Everly Brothers – even to Gillian Welch and Dave Rawlings. It’s natural as the two are featured in a new concert film from the Coen Brothers and T. Bone Burnett called, *Another Day/Another Time* that celebrates the Greenwich Village folk revival of the 1960s. But *Prologue* and its song list snap us back to today and looks across

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**Jedlicka's  
Santa Barbara, CA 93105**

**Ricotti Saddle Co  
Clements, CA**

**Malda's Belts and Buckles  
Houston, TX**

America to tell the quiet stories of life, love and realization. Here are the lyrics to one of the cuts, talking changes and experiences on life's twisting road. A significant album from an important duo. Their playing could quiet the lions.



The Milk Carton Kids  
Kenneth Pattengale and Joey Ryan

“Des Moines, IA”

Words and music by Kenneth Pattengale and Joey Ryan

*The road does funny things inside a man  
To hurt in ways I just don't understand  
My heart can see the road that leads back home  
I'm afraid that I can't get there any more.  
I wish that you could see into my eyes  
To see what makes me race, and makes me cry  
I have faith inside this broken, tethered heart  
Whatever role I play is the right part.  
The sunshine in Des Moines can fade so fast  
The love you never meant to let slip past  
Minneapolis could take me home,  
But home ain't where I'm headed for.  
My sorrow makes a face, the way I hurt  
A longing for, betrayed by what I'm sure  
Her sounds in words that push and pull you still  
But hardened by the thought of what you will.  
Soon I'll find the places that I know  
Faced by what should find me on this road,  
My heart still sees the path that leads back home  
But I think she's gone, I think I'm all alone.  
The sunshine in Des Moines can fade so fast  
The love you never meant to let slip past  
Minneapolis could take me home,  
But home ain't where I'm headed for.*



Here is a link to their performance of “Michigan” from the album *Prologue* as performed on NPR's Tiny Desk Concert. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=fp0xjVzmKxY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fp0xjVzmKxY)



# A Western Moment

## Western Film Poster Artists – #1



The poster art for this 1975 contemporary western was illustrated by one John Alvin. Alvin was an American cinematic artist and painter who created many iconic and eclectic movie posters including *Blazing Saddles*, *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*, *Blade Runner* and *The Little Mermaid*. Later in his career he created poster art for the *Harry Potter* series, *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *The Lion King* and many others. Mr. Alvin died in 2008. Now you know.



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## TWO WRAPS AND A HOOEY

# The Gift of a Viejo

I am a believer in the protecting of important cultural traditions and as I get older I find myself thinking about just how traditions continue. In a recent *NY Times* piece, a museum archivist from the south wrote of the importance of continuing to teach cursive writing in schools as he was fearful that we would become a society able to only communicate via a “hand-held devise” and I don’t mean a #2 pencil. And while I support his thesis that we need to continue to teach this basic skill, what it brought home was the concept of thoughtfully written words that are put down on paper to illustrate and celebrate skills and traditions that could otherwise disappear.

In the world of the classic vaquero culture, Ernie Morris is one of our last *viejos* – meaning a knowledgeable “old one.” He has dedicated his life as an artist and storyteller to help spread the word of the competencies and capabilities of the California vaquero to new generations who have realized the benefit of learning those horseback skills. Ernie has written five books on the subject and all without the help of a keyboard. I had the pleasure of helping him with his latest book, “Vaquero Heritage,” which he swears is his

last book. Don’t bet on it.

I would visit him at home in Templeton, California, throughout the writing process. His studio was neat as a pin. But on his worktable, there were stacks of yellow legal pads and sheets of paper – all perfectly organized but covered top to bottom with his notes and thoughts and the story lines he has gleaned from a lifetime of experience.

We would sit for hours, as Ernie would re-tell the stories of the men and horses he knew and the ranches and places he had seen. “It’s very different today,” he said. “Today fellas load their horses into gooseneck trailers and ride in air conditioning to the works. We had to long trot to get there and sometimes it was pretty hot. Warmed the horses up, though. Not like that now.” Ernie Morris finished that sentence looking out the

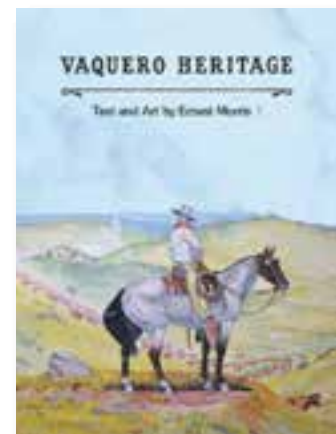




photo by William Reynolds

Ernie Morris putting on his spurs before a ride.

window of his studio – a sturdy little building built low to the ground – kind of like Ernie. This fifth book from Ernie centers on the ways and lives of the California Vaquero, told by one of the last real ones. His previous books dealt with the same subject and about his art and braided work. His is a legacy of giving, keeping the information and memories safe for the rest of us about a life unique to California. A life he loved and lived well.

Nowadays, Ernie and his wife Blanche live comfortably on their little ranch. Folks come and go to see them and to hear the stories of those “days of the long

trot” and of the people who inhabit Ernie’s memories. Without the effort and hard work Ernie has put into his new book – and to the previous four published before this one – we would miss forever a part of the history of California’s unique horseback era. Without Ernie Morris himself, our horseback world would be missing something very dear and enduring. Ernie has written it all down – by hand. He is a throwback; a true original and for his efforts to help us all keep the traditions of the vaquero alive, we are way better off having the privilege of his presence. BR





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FARE THEE WELL

# Rodney Marvin “Rod” McKuen

1933 - 2015



His poetry helped build a bridge between the Beat generation of the 1950s and New Age thinking of the 1970s.

“Age is proof you got from there to here.”

—Rod McKuen

Poet, singer/songwriter and former rodeo cowboy.

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