

The Journal of the American West

# Ranch & Reata

Volume 5.6 \$15.00

Remembering Gram Parsons

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## FRONT GATE



photo by Jay Dusard

Edward Abbey in his writing studio, photographed by Jay Dusard near Tucson, Arizona in 1984. This photograph is from a new monograph on Jay's work, titled, *Icons: Portraits 1969-2015*. [www.shop.lenswork.com](http://www.shop.lenswork.com)



Joshua Tree National Park, Gram Parson's current residence, is located in southeastern California. It was declared a U.S. National Park in 1994 when the U.S. Congress passed the California Desert Protection Act. It had previously been a U.S. National Monument since 1936. Photograph by Randy Poe.

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**Cover image:** Photographed in Joshua Tree National Park – *The Wisdom Tree* – a panorama of the Milky Way rising over a Joshua Tree by Manish Mamtani. [www.manishmamtani.com](http://www.manishmamtani.com)



# Ranch & Reata

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

# Cover Stories

By A.J. Mangum

It was a ritual to which my art director and I had become all too accustomed. The scene played out years ago, at another magazine. That month's issue – a July edition – was in the late stages of production, and the time had come to decide on a cover image, a process we'd grown to dread.

The means of selecting a magazine cover varies from publication to publication, but the smartest and most efficient strategy always involves as few decision-makers as possible, preferably no more than one or two people at the top of the editorial and design mastheads. Turn it into a committee project, and groupthink prevails. Fearful, dominant voices kill innovative ideas; participants retreat to the options they deem the safest, even if such choices are the least original or interesting. That adage about a camel being a horse designed by committee surely had its roots in such an environment.

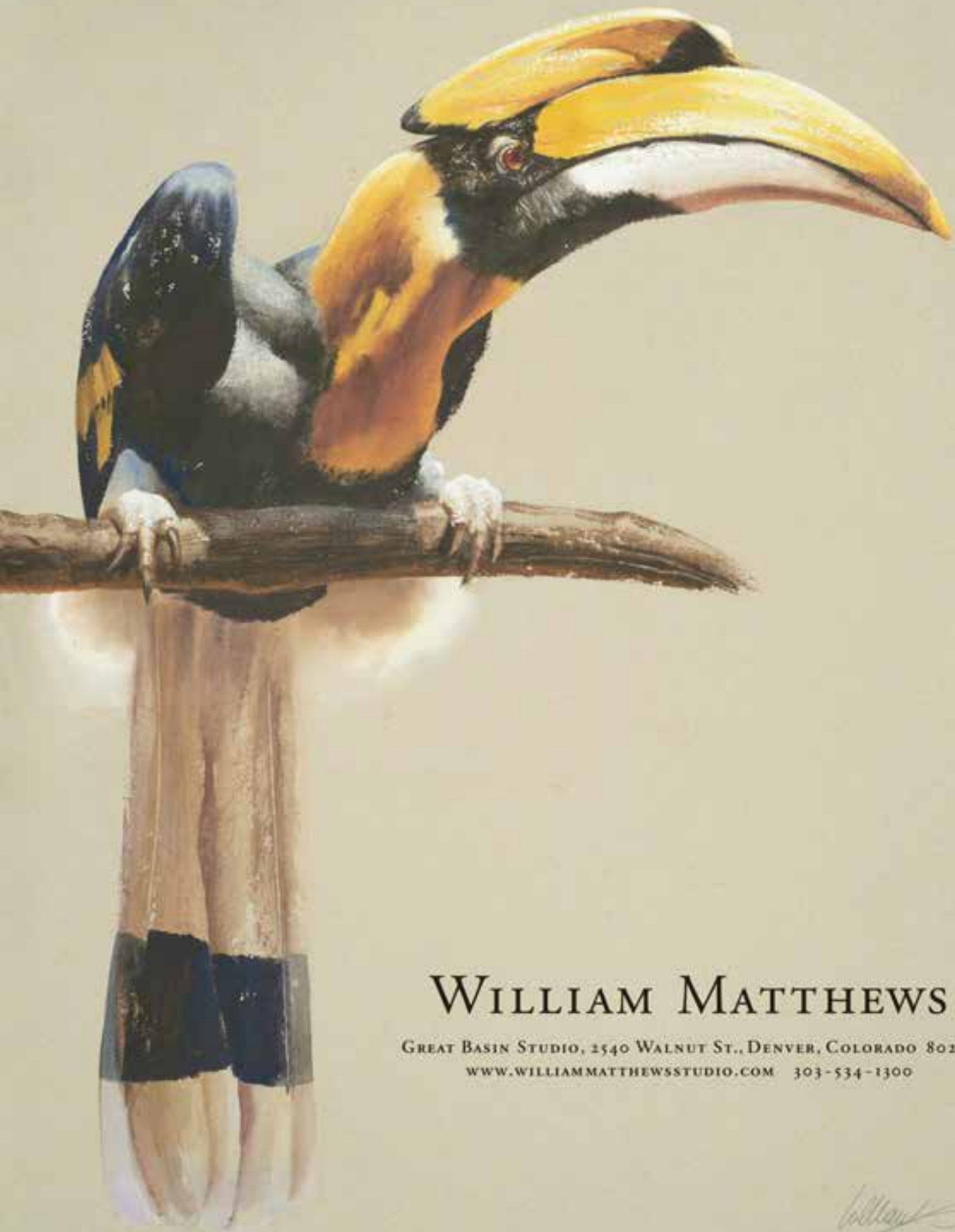
By the time that July issue rolled around, the magazine had produced a number of “camel” covers, in a routine that involved developing multiple cover

candidates for each edition – a requirement rooted in naiveté, given that creating *one* great cover is a monumental challenge – then submitting all choices across multiple time zones to a group in which marketing, circulation, accounting and advertising-sales voices outnumbered those of the creative team by a dozen to one.

Choices that reflected new approaches, clever design or strong editorial messages never seemed to make the cut, simply because the group's non-editorial majority was unequipped to evaluate covers on those bases; the emphasis, instead, seemed to be on achieving a sense of security – replicating efforts that had previously sufficed. The aggravating back-and-forth of each month's debate had become so predictable it could be scripted in advance. And, one couldn't help but take it personally.

That month, the art director walked into my office with three color printouts labeled A, B and C, each a mockup of a cover we'd shared with the ad-hoc cover





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*Ranch & Reata* covers: clean, bold and reflective of who we are and what we do.

committee. He smirked and shook his head.

“Snake eyes,” he said. “They’re willing to live with B, but they all hate it.”

Option B was an inoffensive, and unremarkable, western painting, an image that would work on a cover, but had little else going for it. It reflected nothing of what we were trying to convey with that month’s issue, and was reminiscent of numerous earlier covers, including those of the previous two months.

“What was wrong with A?” I asked. The A image, an action shot of a horseback arena cowboy, had an in-your-face quality that made it unlike any cover we’d run in years, and allowed for some bold usage of spare cover text. It had been the image the art director and I had favored.

“They liked it, but said it didn’t look like *July* to them,” he explained. He paused a beat for the punch line. “They said it looked more like the last week of June.”

“And C?” I inquired. Option C was a landscape photo, a beautiful ranching scene shot by one of the West’s most respected photographers. (You’d know the name, as his work has appeared in this magazine more than once.)

“They thought C looked like the first week of August.”

This monthly exercise had gone on for years, and

we no longer spent time commiserating after each defeat. The art director retreated to his office to finalize the issue’s cover. Left unsaid, once again: This isn’t supposed to be easy, but it certainly doesn’t have to be this hard.

At *Ranch & Reata*, we’re fortunate to have a cover strategy in which creative voices reign. We emphasize clean, bold art and photography, and the pursuit of that *one* image that perfectly fits a given issue. Decisions are noncontroversial, free of internal drama, and I have yet to be disappointed in an *R&R* cover.

Elsewhere, however, editors and art directors working to create great covers are handicapped not only by committees and other sources of largely irrelevant feedback, but also with a cumbersome set of rules – most created by consultants long since removed from the publishing trenches – governing the ways in which those covers should be built. Said rules are, at least in theory, tailored to boost a magazine’s newsstand performance, and therefore its revenues.

To begin with, the experts say, a cover should feature a photo, never artwork, and that photo should be in color, never in black and white. Next, the image should be surrounded, even overwhelmed, by text –





pithy benefit-promising blurbs (“Lose Weight” “Live Longer” “Save Money”) – meant to offer would-be newsstand consumers a litany of reasons to pick up that magazine. If a magazine’s content isn’t geared toward making such outlandish promises, the rulebook can be interpreted to dictate that editors revamp their magazines accordingly. The tail wags the dog.

There are more rules for the ways in which cover text should be written (verbs, verbs, verbs; numbers, numbers, numbers), arranged (most important story at the upper left, least important at the lower right), and presented graphically (use the color green at your peril, as it is reportedly unappealing under bookstore lighting).

Such decrees are drilled into every magazine professional seeking a better grasp on the inexact science of the newsstand. Spend a few minutes studying the

ways in which magazines format their covers, and the ubiquity of these cover commandments becomes obvious. Despite editors’ widespread adherence, though, the truth is this:

These rules don’t mean a thing.

When I was last with a newsstand-oriented publication, I dutifully tracked each issue’s sales stats with the hope of learning something meaningful about creating effective covers. In my office, I kept a continually updated display of previous covers – years of them – each annotated with its newsstand sales figures, numbers I’d update when each month’s circulation report arrived. (Initial newsstand sales reports always have artificially high numbers; it takes about six months of downward revisions before you have reliable, legitimate data.)

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Photo courtesy of Mary Williams Hyde



I would study those covers and their respective stats on a daily basis. Over time, patterns became clear. Our strongest newsstand performers weren't the issues with covers heavy with pitch-perfect, benefit-promising blurbs written and arranged according to Hoyle, nor were they those whose covers survived the flawed democracy of our convoluted committee process.

Instead, our best newsstand performers were those issues with bold, even unconventional, cover images – whether it was artwork, photography, color or black and white – that looked nothing like previous efforts (there was no safety to be found in formulas), and that reflected *that particular issue's* editorial tone, as defined by those of us writing and designing the issue. Newsstand success had nothing to do with consultant-driven rules or the lobbying efforts required to win a committee vote. A colleague once summed it up best: “Covers are an art. You can't make them a science.”

Toward the end of my years in the newsstand-magazine culture, several co-workers and I traveled to a publishing conference at which the highlight was a presentation given by Evan Smith, then the editor of *Texas Monthly*, one of the most respected magazines in the medium's history, and a title whose standards and quality have influenced countless other publications.

Smith walked the hundreds of us in attendance through his magazine's editorial philosophies, and deconstructed several of *Texas Monthly's* most successful covers, sharing the stories behind their creation and the logic informing their designs. I was struck by the lack of formulas at work in the portfolio Smith shared, and at the obvious indifference to any rulebook.

When Smith's presentation ended, he took questions from the audience. In an awkward moment, a senior member of our own circulation team – one of several of our magazine's cover committee members

who happened to be present – raised her hand and challenged Smith on the logic behind various cover designs. Wouldn't a cover have been *more* effective, she argued, if you'd adhered to accepted conventions?

Looking past his questioner, Smith coolly addressed the room at large. Years later, I can quote much of his response verbatim.

“Circulation people,” he said, “don't know as much as they think they do.” They insist rules be followed when creating covers, he continued, “but for each of those rules, you can show them half a dozen examples in which the rule was broken, successfully.”

Smith's parting message: When it comes to magazine covers, editors and publishers shouldn't be bound by predetermined criteria fashioned illogically to be applied across every issue of every magazine. Instead, he said, a magazine's creative staff should build the cover that's right for that *specific* issue. You write your own rules, and those rules might change from effort to effort.

It was a beautiful moment, an authoritative – and public, no less – affirmation of truths for which I'd been advocating, delivered to the audience that needed to hear it most.

Still, such victories tend to be short-lived. I had little hope Smith's admonition would sink in with our cover committee – the circulation specialist who'd attempted to cross-examine him certainly looked nonplussed – and I had no expectation that the committee itself would disband in favor of new strategies. Our committee process would live on. And on and on.

Nonetheless, Smith had given me the gift of a great line, a reinterpretation of his own, that could, at minimum, serve to keep up my own spirits during future cover debates:

“They don't know as much as they think they do.”







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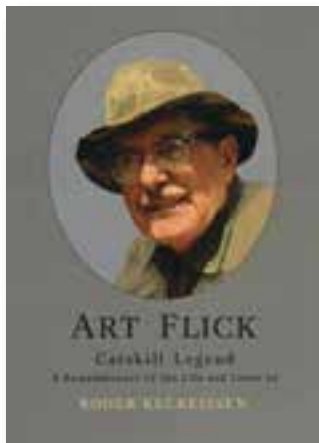


## Interesting Things and Stories from Out West

### ON FISHING

“He told us about Christ’s disciples being fisherman, and we were left to assume...that all great fishermen on the Sea of Galilee were fly fisherman and that John, the favorite, was a dry-fly fisherman.” — *Norman Maclean, A River Runs Through It*

#### Art Flick, fisherman



Recently I received a book from our friend, artist, writer and fisherman, Russell Chatham. (To see some of Russell’s fine work, see the issue #4.1 story by Jameson Parker) The book, *Art Flick, Catskill Legend* by Roger Keckeissen is a loving remembrance of a dry fly fisherman who influenced countless fishermen and people who simply love the outdoors. There is little written about Art Flick but he is the source of many stories – something apparently he himself, as a storyteller, was quite adept at. The book, published in 2014 by Clark City Press – originally founded by Mr. Chatham – is not the typical book that would come from publishers of hunting and fishing books, so called “hook and bullet presses.” This is a story of a man’s passion for detail and understanding. Flick started as a “worm drowner” but evolved into one of America’s most sophisticated dry fly anglers and makers of flies, and author of the game changing *Streamside*

*Guide*, first published in 1947. While Keckeissen’s book is about this immensely talented fisherman, it is really about passion and clarity in life. I am convinced that great fly fishermen are more like great bridle horsemen and vice versa. Flick was ahead of his time regarding his sensitivity to the environment as well, in his caring for the rivers he fished and loved, especially in his protection of the Schoharie Creek in the Schoharie River Valley in New York’s Catskills. This is a book for anyone who loves reading about capability and competency – as well as fishing. This book and Flick’s *Streamside Guide* are available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)





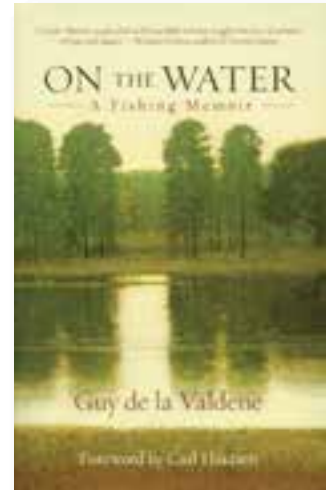


## On The Water

Author Guy de la Valdene's 2012 book *The Fragrance of Grass* is a way more than a sporting book – more of deeply felt memoir celebrating dogs, birds, wildlife as well as food, women and wine. It is a book grounded with the author's knowledge of his love of hunting. But, again, it's more than that.

His most recent book, *On The Water: A Fishing Memoir* (Lyons Press, 2015) is a meditation on water and nature, fishing and growing older. It is a superbly written collection of essays that all take place on or near the water and pay tribute to the flora and fauna associated with those ecosystems. There are essays about rainbow trout in the streams of Normandy, and of eagles and ospreys fishing for bass, barely breaking the surface of the water. There are stories of droughts and floods, of dogs and boats, of worms and rattlesnakes. A well crafted collection of tales that is a joy to read.

Just an add-on FYI – Guy de la Valdene directed and produced the highly acclaimed documentary *Tarpon*. Filmed in Key West in 1973 and featuring the late Richard Brautigan, Tom McGuane, and Jim Harrison, the film was recently restored and re-released in 2008 and is available at amazon.com.

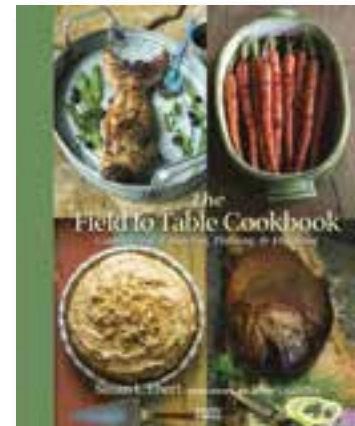


## Eating the Catch

Our friend, Susan Ebert, the former editor and publisher of the western industry trade publication, *Western & English Today* has just released *The Field To Table*



*Cookbook: Gardening, Foraging, Fishing and Hunting* (Rizzoli 2016). The book brings more than 150 family-pleasing, nutritious, and accessible recipes to home cooks who want to increase their knowledge and enjoyment of procuring and cooking clean, organic meat, fish, fruits, and vegetables. The increasing popularity of the modern farm-to-table movement – bringing locally sourced food to the family – is brought to its logical conclusion in author Ebert's field-to-table food aesthetic, pairing her straightforward recipes with more than 100 illustrative photos of procuring food in the field and presenting it on the table, along with tips on dressing, deboning, preparing, drying, curing, and preserving nature's bounty. This book is a wonderful and thorough seasonal guide to cooking with game, foraged food, and organic vegetables (for non-hunters and hunters alike).



## PENDLETON WHISKY NAMED OFFICIAL WHISKY OF PBR BLUEDEF TOUR

World's premier bull riding organization partners with Pendleton Whisky for 2016 and 2017 tours.

“Pendleton Whisky has been a long-time supporter of the western lifestyle and we are extremely excited to have them as a partner of the PBR BlueDEF Tour,” said Dave Cordovano, head of the PBR BlueDEF Tour. “This partnership will allow us to work together to develop promotional opportunities throughout our entire tour and elevate exposure for both of our brands.”

As the official whisky of the tour, the brand will receive in-arena signage and announcements, rights at pre- and post-event parties, branded elements during live streaming broadcasts, and retail activation promotions in select markets. “We are thrilled to partner with the PBR over the next two years,” said Tia Bledsoe, senior brand manager, Hood River Distillers. “As a brand created to capture and celebrate the bold spirit of the American cowboy and cowgirl, this is a great opportunity for Pendleton Whisky to support a prominent organization that aligns perfectly with our values and mission.” (Yeah, we love Pendleton.) [www.pendletonwhisky.com](http://www.pendletonwhisky.com)



Hat Creek Cattle Co Sign

Fort Worth, Texas and runs through Sunday, June 19, 2016. ([www.sidrichardsonmuseum.org](http://www.sidrichardsonmuseum.org)) The show traces the path of *Lonesome Dove* – the novel – to the original screenplay and filming of the



*The Fall of the Cowboy*  
Frederic Remington, Amon Carter Museum

## LONESOME DOVE: THE ART OF STORY

Sid Richardson Museum

*Lonesome Dove: The Art of Story*, is an exhibition inspired by the 1985 Pulitzer Prize-winning western novel by Larry McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove*, opened recently at the Sid Richardson Museum in



*The Stampede*  
Frederic Remington, Gilcrease Museum

legendary TV miniseries. Visitors can explore the 19th century American West through iconic paintings and bronzes by Frederic Remington and Charles M. Russell, a cowboy's 1868 cattle drive diary and materials from the *Lonesome Dove* production archives.

Masterpieces by Frederic Remington and Charles M. Russell – paintings that have never before been displayed together – will be exhibited with production materials from the filming of the TV miniseries, *Lonesome Dove*, on loan from the Lonesome Dove Collection of the Wittliff Collections at Texas State University, San Marcos. The





Trail Map  
C White, The Wittliff Collections, TSU

“Just as seen in the TV miniseries, the Remington and Russell paintings and sculptures in our exhibition illuminate the narrative of the late 19th century American West,” said Mary Burke, director of the Sid Richardson Museum. “Our presentation of the West – through well-crafted words, video, set



Utica  
Charles M. Russell, Sid Richardson Museum

sets the stage for the entire citywide celebration.”

This is a must-see exhibition for anyone who loved *Lonesome Dove* – be it the book or the mini-series. [www.sidrichardsonmuseum.org](http://www.sidrichardsonmuseum.org), or call 817.332.6554.

production materials from the Lonesome Dove Collection have never before been displayed outside of the Wittliff Collections, and some might never travel again due to their fragile condition.

The Sid Richardson Museum will be the “trailhead,” kicking off the multifaceted January-through-June citywide celebration, known as “The Lonesome Dove Trail,” which will include multiple Fort Worth venues plus one in Albany, Texas. The Trail will include exhibitions at four museums and screenings, seminars and a reunion gala of the cast and crew of the award-winning 1989 TV miniseries, *Lonesome Dove*, including Robert Duvall (who portrayed Gus McCrae), Tommy Lee Jones (who portrayed Woodrow Call), Diane Lane, Anjelica Huston and others, to be held in the Historic Fort Worth Stockyards. ([www.LonesomeDoveReunion.com](http://www.LonesomeDoveReunion.com))



Lonesome Dove Sign  
C White, The Wittliff Collections, TSU



Hat Creek Outfit Cattle Co Texas  
C White, The Wittliff Collections, TSU

illustrations, costume designs, storyboards and works by Remington and Russell – is a first-of-its-kind exhibition for our museum, and it

## YOU CAN ALWAYS TELL A COWBOY ARTIST (BUT YOU CAN'T TELL HIM MUCH)

A Remembrance by Rygh Westby

*(Publisher's Note: In issue #5.4, we featured a remembrance of the late cowboy artist, Jack Swanson by his friend Sam Elliott. I had discussed the story with artist Rygh Westby, another longtime friend of Swanson at the Brannaman Pro-Am Roping last October. In Westby's quiet yet direct way, he indicated he had some thoughts on Jack as well. We are pleased to bring you his remembrance.)*



Artists Jack Swanson and Trish Westby

If people are going to spend good money on cowboy art they ought to find out what it really is. And maybe the best way to define something is to give a good example of it and work backwards from there. If the term “Cowboy Artist” means anything these days it sure applied to Jack [Swanson]. He filled a spot in western art and the history of the West that was a perfect fit for him. Just when the cowboy culture looked like the sun was about to set on it, a few artists came along who didn't want to see that happen. Jack was one of them. He was a living link between a time when miles were measured in hoof beats and the beginning of the jet age. How many artists can you name who rode horseback clear across the San Joaquin Valley looking for a cowboy job in the Tehachapis? Jack Swanson may be the last and only one.

Up until the last several decades of the 20th century if you wanted to learn the cowboy trade or any of the associated crafts like saddle making, bit and spur making etc. the rule of thumb was you better have some natural ability, find somebody who would tolerate a green kid and keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth tightly shut! One of the best one-liners I ever heard is “You can't teach experience.” It goes without saying that you can't fake experience either. There's only one way to get it, and it comes in two speeds – too fast, and too slow. Emphasis on slow.

Rarely in the “old school” era did you find an old-timer who would recognize potential in a young man (as you might in a touchy colt), and actually *offer* help – a sympathetic *amansidor* if you will. It was a lot more subtle and secretive than that. Sometimes it went something like this: “Well just don't fall asleep in the saddle and maybe you'll figure it out.” Thanks.



*Time To Think* by Jack Swanson





Things have changed a lot in the last four decades or so. Some of the old trainers and craftsmen realized if they didn't pass on their knowledge it was going to the graveyard right along with them. There was enough interest and dedication in the younger generation so that I think it's true that there are more good saddle makers, bit and spur makers, and horse trainers now than there have ever been.

This may not be true in the field of cowboy art however. The one ingredient that is of overwhelming importance in real cowboy art is experience. Just like it can't be taught, it can't be bought (or stolen) either. Most artists, of any genre I think, like to share with their audiences. But you can't share what you don't have.

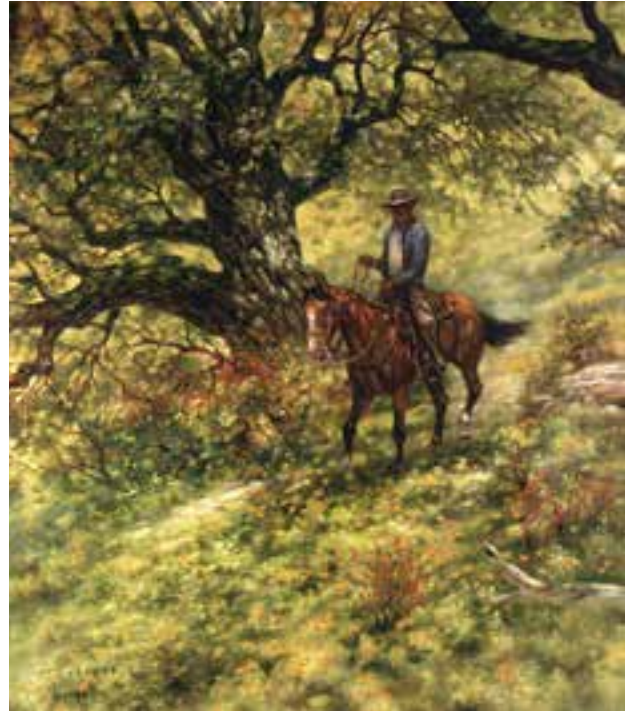
Jack was one of a very small group of artists who had the first person perspective to be called a "Cowboy Artist" in the true sense. His social circle was diverse as he became well known as an artist, but at its core were cowboys, ranchers, horsemen and yes even a few other cowboy artists. These were people who didn't live faster than the speed of sound and who respected the time tested traditions of the cow country that really couldn't be hurried and didn't need much improvement anyway.

Like most cowboys, Jack liked to tell stories, which is one way he passed on knowledge. He was generous in this regard. If he saw the work of a young artist that he liked, he would go to the effort to contact him and say what he liked about the work. This was before the internet or cell phones. His form of "texting" might be a handwritten letter of several pages, maybe a photo of a horse he was training or a picture of a favorite bridle bit, maybe there'd be a little anecdote about someone like the renowned old vaquero Frank Martinez, and occasionally a tip about painting and the much despised "art business." Any advice he offered was done in a kindly but straightforward cowboy way. He never made you feel small. He was a generous mentor, whether it was art or horsemanship.

It would be a mistake to think that all cowboys have a generic mindset, but I think it is true that most of them cherish their heritage. Even if they have to quit punching cows for some reason, (the wages and benefits are still pitiful on a lot of outfits, which is reason enough to quit) very few ever get it completely out of their system. For those people as well as those who would love to live that hard, dirty, sweaty life in a pair of manure caked Levis riding a horse that will buck you off in the dark, but will never have the chance...the cowboy artist will preserve it...legitimately.

*Can you live and work in two worlds at the same time?*

That's a good question. Louise Phippen (George's widow) once told a young artist (maybe it was George) something like this; "you can't be an artist *and* a cowboy, you have to make up your mind." Tom Ryan used to say the same thing. I never heard Jack say that however. It's true, they are both pretty consuming professions, requiring a high degree of multiple skills. One lifetime may not be long enough. Too much of one and the other will suffer. But those few who have lived both lives and survived to paint about it have been amazingly unique and Jack was certainly that – swinging from his own vine, the real McCoy.



*Occasionally I Ran into an Old Vaquero* by Jack Swanson

Jack did have some formal art education, but he probably learned more by doing and talking to other older artists. Everything that came off his easel was entirely his own. He was nobody's understudy. He was a student of anatomy (mostly equine). He not only knew how horses looked; he knew how they were put together, how they thought, how they felt underneath you and how they felt on top of you! He loved training horses, but he hated sending one home to an owner that he knew just wasn't gonna get what that horse was all about. Jack was a horse hand.

Genius can wear a lot of different cloaks – sometimes we don't recognize it at first, sometimes we resist acknowledging it. Perhaps it doesn't always appeal to us immediately because it might stretch us a little bit. But when there's really something solid there, such as in a painting, it keeps us coming back for another look. We keep seeing things we didn't see before, time after time after time. Part of genius is not locking people out. There has to be a trail *in*, though it might be narrow and rocky.



Rygh and Trish Westby, Sedona, Arizona

It has been noted that there are fewer “child prodigies” in painting and sculpture than in any of the other arts. Talent and passion blossom into paintings kind of like some desert wildflowers – it takes time; experiencing life with all its droughts, broiling sun, and flash floods. This is kind of like the gesso on the canvas – it gets covered up but it's under there for sure, and without it the painting falls apart.

Not all artists work the same way – especially cowboy artists. Their methods might range from the practical to the bizarre. Will James is a prime example of the oddball approach, but what a wealth of cowboy life to draw from!

Jack's approach was pretty classical except that he painted a lot on masonite. His drawings went

right on the board, he used vine charcoal. If you have ever been to Jack and his wife Sally's part of California you might ask yourself “How in the world could a guy paint this, all the big old oaks, the rocks and brush, the complicated light and shadow?” I'm not sure if Jack ever asked himself that question. In his minds' eye he could see vaqueros catching snakey cattle or maybe even roping a stock-killing bear out there and he just figured out how to paint it. I never heard him say how difficult it was, he just did it never thinking that it might be darn near impossible. The final results were authentic works; some short sketches and some more robust stories all told in Jack's particular dialect. He definitely had his own voice.

On page XVII of the introduction to his book, *The Life And Times Of A Western Artist*, there's a picture of Jack in front of a painting called *To The Fandango*. I saw this painting before he started adding much color to it. He was still fooling with the drawing, which he did in charcoal right on the board, (half a sheet of masonite). I didn't even see any sketches laying around much less any photos for reference. If he didn't like something he'd just rub it out with turpentine and re-draw. He said if he needed to change the composition he could do that with a Skilsaw, (one advantage of painting on masonite). This takes guts. He didn't paint scared, neither did he paint small very often. He liked Big – like the West.

I don't know if Jack ever finished that painting – I never saw him again. He let my wife Trish and I read some of the





handwritten manuscript for his book. We also saw some of the paintings and photos he planned to include. He promised to send us a copy when it came out. I had to bug him, but it was worth the wait. Inside there's a little sketch in ball point pen, "A High Desert Bronc." A short note said:

"To my friend and compadre Rygh and a pat to Trish"

Not too mushy. I called him after I read the book all the way through and told him I didn't think it was too bad for an old geezer. We talked a few more times on the phone after that. Then the silence became a little less than comfortable and I was kind of afraid to call. I found out by chance that Jack had taken the long sleep.

So it's true; you *can* always tell a cowboy artist...if you know what to look for. Oh...and the other part – you might tell him he should never have tried to be an artist and he might actually agree. But tell him his time might have been better spent if he had never gone to punching cows and you might as well be talking to your cat. He will always be a cowboy, right to the end.

Rygh Westby  
Sedona, Arizona



*Morning on Kirby Creek* by Rygh Westby



## GREAT MOMENTS IN ADVERTISING

This Levi's Saddlecut Jean ad ran in the late 1970s in lots of the horse magazines in the business then. It followed designs of the period that utilized some of the great illustrators of the era. This was before computers and required paint and actual brushes.



## SUNDANCE

As this issue is being completed, the thirty-eighth Sundance Film Festival has been held. It was started in Park City, Utah in 1978, one year before the Sundance catalog was started by the festival founder, Robert Redford. The Sundance Catalog continues to this day to be a bellwether of the "redwood and leather" style in the West and beyond. [www.sundancecatalog.com](http://www.sundancecatalog.com)

## WESTERN STYLE WITH ASHLEY RIGGS-HAMMOND

Rolling, Rolling, Rolling...  
Cowhide!

Ok, it is actually rawhide in the song...The smell of burnt hair is a familiar one in ranching. It takes most folks aback. It takes me back to the heat of the summer in a branding trap. Dust lingering in the air. The camaraderie of all the cowboys. The perpetual mooing and hollering from the mama cows and calves. My first real job there was running the irons to the ground crew, and then eventually branding every calf drug to the fire (I hated inoculating!). I took it very seriously as a child and great pride that nearly every brand was placed by me. Making sure each brand was straight. Not too close to the hip bone...Not left onto the hide for too long. The sizes of the irons varied and I made sure that the smallest brand went on the smallest calves. It was, after all, going to be on there for life.

Now, years later and 2,500 miles away I still have a penchant for hair-on-hide. Luckily enough the fashion pendulum has swung that way too. Wearing animal pelts is the earliest form of clothing for man (the weaving of plant fibers came far later). Not only are cowhides and lambskins warm, they are a beautiful and positive by-product of the ranching industry.

From runway to mainstream fashion, calf-hair (or “pony-hair” as it sometimes called) has been important for several seasons. The French label, Celine, was one of the first to start the trend with modern sneakers and handbags. Ralph Lauren featured it heavily in both his Fall 2015 Women’s collection and the coming Fall 2016 Men’s collection. It has come a long way from a yee-haw/Dale Evans attitude. It is now in the street style realm and oh so chic!



Ralph Lauren Fall 2015 Collection



photo by Fryd Frydenahl



Celine Spring-Summer 2015 Handbag

At our home I love having several cowhides laid on our floors and cozy lambskins draped on the seats of all chairs (our dog Amigo loves that!). It is the easiest way to bring a touch of the west to a room, no matter the location. My bare feet are still feeling the warmth and the memories of those branding traps long ago...

For more inspiration, follow me on Pinterest at [Ashley\\_e\\_Riggs](#) and on Tumblr at [nynv-ashleyriggs.tumblr.com](#).



*Some favorites...*



George Smith Couch



RRL Men's Limited Edition Jacket



Looks very much like the Hammond casa – pooch and all!



Cowhide in the bath!



Celine calf-hair espadrilles

## CATTLEMEN'S WESTERN ART SHOW

The much anticipated Cattlemen's Western Art Show will celebrate its 26th year with the Artist Reception Friday April 8, 2016, from 5 to 9 PM at the Paso Robles Event Center in Paso Robles, California.

The unique feature of this show is the ability to talk to each artist and step into their world, the stories behind each piece and why they create what they do. Western themes and landscapes in acrylics, oil, pencil, pastels, scratchboard and sculptures. Over 400 new works will be on display and available for purchase. Featured Artist, Don Weller will welcome you into the world of the watercolor artist. For more information go to: [www.cattlemenswesternartshow.com](http://www.cattlemenswesternartshow.com) or call Dee Pellandini 805-472-9100 or 805-423-1319



Don Weller



Don Weller art





## PHONING IT IN.

One of our Hens from the Hen House has flown. Ceily Rae Highberger is somewhere out there so here are some photo entries to her life journal via her phone.

### The iPhone Files: A Photographic Journal, Part 1

By Ceily Rae Highberger

#### Photo A

It seems that if you are passionate enough about something, life tends to get in the way. I consider myself a photographer, an amateur in every aspect, but what defines the word “photographer” anyway? If it is being passionate about pictorially documenting the world with an artistic eye regardless of what life throws your way, then yes I believe I am one.

I mention this whole life getting in the way concept not to sound glass half empty, quite the opposite really. You see, taking photos is just one of many activities that fills my time. Unfortunately it is an activity that gets pushed into the cracks of a very full-time management schedule. It fills in around large blocks of work, play, work, family, friends, and more work only to get squeezed out at random moments to capture something that I can't ignore.



#### Photo B

Another limitation I have, aside from time and other activities, is firepower. In this day and age, technology makes it so that photography is accessible, user friendly, and available to most anyone interested in it. If one wanted to stand out from the rest, the subject of quality comes into play. If one wanted to produce quality work, there are cameras on the market that can facilitate that at a higher price. Luckily for me, someone came up with this handy dandy invention called the iPhone. It is an affordable, portable, and useful tool that is about the fanciest thing an out of college working kid can get her hands on. Usually, the only reason I even pack it around on an daily basis is so that I CAN squeeze in some snap shots of the every day working life. Sometimes it is nice to make a phone call off of. Usually where I'm at in the middle of nowhere, (not complaining) service is a rare unicorn never to be found, banishing the iPhone to a life of airplane mode to save on battery life. With all its positive aspects, the one problem is that I must sacrifice the quality of owning a larger more expensive camera in order to obtain the shots I do. One does not simply strap on their fifteen hundred dollar Canon EOS 7D Mark II to the back of their saddle and long trot 7 miles only to say “sorry, I can't heel that calf for you...I wouldn't want to damage my

camera, but hold still and pose while I get a shot of you please? Can you move your horse a little to the right so I can get the mountains behind you? Oh, I think that calf is running out of air by the way, maybe you should give him some slack, thanks!” So I do what I can with my handy dandy iPhone tucked into random places on my person best not mentioned to the public (they don’t make the most useful shirt pockets for girls clothing these days).



**Photo C**

At the end of the day I get to come home flip the Coleman gas light fixture on, take a nice wood powered sponge bath and eat some food cooked on the propane microwave. Then I plug into the nearest current bush outside and access my local smoke signal social media site. In all seriousness though, spending most of my time in places I have worked with either limited or no electricity and Internet access can be difficult. Nowadays with things so technology and social media based, it can make networking and marketing a difficult task if you live somewhat off the grid so to speak.

**Photo D**

Acknowledging (and enjoying) this limitation, there are certain things you get really skilled at:

- 1) EVERY time the pickup is running ALWAYS charge one or more phones
- 2) WHENEVER the generator is fired up to use power tools, immediately run for laptop and charger.
- 3) IF and WHEN it rains or snows too much to make it out of the yard, utilize down time and charged computer to download and save pictures



**Photo E**

- 4) MAKE sure to get the wifi password at every bar and restaurant that you might end up in.
- 5) Sometimes IT IS necessary to use the fuel and drive to that big hill, the one that the cell towers can actually reach.

**Photo F**

In the end, all that actually matters are the images I capture, the feeling associated with it, and my desire to share it with others. They are as close to portraying the moment I lived them as best as I can.







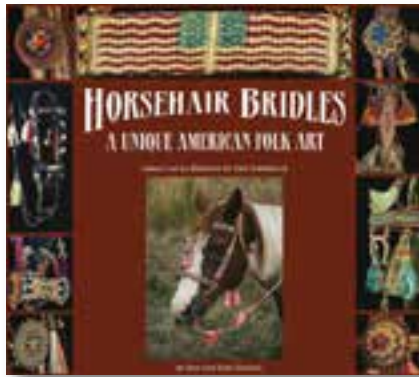
**Photo G**

Soooo...until I get that Canon EOS 7D Mark II, I present to you my iPhone photography journal – images of a struggling amateur, doing the best she can, embracing life and its limitations, sometimes broke, but a working photographer. CRH



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**HORSEHAIR BRIDLES:  
A UNIQUE AMERICAN FOLK ART**



Ned and Jody Martin have spent a professional lifetime documenting and celebrating horse gear. From Vaquero bits and spurs to the open sky of Texas they have painstakingly chronicled the gear that horsemen all over the west have built and used – creating the preeminent library in their field. Now, after ten years of research, the authors have published the seriously cool history of the development of horsehair hitching. This unique American folk art evolved in the bleakest of environments: the prisons of the West. The book includes stunning color photos of 200 bridles from public and private collections and includes not only the beautiful and colorful bridles made of horsehair; but also images of hatbands, belts, quirts, canes, reatas and other miscellaneous pieces made by inmates. Two complete chapters deal with horsehair pieces that were made outside of prisons: one by Winfield Coleman, that illustrates the “Indian Uses of Horsehair” which go far beyond the creation of bridles; another ends the book with a description of work by talented, often self-taught, contemporary makers. [www.hawkhillpress.com](http://www.hawkhillpress.com)

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**LAURA NOELLE HATS**

Laura Noelle is a small, handmade hat company stemming from the desire to create timeless designs. They use the best materials to create their hats: 100% natural beaver fur, humane leather, and our own two hands.

Laura learned from one of the best hat maker’s in the cowboy hat world, Ritch Rand of Rand Hats in Billings, Montana. By mixing the western lifestyle with a street boho-chic flair, Laura designs these hats to be a “timeless necessity.”

As she says, “Our hats are made to be worn and enjoyed, made to make a statement, and made to make you feel amazing.” [www.wearlauranoelle.com](http://www.wearlauranoelle.com)



## KIMES RANCH RELEASES THE “COVETED PLUS SIZE” RIDING JEAN



Recently, it appears the jean label Kimes Ranch has hit a home run with the release of the “Madeline,” a plus-size riding jean for women.

“This is something that has truly been missing from the market. So many companies say they offer a plus-size jean but really all they have done is extended their sizes,” relayed women’s jean designer and Vice

President Amanda Kimes. “We wanted these women to feel great/sexy in our product so before we began development we asked our potential market what they wanted. I have close personal ties to several true plus-sizes. I spent a year and a half perfecting the fit, researching the market and testing the jeans. The last thing I wanted to hear was ‘you don’t know anything about fitting a plus size woman.’”

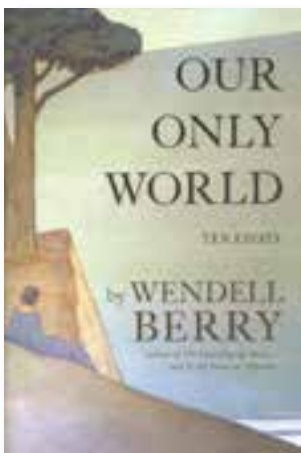
Input for the jeans was also taken from feedback acquired on the company’s Facebook page. The new jean features a 99% Cotton 1% Spandex rinse washed denim in a flattering mid rise and a boot cut. Navy blue and silver pocket stitching with a dark body stitch give a slimming appeal without compromising on a little fun flare. The jean ranges in size from 16 up to a 24 waist with 32”, 34”, 36”, and 38” inseams to ensure that women riders have enough stack, a detail that is not customary in other brands.

For more information on Kimes Ranch or to order, visit [www.kimesranch.com](http://www.kimesranch.com).



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## IF YOU READ ONLY ONE BOOK THIS YEAR...



### **Our Only World: Ten Essays**

Wendell Berry

Counterpoint Press

If one loves truth, then Wendell Berry is your man. At 81 and still going strong. *Our Only World* is quintessential Berry. This is a thoughtful book about today – and tomorrow – learning from our past. Berry is gift. If in this fast and furious world you have time to read only one book. This is it. And then, greet the day and improve on yesterday’s world.





## LARRY BUTE



No stranger to these pages is the artwork of one Larry Bute. Larry's distinctive and accurate style of drawing and painting were what initially attracted Roger and Vern Allgeier of Colorado's Brighton Saddlery to his work.

"We met Larry Bute at the NFR a long time ago," Roger told us recently. "He was a quiet cowboy artist selling original buckaroo scenes on lampshades and wine glasses."

They clicked and soon Larry was painting original art for Brighton Saddlery. Roger said he and Verna had seen some of his huge murals on building in Elko and Ely but what impressed them was the accuracy of his rider's gear on horses, be it a Texas brush cowboy or a Great Basin buckaroo. "Larry is the real deal," Roger told us.



Although Larry was raised on the Minnesota/Iowa line feeding yearling cattle, he was a cowboy at heart. He rodeoed in the 1950s and later rode bareback horses in the 1960s. He worked the big outfits in the Great Basin country and found time to attend art school in Denver.

"We asked Larry if he would be willing to do our next saddle sale poster for our 26th Annual Sale in 2003," continued Roger. "We appreciated his art so much that we then persuaded him to do some illustrations for us for our ads. He has really branded Brighton Saddlery by the style of his work. Occasionally we ask for a theme but we are then so pleasantly surprised to see his vision. He has wonderful ranch kid themes, his buckaroos are always right on and his great sense of humor shows through in many of his paintings."



Larry Bute



Larry Bute, 1990

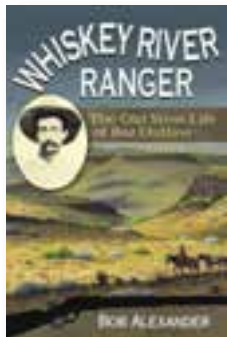
See more of Larry's work on his Facebook page and at [www.brightonsaddlery.com](http://www.brightonsaddlery.com).



## 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!

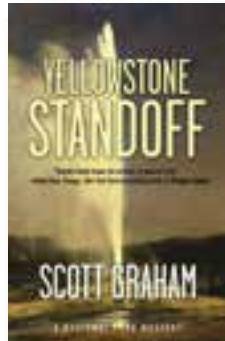
Here's what's on this month's bookshelf.



Bob Alexander tells the long-overdue true story of the troubled life of Texas Ranger Sergeant Baz Outlaw (1854-1894), who “never knew what fear was,” in **Whiskey River Ranger: The Old West Life of Baz Outlaw** (University of North Texas Press).



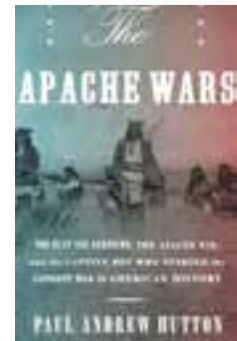
After a brutal winter, Matthew Garth is forced to take another cattle herd north in **Return to Red River** (Pinnacle), Johnny D. Boggs's sequel to Borden Chase's *Blazing Guns on the Chisholm Trail*, which became the classic 1948 movie *Red River*, starring John Wayne and Montgomery Cliff.



Rogue grizzly bears and gray wolves at Yellowstone National Park mean another mystery for archaeologist Chuck Bender to solve as Scott Graham continues his National Park series in **Yellowstone Standoff** (Torrey House).



Yes, another novel about Custer's Last Stand. But in John Hough Junior's **Little Bighorn** (Skyhorse), an 18-year-old boy is hired, against his will, as an aide to George Custer, falls in love with the sister of a regimental surgeon and rides with the 7th Cavalry to destiny.



Acclaimed historian Paul Andrew Hutton offers his perspective on Apache warriors and the white men who fought them in **The Apache Wars: The Hunt for Geronimo, the Apache Kid, and the Captive Boy Who Started the Longest War in American History** (Crown).

For more visit [www.westernwriters.org](http://www.westernwriters.org)

## NEW PRINTS FROM WILLIAM MATTHEWS STUDIO

In William Matthews book, *Working The West* (Chronicle Books, 2005) he describes his interest in all aspects of the West. “Architecture has always been a great interest of mine. The buildings on most ranches reflect their use, and there is usually little ornamentation. But their beauty lies in their simplicity.”



*Sugar Mill*

26.5" x 41" on a 34" x 47" sheet. \$1250.



*Phantom*

27" x 19.5" on a 33" x 27" sheet. \$680.

These two new prints being released by the William Matthews Studio were created from paintings that were included





in Mr. Matthews' recent Denver Art Museum one-man retrospective exhibition. The show, titled *Trespassing*, ran from November 2014 through May 2015.

Both prints are printed on a sophisticated, ink-jet printer on 100% rag, white cover paper with deckle edges on four sides. These prints are the latest in a series of over 60 prints Matthews' studio has produced. See all available prints at [williammatthewsstudio.com](http://williammatthewsstudio.com)



## LEGENDARY KING RANCH LUGGAGE

The luxury of leather takes to the skies with the Chaparral Collection from King Ranch Saddle Shop. Each bag is as rugged as it is handsome, with reinforced gussets, handles, and trim. Smooth-rolling inline wheels let you move easily through hectic airports, and locking retractable handles can be zippered out of sight when not in use. Brass hardware and the Running W accent the pieces just as they would a quality King Ranch saddle. [www.krsaddleshop.com](http://www.krsaddleshop.com)



## DESTINATIONS: NEW ORLEANS The Soul of the South

By Donna Stegman

There are only a small handful of cities in the United States that the majority of people could identify by just seeing one photo – New York City, San Francisco, Seattle, New Orleans are at the top of that list. There's just something about the skyline or the buildings that are so iconic anyone can pick them out of a lineup instantly. New Orleans may be the most remarkable of them all, with its Cajun food, jazz, historic architecture, haunting art, and the people themselves being so unique, I almost feel like I need to grab my passport before I get on the plane.

The Big Easy is a bit of a southern anomaly – its geography is in the heart of the south, but it doesn't seem to share the same genes as its Dixie neighbors. It's not your traditional Southern Baptist stronghold but predominately Catholic, with a creole twist blending Spanish, French and Caribbean ancestry into one big pot of spicy gumbo.

The second I step off the plane into the Louis Armstrong airport my eyes light up, my mouth begins to water and I get a bounce in my step to the beat of the song the jazz band is playing next to baggage. I love the vibe of this city – welcome to New Orleans.



I jumped at the opportunity to fly south and visit the crescent city, the winter at home has been frigid and I was tired of shoveling snow. It was the perfect storm, I wanted to take in a fabulous art exhibit of George Rodrigue's works titled *Louisiana Graveyards* and was lucky enough to be given tickets to attend a Random House Publishing party for one of my favorite authors. For a bookworm nerd, it doesn't get much better than this. I asked my BFF (and fellow nerd) from Texas to join me for a long weekend. She wasn't familiar with New Orleans, so I was able to wear my favorite hat of tour guide once again.



One of my worst fears is that an unguided newbie will step out into the streets of New Orleans and camp out in the French Quarter thinking they've discovered the heart of all things New Orleans. In my mind, Bourbon Street is a bit like Pleasure Island in Pinocchio. You're lured there by scantily clad ladies acting as carnival barkers trying to entice you to try their wares – cheap daiquiris pumped out of 7-11 Slurpee machines, sub par music, voodoo shops, long waits for marginal food and blocks of T-shirts shops selling items you'll regret buying the second you get back home. I'm not saying not worth your time to spend 45 minutes gawking at the side-show, I'm just saying see it, then quickly move on...and yes, even I have a few strands of Mardi Gras beads stuffed somewhere in the back of a kitchen drawer at home. So branch out and explore the city where her people live, eat and play and you'll get to see who

she really is, in all her glory.

We set out from our hotel that flanks the edge of the French Quarter, grabbed a cab, and headed to the Garden District. I do cabs in NOLA – most are very accommodating and will not only wait for you, but will give you history lessons included in your fare. They're plentiful and inexpensive. New Orleans has a very high crime rate so don't be a hero. The Garden District is one of several neighborhoods that were carved out of the old Bienville plantation, the master of which is said to have been the founder of New Orleans. Chocked-full of Antebellum mansions and stately genteel homes sporting lush manicured gardens and impressive iron gates, the Garden District was built to shame the architectural splendor found in the Creole French Quarter townhomes. These elegant dwellings are perfect examples of the Greek revival and Italianate designs. I could wander these streets for days admiring the grandiose living of a time long gone by. Today, many of the more elaborate addresses found in this area are now owned by movie stars and tech moguls than by founding families. I just had to stop and take a picture of the home once owned by Ann Rice, where she penned her wildly popular Vampire series. One of the world's most famous restaurants sits quietly in the heart of the neighborhood, the Commander's Palace. Known for its turtle soup and highbrow brunches, where ladies still show up in long flowing dresses and hats adorned with colorful feathers, and gentlemen sport pastel colored clothing with the southern regulation bow tie.



After a leisurely lunch of native seafood, we wander directly across the street to one of New Orleans' top attractions





– the Lafayette Cemetery No.1. Yes, this is a big tourist destination in town, known down here as “Cities of the Dead.” Due to the area’s high water table and perhaps a bit of a throw back to some of its Caribbean roots, these cemeteries are designed for above ground burial. Renowned for its elaborate tomb designs shaded by groves of lush greenery, this cemetery exudes a strong sense of Southern gothic. Built in early 1833, it’s divided by two intersecting footpaths that form a large cross that bisects the plots. It’s plain to see the economic divide; the tombs of the wealthier families can be spotted a mile away, extraordinarily elaborate in painstaking detail and carved out of pristine white marble. One would think this trip to be a bit macabre, but in truth it held a quiet beauty that was a peaceful respite from our busy day.



We felt we were ready to take on a bit of shopping and if you’re going to shop, you’re going to need to cab-it to the famed Magazine Street. I must applaud New Orleans in its utter support of mom-and-pop establishments. You’d be hard pressed to find any of the invading species known as the big box store or franchises within its city limits and that helps keep the Crescent City real. Magazine Street sports miles of the most eclectic gathering of retail shops imaginable. From the curious to convenient stores that specialize in only imported vinegars, chocolatiers, hand made scarves, one store that makes custom-carved buttons to order and then there’s the food. Restaurants range from white tablecloth and cut crystal brunches to grab and go Thai lunch boxes – if you’re hungry, they have you covered. But the shining star of this stroll is the antiques – New Orleans boasts more antique shops per capita than any other city in the United States. It would seem that its preferred century is the mid 1700-1800s and it goes without saying that most of these antiques are of the French persuasion. Rows and rows of massive crystal chandeliers twinkle in the windows as you pass by and enough original Sun King to refurbish several wings at Versailles. But to be fair, he was in fact the heir to the House of Bourbon.

After a glorious day of shopping and sightseeing, we drag all of our bags filled with treasures back to the room to get ready for dinner. We could fall out the front door of our hotel and find no fewer than 10 restaurants worth our time, but we chose the Rib House, which was located in the lobby of our hotel. I prefer old school when it comes to dining and this Zagat-rated steak and chop house is as old school as it comes. If an establishment has high ratings and has been able to stay in business for numerous decades, then it must be a duck. New Orleans has so many quality dining establishments that it’s best to look before you land for what interests you. And in case you’re wondering, I’m not into celebrity restaurants any more than I am Chinese food buffets, just sayin’...

We so enjoyed our time in this iconic all American-ish city, that it felt almost painful to leave. Vibrant live music only found in a few square miles of America mixed with a singular cuisine that reflects its history deeply rooted in French and African cultures producing a unique flavor unmatched anywhere in the world – who wouldn’t want to spend time here? Where the local people are made up of Southern gentility, heavily mixed with florid eccentricity and a dash of who-gives-a-shit. So when your plane lands at the Louis Armstrong airport, please look beyond Bourbon Street and discover what New Orleans is really all about, the people. Don’t be shy, fly your own freak flag and remember to always applaud the spectacle.

**New Orleans**

**If you want to know a city, meet its people, eat its food, and drink its drinks.**



**THE GARDEN DISTRICT**

The Garden District, both lower and upper, is where I like to spend a day or so – quiet, residential eye candy wherever you look. High-end shops and authentic restaurants abound. Nearby, wrought- and cast-iron railings line the balconies – they call them galleries here – adding charm and shade to sidewalks and outdoor space to second and third floors. And for the record, the vernacular architecture of the French Quarter is in fact largely Spanish. When Spain controlled the city (1763 to 1800), two fires swept away the standing French colonial plantation-like

homes and this was the style used when the rebuilding commenced.

**SHOPPING**

If you're not eating, drinking or listening to jazz, you need to be shopping. New Orleans has some of the most spectacular selections of one of a kind shops in the world and the best of it is located on Magazine Street. With dozens of specialty boutiques, galleries, and restaurants to choose from, you could walk for days down the 6 mile stretch and still not see everything. Don't be a hero, take a cab and plot out your attack. [www.magazinestreet.com](http://www.magazinestreet.com)



**EXHIBITS AND MUSEUMS WORTH YOUR TIME**

**THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION EXHIBIT**

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You have a plethora of choices when it comes to accommodations, it just depends on what experience you're looking to create.

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### WHEN TO GO

I guess it depends on what level of crazy you're looking for on your trip. If Carnival is your thing, then look up the parade schedule far in advance. The hotels book up months in advance and you will need to nail down details as far out as 6 months. If you want a quieter trip to the Big Easy, then mid January works well. The New Year's crowds have left and the city has had time to rest, the prices are low and the weather is wonderful for sight seeing. It gets H-O-T in the city; close buildings and wall-to-wall concrete create a humid soup that's almost unbearable in the summer months.



### TOURS

I'm personally not a group tour kinda gal, 20 people shuffling along behind a lady



with a mic, climbing in and out of a bus behind your grandparents. I go out and give a tip to the bellman and he delivers a cabbie that was born and raised in the city. We prearrange what I want to see and for a price. He takes me and waits as I tromp through the cemetery with my BFF without a horde of people asking redundant questions. It takes half the amount of time, I get to customize my tour and it's almost always cheaper.

New Orleans 10 Years After *Katrina*

I must admit that I found being down here and witnessing the gentrification of neighborhoods, that at one time were the true heart and soul of the non-touristy New Orleans – a bit worrisome.

Just turn around and look north – Lakeside, as they say here – and there’s the Bywater, where Hipsters hunch over their laptops, drinking Sazeracs and NOLA Hopitoulas beer. It’s a perfect spot to bear witness to a city in transition. Along with restoration has come reinvention. The city that once profited so much from its past, has become a magnet for start-ups. *Forbes* labeled New Orleans the No. 1 “Brainpower City” in the U.S. last year, and has ranked it behind only San Jose and San Francisco for tech expansion and yet brings them no small source of civic pride. It’s just a bit unnerving to see bearded plaid wearing hipsters invade and takeover the native lands of a once traditional New Orleans neighborhood.

But not all change is bad – some of the forward movement is exciting and should have happened years ago, sometimes it just needs a shit storm to get it started. The public school system is a good example of a radical experiment gone right – all charter schools all the time. Perhaps this is an example worth studying. Could this be a change to help education throughout the United States? Consider that in pre-Katrina 2005, 62 percent of New Orleans children went to failing schools and that number is now down to 7 percent. Politics aside, maybe we should take a closer look?

But few today would argue that New Orleans BK (before Katrina) was in serious trouble – riddled with crime, up to its eyeballs with municipal corruption and saturated with atrocious poverty, and had the highest incarceration rate in the country. Tradition – good, bad or irrelevant – stasis was the safe route, but it wasn’t working. Then came Katrina, and suddenly, change looked like the only route to survival for one of the most unique cities in the United States. I just hope people don’t opt for a Starbucks Frappuccino instead of standing in line at Café Du Monde for their morning coffee – restoration, not reinvention, please. Be careful New Orleans, you’ve lost a huge chunk of your original population and have systematically replaced a portion of that percentage with movie stars and start-up moguls. Don’t lose the soul that made your city such a destination in the first place.



## BASIC TIPS

- Cajun and Creole are NOT the same thing. Cajuns were once Francophone refugees who fled Canada during the French and Indian War, then settled in little communities around the swamplands of lower Louisiana. Creoles are urbanized descendants of 18th century French and Spanish colonists that mingled with the locals. This fact is very important to them.
- Use your concierge. They can help you get to the right place for what you want to experience, fast. And tip them.
- I’m not going to lie to you, the crime rate here is high. Don’t wear ALL of your jewelry out on the streets and don’t swing a big designer purse in the clubs. I use a wristlet wallet and leave most of my cards in the hotel. Take cabs.
- This is the South, good manners go a long way. Yes ma’am and sir will get you the best service.  
“Where y’ at?” = How are you?  
“Where y’ be?” = Where would you like to go?
- Last, Don’t wear flip-flops on Bourbon Street. I’d prefer not to say how I figured out this tip.





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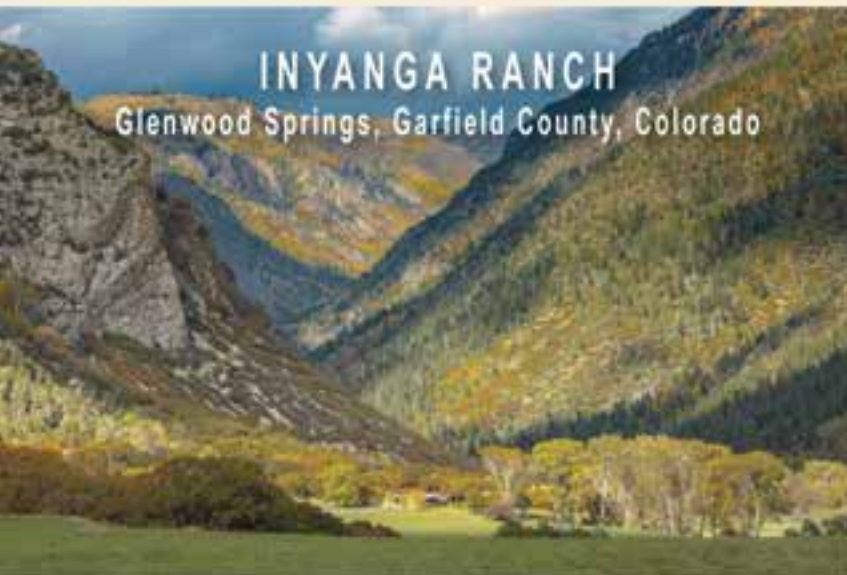
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## VISTA VERDE GUEST RANCH Steamboat Springs, Routt County, Colorado

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## INYANGA RANCH Glenwood Springs, Garfield County, Colorado

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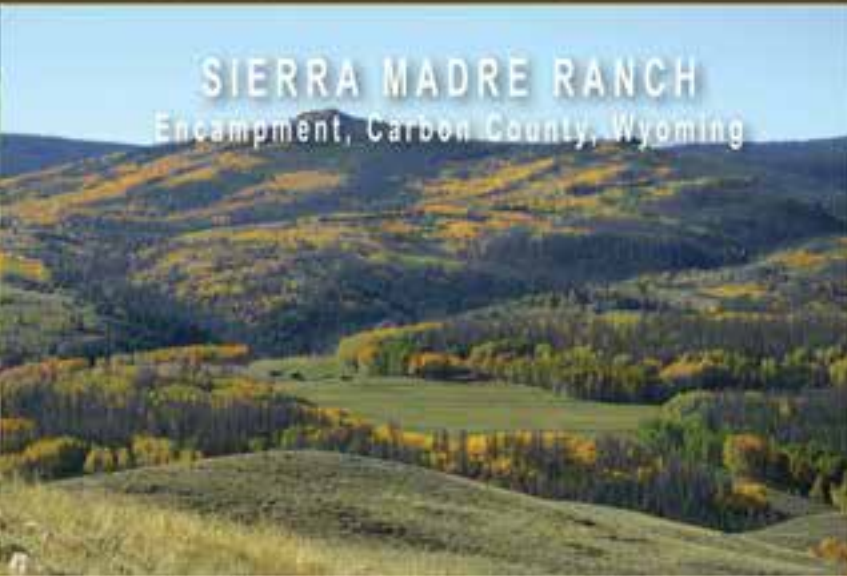






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SAN MIGUEL CREEK RANCH  
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This cattle and trophy hunting ranch encompasses 7,820± total acres with plentiful water, 7 pastures, excellent wildlife habitat, a 3,500-square-foot main residence with 3 bedrooms, 3 baths and amazing views and two additional homes. This scenic ranch is very accessible, yet secluded in the foothills with 360-degree views of mountains, mesas and Western landscapes. **\$4,700,000. Duane Daskam, 719.942.3734, duane@rmabrokers.com**



NORTH PLATTE RIVER VALLEY RANCH  
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These 8,414 total acres feature 1.5 miles of North Platte River frontage, 140 irrigated acres, excellent livestock grazing and plentiful water. It runs 350 cow/calf pair or 600 yearlings, has various changes in both terrain and elevations throughout and features a variety of plentiful wildlife and upland game birds, including elk, mule deer, white tail deer, antelope along with wild turkey. **\$5,200,000. Ron Morris, 970.535.088, ron@rmabrokers.com.**



HILLSIDE RANCH  
Hillside, Custer County, Colorado

Nine miles from Westcliffe, this high-quality 580-acre executive ranch features luxurious improvements, 360-degree views, pastures and meadows set up for grazing. Ideal for entertaining, the elegant 7,350-square-foot, 3-bedroom, 3.5-bath home has a large open floor plan. This is an exceptional mountainside retreat. **\$2,900,000. Ron Morris, 970.535.088, ron@rmabrokers.com and Duane Daskam, 719.942.3734, duane@rmabrokers.com**

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## BY HAND AND HEART

# Seeing in Tongues

For Montana silversmith Haddon Hufford, craftsmanship is a near-spiritual experience.



By Brian D'Ambrosio

36

**L**ost wax casting. Synclastic raising. Anticlasting raising. Hollow construction.

Haddon Hufford speaks the language of the silversmith, its lexicon centuries old.

Common terms: annealing, raising, engraving, chasing, planishing, repoussage, sinking and soldering.

Spend a few hours with Hufford in his rustic Frenchtown, Montana, studio and his encyclopedic knowledge of the craft makes you feel uninformed, outright ignorant. With a rough-hewn scholarliness, Hufford explains that “annealing” is



photos by Brian D'Ambrosio

Silversmith Haddon Hufford.

when metal is heated for altering. “Planishing” is the act of using highly polished hammering to refine metal surfaces. “Raising” shapes a hollow form in the metal.

Hufford is the consummate teacher, sharing definitions and histories with thoughtful regularity. One minute he could be discussing the colonial artistry of Paul Revere, and his “first copper rolling mill.” The next, he describes how to imprint and texture a design into metal. From there, it might be talk of sinking (hammering the metal to create a concave hemispherical



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shape), and soldering (connecting metal with a low temperature heat). Hufford's sentences are not haphazard slivers of verbiage, but more like authoritative assertions.

"Silversmithing in many ways is the forcing of metal into new directions," he says, "directions it may not wish to go."

Seeing Hufford at work is to glimpse silversmithing's ancient endearment, intense difficulty and unique beauty. His movements are provocative, purposeful, even exhilarating, sometimes all in the same action. He's not a gambling man, but he certainly knows what it means to go all-in.

On one table stands a pair of sterling silver candlesticks, with long, tapered stems, and a spiked candle holder. At his fingers, a pair of contemporary candelabras – hammered, polished and glistening – with balls and jutting arms to suit tapered candles. Hufford's craftsmanship articulates the flurry, the force of a man who pays stout attention to details.

Many of the utensils used in ancient times are still used by modern silversmiths. Ancient tools Hufford finds familiar include tongs, hammer, anvil, engraving burins, small mallets, large scales, weights and blow pipes. Hufford's studio walls are lined and stacked with dozens of hammers and mallets – each a different shape, each fashioned to make its own distinct impression. Also displayed in his shop are specialized hammers, anvils and metal working stakes, many of which are handmade.

Tools alone are simply tools. It's the craftsman who breathes creative life into them, who understands their purpose, perpetuates their methods. There is something revelatory in seeing the two together, an almost Pentecostal feeling of seeing in tongues. Hufford says that each hammer's shape and style contributes to a



Hufford's tools. "Silversmithing ... is the forcing of metal into new directions, directions it may not wish to go."

piece's distinction. Metal conditioning is important, too. Metal moves at such a leisurely pace; hammers slowly form their outcome.

According to Hufford, sometime in the Middle Ages there was a distinct rift between goldsmiths and silversmiths. Silver was plentiful and inexpensive compared to gold. Aspiring workers could not afford gold as their medium. Goldsmiths became highly revered, often serving as the local bankers. The silversmith used the goldsmith's training to popularize his own commodity. Hufford's art is the continuance of that split.

Hufford has lived in the woodsy hills of the Missoula Valley since 2006. He was born and raised in New York's Hudson River Valley, and studied graphic design at the Parsons School of Design in New York before serving in Vietnam from 1969 to 1971 as a combat cameraman in the Army's 1st Air Cavalry Division. Hufford then trotted the globe in the subsequent 28 years, working in the film industry as a dolly and crane grip, and as a set builder. By Hufford's estimation, he worked on at least 75 films.



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His journey into metalsmithing began serendipitously on a trip through Argentina in 1996. In a tiny village on the Pampas, Hufford visited a silversmith's workshop and became fascinated. Wonder is a measure of what this world is all about. In that South American shop, Hufford learned that wonder could be an antidote to the chaos of the world.

"There were three silversmiths in town," says Hufford. "One of them invited me into his studio. It was a powerful and exciting exhibition. I came home and I got started."

Sterling is Hufford's material of choice because of its inherent beauty and value; it requires Zen-like endurance to form and forge such noble metal.

"I know that the blow from the smith's hammer is directly related to the heartbeat and rhythm of life itself," Hufford says. "There are times in the solitude of my studio when hand and hammer become one and the repetition of the overlapping blows brings me to the point of meditation."

Techniques used to join silver together include welding, soldering and brazing. Hufford's silversmithing incorporates the skills he obtained in the workshops and homes of craftsmen across the world: an Irish metalsmith, a Bulgarian silversmith, a New York jeweler. A desire to follow an abiding sense of curiosity opened up an entirely new world of shape, form and creation. Some of his forms are common, even familiar: letter openers, candelabras, goblets and vessels. Each handwrought piece that Hufford forms is original, masculine and geometric, and he is proud to have not once duplicated any object.

All of Hufford's work is either created on commission or sent to Lauren Stanley American Silver gallery in New York City. No matter where the works travel from there, they will remain fragments of



Sterling is Hufford's material of choice because of its inherent beauty and value.

Hufford's experience, accounts of his spiritual and artistic growth.

Silversmithing, like life, allows for the possibilities of transformation, a daily opportunity for Hufford to experience the vigor of the everyday. Its enduring link to man's innate desire to shape and create something eye-catching isn't lost on Hufford.

"Silversmithing goes in and out of vogue," he says. "But I think that silver has, and always will, connect to people. Think about it: candlelight, a glass of wine, a great dinner, and silver, handwrought candleholders. That says it all."



Brian D'Ambrosio is a writer living in Montana.



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## BOOKS TO FIND

# Great Books from College Presses

Publishing is challenging no matter what the genre or subject these days so it is encouraging to see the university and college presses bringing so many great titles to the market. One of the great regionally-focused presses is the University of Nevada Press. Here are three fine examples from their current crop.

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### **Down by The Lemonade Springs – Essays on Wallace Stegner**

By Jackson J. Benson

Wallace Stegner was one of this country's finest writers of the West and its environment. His biographer, Jackson Benson, has created a series of essays that further illustrate the life of this significant writer – as an author, environmentalist and teacher. A Pulitzer



Prize and an American Book Award – along with many other honors – have recognized Stegner's works during his prolific career. And yet his legacy is much larger than any of these awards would suggest. In Benson's in-depth essays, Stegner's biographer continues to explore various aspects of his career – his philosophical writing, his concern for the land, and his bedrock beliefs.

Wallace Stegner died from the result of complications from injuries in an auto accident in Santa Fe, NM in 1993. He was 84. Benson argues that Stegner truly developed his artistic voice late in his career, with the publication of his final four novels and pays particular attention to what many believe to be Stegner's masterpiece, *Angle of Repose* (1971), for which he won the Pulitzer. This while the book also examines the personal doubts that Stegner wrestled with throughout his career. As stated, Benson is Stegner's biographer deluxe, he is also an admirer in his celebration of his subject's complicated life.



L A U R A

*noelle*

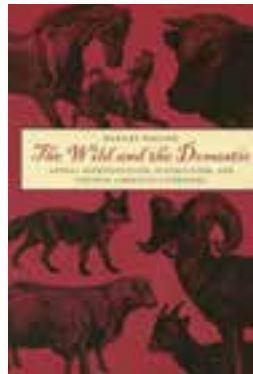


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**The Wild and the Domestic: Animal Representation, Ecocriticism, and Western American Literature**

By Barney Nelson



Barney Nelson is the author of four books, numerous journal and magazine articles, poems, photographs, and photo-essays, as well as book chapters, including one in *Exploring Lost Borders: Critical Essays on Mary Austin*. She is a passionate westerner and this book is a fresh look at feminist criticism as well as “ecocriticism” and the growing numbers in literature of the environment. This, the author explores, as just how

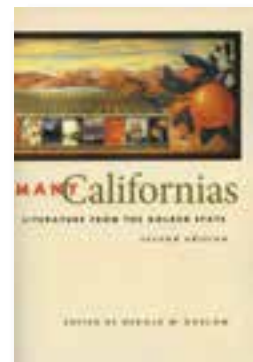
American literature has shaped the way people view animals as wild and domestic and its consequences. Specifically the subject of cattle and the West is covered along with the likes of Edward Abbey, John Muir and the author’s continuing mission to champion Mary Austin’s place in American writing – among other topics. But is her examination of livestock grazing along with a fascinating review of her own life that makes this slim volume a great read.

**Many Californias**

(Second Edition)

By Gerald Haslam

Prolific writer Gerald Haslam is no stranger to these pages. As an historian and



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## Western Books: The Nightstand Collection, Part 2.

As promised in the last issue, here are picks from our learned editor, A.J. Mangum.

*Reservation Blues*, by Sherman Alexie



*In These Hills*, by Ralph Beer

*All Creatures Great and Small*, by James Herriot

*Last Go Round*, by Ken Kesey and Ken Babbs

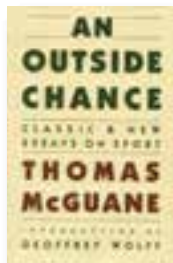
*The Selected Works of T.S. Spivet*, by Reif Larsen

*The Sky Fisherman*, by Craig Lesley

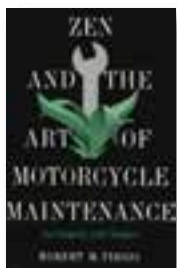
*The Crossing*, by Cormac McCarthy

*An Outside Chance*, by Thomas McGuane

*Nothing but Blue Skies*, by Thomas McGuane



*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, by Robert Pirsig



*Day Out of Days*, by Sam Shepard

scholar of California literature, Haslam has done much to tell the stories of the non-coastal areas of the Golden State – including his extensive writing and study of Latino writer Arnold Rojas (1888 – 1988). Rojas’ writings have been included in this journal, as has Haslam’s take on the writer in numerous past issues. This volume, in its second edition was released in 1999 and, still in print, importantly celebrates the diversity of his state. As Haslam states in the Introduction, “California is elusive...For those who yearn to be here, this state seems to be a land of tan, sun bleached blondes with straight teeth, blondes who don’t have to work but who do hurry from hot tubs to haute cuisine, a place where gold nuggets could be scooped up by the shovelful and fruit burgeoned year-round. Unrealistic expectations have led to disillusionment, said a homeless man at a San Francisco shelter in 1989, ‘I thought California was about somethin’, but it ain’t about nuthin.’”

Theodore Roosevelt said about California, “When I am in California, I am not in the West, I am west of the West.” As the eighth largest economy in the world, California truly does have many faces and Haslam has brought us in this rather timeless volume a hard look straight into the eyes of numerous writers and their views on the state. The book divides the state into five regions, and Haslam has selected prose and poetry from each that reflects their history, terrain, and culture. The book features sixty-seven authors ranging from Jack London to Maxine Hong Kingston, making it most diverse. Subjects as diverse as Mark Twain’s story of blue jay speech habits, Joan Didion’s evocation of the southland’s Santa Ana winds to Bukowski’s ride in a red Porsche all add layers to such a rich subject.

In Gerald Haslam’s book, he asks, “Where is California? What is it?” then offers, “California remains at least as much state of mind as state of the union.”





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# Kurt Markus

Spanish Ranch, Tuscarora, Nevada, 1983



*Kurt Markus*

Spanish Ranch cavy, sunrise.





Bill Kane is the figure squatting on the left, Rick Arrington is standing in the center and the buckaroo horseback is unidentified.



Fritz Marek.

The roll-your own cigarette sticks to his lower lip in one corner, and when his mouth moves, the cigarette magically stays where it is. The whole character of him seems made up, every turn of him created for our pleasure, as if his life had been cleverly written and rehearsed. His missing upper teeth. The store of chewing tobacco in his trailer refrigerator, maybe ten full rolls; the bright green plastic Hawken cans seem right for him, matching the assortment of colored strings, wire, bones, and Peruvian trinkets he's hung everywhere. His saddle and bridles. I remember him as a man on the edge of falling apart: all that he had was torn, or mended. A strong wind or a day of careless inattention and he could be spread out over half the Spanish Ranch. Yet he's a smooth figure horseback, durable as hell, and can handle a rope and knows cattle and men. He hasn't tired of helping a younger man, which says a lot, and Bill Kane tells me he's invaluable with his kids – takes them fishing and baits their hooks and keeps them in constant view.

—Kurt Markus

(excerpted from *Buckaroo*, published by New York Graphic Society, 1987; copyright Kurt Markus 1987)





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## THE COOK HOUSE

# Shawn Cameron's Green Tomato Chow-Chow



By Kathy McCraine

52

Shawn Cameron is best known for her authentic western art, having exhibited oil paintings in the most prestigious art shows in the West. A fifth-generation Arizona rancher, Shawn knows her subject matter and the hardships of ranching firsthand. And, like most ranch women, she also knows a thing or two about cooking.

“Just like drawing or painting, I grew up cooking,” she says. “Cooking was huge in my life from the time I was in the third grade.”

As a child, Shawn's parents, Louis and Billie Wingfield, had a large feedlot and farm in Arlington, Arizona. When her mother went back to school to get a master's degree, Shawn often came home from school and cooked dinner for the family.

“I don't think it was very good,” she says, “but they never complained.”

In 1960, the Wingfields bought the Horseshoe Ranch north of Phoenix, where they spent their summers until moving there full-time in 1968. In 1970, at the age of 19, Shawn married Dean Cameron and



photos by Kathy McCraine

Artist and ranch cook Shawn Cameron.





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the next year they also moved to the ranch.

“You don’t go to town to eat when you live that far out, so from that time on, I cooked a lot, but it was ranch food,” she says. “I did a lot of biscuits and gravy, lots of roasts. I baked bread and did a lot of canning. When we sat down to eat during roundup, everything on that table came off the ranch – the meat, the milk, the butter, vegetables from the garden, and fruit from the many varieties of fruit trees that grew on the ranch.”

The Horseshoe was almost like a small remote community, with the two families, plus several additional families working there. Trips to town were infrequent but, every three or four weeks, Shawn would go to Prescott, 65 miles away, taking everybody’s list to stock up on staple goods.

The Horseshoe was a cow-calf and yearling operation, running around 2,000 yearlings and 500 cows. They also ran a cow herd at Valle, just south of the Grand Canyon. Roundup was a major event. Before the work started, Billie would get out her huge recipe file and old cookbooks and start circling the things they wanted to cook.

“It was major shopping to get ready, but it was fun,” Shawn says. “We all chipped in and cooked.”

At roundup, it wasn’t unusual to have 10 to 15 extra cowboys to feed, especially during shipping. Shawn would trade off with her mother on the cooking so that each of them could also spend time helping gather the cattle. Louis was famous for his Dutch oven biscuits, and that was a frequent treat for everybody too.

On days when the working pens were accessible by pickup, Shawn or Billie would carry lunch out to the crew, but other days the cowboys just carried burritos, which packed better than sandwiches. On shipping day, there might be seven trucks lined up to be loaded, and they would feed all the truckers as well as the help.

A big part of cooking at the ranch revolved around

canning whatever was available

“Fall roundup always came right after harvest, with the fruit ripe and the garden going overboard,” Shawn says. “The cowboys loved anything sweet. You would set jars of jam or sweet relish on the table, and you almost had to ration it, because they would just sit there and eat it. I’d put out a pint of jam when I cooked breakfast and then leave the room. When I came back, the whole jar of jam was gone. They would just help themselves.”

With apples, apricots, peaches and plums, plus an abundant garden, Shawn canned straight through August and September. At the end of the season, when the garden was still full of unripened tomatoes, they made a green tomato chow-chow from a recipe Billie found in an old cookbook. The cowboys loved this sweet/tart relish on beef or hamburgers.

“For us, preservation and using what we had was very important to us,” Shawn says. “We didn’t make an issue of it. That was just the way it was. To me canning is just like my art. You’re preserving what you have, and that’s what our life is about.”

### **Green Tomato Chow-Chow**

About 24 large green tomatoes

9 large onions

3 green bell peppers, halved and seeded

3 red bell peppers, halved and seeded

3 tablespoons celery seed

3 tablespoons mustard seed

Scant tablespoon salt

5 cups white sugar (less can be used)

2 cups cider vinegar

Chop or put in grinder the tomatoes, red and green peppers, and onions. Put mixture into a strainer and allow to drain 1 hour. In a large stockpot (enamel or





stainless steel, not aluminum) combine all ingredients and simmer 10 minutes. To can, sterilize 12 pint jars by placing in boiling water a few minutes. Fill sterilized jars with mixture using a ladle and funnel. Process in boiling water bath (large canning pot with rack to separate jars and enough water to cover 2 inches above lids) for 30 minutes at a full boil. Remove with canning tongs and place on towel-covered counter top to cool until lids seal (“pings”) and there is no movement when touched in center. Delicious with sandwiches, meat, potatoes... whatever.



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). See Shawn Cameron's artwork at [www.shawncameron.com](http://www.shawncameron.com).

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# The Call of the Horizon

The Art of Glenn Dean.



*Homeward*

To me, the West has a certain spiritual quality to its open spaces, a specific strength to its subtle color harmonies and in its simple, bold shapes. There's also a mystique to its history and inhabitants that has always intrigued me. I seek to paint these elements and qualities (both seen and unseen) that I find in this special landscape.

In its visual bounty, the West always keeps me searching. I like that aspect of not knowing what might be seen just around the next corner or over the next ridge. It's what I like to refer to as "the call of the horizon." It's so vast out there that you feel like you're one of very few who has even laid eyes on a certain view, or walked that one slope, or stood on a particular boulder. That sense of discovery stimulates a deeper, more personal connection with my surroundings.

In my work, I try to convey that connection, as well as the sense of space and sense of place. I paint simple truths about the places that I have seen – for example, the type of light, or a specific rock formation or a certain arrangement of clouds – however, I might add or change elements in ways that help tell a more complete story on the canvas, or that





*Forging Ahead*

might make the composition and design more appealing, yet still honor the overall subject and place.

Traveling and painting throughout the West, with its canyons, mesas and mountains, and with its various peoples and their cultures that are so strongly tied to the land, has introduced me to beautiful and interesting subject matter to which I've been inspired to return again and again, always to discover more beauty and interest.

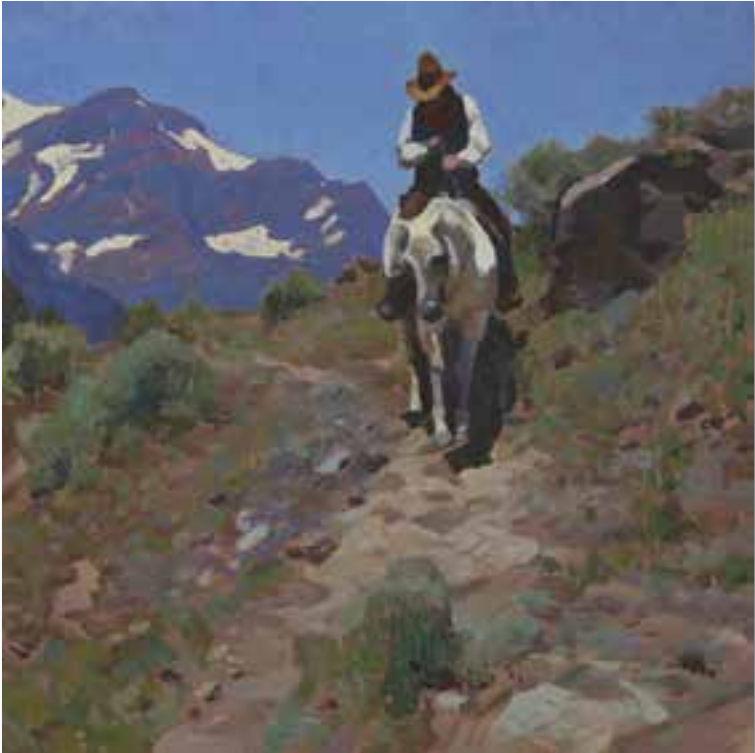
The image of the cowboy or traveler on horseback is one motif that continually inspires me. I don't ride often, nor do I call myself a cowboy, by any means. Other than for aesthetic purposes, this image of a horse and rider in my work serves as a depiction of my own solitary experiences in these open spaces, symbolizing my own romance with the West.



*Drifters*



*No Sign of His Cattle*

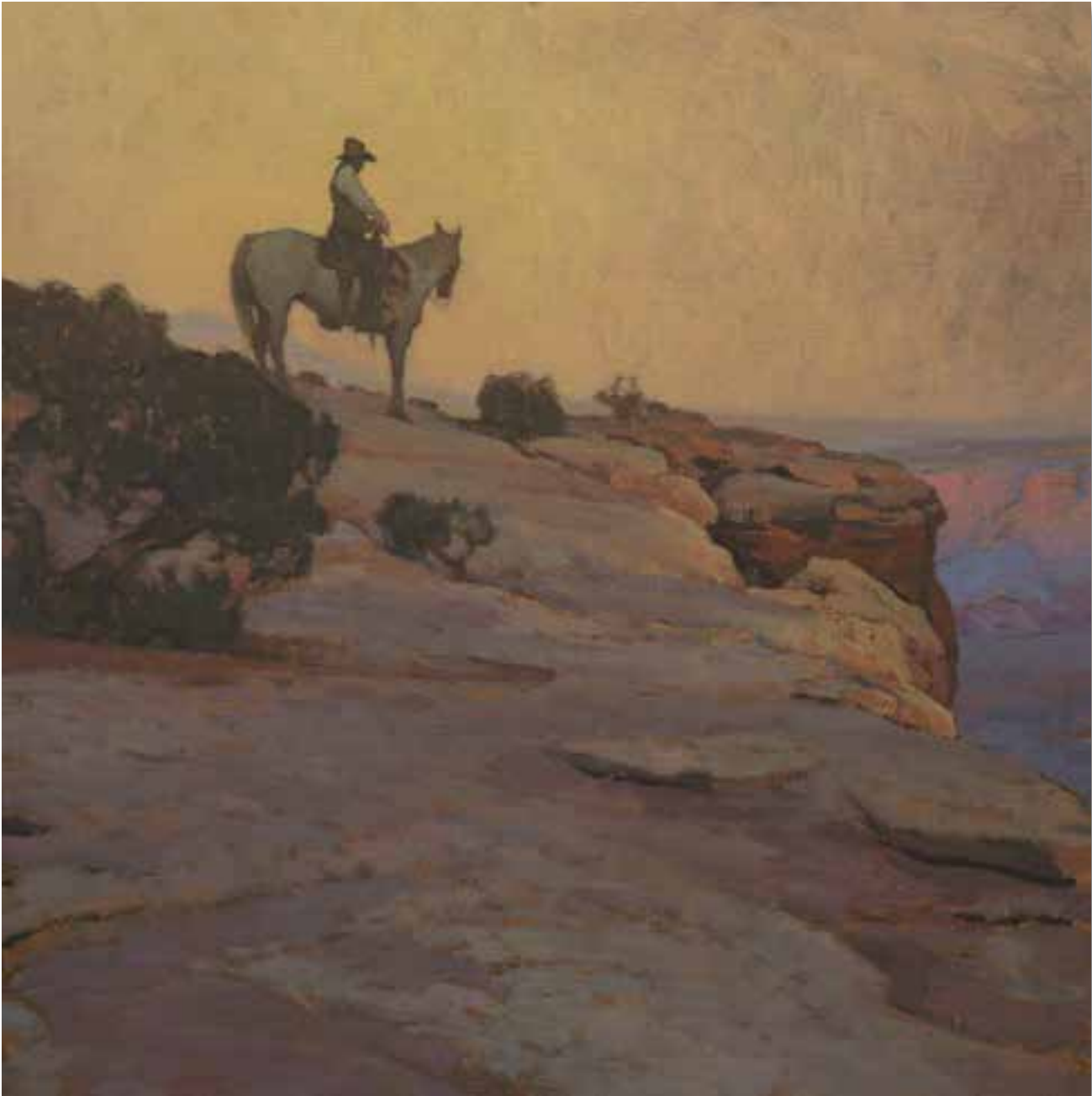


*Descending*





*Lonesome Trail*



*Communion*





*Across the Divide*



*The Smell of Rain*



*The Rancher*



*Chewing the Fat*





*Afternoon Sun*



*Sage Brothers*



[https://youtu.be/MCs\\_epgXbR0](https://youtu.be/MCs_epgXbR0)

Watch Glenn Dean at work in this video by Maxwell Alexander Gallery.

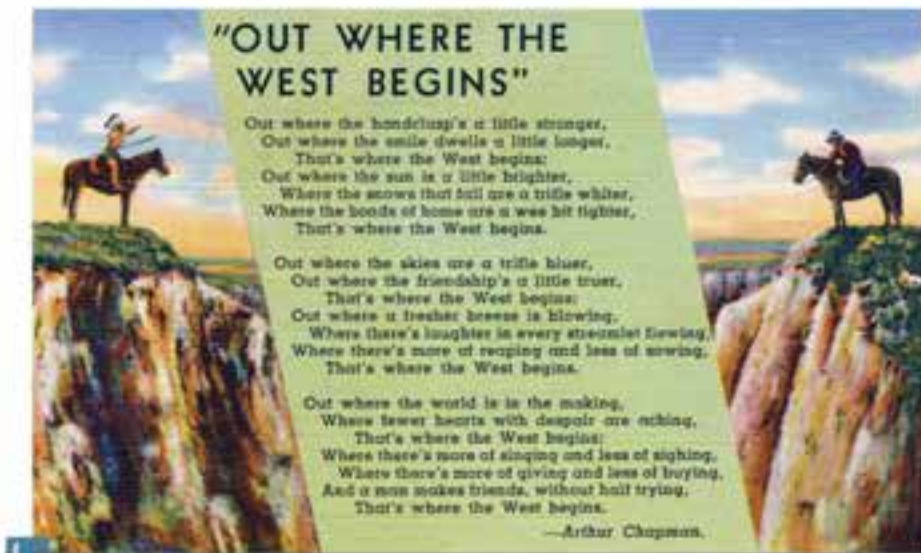


Glenn Dean is represented by the Legacy Gallery ([www.legacygallery.com](http://www.legacygallery.com)).

Learn more about his work at [www.landscapesofthewest.com](http://www.landscapesofthewest.com).



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The iconic poem, "Out Where The West Begins" was written by journalist and author, Arthur Chapman (1873 -1935) in 1912. He was a prolific poet – who wrote about all sorts of things – the pony express, science, skyscrapers and New York. But he knew his West and wrote this lovely poem after reading of a discussion of U.S. governors as to where geographically the West actually began. The poem went on to be quoted, translated and printed worldwide and even put to music several times. Chapman is a fascinating character, remembered primarily for his little invitational poem – all twenty-one lines – about a special place that continues to awe and inspire people today.



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## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

# Horseback Hymns

Brenn Hill and the healing power of music.



By Rod Miller

With 10 successful albums and a slew of industry awards, singer and songwriter Brenn Hill is well-known among fans of western and cowboy music. But there's a side of Hill even his most ardent fans might not know.

Hill's music is inspired by the American West, and a love for the land and its people infuses his work. But another aspect of his life and loves is revealed in his latest album, *Spirit Rider*. It's a collection of songs meant to inspire – 13 tracks of faith-based music. Four are traditional Christian hymns, one is a cowboy classic, another



photo courtesy of Brenn Hill

Singer-songwriter Brenn Hill is no stranger to fans of cowboy and western music.

was composed by a Texas songwriter. The rest are Hill originals.

There's a reason the cowboy singer rode a different trail with *Spirit Rider*. Hill's good humor and pervasive smile belie a family life fraught with medical misfortune. It all started in 2008 when Briggs, second son of Hill and his wife, Sylina, was diagnosed at age three with a particularly potent form of brain cancer from which recovery is rare. Years of surgeries, infections, meningitis, cardiopulmonary failure, muscle atrophy, and other complications contributed to the boy's suffering.

And tested Hill's faith.





Brenn Hill and his wife, Sylina, with their daughter Cambridge, and sons Briggs and Quayden.

“It’s been said that there is no faith like faith tested. I can testify to that,” Hill says. “Praying to save Briggs’s life actually saved his old man’s soul. We prayed constantly for our son, for our family. I could literally feel the Lord listening and consoling us. I saw the Lord’s hand as never before. I felt him carry me and my family through the greatest trial of my life.”

Briggs has been free from cancer for six years now.

While Hill’s latest album is something of a departure, he has dabbled with music with a spiritual bent from the beginning of his career. His first album, *Rangefire*, released in 1997, when Hill was but 20 years old, included “Hill Family Song.”

“My uncle, Ray Hill, was killed in a tragic woodcutting accident in August of 1996,” he says. “I wrote ‘Hill Family Song’ and sang it at his funeral for my aunt, my cousins and my grandmother. Since then it’s become one of my most requested songs.”

The song makes a return appearance on *Spirit Rider*. Another song, “The Power of Prayer,” appeared on Hill’s 2010 album, *Equine*. That song came about as a direct result of Briggs’s fight with cancer. But while some of Hill’s songs have offered a spiritual message or spoken of faith, *Spirit Rider* is unique in that every song on the album is deeply rooted in Hill’s religious beliefs.

“I have, perhaps, a better sense of my own spirituality following my son Briggs’s cancer battle,” Hill says. “Though I’d faced numerous trials and challenges as a career artist, nothing compared to the struggle we faced as a family through that ordeal. *Spirit Rider* has nagged at me for a few years.”

While Briggs was certainly the impetus for the album, it includes songs inspired by others of Hill’s acquaintance, members of an ad hoc community that pulled together for strength when sharing serious challenges.

“The songs ‘Spirit Rider’ and ‘Land of No Return’ were both written for families trying to heal from tragic losses of young sons,” Hill says. “Interestingly, there are no

specific songs about Briggs on *Spirit Rider*.

There’s a song there called ‘Guns a-Blazin’ that I wrote for my other son, Quayden, and ‘Daddies and Daughters’ is inspired by our daughter, Cambridge.



*Spirit Rider*, Brenn Hill’s latest album, is a collection of inspiring music and cowboy values.

But, while Briggs inspired the album, there are no songs specifically for Briggs on this record.”

*Spirit Rider* is also the work of producer Ryan Tilby, a musician who operates a recording studio in St. George, Utah. Tilby has known Hill for many years. They are, Tilby says, “close friends but distant neighbors.” Hill has employed Tilby’s talents as a musician in both his road band and in the studio. And Hill has produced albums for other artists at Tilby’s

studio. An album of faith-based music is something they had discussed over the years, and Tilby tells how the record finally came together.

“I remember sitting in a hotel room with Brenn when he first played me the song ‘Spirit Rider’ and told me the story behind it, and announced that it may have been the last piece he was waiting for to pull the trigger on the album we’d batted around for so long,” Tilby says. “An album like *Spirit Rider* requires a magical convergence of circumstance – the right songs, the right musicians, the right timing. It’s a record Brenn never wanted to do halfheartedly.”

Tilby is pleased with the result of their work.

“The *Spirit Rider* album is something I’m proud of from top to bottom,” he says. “It’s as though the project turned out just right in spite of my shortcomings.”

As is often the case with record albums, Hill and Tilby considered numerous songs and experimented with various arrangements before deciding which made the greatest contributions to the spiritual appeal of the album.

“I wanted to make a great record that broadly appealed to saints and sinners alike,” Hill says, “across all denominational boundaries.”

Hill feels especially strong about two of the songs

he wrote for the album.

“The title song, ‘Spirit Rider,’ and ‘Land of No Return’ are powerful for me because of the way they came down,” he says. “Both were gifts from the Lord and I couldn’t get the words written on paper fast enough. I



Brenn and Briggs Hill, just two weeks before the boy was diagnosed with brain cancer.

have witnessed the effects of these songs on grieving families and I have no doubt that I was able to serve as the Lord’s instrument in writing them.”

“Guns a-Blazin’” is Tilby’s favorite.

“As a young father, that tune takes what I feel in my heart and delivers it with the passion that I can only hope my son feels from me,” he says. “I’ve always been impressed with Brenn’s writing. This time I’m just jealous.”

Christian hymns on the album include “Nearer My God to Thee,” “How Great Thou Art,” and “God Be with You Till We Meet Again.”

There’s a story behind a fourth hymn on the record.

“I sang ‘The Old Rugged Cross’ at a Cowboy Gathering in West Virginia,” Hill says. “It was a sunny Sunday morning on a bare Appalachian ridge. I was far from home, missing my family, and I’d had a hard road getting to the event. My interpretation of the song was



Riding with Dad has always made Briggs smile.



Singer-songwriter Brenn Hill performs on stages across America.

that in bringing forth ‘the message’ there is intense opposition. We all have a cross to bear.”

Hill travels widely and appears at many cowboy and western-themed events. But most audiences, even fans, may not be aware of the importance of his faith.

“I wouldn’t say that I outwardly display my religion at cowboy gatherings, so it’s entirely possible that fans don’t know how important my faith is to me,” he says. “But, I cherish the opportunity with *Spirit Rider* to weave my testimony into the music. For me, it’s a piece of art that I’m grateful to have the opportunity to have made. If there’s a message in the music, it is that I’m an iron-clad believer, a Christian cowboy, and that I know from my own experience that the Lord waits with open arms for sinners as well as saints.”

In addition to cowboy gatherings, Hill also seeks out opportunities to share music in various worship services.

“I’ve sang spiritually in jails, detention centers, and numerous other spiritual-type gatherings and I feel a

deep sense of duty to do so,” he says. “I believe the gift of music and talent – should I actually have any – comes with the responsibility to inspire, uplift and console others. I’ve cherished these opportunities.”

In giving his fans a dose of spiritual music with *Spirit Rider*, Hill integrates his beliefs in the values of the American West and Christian traditions.

“I hope listeners will relate to the hymns and be touched by the fatherhood songs, and also be intrigued by the cowpunch tunes,” he says. “Most of my songs have some level of blood, guts and horse sweat in them. It’s about the love of a way of life, love of the land, love of livestock, and how westerners survive the modern era. I hope listeners will gain some insight into the values that are integral to the cowboy code, which I truly believe parallels the teachings of Christ, steadfast and immovable.”



[https://youtu.be/BFGwP8Hxz58?list=PLLSb03LMH5BJ5SI0BsvrVz\\_Wq-uKVM7LE](https://youtu.be/BFGwP8Hxz58?list=PLLSb03LMH5BJ5SI0BsvrVz_Wq-uKVM7LE)

Take a listen, via YouTube, to music from Brenn Hill’s *Spirit Rider*.

Spur Award-winning author Rod Miller writes poetry, fiction and history about the West.

His latest book is a collection of short fiction, *The Death of Delgado and Other Stories*.

Find Rod online at [www.writerRodMiller.com](http://www.writerRodMiller.com) and [writerRodMiller.blogspot.com](http://writerRodMiller.blogspot.com).



# New Brew

Some of the West's best craft breweries are in unexpected places.

By Melissa Mylchreest

It's no secret the West is awash in craft beer. The top four states with the most microbreweries are California, Washington, Colorado and Oregon. But it's also no secret the vast majority of these breweries are located in heavily populated areas, where urban trends and tastes maintain an insatiable demand for hoppy IPAs, experimental saisons, and chocolate-and-coffee flavored porters.

But what about those out-of-the-way places, the vast swaths of the West where American lagers rule the day, and Coors Lite is king? Or tiny, pinpoint-on-the-map towns barely big enough to warrant zip codes, let alone support breweries?

Well, the West is full of enterprising souls, and where there's a will, there's a beer, even if the odds are stacked against you.

"Before we opened the brewery, we actually did a whole economic feasibility study and decided it wouldn't work," says Teresa Dahl-Bredine, who, along with her husband, David, founded Little Toad Creek Brewery and Distillery near Silver City, New Mexico.

The two ignored the dire predictions, and opened a small production facility alongside the wilderness



Little Toad Creek Brewery & Distillery, located in Silver City, New Mexico, is the only brewery in three counties. Browse Little Toad Creek's offerings at [www.littletoadcreekbrewerydistillery.com](http://www.littletoadcreekbrewerydistillery.com).



hotel they had just purchased and renovated in the Gila National Forest, about 45 miles north of the Silver City.

"We ran the hotel for a year while we got our brewing licensure in place," Teresa says, "and then as soon as we opened the brewery it became clear it would be the real moneymaker."

Today, they still operate their wilderness brewing facility – and the hotel on a seasonal basis – while serving up beers at their taproom in the heart of Silver City.

As a nod to their origins and the surrounding wilderness, many of Little Toad's beers and spirits owe their names to the landscape.

"We're the gateway to the Continental Divide Trail,



which is where our Gateway Ale gets its name,” Teresa explains. Their Amphibian Amber pays homage to Sapillo Creek, which runs past their production facility. Translated from Spanish, *sapillo* means “little toad.”

The first – and still the only – brewery in three counties, Little Toad Creek can credit some of their success to a steady stream of hikers and tourists who come through the area. But their true supporters are the locals.

“A lot of people from the area were still getting used to the idea of craft beer,” says Dahl-Bredine, referencing the region’s staunch Coors and Bud aficionados. “Unlike Oregon or Colorado, where there are so many craft breweries per square mile, here it took some convincing. And it’s been fun to watch people go from, ‘Oh, I can’t drink anything but Bud Lite,’ to really enjoying our beers and coming in regularly.”



photo courtesy 1188 Brewing

1188 Brewing is located in the eastern Oregon town of John Day. 1188’s online home is [www.1188brewing.com](http://www.1188brewing.com).

Successfully winning over the locals was an integral part of the business plan at 1188 Brewing in John Day, Oregon, as well. “That was always part of the goal,” says Shannon Adair, one of 1188’s founders and co-owners. “It’s not just about having a profitable business, but about supporting our community and doing something to provide economic development for this side of the state.”



John Day is the largest town (with just about 2,000 people) in eastern Oregon’s 4,500-square-mile Grant County, where the entire population tops out right around 7,000. While the area’s ranching sector is still alive and well, the once-flourishing timber industry has been in decline for decades, and the region is, putting it bluntly, economically depressed. Adair and her sister, along with their husbands, saw a brewery as a way to expand on a hobby, launch a viable business, and bring jobs to an area sorely in need of both employment opportunities and a gathering place.

“We wanted to create a way for locals to stay here, and also a reason for people to *come* here,” says Adair. Like Little Toad, they’ve had tremendous support from the community, who agree with 1188’s slogan: Time spent drinking beer with friends and family is time well spent.

They’ve also benefited from the steady stream of visitors to Grant County, a motley assortment that includes hunters, wilderness recreationists, bicycle tourists, and motorcycle groups.

“We have a lot going on,” says Adair. “High lakes, hunting, snowmobiling, fishing, the Painted Hills, the Fossil Beds National Monument, and a museum devoted to the history of mining and the Chinese population that was here.”

And what about that name, 1188? Turns out, it pays homage to the two things the owners think are most important: family and community. Shannon and her sister Jen – as well as Jen’s husband, Ken – grew up together in John Day, and their families were heavily involved in snowmobile racing. Their fathers’ racing numbers were 11 and 88, two numbers that apparently remained ingrained in their heads.

“I used to use 1188 as my password for everything,” recalls Adair. “One day I had to ask my sister for her pin

number, and it was 1188. And then we found out that Ken's password was also 1188." While she hastens to mention that they've all since chosen different passwords, it was clear they'd need no further deliberation about a name for their family business.

1188 isn't the only brewery looking to family history; the inspiration behind Tonopah Brewing in Nevada is based in familial roots as well. Nancy Cline, co-owner of Tonopah Brewing, along with her husband, can trace her connection to the region back several generations. General manager Richard Weathers ticks off the connections:

"Her great uncle was here in the early 1900s, and owned a bar with Wyatt Earp. And her grandmother was the first female postmistress out here, in a town about 25 miles away."

The town of Tonopah itself owes part of its history to beer, as the first stone building erected in town was the Weiland Brewery, a testament to the importance of the fermented beverage.

"The water here was so bad," Weather says, "that they boiled it and made beer, and then the people could drink it."



photo courtesy Tonopah Brewing

Tonopah Brewing builds upon Tonopah, Nevada's historical ties to beer-making. The town's first stone building was a brewery. Tonopah Brewing is midway between Reno and Las Vegas.

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



Situated at the halfway point between Reno and Las Vegas, Tonopah (population 2,500) is the logical stopping point for a road-weary traveler looking for a cold beverage. So, after purchasing and restoring the Mizpah Hotel, an iconic Tonopah landmark, it only made sense that Nancy and Fred Cline should pay homage to the area and her family's legacy by opening a brewery as well. In an effort to honor the area's heritage, they've named all of their beers after local stories, characters or landmarks.

"The Mucker Irish Red Ale is named after the person that shovels ore in a mine," explains Weathers. "Half Life Hefeweizen – we wanted to call it 'Half Dead' because of how much arsenic was in the water here, but our attorney said Half Life was better."

Their .999 IPA references the purity of the finest silver, the 49-51 American Ale is a nod to their distance (49 miles as the crow flies) to Area 51, and the Tasker Double IPA gets its name from Tasker Oddie, Nevada's twelfth governor.

Tonopah isn't the only one to capitalize on a town's history. Old Bisbee Brewing in Bisbee, Arizona, is situated in a part of town called Brewery Gulch, which had long lacked a namesake.

"I was down in town one night at our famous restaurant, Café Roka," recalls owner Vic Winqvist. "And someone asked the bartender, 'Hey, where's the brewery in Brewery Gulch?' And Fred, the bartender, said, 'There hasn't been a brewery there since 1891.'"

After mulling over that fact for a while, Winqvist mentioned to Fred that somebody ought to rectify the situation.

"He looked at me and said, 'Well, Vic, you're the guy to do it.'"

Luckily, Winqvist was looking for something to do. After a lengthy career in investment banking and winemaking, he had retired to Bisbee, population 5,500,





for its ample hiking opportunities (it's sandwiched between the Chiricahua and Huachuca Mountains) and its history (gold- and copper-rich, Bisbee was once the biggest city on the railroad between St. Louis and San Francisco.)

But Winqvist wasn't quite ready to sit around and do nothing. After looking into the economics of opening a brewery in the area, he called his daughter and asked if she'd like to join him in taking brewing classes at the University of Sunderland, in Newcastle, England. The rest, as they say, was history.

After taking classes, the father and daughter traveled throughout Europe to learn from a variety of brewers, then returned to Arizona to build a state-of-the-art microbrewery, bringing fresh-brewed beer back to Bisbee after more than a hundred year absence.

With any luck, Old Bisbee will stay in Brewery Gulch for a good long while, unlike the previous brewer who, in the late 19th century, sold out and moved to San Francisco. Progress swept in behind him, offering a new beer to the West's thirsty souls: "We've read in the historic journals," says Winqvist, "that they started getting this beer from St. Louis called Anheuser-Busch, and it appeared in kegs on the train, and it was awful

photo courtesy Old Bisbee Brewing



Old Bisbee Brewing, in Bisbee, Arizona, offers a near-border experience. Make a virtual visit to Bisbee's "Brewery Gulch" at [www.oldbisbeebrewingcompany.com](http://www.oldbisbeebrewingcompany.com).

but it was cheap."

It seems, perhaps, that brewing in the West has come full circle. Dedicated craftsmen and -women are setting up shop in small towns and supporting both the locals and the travelers, just like they did a hundred years ago. Today, though, maybe things are a little more laid back, a little more about enjoyment and good cheer.

"I come in every day, and I can't help but smile," says Winqvist. "I tell my staff before we open the doors, 'It's all fun,' because it is. It's just such a joy."



<https://youtu.be/x4Bks4gvAdo>  
Tonopah Brewing announced its launch with this YouTube video.



<https://youtu.be/TJR86VgEfGA>  
Old Bisbee Brewing appeared in this episode of the beer-centric series *Hopped Up*.

Melissa Mylchreest is a writer living in Montana.

# An Elegant Spirit

## Meeting Ella Gant McBride in 2010.

By Hal Cannon

It's been five years since I met Ella Gant McBride. It was to be our only meeting but one I'll never forget. It all started when Bess Lomax Hawes suggested I look up a family called Gant. Bess was the daughter of John A. Lomax, the famous folklorist who, along with her older brother, Alan, did so much to document American folk music in the 20th century.

The elder Lomax had recorded a wide repertoire of old and rare folk songs from the Gants when they all lived in Austin, Texas in the mid-1930s. Bess knew I'd grown up in Utah and remembered the Gants as being Mormon. She had wonderful memories of the family, and thought I should follow up.

Bess was a mentor to me and, when she made suggestions, they were not to be taken lightly. Yet, I postponed the meeting until I was working on a radio documentary on the Lomax legacy in the spring of 2010. As it turned out, Ella Gant McBride, then 88, was perhaps the last living person to

have been recorded by Lomax.

Bess remembered going with her father to visit the Gants at age 12. Her father set up a bulky recording machine in the family's shanty on the bank of the Colorado River while she hid out under the house with the young Gant girls, Foy and Ella.

It was one of those houses built high to avoid flooding. Bess remembered vividly the tapping of feet on the floor above her and the faint echo of singing and guitar. Over the years, more than 200 rare songs were documented from the family's repertoire. Lomax remembered that, in the middle of the depression, this sharecropping family would stave off hunger by singing and dancing late into the night. They impressed the Lomaxes with a contrast between how poor they were in physical wealth and how rich in love and music.

Later, Mike Seeger, another mentor from a famous folk music family, listened to those early field recordings of the Gants and incorporated them into the repertoire



photo courtesy Hal Cannon

The Gant family made news as their songs were being recorded by John and Alan Lomax.



of his group, the New Lost City Ramblers. Mike used to talk of the “true vine.” By this he meant, the music that grew organically through family, occupation and community, what he considered truly traditional music. He believed that way of learning and passing on music has largely been drowned out by the power of commercial music and he dedicated his life to finding that spirit in old-time music.

My mentors are almost all gone. I played music with Mike just before he died in 2009, the same year Bess Hawes passed on. Her father, John Lomax, died in 1948, the year I was born. Now all Lomax’s children are gone. Within the Gant family, Foy is gone and all the brothers and sisters from that generation are dead.

And now the only one left is Ella, living at the Latter Day Assisted Living Center, 60 miles south of Salt Lake City. As I drove down the highway, I started singing one of those songs Mike Seeger learned from the field recordings of the Gants. It’s a song that, over the years, many people have covered, including Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and Jerry Garcia.

*When first unto this country, a stranger I came  
I courted a fair maid, And Nancy was her name*

*I courted her for love, Her love I didn’t obtain  
Do you think I’ve any reason, Or right to complain*

Ella’s son, Wayne, told me repeatedly not to expect too much. He said it would be best to visit in the late morning and asked me not to stay for lunch. He added, “she will try to feed you and forget to eat herself.”

I didn’t think I had expectations. I was excited to meet someone still living who had actually been recorded by John Lomax. I had brought a CD copy of a few of the songs Ella had recorded with her sister, Foy,

when they were just girls. I hoped she would hear her girlhood voice and start singing along with those recordings. I would record this blending of the same person as an old woman and as a girl. In my mind, I could hear how this tape would be used for our radio story about John Lomax.

The moment I walked into Ella’s room, I realized I would not be recording that day. Any expectations of getting something from Ella were out of the question. Ella barely had a whisper left in her as she sat in her recliner, clutching a blanket, barely opening her eyes to talk to me.

I asked her if she remembered the time under the porch with Bess and Foy and she answered, “Yes.” Then she asked me if I liked her. I said, “Yes.”

She opened her rheumy blue eyes, looked at me and said in a faint voice, “I love you.”

Startled, I changed the subject and asked if she still remembered the old songs from her family. Again, she answered simply, “Yes.”

I told her I had brought some recordings from the Library of Congress of her singing and asked if she would like to hear them? Again, “Yes.”

So I put the CD in her bedside player and we listened as the scratchy sound of the original 1935 acetate disk began to play. The archivist began by saying, “AFS 64, A side,” then the sound of the the tone arm being set on the ancient disc finding the tracked grooves. Then the music began, two sweet voices, young girls, untrained, singing in unison.

*My Love’s a jolly cowboy, he’s brave, he’s kind, he’s true,  
He rides a Spanish pony and throws a lasso too.  
And when he comes to see me, around him in a ring  
he throws his arms around me and then begins to sing*



I could tell Ella was listening, recognizing the song, her voice from a distant past. And yet it seemed less a memory, and more of a reunion of sorts.

While we were listening I noticed a homemade binder under Ella's bedside table. On the cover a piece of paper was pasted, "Ella loves to have these songs read or sung to her."

I opened the binder and on the first page I saw a telling inscription, "Dedicated to my eternal husband Mark." Then pages of family photos and a sheet talking about the importance of keeping and preserving family songs.

Following was the collection itself, at least a hundred songs, both words and music, that Ella had compiled. I knew many of them as old ballads from Great Britain, popular songs from the Civil War era, cowboy songs, 19th century sentimental songs, along with original songs Ella had penned. It was then I started to realize songs were core to who this woman was.

After the first song I turned off the recording and asked her if she remembered it. She said, "Oh, yes." Then she looked at me again and said, "I love you." This time I don't think she was talking to me. Maybe it was Mark she was talking to, her eternal husband. She began to cry, "I love you so much. I love you so much."

She held out her hand and I took it. It seemed for a moment that all that was left of Ella Gant McBride was a shell of a body, some scattered memories, and a clear and deep abiding love, pure love. At that moment it didn't matter that I was not the love of her life she was talking to. I was simply the conduit for her love.

I've interviewed people all my life, hundreds of people. For me, every interview comes from an unquenchable curiosity. Interviewing, for me, is all

about empathy, truly listening to someone and feeling their feelings. This was a challenge.

I don't know if Ella was suffering dementia. I do know her reality was dreamlike, and I had to be willing to accompany her in those dreams. I sought to feel what she felt as she heard those songs and as I talked to her without judgment. She obviously did not have much language or voice left to express herself, but she had feeling, strong feeling, and that feeling was love. I couldn't record that feeling but I have to write about it.

We listened to the next song, a rollicking kids song.

*When I was a little boy, fat as I could roll  
When I was a little boy, fat as I could roll  
Sent me on a bus and then we had a show*

After it ended I said, "Isn't it amazing, 75 years ago, and we can still hear you and your sister singing. You were just girls. Do you remember singing with Foy?" This time she said, "Foy was my sister. I love her so much. Foy, I love you so much. I love you Foy." Again, she started crying. It was almost as though Ella was calling out to Foy on the other side, calling for her sister to find her.

I had come to express my gratitude to Ella, for the Gant Family songs, but now I began to feel uncomfortable being in this very personal place, a stranger, so I told her I thought I better leave. She took my hand again. "Please don't leave. Stay a little longer."

So, having no questions, no answers, I put on another song.

*No more have I a mother's love  
No more have I a father too  
No more have I a mother's love*



Again we sat and listened, and I could tell she was taking in the song. After it ended I really did have to leave. I said next time I'd bring my guitar. Ella said, "Good. I'd like that."

She asked for my hand and she once again told me she loved me. Then she kissed my hand tenderly, and looked up and said, "I just want to die. I just need to die."

I told her I understood, and I do. I sensed Ella was

between two planes of being. The physical plane, at this point is painful and unsatisfying. She wanted to be in a place of love with her loved ones. It's that simple.

I gathered my CDs as she was dozing off and I slipped out of the room, determined next time to come back with a guitar. The following week I called her son to see how she was doing and I learned that she indeed had gone on to a better place.



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



## YOUR HORSE'S FEET, A SERIES

# Licensing

By Pete Healey, APF

There has been a lot of rumbling in the farrier industry lately about licensing. I've noticed this happens about every few years but nothing becomes of it. Currently there are no standards for farrier education, training, examination or regulation unlike other trade professionals such as contractors or hairstylists.

There are three distinct "Camps" so to speak about this issue. Those for it are promoting farrier education, training, testing and credentialing. Currently this is being considered as an inclusion into the Prevent All Soring Techniques (PAST) Act in congress. On the other side of the table are the individuals who are adamantly against it; I can almost hear them loading their guns as I read their letters to the editor in the *American Farriers Journal*. Their biggest argument is more government policy in their lives.

I am in the third camp, the in between area. I can see where licensing would work if it adopts a standardized system that is biomechanically correct. This could stop a lot of malpractice by the self-proclaimed experts. It might also stop misinformed owners and trainers from dictating shoeing policies on their horses only to blame the veterinarian and the farrier for a poor outcome. This could actually be a good deal for the educated farrier as it would give them a respected voice in foot care. Imagine a lameness case where an owner and veterinarian who have never shod a horse in their lives start telling the farrier from their empirical experiences how to shoe the horse and the farrier says "We can't do that, it's not to code."

But creating the "code" could be misleading as most shoeing prescriptions are based on two thousand years of a flat shoe paradigm. Current certification standards of the American Farriers Association require knowing the anatomy of the foot but their biggest emphasis is on shoe making which is more self-serving to the farrier than to the horse. Another concern would be government regulation at the federal and state levels and the possible influence of animal welfare groups getting their thumb in the pie. Part of the regulations could be what procedures a farrier could and could not perform like repairing a quarter crack, draining an abscess or even formulating a shoeing prescription.

Where are horse owners on this? According to a survey conducted by the *American Farriers Journal*, 59% of owners favor licensing and 53% are willing to pay more for services from a licensed farrier. What owners really want is quality work that keeps their horses as sound as possible. This can be done through organizations like the American Association of Professional Farriers that require continuing education credits for their members but this takes responsibility of the farrier to educate himself. The industry can be proactive to regulate themselves and leave the government out because all it takes is one ticked off congressman to earmark a bill and it's a done deal.

At the end of the day who knows if this will ever happen or not and the big question is will it help the horse?  
[www.balancedbreakover.com](http://www.balancedbreakover.com).







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## THE WESTERN HORSE

# Horsemanship Camp

For riding students, immersion in a ranch environment puts horsemanship lessons into greater context.



By A.J. Mangum

It's a hot August day in the ranch country outside Wheatland, Wyoming. The sun bakes a landscape already turned yellow by the late summer season. Inside a cavernous arena, a dozen or so riders work their horses in relative comfort. It's still hot, though, and there's a closeness to the air inside the metal building. The horses' necks dampen with sweat, and riders periodically remove their hats to wipe their brows. Still, it's a couple of degrees cooler than it would be outside, and all are grateful for the environment.

The riders circle the arena's inside perimeter. There's a loosely defined lesson plan, one centered on achieving collection and control, and on developing clearer communication. There's room for improvisation, though, and occasionally a rider breaks from the

pattern, circling inward from the edge of the arena to perform one or another small exercise meant to build a particular skill or iron out a kink in the way a rider and horse are interacting.

Peter Campbell sits astride a buckskin horse that stands relaxed near the center of the arena. A lifelong horseman and a protege of the iconic Tom Dorrance, Peter spends more than 40 weeks a year on the road, crisscrossing North America to teach horsemanship clinics at a long roster of fairgrounds and private venues. This is a rare mid-year break in his travels, a chance to return home for a two-week clinic he and his wife, Trina, host at Hat Creek Ranch, their horse and cattle outfit located a few minutes north of Wheatland. In a reversal of the standard *modus operandi*, this time it's



photos by A.J. Mangum

Campbell assists a student with a maneuver.

the students who've done the traveling, hauling horses from across the country to immerse themselves in Campbell's program.

Students stay in cabins and tents, or in the living quarters of their horse trailers. Meals are served out of the Campbells' kitchen. There are morning and afternoon sessions on horseback. The itinerary, though, doesn't seem written in rock. There's a big enough crowd to require order and planning, a daily agenda. But the group is small enough to adapt on the fly: if a student encounters a unique challenge, there's time to address it; if the entire group needs a refresher, the day's

syllabus can change. Arena work is broken up with outside work, sessions conducted in a pasture or on a ranch trail. No one's in a rush, and the atmosphere is relaxed. In fact, there's a definite *mañana* mentality that harks back to California bridle-horse traditions, a collective low-pressure mindset built around the idea of meaningful progress being achieved in small steps.

The event turns the standard horsemanship clinic format on its head – students come to the clinician – but it's the longer-term nature of the experience that has greater impact. In a weekend clinic, a rider might gain



Multi-day ranch clinics offer clinicians rare breaks from the road, and chances to work in their own environments.

new insight into the particular challenges he must work to resolve, and would likely leave with a plan of action. The two-week ranch clinic offers that rider the chance to actually begin putting that plan to work. Add the immersive element – students are away from home, family, friends, routines and distractions – and serious advancements in horsemanship, in horse-rider communication, are possible.

The concept isn't exactly new. Some guest ranches, of course, offer parallel experiences – in-depth horsemanship instruction – albeit with the distractions posed by other recreational options, and the presence of guests

with other interests. Two weeks of total immersion in horsemanship, though, in the setting of the instructor's home turf, where there's complete control of the schedule and environment ... that's unique, in practice by only a handful of horsemanship educators, and offers a model that ought to be in wider use.

For horsemanship clinicians, the benefits seem obvious. Most operate on schedules that would wear out the most amped-up of touring rock bands. Map a clinician's annual itinerary and you might start out with some semblance of geographic order – a steady progression from venues in the west to those in the east,





The “full immersion” environment can foster peer support.

for example – but as gaps in that schedule are filled with late additions, that order can fall apart, leading a traveling clinician, and the mounts traveling with him, on inefficient detours of several hundred miles each.

Even with the most straightforward of schedules, educators most in demand essentially live on the road, building a set of life routines away from family and home. It’s hard to imagine a veteran clinician not jumping at the chance to trade that lifestyle – at least for a few weeks at a time – for a more structured existence.

The students who attend such longer-term

offerings are a decidedly different lot than the weekend warriors at a typical clinic. Taking two weeks out of their lives to study horsemanship (in many cases, hauling a horse across the country to do so), isn’t a casual endeavor, so students tend to be serious about their goals. They might enjoy every moment of the work ahead, but they’re not on vacation. That collective work ethic has motivational benefits: no one wants to be the one rider who decides to sleep late midway through that two-week stretch.

Moreover, working in the environment of a private ranch gives the clinician a sense of control that can’t be



Students escape the arena for some hill work in a ranch pasture.

found on the road. He's not at the mercy of fairgrounds management, and isn't competing for parking or other resources with other events being held on site. And, he has a rare but valuable opportunity to conduct lessons and illustrate their effectiveness outside an arena environment. Skills can be tested in open country, even on cattle in a pasture. Consequently, riders aren't left in an arena pondering theories, and don't head home with false senses of achievement.

For students, it might be a serious accomplishment just to be selected for such a clinic, as they're not always open to all who apply. If a clinician has to spend two

weeks with a group of students, he wants the experience to be positive; students might be handpicked, offered the equivalent of a "golden ticket" in recognition of their abilities, positive attitude, and willingness to learn. The invite itself might be a high point in a student's career as a rider. Add the benefits of working in a small group, the personalized attention that's possible in such an environment, the peer support that can develop, and the progress that can be made in two weeks of intense study, and the sum is enough to bring a idealistic student of horsemanship to the brink of joyful tears of appreciation and humility.



Horseman Peter Campbell directs riders at a two-week clinic held at Hat Creek Ranch in Wyoming.

The greatest benefit of such ranch clinics, though, might be most obvious once the day's riding is over and horses have been corralled for the night. On one evening, midway through the two-week clinic, I sat with Campbell and several of his students on the back deck of the Hat Creek ranch house. Any teacher-student formality that had existed earlier in the day had been replaced by a lighthearted, casual atmosphere.

After a day of talking nothing but horses, other topics – family, work, life back home – worked their way into students' conversations with Campbell and one another. Horse folks being horse folks, though, the

themes of the day returned, perhaps in unexpected contexts, as students explained how they found themselves applying lessons learned in clinics – “make the right thing easy, the wrong thing difficult” – to interactions with their kids or spouses or employers. They talked of deeply personal challenges, of troubled relationships and other setbacks that had been remedied, or at least mitigated, with the knowledge they gained in working with horses. Students revealed that, in the preceding days, they had come to realize that, all along, they'd been developing life skills, not just improving techniques for handling their mounts.





They were conversations that likely wouldn't have happened among casual acquaintances (or near-strangers) that, at most, encounter one another for a few weekend hours each year at a traditional two-day clinic. Such revelations and admissions, and the closeness that enabled them, came from a shared experience, a distraction-free immersion into their discipline.

I don't know to what extent the students shared my interpretation. For the most part, they looked like they

were simply enjoying a pleasant evening. I might've been the only one overthinking the proceedings and reaching philosophical conclusions but – even now, years later – their validity seems to hold. There's immeasurable value to be found in an escape from normal routines, the singleminded pursuit of a passion, and the revelations as to what that pursuit reveals about one's self.



A.J. Mangum is the editor of *Ranch & Reata*.

## Upcoming Clinics

### **Buck Brannaman**

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

March 4-7, Sulphur Springs, Texas; (214) 707-4187

March 18-21, Belton, Texas; (325) 396-2461

April 1-4, Lake View Terrace, California; (323) 662-8085

April 8-11, Del Mar, California; (858) 755-5022

April 22-25, Corning, California; (530) 680-6924

### **Peter Campbell**

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

March 10-13, Giddings, Texas; (361) 510-4884

April 7-10, Reidsville, North Carolina; (919) 802-1320

April 14-17, Negley, Ohio; (724) 663-5339

April 21-24, Chelsea, Michigan; (734) 649-5706

### **Tom Curtin**

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

April 9-11, Mount Baker, Australia; [info@sanjoqh.com](mailto:info@sanjoqh.com)

April 23-24, Barunah, Australia;

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

April 29-31, St. Albans, Australia;

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

### **Dave & Gwynn Weaver**

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

March 26-27, Briones, California; (510) 569-4428

April 7-11, Orland, California; (530) 865-2610

April 22-24, Wickenburg, Arizona; (602) 684-3884



PR photo

Gram Parsons



# In the Shadows of The Joshua Tree:

## Gram Parsons & the Lost Angels of Americana

By Tom Russell

*I spend a lot of time up at Joshua Tree,  
in the desert, just looking at the San Andreas Fault  
and I say to myself, 'I wish I were a bird  
drifting above it.'*

**Gram Parsons**, July 1973

*The seed of our destruction will blossom in the desert, the  
alexin of our cure grows by a mountain rock, and our  
lives are haunted by a Georgia slattern...flies buzz home  
to death, and every moment is a window on all time.*

**Look Homeward Angel**, Thomas Wolfe

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### I Joshua Tree National Monument

The land remains as wild and starkly beautiful as two hundred years back, when the Indians roamed through, digging roots and building fires against the huge boulders. These were the Mojave tribes, or specifically the *Serranos*, and the *Chemehuevi*, sometimes called the Southern Paiutes, and the *Cahuilla*.

The desert valley is surrounded by mountains with names like *Sheep Hole*, *Turtle*, and *Old Woman*. The desert here is *biblical* in tenor – a mystical landscape of

tree, rock, yucca, and sand. An apocalyptic tone colors every sunrise and sunset, as the light sifts through the prickly Joshua Trees.

The Mormons gave the name *Joshua* to the spiny Yucca tree which abounds in the Monument. The trees reminded the Mormons of *Joshua*, the Old Testament patriarch, raising his arms towards the heavens. Joshua was the archetypal *voice crying out in the wilderness*, a prophet who spouted hair-raising admonitions, warning us against creating burnt offerings, and all that.

Los Angeles is 150 miles to the north of the Joshua





Gram Parsons by Tom Russell

Tree Monument. Up yonder where the freeways begin to snake and strangle the irrigated desert. On a sunny afternoon in in September of 1973 a Georgia boy, age 26, with a cracked country voice that could break your heart, drove out of L.A. and down into his desert. To *dry out*. The hour of darkness he'd sung about was very near.

His lyrics were revelatory:

*It's a hard way to find out, that trouble is real  
In a far away city, with a far away feel...*

The Joshua Tree desert is about as far and you can travel, *feel wise*, from Waycross, Georgia. His place of birth. There was to be no drying out. *Au contraire*. Destiny's flames roared up in his face, Hank Williams style, and blistered the boy upwards from earth in a fiery arc that

splintered back down in ashes over the Monument.

Considering this Georgia boy's final days, we could rustle up a stew of his divinatorly lyrics, throw in the prophetic words of the patriarch Joshua about *burnt offerings* and sacrifice, and ultimately arrive at Thomas Wolfe's lines dealing with *the seeds of destruction lying in the desert*, the *mountain rock*, and the haunting by a *Georgia slattern*. Roll over Tennessee Williams, there's a cat on a hot tin roof.

The kid was born Ingram Cecil Connor III. He was to be known professionally as Gram Parsons.

Young Gram was of an era when country music banged head-on into rock and roll in the late 1960s. This Southern kid was in front of the parade. How could you ignore him, with his long hair, satin bellbottoms, and embroidered Nudie suit? The suit with naked women, marijuana leaves, and pill capsules on the front. A flaming red crucifix was stitched upon the back. The old Porter Waggoner routine turned upside down and taken to the cosmic limit.

These days the suit is draped over a dummy in the Country Music Hall of Fame, next to Gram's big Gibson guitar. Around the corner is Hank Williams' suit and guitar. An appropriate collocation. Two Southern boys who changed the shape of country music and flamed out before the age of thirty.



photo by Randy Poe

Joshua Tree welcomes you.



Gram was an American singer-songwriter. He died September 1973 in Joshua Tree, California. His ashes blew through the monument and, for the next forty years, fans would trek out there and leave roses, candles, and old guitar strings on the sand – in the shadows of an isolated boulder fifty feet high.

The rock still bears charred marks from where the Georgia kid was cremated. Once upon a better time the kid and his pal Keith Richards, of the Rolling Stones, sat atop that rock, wrapped in Indian blankets, staring out at the wild landscape, fueling their song-visions with a little powder from the coca leaf. Keith is still with us. And a wonderful surprise that is.



photo by Randy Poe

Cap Rock, a place of legends. Joshua Tree National

## II In Search of the Grievous Angel

*I headed West to grow up with the country  
Across those prairies with those waves of grain  
And I saw my devil, and I saw my deep blue sea  
And I thought about a calico bonnet  
from Cheyenne to Tennessee*

**Gram Parsons,  
“The Return of the Grievous Angel”**

His songs roared out of a rental car cassette player when I first drove to Joshua Tree in 1974. I was a fledgling songwriter on a spirit quest, inspired by the dark country edge in his songs. I was picking up the

crumbs and bones along the trail, searching for the witch’s house where all the big songs were hidden. I had a pocket full of guitar picks.

Forty years later I’m still searching.



Hand-painted remembrance of GP created by a fan below Cap Rock. It reads, "The sun comes up without you – it just doesn't know you're gone."

In the early 1970s I’d started playing this music they called *country rock* in the bars of the world. It was *Gram Parsons era* country. The soul of a George Jones song mixed with the hard beat and irreverent lyrics of The Rolling Stones. *Drinking music*. Four to six sets a night on Skid Row, Vancouver.

My old set lists, taped to the top of the Martin guitar, held George Jones songs, Hank Williams, Gram Parsons, The Rolling Stones, Merle Haggard, Buck Owens, John Prine, Bob Dylan, and whatever early original I could sneak in. I



wrote some damn bad ones, trying to copy Gram. One was titled: “Strung Out Like the Tightest Wire on a Frozen Barbed Wire Fence.” What a lousy metaphor.

The song made the jukebox in four or five Vancouver bars. We were called The Mule Train, *skid row’s finest band*. Proud of it. I was the same age as Gram. But by the time I was crawling around the bottom rung of the *music biz*, Gram was nearing the end. Burning the candle at both ends and in the middle.

In spring of ’74 I cranked up the cassette tape

volume with his music and sailed into Joshua Tree Monument. At the intersection of two desert roads stands an outcropping of monzonite boulders called *Cap Rocks*. The assemblage of boulders resembles a skull falling from the sky into the desert sand.



photo by Randy Poe

Cap Rock

I stopped the car and parked it in the shade. I hiked around the base of the skull until I reached a cave-like indent in the rock where the surface was charred from smoke. The topsoil was covered with ash and charcoal. On the ash and sand there were a few candles and a long poem, framed under glass, from a Parsons' fan in Germany.

The ashes were the remains of Gram and his coffin. I reached down and picked up what I assumed was a bit of charred bone. I brushed it off lodged it inside my hatband. No disrespect intended. I said a prayer for Gram and that aching country boy voice that seemed to echo through the eerie Joshua Trees and twirl up and join the circling hawks. Then I walked away.

Gram died on September 19, 1973 in The Joshua Tree Inn, a motel a few miles outside the Monument. The newspapers claimed it was *heart failure due to natural causes*. Later it was determined Gram died from a lethal combination of drugs and alcohol.

The ambulance arrived and Gram's body was hauled back to Los Angeles, slated to be air-shipped to New Orleans for burial. The coffin never made the flight. By the next morning it was a mound of smoldering ashes in the Joshua Tree desert. Out of the ashes the legend of Gram Parsons began to form.

And why should we care now, forty years down the line? His voice and vision echoed through 1970's rock and roll. He brought country music to the rock crowd and rock and soul music to the country folk. Gram was a first hand influence on the music of The Byrds, The Rolling Stones, Emmy Lou Harris, The Eagles, and the dozens of Country Rock Bands that emerged from the West Coast in the early seventies.

When you consider that Parsons turned the above artists onto deep country music, then estimate the millions of people they reached with their more refined, commercial approach – you arrive at the importance of



The Palomino Club was a country music venue in North Hollywood, California. It opened in 1949 and was known as a talent incubator for rising country music acts for decades. It was called "Country Music's most important West Coast club" featured such performers as Rick Nelson, Johnny Cash, Linda Ronstadt, Buck Owens, Patsy Cline, The Flying Burrito Brothers, Johnny Carver, Jerry Jeff Walker, Hoyt Axton, Tanya Tucker, and Willie Nelson. It closed in 1995.





Gram Parsons. His influence on bringing country music to Rock n' Roll might be as important as Bob Dylan's combining Folk Music with Rock. And I'm a Bob Dylan fan.

### III Cosmic American Music Melts into Americana (And What the Hell is All That?)

*The music he had in him was incredible...  
he was a walking encyclopedia of songs...*

**Emmy Lou Harris**

"When I first came to California," said Gram, "my ambition was to go to the honkytonks and win the talent contests and show them that a guy with long hair could be accepted. It took me two years to win The Palomino Club's contest. Every Thursday I would religiously drive out there and wait my turn, and for two years I was beaten by yodeling grandmothers and the same guy who sang *El Paso* every week."

"I wasn't to be stopped. When things got tough at the Palomino I started to go out to the tougher ones. I heard about The Aces Club in The City of Industry, where they keep it open all night long on Saturday and reopen the bar at six in the morning. I started going out there every weekend. The first couple of times I nearly got killed. I was wearing satin bellbottoms and people couldn't believe it.

"I got up on stage and when I got off a guy said to me, 'I want you to meet my five brothers. We were gonna kick your ass but you can sing real good so we'll buy you a drink instead.' Thank God I got up on that stage."



1980s *L.A. Times* ad for The Palomino Club

## Records Which Pioneered Country Rock

1. **Gram Parsons:** (*Sweetheart of the Rodeo* (The Byrds), *The Gilded Palace of Sin* (The Flying Burrito Brothers), *The Return of the Grievous Angel* (Gram Parsons & Emmy Lou Harris.)
2. **Willie Nelson:** *Phases and Stages*, hands down one of the best concept records of all time. The breakup. One side the man's view, other side the woman's.
3. **Ramblin Jack Elliott:** *Young Brigham*, worth it if just for Jack's guitar playing and the versions of Tim Hardin's *If I Were a Carpenter*, and Ramblin' Jack's Kerouac-ian rap *912 Greens*.
4. **The Everly Brothers:** *Roots*, The brothers' foray into their country music roots. A cool cover of Merle Haggard's *Mama Tried*.
5. **Steve Young:** Double CD: *Renegade Picker, No Place to Fall*. A major voice who helped invent country rock then outlaw music.
6. **Billy Joe Shaver:** *Old Five and Dimers Like Me*, his first record. Matchless lyrics, matchless attitude.
7. **Stoney Edwards:** *Blackbird*: produced by Chip Taylor – an African American country singer who will tear your heart out.
8. **The Great Speckled Bird (Ian and Sylvia Tyson):** one of the first great country rock experiments with Amos Garret on guitar and Buddy Cage on steel guitar. And of course Ian and Sylvia.
9. **John Stewart:** *The Phoenix Concerts*: John was in The Kingston Trio then transitioned into his great solo career. Many of his classics on here.
10. **Dillard & Clark:** *The Fantastic Expedition of Dillard and Clark*: Gene Clark of The Byrds and Doug Dillard, banjo player from The Dillards, unite to make a great blend.



Gram Parsons – press kit, PR photo

Gram aimed to defy the strict boundaries the music press had established. That myth that that hippies and city folk wouldn't dig country and country rednecks and cowboys didn't dig rock. His personal goals were messianic in tone, like a child preacher from the Deep South healing cripples and drunks with God's own country music.

Gram was one of the godfathers of what some now call *Americana* music. In our obsession with naming genres (then killing them) the hybrid once called *Country Rock*, transitioned into *Progressive Country*, *New Country*, *No Depression Country*, *Alt-Country*, *Roots Rock*, *Outlaw Country*, and now *Americana* is the flavor of the day.

In truth, Virgil Thomson and Aaron Copland were creating *Americana* music, in the 30s and 40s, when they mixed folk and cowboy songs with ballet and symphonic works – like *Billy the Kid*. Moses Clear Rock Platt and *Lead Belly* were creating *Americana* music in the Texas and Louisiana prisons when they mixed cowboy music with blues and early rap – *call and response* songs. Chain gang *Americana*.

*Americana* music encompasses folk, blues, rock, soul, jazz, gospel, Mexican and South American Music, Cajun music, Swiss yodel, German drinking songs...all

of it. And more. Give a nod to the classical composers above and all the street singers of eighty years ago who sang Gospel, blues, country, folk, and a grand mix of poetry from our rattle bag heritage. Hank Williams was listening. And Gram Parsons.

Allow me a quick, necessary detour. If we're eyeballing folk and country-rock pioneers from the 1960s, a more neglected voice, deserves a moment of light. Another Georgia boy. Steve Young.

#### IV Crying up a Thunderstorm Chain: Steve Young

*There are stars in the Southern sky  
Southward as you go  
There is moonlight and moss in the trees  
Down the Seven Bridges Road...*

**Steve Young,  
"Seven Bridges Road"**

Thirty years ago I met Steve Young in Los Angeles. He was living in a studio apartment in Silver Lake above



an oriental food store. He slept most of the day and wrote music at night. Called himself a *vampire*. There were sheets over the windows and a pallet on the floor. Overwhelming the main room was a mad-professor recording setup with keyboards, guitars, synthesizers, and microphones. Wires ran in all directions. Along the wall, on the floor, were dozens of *Our Lady of Guadalupe* votive candles from the local Mexican grocery store. Steve was not Catholic, that I know of, just wired into some other mystical universe for inspiration.

He told me then he was working on *weird new stuff*



that was maybe *too far out* for the folk and country world. He was digging deep, pondering the roots of love and pain and writing about his divorce, about an old drinking problem, and death. He wouldn't play me the new songs yet, but he gave me a recording of his version of a Merle Haggard song that chilled me – "Sometimes I Dream."

*There's no magic way for me to get over you  
There's not much I can say, not a thing left to do  
Seldom I laugh and seldom I ever cry  
Sometimes I drink too much, and sometimes I lie  
Sometimes I hate myself and wish I could scream  
Sometimes I give up on love but sometimes I dream*



Gram Parsons

A haunted lyric firmly based in self-truth. He sang it to the core. This was the terrain where Steve was heading with his songs. I went on my way thinking he was one of the pioneer songwriters who'd invented country rock in L.A., then outlaw music in Nashville. Now he was way out on a polar expedition, out yonder where you might end up on an isolated ice flow, disappearing forever.

Two years later I was walking down a back street in Oslo, Norway, five thousand miles from Los Angeles, and there was Steve Young walking toward me. As if we'd just chatted in Silver Lake. Nonchalant grin. Lost in thought. The vampire who'd emerged from the song caves. He was in Norway to record an album with a Norwegian backup band. He thrust a cassette into my hand and told me to check it out. *His new songs*. The

fruit of the years in the room above the Oriental store.

"It might scare you," he said. "Maybe too far out. I don't know."

Steve looked down the street and out onto the *fjord* where the shrimp boats were coming in with the day's catch. He told me he'd tried to play the new songs in a folk clubs in Los Angeles, but club owners weren't interested in a folk or country singer playing solo, standing at a synthesizer. The songs and new sounds *scared* people. I thought of Bob Dylan walking onstage with an electric guitar at The Newport Folk Festival in '65. The old folk elite began weeping and gnashing their teeth. American music was never the same.

That night in my little room on the east side of Oslo I listened to the tape over and over. A new form of electric folk music. Honest revelations set to a synth drone. The finished songs, about love, lost love, divorce, drinking, and death, were potent. It was like eavesdropping in a confessional. A self-intervention. The songs were titled: "Look Homeward Angel," "War of Ancient Days," and "Long Time Rider."

Here's a bit of the divorce lyric:

*I didn't come here to see who gets the best deal  
You can have the stuff I will survive  
But I came here to wage war on the poverty  
That I see in our eyes  
And I'm here to pay the tallest price  
For now I'm willing to change my ways  
And I'm here to lay the wreath of peace at your feet  
And end this war of ancient days.*

This was not Tammy Wynette *D-I-V-O-R-C-E* stuff. Nobody was blurting out songs this direct. And almost 20 years prior to this Steve had recorded his first record on A&M, *Rock, Salt, and Nails*, right down the hall from where Gram Parsons was recording in 1968.



Then Steve went to Nashville, and recorded two definitive records for RCA. His songs were covered by Hank Williams Jr. and Waylon Jennings, and the spirit of the songs almost single-handedly created the *outlaw movement*. Two Steve Young songs set the tone: “Montgomery in the Rain,” and “Lonesome, Onr’y and Mean.”

At that same time Willie Nelson moved to Austin and the outlaw movement became centered there.

If Gram Parsons was a soul cousin to George Jones, then Steve Young might be the lost godson of Faulkner or Thomas Wolfe. But Steve had, and still has, no flamboyance to his persona. Unless he was on stage, solo, with that huge voice and great guitar playing, he was shy and withdrawn. *An enigma* critics called him. A Zen warrior. No Nudie suit for Steve. He was meditating on how love devastates all of us. And how we might heal.

As I write this, in 2015, Steve Young is in a rehab facility in Nashville because of a bad fall. He should be given his due as a pioneer. The scribes are not usually attracted to the *legend* stories ’til the poet dies or flames out.

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In truth, with the gift of forty years of hindsight – who truly created Folk Rock and Country Rock in the late 1960s and early 70s? Surely Bob Dylan, Gram Parsons, Steve Young, *Dillard and Clark*, Ian and Sylvia Tyson and their band *The Great Speckled Bird*, Doug Sahm’s records on Atlantic (Bob Dylan attending), Billy Joe Shaver, Johnny Rodrigues, Jesse Winchester, Commander Cody, The Everly Brothers, The Band, Ramblin’ Jack Elliott, John Stewart, Hoyt Axton, Katy Moffatt, Barbara Keith, Willie Nelson, Guy Clark, Linda Ronstadt, and on and on.

All of them and more.

And the bands who found commercial success in the formula: The Byrds, The Rolling Stones (some country tracks), Creedence Clearwater...and finally

The Eagles. And one of the Eagles biggest hits was Steve Young’s “Seven Bridges Road.” That’s how he pays the rent.

Back to the Gram finale.

## V The Messianic Country Soul Of Gram Parsons

*Some called him a seer  
flying blind and soaring free  
like a bird above the fault line  
in the land of the Joshua Tree*

**“Joshua Tree,” Tom Russell**

There I was, three years after Gram’s death, with that bone shard in my cowboy hat, trying to carve my own path through the snaky realms of show biz. Wandering around the Mojave Desert. There’s ghosts a plenty out in that country – hillbilly ghosts with voices that reach across the years. In truth Gram was trailing a long line of Southerners and Texans who came to California in search of work, and brought their guitars and fiddles along.

I drove around the desert for days, and every crossroad led to another highway with a country music story behind it. Spade Cooley killed his wife out there somewhere. The old Roy Rogers museum in used to be in Apple Valley, with Bullet and Trigger stuffed, and if you took back roads north you’d eventually hit Bakersfield where Merle Haggard grew up in a boxcar and broke into and robbed a bar that he didn’t know was still open for business. Next stop San Quentin.

I circled around and drove back into Joshua Tree, towards Gram’s last motel stop. The Joshua Tree Inn was on the right as you entered town. An air conditioner rattled and spit in the small room where Gram died. The place smelled of ivory soap, bleach, and stale beer. Outside a semi-truck rolled by and flew past the *High-*



*Ho Lounge* where Gram had sung and shot pool.

I'd last seen Gram alive in 1969, in the old Charlie Chaplin studios near Hollywood and Vine. The night the critics claimed Country Rock was born. The night of the Nudie suits.

A&M had invited the Rock press and DJs, as well as an odd mix of Hollywood cowboys, stuntmen, movie ranch folks, hippie chicks and groupies – a mix designed to confound the mind yet play host to Gram's cosmic dream. And sell records.

"There wasn't any music similar to ours," he'd said, "we were trying to come up with a new genre, a dream that I called in my early days, Cosmic American Music."

Nudie, *the rodeo tailor*, originally from Brooklyn, was in attendance to see how his suits looked on the boys. Nudie had parked his Cadillac near the back entrance – a big convertible with tooled leather seats and longhorn steer horns on the hood. There was a



saddle lodged between the two front seats. Inside the gig there was free beer, cheap vin-rose wine, and a box lunch of chicken and beans. A square dance band opened the show. As per Gram's dream, hippies and rednecks drank and danced under one roof.

A wrangler I knew from the L.A. Horse and Mule auction recognized me and waltzed over:

"Who in hell is this hippie kid in the marijuana suit?"

"Gram Parsons," I said.

"Gotta' be Southern.

"Waycross," I said. "Georgia swamps."

"No shit? He's got that warble in his voice. The *hurt*. It's in the food down there. In the drink. You ever been to Waycross?"

"No," I said.

"The earth down there shakes. Like this kid's voice."

## VI Waycross – The Land of the Trembling Earth

*Oh My Land is Like a Wild Goose*

*Wonders all around everywhere*

*It trembles and it shakes 'til every tree's loose...*

**"A Song For You"**

**Gram Parsons**

Gram originally hailed from Waycross, Georgia, near the Okefeenoke Swamp, in the heart of the Old South. A peat-filled wetland straddling the Georgia-Florida border.

"Swamps," Gram said. "Okefeenokee, you know, means land of the trembling earth and everything down there is mush. I never fit in. I was a misfit from the start. There's an old saying about Waycross...as soon as you learn to walk, you start walking out of town."

The family history parallels anything in Tennessee Williams'. Old money, citrus groves, a mansion in Winterhaven, Florida, where *Gone with the Wind* was filmed, big business, packing plants, the family's founding of Cypress Gardens, and a father nicknamed *Coon Dog* Conner – part time country singer, full time drinker.

Money could not waylay the ravages of alcohol, insanity, and suicide, which ran up and down the family tree. *Coon Dog* blew his own head off on Christmas day 1959 with a small gauge shotgun. The trembling earth and the family troubles filtered up into Gram's singing

voice as he retreated into music. He taught himself piano and guitar and formed bands. His first group was a folk unit called the Shilohs.

Fast forward to Harvard Divinity school:

“I did a back dive into Harvard. I think I was there about four hours and fifteen minutes. I was out of the mold.”

After Harvard, circa 1966, Gram began to formulate his dream of a *Cosmic American Music* – a combination of folk, country, blues, R & B, and rock, which would unite all audiences. The Harvard Divinity student felt his music could heal the world. He had formulated his divine mission and began to sermonize.

“If people want to get hold of something real, young people, they should listen to some good ole country music,” Gram said. “Good country music teaches a lot of simple lessons. Rock and roll has probably contributed to the creation of more musical prejudices than it has broken down.”

Gram and friends recorded *The International Submarine Band*, an album produced by Lee Hazelwood. The vision was there, but half formed, so Gram joined *The Byrds* and tried to convince them that their future wasn't in re-interpreting Bob Dylan songs. The result was *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*, one of the first



country music albums by a known rock band.

Gram left the Byrds to hang out with the Rolling Stones in France. His influence showed up Stones' songs: “Wild Horses,” “Dead Flowers,” “Sweet Virginia,” and “Faraway Eyes.” Gram and Keith Richards bonded deeply – drugs, alcohol, and country music tightened the bond – but Gram didn't seem to have the constitution that Keith Richard still retains. They cut Gram loose.

Gram returned to L.A, entrenched in his *physical abuse program*, as Chris Hillman called it. Together Chris (of The Byrds) and Gram formed *The Flying Burrito Brothers*. Their first album, *The Gilded Palace of Sin*,

finally captured what Gram had been visualizing – Cosmic American Country Rock, erasing all boundaries. This was the Nudie Suit record. The second album was unfocused and Gram lost interest. He took a room at the Chateau Marmont Hotel, on Sunset, dug into his inheritance money, and reverted back to the wild side of life. Plum wine for breakfast and the five martini lunch.

He came out of the fog long enough to land a solo deal with Warner-Reprise, and was slated to be produced by his new idol, Merle Haggard. Merle







eventually pulled out at the last minute, evidently involved in marital troubles.

Gram straightened up a notch, but he needed a harmony singer. Enter Emmy Lou Harris. Chris Hillman had spoken of this lady folksinger in Washington DC and Gram drove down from Baltimore one night and he and Emmy sang a few old George Jones duets. Instant magic. *The sound.*

“The power of his art,” Emmy stated, “was his ability to incorporate vision, his gut feeling about what he was doing. That’s where a new art form comes from. There’s something in my voice that just wasn’t there until I sang with Gram...a great deal of what I am as an artist is coming from him.”

The second and final solo album was *The Return of the Grievous Angel*. Gram’s masterwork. The record ended with Gram and Emmy Lou’s “In My Hour of Darkness,” a plea for the Lord to grant the singer speed and vision in his hour of death. The song was a fitting close to an album and a career.



“...like a bird drifting above the faultline.”

Two days after the final session Gram Parsons was dead, age 26.

## VII The Hour of Darkness & the Wilderness on Fire

*We poured on the five gallons and threw in the match.  
We were unencumbered by sobriety, so we got away.*

**Phil “Road-Mangler” Kaufman**

*I was in the wilderness and the canyon was on fire...  
I would walk all the way from Boulder to  
Birmingham*

*If I thought I could see, I could see your face.*

**“Boulder to Birmingham,”**

**Emmy Lou Harris**

Gram Parsons was pronounced dead at a Yucca Valley Hospital on September 19, 1973. The coffin went to LAX, slated for flight to New Orleans and the family plot. Enter Gram’s drinking buddy and road manager Phil Kaufman. From stage left.

“Gram and I had talked about this. Gram’s thing was he wanted to die at Joshua Tree. He wanted to be cremated at Joshua Tree and have his ashes spread over Cap Rock.”

The immediate family had other ideas. Gram’s remains were to be flown home to the family plot – entombed forever alongside the Faulknerian tribe he’d fled from. The ghost of *Coon Dog* Conner was awaiting the return of the prodigal son.

Phil Kaufman and a friend came up with a plan to honor Gram’s wishes. “It was something I’d promised him,” said Phil. “I saw Keith Richards and he hugged me and said, ‘Nice one, Phil, you took care of Gram.’”

Phil borrowed a hearse from a girlfriend and drove out to LAX – right up to the funeral home driver who was carting Gram’s coffin to the plane. Phil told him the family had changed their minds. After some repartee



the man shrugged and handed over the goods, and Phil drove off with Gram's body. They stopped at a liquor store for beer and Jack Daniels, then at a gas station for a gallon of gas. The wake began.

"We drove out to the desert, drinking with Gram. Went out to Cap Rock in Joshua Tree. I opened the casket to make sure it was Gram." The legend has it that Phil then put a can of beer in Gram's pocket for the long ride home.

"We poured on the five gallons and threw in the match. You aren't supposed to have open fires in National Parks, and this one created an unbelievable fireball seen by the forest rangers. They chased us, but we were unencumbered by sobriety, so we got away."

Most of Gram's friends agreed Kaufman had done the right thing. Kaufman was eventually busted, but got off lightly. He had to pay for the coffin. Gram's friend Kathy Miles provides the coda to the Gram Finale: "I can see Gram up there in hillbilly heaven, laughing his ass off."

I have a recurring daydream of Gram Parsons, at The Aces Club in The City of Industry, in a cape and satin bellbottoms, facing a beating for his attire, then winning the rednecks over in the talent contest. Saving his life with the country-truth of a George Jones song.

Since then I've returned to the desert many times. I buried the bone chard back in the sandy earth behind Cap Rock. I've written

songs at The Twenty Nine Palms Inn, with Katy Moffatt, and I co-wrote "The Rose of the San Joaquin," with Ian Tyson, in The Pioneer Town Motel near Yucca Valley.

I've felt Gram's spirit out there – *like a bird drifting above the faultline*, singing up his cosmic visions, where every moment is a window on all time and the spiny Joshua Trees raise their arms toward the heavens.

*He was just a country boy  
His simple songs confessed  
And the music he had in him  
so very few possessed.*

**"In My Hour of Darkness"**  
**Gram Parsons & Emmy Lou Harris**



Tom Russell's double album "Horse Opera" on the West, *The Rose of Roscrae*, is available, along with his full catalogue, from [www.fronterarecords.com](http://www.fronterarecords.com) His art is available at: [www.tomrussellart.com](http://www.tomrussellart.com)

# Ohio Mountain Man

Rob Denney wasn't raised anywhere near a mountain range. Now, he guides others into the rugged high country he once dreamed of seeing.

By Juli S. Thorson

With a practiced hand, Rob Denney brings a guest mount to the saddling rail at his Triple O Outfitters camp in the Idaho

Bitterroots, near the mile-high Lolo and Lewis and Clark Trails. Though 2,000 miles away from the regular home in Ohio that he shares with his wife, Jan, for half the year, he's equally at home here, putting up guests in old-fashioned wall tents and taking them on backcountry bucket-list adventures.

The roots of familiarity took hold decades ago. Denney, 54, has guided guests on behalf of the same outfit since the 1980s. He got his start in the trade with a job at Triple O and, as he puts it, "just kept coming back" each year until he was able to buy the business and secure its U.S. Forest Service operating permit in 2014. Like the owners who preceded him, Denney serves a clientele of hunters, fishermen, trail riders and snowmobilers who

crave remote, wild country more than they do a resort with modern amenities.

When in camp, Denney operates and prepares guest meals from a wood-sided Forest Service building, converted to a cookhouse. It's older than he is. The sturdy bay he's about to saddle is descended from some of the same stock he first handled as a green-as-grass, wanna-be mountain guide working for Triple O.

As for the precipitous Lolo country itself, little has changed since the Lewis and Clark expedition nearly extinguished itself in the struggle to cross it over 200 years ago. The Triple O guide area includes the most primitive and untouched portion of the Lewis and Clark Trail, along with several campsites documented in the explorers' journals. When filmmaker Ken Burns shot his documentary series about Lewis and Clark in the 1990s, Triple O packed in his gear and



photos by Juli S. Thorson

Rob Denney, owner of Idaho's Triple O Outfitters, grew up in Ohio and still resides there half the year. But for decades, he's returned to the same guide area in the Bitterroot Mountains to take others on adventures.



crew to sites no vehicle can reach.

The area has few roads, none of them paved, and no homes, settlements or services. It remains off the grid, with no electricity, WiFi or cell-phone coverage. The closest telephone and email connections are 50 miles from the Triple O base camp, which itself is a good hour's drive from the two-lane paved road leading back to those aspects of civilization.

Nothing in Denney's upbringing, nor his initial and still-continuing job as a commercial truck driver, prepared him for the intensely physical and risk-laden outdoor life he sought and found in Idaho. He grew up in central Ohio, where his father punched the clock at a factory and had few outdoor interests. Except for seeing the horses driven by Amish farmers, the Denneys had no contact with horses, mules or other livestock. They seldom traveled beyond their own state, the highest point of which is a modest 1,550 feet above sea level. At 27, Rob Denney was on a similar life path, one that



Denney stands flanked by guests who've just concluded a wilderness trail riding vacation with Triple O.

included a wife and extended family and that was comfortably paved with regular wages.

But then two life-altering events occurred, almost at the same time. Denney's father died, and the factory he'd for which he'd been trucking went out of business. "I needed to get away," Denney recalls, so he struck out for Hamilton, Montana, to spend two weeks as a paying hand at a guide school run by an outfitter. He added this experience to his one other credential, the home-study course in guiding that he'd taken after ordering it from a magazine.

When the school ended, Denney began making calls to outfitters, looking for work, and "by about the sixth call," was hired over the phone by Harlan Opdahl, Triple O's earlier and late owner.

"Elk-hunting season had already started, Harlan was short-handed, and it pretty much came down to me, or nobody," Denney says. He tells of reporting for work at the Triple O base camp, finally finding his way there long after dark, and of discovering himself alone, in a



At the Triple O base camp, guests stay in wall tents and dine outdoors around a campfire. The Bitterroot country itself provides the main amenity.



cold camp. His first lesson in the degree of self-reliance expected came in the form of a note. “Rob: Feed the horses. Back in a few days. Harlan.”

“I didn’t know what else to do except feed the horses, like the note said,” Denney remembers. “I was opening a can of cold beans in the cookhouse when an old cowboy, who also worked for Harlan, rode into camp with a string of horses and, fortunately, took over.”

The cowboy was Virgil Gardner, a former Oregon buckaroo who’d been in the saddle and in mountain country all his life. He mentored Denney, as did Opdahl and others who’d chosen the outfitting life. “I learned a lot from Virgil, about so many things, just by being around him,” Denney says. “Everything he knew, he’d learned firsthand, just like the people who’d taught him. I don’t know what he thought privately about my ‘book education,’ but I do remember him telling me, after seeing me with those beans, that he’d be doing all



Perched at the edge of a former lookout site, Denney takes in the seemingly endless peaks of the Idaho Bitterroots. This is where the Lewis and Clark expedition nearly met its end from starvation and exhaustion.

the cooking from now on.”

As a youngster, Denney devoured books about mountain men, hunters and other explorers. He still studies the genre, turning to books when alone in camp or overnighting in his semi-truck rig. (In winter, when the Bitterroots are buried in snow, Denney returns to Ohio and hauls jet engines on cross-country runs.) His dog, Blix, is named after Bror von Blixen, the impoverished Swedish baron who was portrayed in *Out of Africa* and who became one of the first renowned big-game hunters. Denney’s encyclopedic recall of adventurer lore makes him good company, whether on the trail or while doing chores in camp.

He’s equally versed in history of his guide area, much of it learned by sharing campfires with scholarly guests from the Smithsonian Institution and elsewhere.

“The Lewis and Clark connection got to be a bigger part of the business over time,” Denney explains. “When I started, back in the ’80s, this country was still full of



A simple wooden sign tells guests and visitors that they’ve found Denney’s Triple O Outfitters camp, miles from any other slice of civilization.



elk, and the outfitting business was more about hunting than anything else. But then the elk population declined, while the interest in Lewis and Clark started growing, especially after Stephen Ambrose came out with *Undaunted Courage* [the *New York Times* bestseller about Lewis and Clark, published in 1996].”

Denney’s seen other changes to the Triple O clientele, including a greater number of women and young people. They aren’t there to fill a game tag, he says, but to fulfill a wish or promise of some kind, whether it’s to bond with friends, do something special with a grandchild, or scatter a loved one’s ashes.

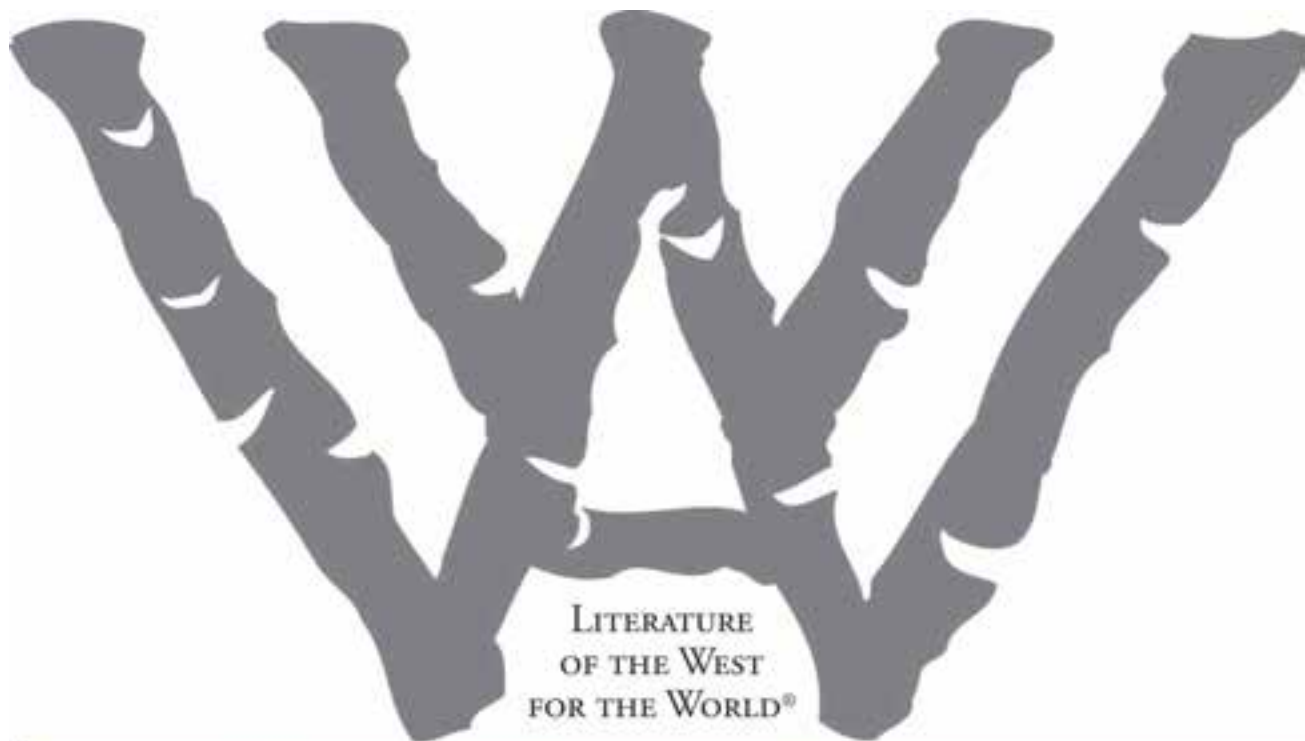
Whatever their reason for using his services, Denny’s guests, and their engaged reactions to his beloved second home, provide his favorite form of intrinsic reward.

“I like to see people smile, and to hear kids laugh,” he says, “and I get that in this business. Most of the guests are pretty far out of their element when they get up into this country, but they’re also here by choice. I get to be around people who are making a dream come true. It’s great, because I know exactly how they feel.”



Juli S. Thorson is a writer and editor living in Idaho.

Learn more about Rob Denney at [www.triple-o-outfitters.com](http://www.triple-o-outfitters.com).



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## A VISIT WITH BUCK BRANNAMAN

# Continuing

I recently returned from Australia where we held the latest “A Legacy of Legends” event. My daughter Reata went with me and we had a big time being tourists when we weren’t horseback together. The next “Legacy” event in the U.S. will be held on March 11, 12 and 13 in Fort Worth, Texas. You can learn more about the event at [www.alegacyoflegends.com](http://www.alegacyoflegends.com). Many of you may know we hold these events every year to honor the traditions and horsemanship of Ray Hunt and Tom Dorrance by the participation of those who worked directly with these two gifted men. We feel the obligation to carry on their approach and teachings. After the first one, we didn’t want it to be the last time we all got together so it became a yearly event and the people that come are really devoted to continuing the dreams that Ray and Tom had, and it’s a pretty loyal following. We need to grow it, and we’re gaining a little bit every year. It’s worth it to us because we don’t want all of what Ray spent his life doing to just disappear. It is important that this style of horsemanship continues to thrive.

When Reata and I were flying back from Australia I was thinking about my introduction to Ray Hunt back

when I was trying to get a ranch job early in my life. I’d been talking to an outfit by Three Forks, Montana, called the Madison River Cattle Company. They had a lot of cattle and raised horses. My kind of place. I wanted a job with them. So I went to meet with the manager and turned out he was in town at a Ray Hunt clinic. I had a teacher in school who had told me about Ray Hunt years before. She showed me a brochure with a picture of him, and told me what he could do with a horse. Well, I thought that was just a made up story.

“Ahh, he doesn’t have anything he can teach me.”

And she said, “Well, if you ever want to see how the pros do it, you need to look him up.” Mrs. Jackson was her name. She was a great teacher and very kind, but she wasn’t going to argue with me. I was about at the age where I knew everything about everything and she was smart enough to know there wasn’t any point in saying any more. But I decided to see what this Ray Hunt clinic was all about.

When I arrived at the arena and found my way in to the grandstand, I was as far away from the action as I could be, and they were all on their lunch break as it was. I couldn’t find the ranch manager so I was getting up to



leave and into the arena comes Tom Dorrance and Ray Hunt. They start working with the horses and doing their deal and all of a sudden I start to notice some things that Ray Hunt's saddle horse was doing that I didn't even know a horse could do. First thing you know, I'm a little farther down in the grandstand. Pretty soon, I'm a little closer yet. Finally, I'm standing right by the round corral, peeking through and watching his every move, and I just couldn't believe it. It was the most amazing thing I'd ever seen. I never knew a horseman could be THAT good. And of

course, Tom Dorrance was there helping Ray in the clinic and also doing some things that I just thought were magical. To this day, that feeling remains the same. I'm still trying to pursue the magic that I saw those men do. It's why Ray's widow, Carolyn Hunt and I – along with so many who feel as we do – work to continue the teaching legacies of Ray Hunt and Tom Dorrance with those who worked directly with them, in order to help those who might never have had that chance. We hope to see you in Ft. Worth this March.



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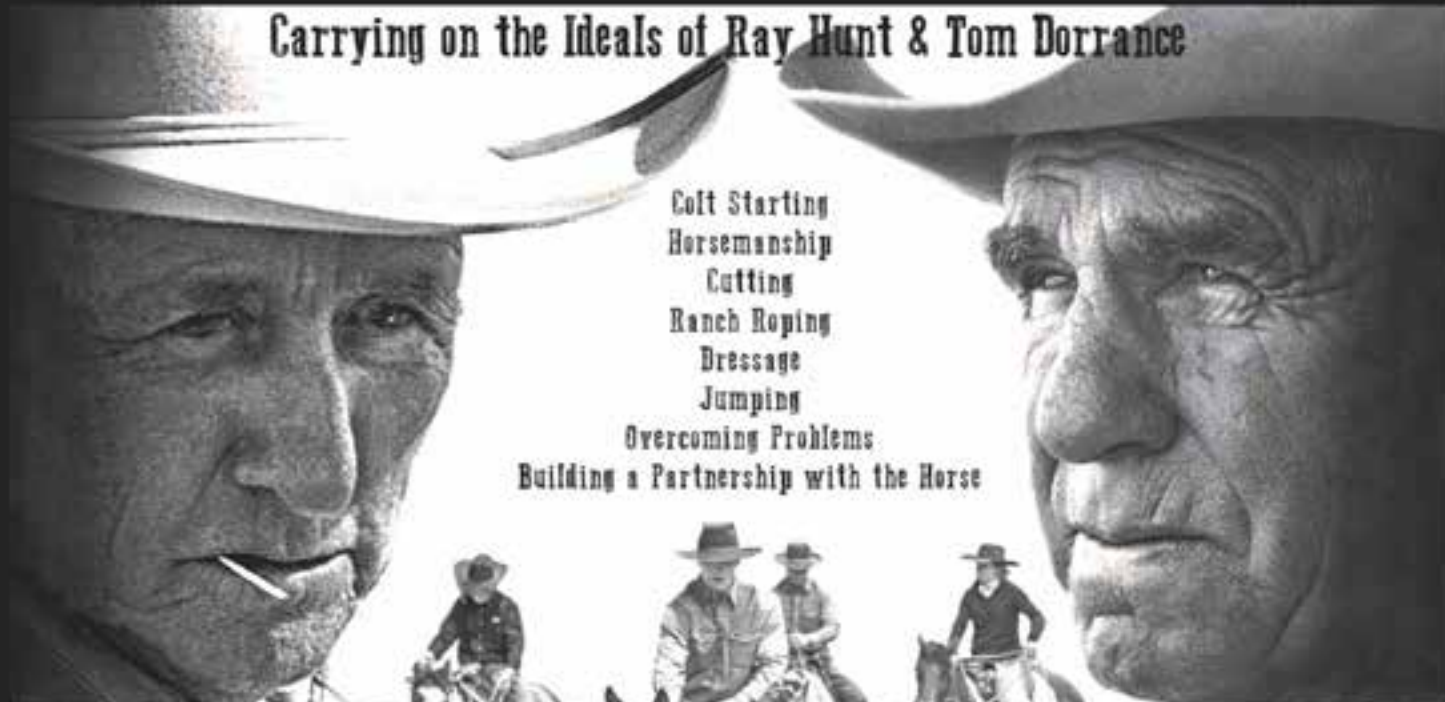
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The Hen House ladies – from left – Reata, Nevada and Hannah



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## THE HEN HOUSE

# Child's Play: How siblings shaped who we are.



By Hannah Ballantyne, Reata Brannaman and Nevada Watt

### Hannah

My brother saved my life. I'm not talking figuratively here, this was real, literal life-saving, when we were wild-eyed children, smoking around through the snow, as healthy northern kids do. This was Montana, the snow was heavy and high. Our road had been plowed and the mountain from the piled snow made of smashed up snow-boulders and ice seemed like the perfect place for our snowball battle. It was warmer that day and the snowplow mountain was starting to settle and shift. I was crouched at the base of it, a perfect snowball in my 7-year-old hand ready to be launched at my brother's face, when something huge knocked down and there was just blackness and cold pressure. I tried moving but couldn't, I couldn't scream, I couldn't breathe. It was probably only 30 seconds but it felt like



Hannah Ballantyne and her brother, James.

cons. And then there was light and air and my brother, pulling me out of the snow, saying it was going to be OK. A lot of kids would have run for help, or yelled for



James and his father Jesse Ballantyne

parents, or panicked. My 9-year-old brother pushed an ice boulder three times his size off of me, a chunk of snow and ice so heavy that when our dad tried to move it later, he could barely shift it. If my brother had hesitated or run for help, I would have suffocated. When my parents asked him later how he'd done it, he said "I don't know, I just had to save my sister." I don't know if it was adrenaline or angels that helped my brother save me that day, but it's just one of a plethora of reasons I'm grateful to have him in my life.

There's something special and unique about having just one brother. I'm sure this isn't the case for all siblings but I never felt like a tag-along, we were partners in mischief and usually having some random adventure. As we've gotten older I appreciate more how my brother was always there to help me but never holding me back. I view the world differently because of him. Frogs and creepy crawlies were fun and interesting, rocks and hills were meant to be climbed, forests explored and challenges relished. He really is my best friend. Sure we've fought, but that didn't matter because we know when you boil it all down, there's nothing that matters the way family does.

I've told my brother that he should write a memoir.

Sure he's barely out of the twenties, but those years are packed with more adventure, insanity and living than most people could even think up. Through being in the military, surviving the Iraq war, and countless other wild escapades, he has somehow managed to maintain a sense of empathy for people that just flat out makes me want to be a better human. Whenever I'm feeling frustrated about something (probably trivial) in my life I like to remind myself of the incredible odds my brother has been up against. He's also the kindest, strongest human I've ever known, and I know his story is only just beginning. Thank you, James.

### Reata

Unlike my other roommates, I was blessed with sisters. Being the youngest of the trio not only allowed me to – what they would consider “get away with anything” – it gave me great role models to live up to. My dad always said he was drowning in an estrogen ocean living with three daughters and a wife, but he managed to handle it fairly well and we only gave him a few grey hairs.

From listening to them play their Spice Girls CDs in their room and observing as they managed to find



Reata and from left, her sisters Lauren and Kristin





their “individual” sense of style through the awkward middle school years... I managed to pick up a few things as well as have some great guidance through my adolescence.

Being the only sister to have much interest in



Kristin, Lauren and Reata with their mom Mary in back.

horses, it was always something other than horses that brought my sisters and I together. Almost every relationship in my life has been centered around or based on horses; I can honestly say that the only one that hasn't been, has been the one with my sisters. My oldest sister Lauren is the one who started my interest in cooking and taught me how to cook, and my middle sister Kristin is the one who got me started playing basketball. Thanks to them, I broke out of my comfort zone and experienced something other than what I was used to. Something other than horses.

Being the youngest by 9 years, I was definitely the spoiled baby of the family; I will admit that. But lucky for me, my sisters were there to keep me in line and make sure I turned out alright.

Having 2 sisters precede me through high school, I was used to all my teachers saying “Are you Lauren and Kristen’s sister?! We just love your sisters.”

I wasn't as good in school as them, I had to really make myself stay focused... which I partly blame on the fact that I had my horses outside of school that I would much rather be messing with. But having the motivation to succeed and keep up with my sisters forced me to do well in school and push myself to be better.

I look up to my sisters, just as any younger sibling should. I strive to be a better person everyday and even though we have chosen different paths in life; there are still lessons to be learned from each other. Being able to develop relationships with people with other interests opens up a whole new set of doors that gives us the opportunity to connect and learn about other people and their ideas, dreams and aspirations. My sisters have given me this opportunity, not only to build a relationship with them, but educate myself about other people that I might stumble upon in my life.

## Nevada

Something about hiking on ice – picking away footholds while being blown over by 70+ MPH wind gusts brings you together. My headlamp maybe illuminated 20 feet of the glacier and I kept on losing

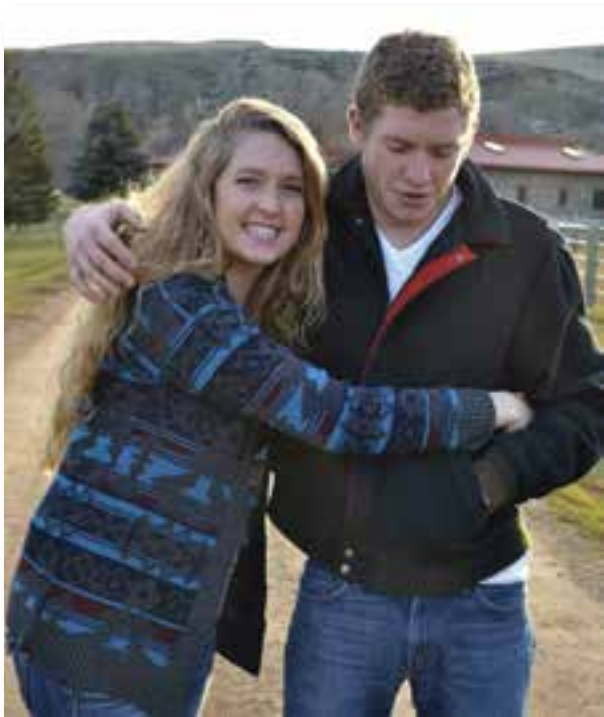


Hannah Ballantyne, Nevada Watt and her brother Pine.



sight of him, the only person I could trust to get me off this God forsaken mountain. He was the one who got me up there in the first place.

His name is Pine, yep like the tree. And this particular adventure was climbing Pico de Orizaba in Puebla, Mexico. You might think how strange to want to climb a volcano in Mexico, but that is my brother for you! Mundane is not in his vocabulary. Pine is the best



Nevada and Pine

older brother a girl could have and I'll tell you why. He never babied me growing up or gave me the easy job because I was his little sister. He knew I could do it, he believed in me. He most definitely didn't take it easy when slinging cold mud at me during our countless mud fights. But you know, I wouldn't change a single aspect of our relationship.

Because we were homeschooled, we were in a way forced friends but that friendship has only grown over



Pine and mom, Colleen Watt.

the years. Albeit there were times we may not have got along, but we always figured it out together. There was a rule in our house that the tattler got a spanking too and it is amazing how kids react with this as an option. The result, we learned how to overcome disagreements and just let it go. I loved that about our relationship – there were never any grudges held.

Pine probably got sick of his little sis hanging around him all the time (I couldn't help it, I thought he was the absolute coolest person) but somehow he was patient and always included me. From that we had a lot of the same friends and still do to this day. Those friends have adventured with us, grown with us, and ultimately brought Pine and me closer together.

Pine has an amazing force of passion and motivation for life. He never thinks something is too big or too hard. He is always ready for the next adventure and somehow plans the entire thing for crazies like his little sis! When he desires to do something, he just takes all the little steps and those steps cumulate into something amazing. Recently he has discovered his passion for photography and accompanied his pictures with words that bring life to the still. Pine is an entrepreneur, a dreamer, a doer, and the most amazing brother. If you wish to see more about him check out [pinewatt.com](http://pinewatt.com)!





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## WESTERN CULTURE

Regional and local writing and arts journals are fast becoming fewer and far between.

They are worth finding and supporting as they give space to local writers, poets, artists and musicians. The *West Marin Review* is published in Pt. Reyes, California by Point Reyes Books – an indie bookstore – ‘member them? This is their 6th and it is a print journal that comes out once a year and is way worth the time and money to find.

Here is a bit of prose from the current edition by Denise Parsons:

### **The Rancher Whispered.**

What I remember most fondly is the Ramblin’ Jack Elliott performance in the tiny diner.

Well, not so much the performance in itself, although it was quite special, but the fabulously stout middle-aged rancher who sat behind us. I’d seen him around town, always sporting a big bold belt buckle and fine felt cowboy hat. Toward the end of the night, as Ramblin’ Jack described one of his last songs, “Old Shep,” about a favorite dog he’d taken on the road, the rancher whispered to the woman beside him, “I love this song, but sometimes it makes me cry.”

Glorious. [www.westmarinreview.org](http://www.westmarinreview.org)





# Art of the Eight-Second Dance

Chasing glory on the Challenge of Champions Tour.

Essay and Photography by Scott Ripley

John Branch, a Pulitzer Prize-winning sportswriter for *The New York Times*, once described bull riding as “an eight-second car wreck.” It’s human nature, of course, to stare at a car wreck, making spectating at a bull-riding event something like watching 25 such wrecks in quick succession. Some are serious, others are fender-benders.

A couple of years ago, on a sunbaked August afternoon, I took a respite from steelhead fishing on the Deschutes River and made the short drive to the Sherman County Fair in Moro, Oregon. The top billing for the day was a visit by the Challenge of Champions Tour, a series of bull-riding events produced by Jason Mattox. Jason rode bulls professionally in PRCA and PBR for 15 years before he decided to hang it up and create a tour. A CoC tour stop will feature up to 30 riders ranging in age between 18 and 28. These are serious young men with a passion for a sport that, for many riders, began with riding sheep and calves in junior rodeos. Most of the riders have full- or part-time jobs and are drawn to the tour by the adrenaline-fueled action and the camaraderie shared by riders. The bulls are no slouches, either, bred for aggressive rides and supplied by top stock contractors.

I went to the fair to capture the essence of an annual gathering of western families. And to photograph bull riding. I approached the riding as I had done with NFL or NBA shoots: freeze the moment and tightly frame the subjects. This requires long, light-grabbing lenses, fast shutter speeds, and shooting many frames per second. There’s no “waiting for the perfect shot.” With bull riding, you’re lucky if you have eight seconds of a bull and rider in the same frame.

I was not disappointed, though. As sunlight faded to gold and shadows grew longer, the capacity crowd roared as riders sought their elusive eight seconds. There were short, explosive rides and times when bulls charged thrown riders only to be diverted by skilled, colorfully dressed bullfighters. Perfect rides were rare. When they came it was like a dance, with the bull pirouetting mid-air, the rider holding tight with one arm held high.

The Challenge of Champions Tour holds events in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Many of the venues are indoor facilities. A covered arena is great for the audience, but makes photography difficult due to low lighting. Professional DSLR cameras allow you to bump up the ISO (light sensitivity), while retaining image quality and keeping the shutter speed high to freeze action. At the Sherman County Fair, and subsequent tour stops in Astoria and Albany, Oregon, I took advantage of my backstage pass to meet the riders and capture their pre-ride preparations, rituals and jitters.



*Arena Stagecraft*



*Influence*



*Red Bull Before the Bull*





*Off the Ground*



*Tools of the Trade*



*Airborne*



*Send in the Clowns*





*Tape Time*



*Barrelman Nate Reed*



*A Moment of Silence*





*Hung Up*

## Faces of the Tour



*Bryan Carter*



*Codey Brixey*



*Jake Suratt*



*Lyle Painter*



*Michael Hauner*



*Sid Britt*



*Ty Bennett*



*Xavier Gilbert*

Scott Ripley is a photographer based in Oregon.





# Cindy's Cows

Excerpted from *Rough Patches*, a powerful collection of short stories centered on women in the historical and contemporary American West.

By Deanna Dickinson McCall

The cattle looked good, despite the snow frosting their black backs and the churned brown and white mess in which they stood. They were uniform and in good flesh, just what they should look like.

The woman grabbed the cold metal of the pen with a gloved hand and climbed up to get a better, final look. She turned to an older man in coveralls and told him she'd call him tonight.

Once in the pickup, she flipped her long golden braid out of the way of the seat belt and reached for her phone before starting the motor.

"I'm on my way home now," she said. "I want to talk tonight."

A frown crossed her face as she pulled onto the pavement.

"I thought we were going to stay home tonight," she said, "that we'd decided not to be running all over."

Scowling, she threw the phone down.

Cindy reached for the thermos she kept with her and took a long drink. She drove the rest of the way home filled with mixed emotions.

As she pulled into the lane leading to the older, farm-style house, she noted his truck was still there. The dogs came off the porch to greet her, excited and wagging their tails. That was the thing about dogs, she thought, they were always glad to see you.

She looked past the house to the horses standing in the pens. Wondering why they weren't out grazing, she started for them when she thought to check the dogs' pans. They were empty, as was their water pan.

Sighing deeply, she went to the horses. There was no trace of hay in the feeder or on the ground, and the trough was thick with ice. She reached through the fence for the ax and felt a rush of rage rising.

She swung the ax hard, venting her frustration. Ice shards splintered through the air, stinging her face. She struck the ice several more times before hooking the broken pieces and dragging them out of the trough.

She placed hay in the racks, then went to the back porch to fill a bucket with water and a coffee



*Rough Patches*, by Deanna Dickinson McCall, includes nine short stories.



can with dog food.

When she returned to the enclosed porch, she pulled off her snow boots and hung her coat. She stared at the unfinished walls, walls that were supposed to have been finished two years ago.

Dale came to the door connecting the enclosed porch and the kitchen.

"I thought you said you'd be right home," he said. "I'm going to be late."

Cindy stared up at her husband.

"I was feeding the horses, breaking ice and taking care of the dogs," she replied. "I thought you'd have that done."

It always made Cindy angry that he could come home from his job, and plop on the couch. Animals were always an afterthought with Dale. Come to think of it, most things other than what he desired at a given moment were an afterthought.

"What did you want to talk about?" he asked. "I'm going to a movie."

Cindy looked down, trying to hide her frustration and anger. He hadn't asked if she wanted to go, and she'd bet he didn't even know what was playing. It was just another excuse to be gone. He had no desire to make their place better, no desire to make anything better; he just lived for the moment.

"I went to look at a nice set of heavy heifers," she said. "The price is good and I told the guy I'd call him tonight and let him know."

Dale was silent for a moment, and then looked down at the floor.

"I don't want more to do after work," he said. "I'm tired after working. I think we need to move in closer to town. The gas for going to town is expensive, especially since we're running in several times a day."

Cindy felt her stomach churn. What had happened

to the guy she married? The one who wanted to get ahead, work at jobs, and run cows until they built a herd that was paid for and they could have the life they wanted, something besides a pension when they were able to retire? He never even looked at the horses or the pasture any more.

"Go to the movie," she said in a flat tone as she squeezed past him.

She never looked up at the sound of the front door closing. As he pulled out of the driveway, she already had the glass of whiskey poured.

After her second glass of whiskey, she called about the cows.

"I'm sorry, but we can't take them. Our pasture lease we had lined up fell through," she lied. "I sure appreciate you giving us the chance. They're a nice set of heifers."

Deciding she wasn't hungry, Cindy poured another drink, settled down on the couch, and found the agricultural channel on the television. It was a show about women farmers and how the government had special loans to help women.

Cindy fell asleep after pouring another glass. She dreamed of riding in a big, green, irrigated pasture, through a herd of black, shiny cattle she owned.

The next morning she woke with the usual headache. It was her day off from her job at the feed store. She poured a cup of coffee and topped it off with brandy. She had noticed a few months ago the addition of the brandy to her coffee always seemed to help clear her head.

Dale had left hours ago; she had rolled over on the couch, feigning sleep, when she'd heard him in the kitchen making coffee before he left.

She looked around at their home. She'd painted, then nagged until he helped her lay the new wood floors. Dale had been so excited when they bought the

place a few years ago, no more renting, no more having to find a lease for their horses. He said they'd start their family, have kids here, kids who belonged to 4H and raised projects. Now, it wasn't good enough for him, and he had all but admitted he wanted to sell out and rent a place in town, a place where he didn't have to make repairs or improvements, or fix fences or clean ditches.

Cindy poured another cup of coffee and added a generous splash of brandy. She thought about last night and sleeping on the couch. That was happening regularly. Dale didn't bother to wake her any more. He hadn't mentioned starting a family lately. Well, there wasn't much likelihood of babymaking with him not caring if she even slept in their bed.

She remembered the show about women farmers and wondered how much of it was true. She grabbed the phone book and made a few calls until she got the right government office.

Cindy went into the bathroom and looked in the dusty mirror. She turned on the water in the shower and began gathering up the dirty clothes and towels littering the floor, dumping them in the hamper before stripping and adding her own.

"You seem to have adequate experience and are really what we're looking for. I know the ads say beginning farmers, but a lot of the women who come in don't have a clue. There's no way I can loan them money, regardless of what the government wants."

Cindy studied the balding, middle-aged man behind the desk. He seemed sincere enough, yet she still had a hard time believing she could do this, that she could make their dream come true. Or perhaps *my* dream, she thought.

"Thank you. I'll look the papers over," she said. "Is there anything else I need to do?"

"I think you're set," the man said. "Thanks for coming in. I'll be waiting to hear from you."

He pushed himself up from behind the desk and came over to shake her hand. He immediately recognized the smell of booze, fresh and old – the kind of old-booze smell that came out of someone's pores after prolonged, heavy drinking. He smiled and closed the door behind her. Seated back at his desk, he disapprovingly shook his head. Why would a young woman like that be drinking?

Cindy glanced down at the papers on the seat beside her as she pulled into the grocery store. She had a hard time believing they were real. She was torn between euphoria and being scared to death.

She studied her list and grabbed the last item, a jug of milk, then started for the checkout when she saw the liquor sign hanging over an aisle. She turned the buggy and grabbed a bottle of brandy. It was winter, and she needed to warm up sometimes. Coffee alone didn't do that. Then she saw the vodka that she poured into her iced tea and Cokes. She added that to the basket before loading the cases of beer.

At the checkout counter, her old neighbor was working the register. She smiled and asked how she was doing, adding with a worried expression that Cindy looked tired. When she looked down at the basket and saw all the alcohol, her hand froze in midreach. She swallowed hard before asking if Cindy and Dale were entertaining.

Cindy replied with something about Dale and his buddies before hurriedly paying and escaping out the door. Old biddy had nothing better to do than mind someone else's business, she thought as she loaded the groceries. She ignored the looks the family parked next to her exchanged with one another as she loaded the last case of beer.





Cindy hooked the wire in the hammer's claws, then pulled the wire past the post before hammering the staple in with the other hammer. She hadn't been able to find the fence stretcher and had figured Dale had gotten rid of it as an excuse to not fix the fence.

She looked down the fence, satisfied. The wire was taut, even where she'd had to splice and add pieces. Not bad for a woman, she thought sarcastically – a woman whose husband wouldn't do the job.

Cindy went in the house to get a drink of water. She reached for a glass and thought of the cold Coke in the fridge. And the new bottle of vodka. She filled her go-mug, stepped outside and settled on the porch.

Scratching the dogs' ears as she drank, she thought about the papers she'd picked up yesterday. She'd look them over tonight.

After sweeping out the barn and knocking down its cobwebs, Cindy refilled her cup and decided to make a drive-by of the heifers.

They were a pretty set. She wouldn't be able to get them, but maybe the seller would know of others by the time she was ready. Her throat constricted and she wondered if she'd really be able to do this without Dale's help. She knew cattle and horses, most of ranch life better than he did, but she still second-guessed herself. She put it on her old-fashioned upbringing. Girls didn't do stuff when there were guys around to do it. But, what about when the guys were there and still didn't do it?

Cindy read the road sign, making sure she was

headed the right way. She glanced down to grab her mug and never saw the tractor sitting in the road around the curve. She cranked the steering wheel, but saw the hood



photo by Anita Crane/www.photographybyanitas.com

New Mexico writer and rancher Deanna Dickinson McCall.

and front end rise up as the truck made contact.

She remembered being thrown around the cab. Remembered the crunch of broken glass and feeling like she was being turned upside down. She remembered the hands and voices, hands dragging her and lights flashing and a radio chattering.

Cindy was still being checked out when Dale arrived at the hospital. He walked into the exam room in time to overhear the physician lecturing Cindy about drinking and driving. Dale leaned against the doorframe, staring at his wife's scraped and bruised face.

Cindy finally broke the silence.

"I don't know how bad the truck is," she began defiantly as she started to stand. "I'm sorry, but that

tractor was around a blind curve, not even moving.”

“I’m not worried about the damn truck,” Dale answered angrily. “I’m worried about you.” He lowered his voice. “When are you going to face that you’ve got a problem? After you kill someone? Or yourself?”

He saw how unsteady she was and strode over to grab her arm. She pulled away from him, and started for the door. Dale picked up her forgotten jacket and followed closely.

Cindy woke to a raging headache and felt sore all over. She grimaced as she made her way to the kitchen. Last time she was this sore, she recalled, was when a horse had gone over backwards with her, pinning her underneath.

As she reached for the coffee pot he saw the folded note. She settled with her coffee and the note at the kitchen table. After a couple of sips, she opened it.

*Cindy,*

*I called into work for you, explained what happened. They said take your time, just give the boss a call this evening and let him know how you’re doing. You need to know I love you, but things have to change. I can’t keep doing this. I am coming home at lunch and want to talk to you. – Dale*

She cupped the mug in her scraped hands and stared out the window while silent tears slid down her face. She wiped her face against her sleeve and carefully rose from her chair, ignoring the bottles waiting in the cupboard. She glanced at the clock and headed for the bathroom.

The hot shower felt good on her sore body. She stared in the mirror at her cut lip, blackened and swelled

eyes. There was a large scrape near her temple and another on her chin. She piled her hair up, and found clean clothes she gingerly pulled on.

The dogs barked when Dale pulled in. Cindy worked to calm herself. Her hands shook and she felt tremors run the length of her body. She went to the fridge and grabbed a Coke, popping it open as Dale entered the house. He walked over to her, peering into her face.

“How are you feelin’?” he asked. He gently picked up a strand of her hair that had come loose and attempted to put it back.

“Come on over and sit down,” he said as he pulled a chair out for her at the table. He cleared his throat before beginning. “You scared the holy hell out of me yesterday. They let me bring you home, but you should have gone to jail, Cindy. Cop felt sorry for you. You’ll be getting a drunken driving ticket.”

He let his words sink in, watching Cindy’s face carefully. She stared ahead, her face like a mask under the injuries. She vaguely remembered something about that.

Sighing, he began again.

“You have to get help. We can’t keep doing this. I love you, but I can’t live with you and watch you drink like you do. The choice is yours.”

The silence stretched on until his chair scraped back.

“I guess I have my answer,” he said as he began to rise.

“No, don’t go,” Cindy said quietly. “You want to know why I drink? I drink so I don’t have to think about how none of our dreams have even tried to start happening. How you have no interest in this place, no interest in getting some cows, having kids, or even staying home.”



She raised her battered chin and stared at her husband. Dale's eyes clashed with his wife's.

"What? The reason I'm not here is because I can't stand watching you drink," he said. "You think you're hiding it, fooling everyone? Well, you sure as hell aren't! When I saw how your drinking was progressing, I stepped back. Why do you think I wanted to move to town? Because I was afraid that what happened yesterday was gonna happen."

"That's no damn excuse. You're trying to put your laziness off on me!" Cindy returned. "Last night did make me wake up. I am drinking too much. I decided I'm not drinking anymore. I'm going to check into ways to get help. But, I've also decided I'm going ahead with my life and dreams, with or without you. I don't care about town, movies or ballgames. That's not who I am."

Dale stared at his wife. Once she set her mind on something, she wouldn't turn back. Cindy held his stare.

"I can qualify for a loan for cows, operating expenses, even land," she said. "As a woman. Low interest, too. A government loan. I know I can do this. The question is, do you want to be involved? Or do you not want any responsibilities – animals to take care of, or even kids?"

The sun was warm for an early spring day and Cindy smiled as she climbed into her truck. She'd stop by the store on her way home. The meeting had gone well, and she'd had no major slips. Her sponsor was great, always willing to take her calls. He was an old cowman who understood Cindy. He'd even talked to her loan officer, assuring him Cindy was on the straight and narrow.

She slowed down for the school and saw Dale's pickup. Probably at the game, she thought. She looked at the envelope on the dash and swung in behind his truck. She swallowed hard before reaching for it. She climbed out and placed it on the seat of his truck. As she pulled out she blinked a few tears away.

*Dale,*

*I will probably always love you. I love alcohol, too.  
I can't handle either of you. I must stay away  
from both of you. I am apologizing for anything  
I've ever done to hurt you. Please know I am  
clean, sober, and happy, and I am getting my  
cows. I wish you the best. – Cindy*

*P.S. The fence is fixed, the ditches are clean, and  
the dogs and horses are happy to be fed every day.*



*Rough Patches*, by Deanna Dickinson McCall, is available from Amazon and other booksellers.

McCall is a writer and poet, and ranches with her husband in southern New Mexico.



# Road Trip List

## Old Vinyl Favorites

### Ray Price, The Byrds and Patsy Cline and Jim Reeves

#### Ray Price

*Night Life*

Columbia



Legendary, country artist Ray Price's album, *Night Life*, was released in 1963. The album features his regular touring band, the Cherokee Cowboys consisting of Willie Nelson, Johnny Paycheck, Floyd Cramer and Buddy Emmons on pedal steel. Band member and budding songwriter, Willie Nelson wrote the title track, "Night Life," Price bought the song and recorded it as the title track for the album. The song became a hit for Price, who started to use it as the introduction in his live shows, saying that the song was "especially written for him by a boy down Texas way."

When you listen to the opening of the song – it's



Ray Price – "Night Life"

<https://youtu.be/cn2zyRnAGqg>

all Buddy Emmons' pedal steel. Emmons' jazzy, bluesy intro and solo established Emmons as one of the most innovative musicians in Nashville. Price soon appointed Emmons to be his bandleader, and Emmons created many of the arrangements on Price's recordings over the next several years – a smart move. The album is full of well-written songs about a life on the road full of bars, smarmy hotels, one-night stands and heartache. This, folks, is Country music with a cap C. This album and its superstar affect on Price would introduce audiences to what a superb mellow country balladeer he was.



Buddy Emmons

"Night Life"

Written by Willie Nelson

When the evenin' sun goes down  
You will find me hangin' 'round  
Oh, the night life, it ain't no good life  
But it's my life

Many people just like me  
Dreamin' of old used-to-be's  
Oh, the night life, it ain't no good life  
Ah, but it's my life



Listen to the blues that they're playin'  
Listen what the blues are sayin'

Life is just another scene  
In this old world of broken dreams  
Oh, the night life, it ain't no good life  
But it's my life

Oh, the night life ain't no good life  
Oh, but it's my life  
Yeah, it's my life

**The Byrds**  
*Sweetheart of  
The Rodeo*  
Columbia



Tom Russell's superb story about the legacy of Gram Parsons demands that this album be part of this issue's Road Trip List, but it would be here anyway as it is such an important record stylistically – celebrating the evolving presence of Parsons' pioneering "country rock." Recorded in Nashville and Los Angeles, Parsons' passion shines through especially with the integration of Lloyd Green's steel guitar and John Hartford's banjo playing – all helping to bring country music to a younger audience – Parsons' intent. The Nashville establishment viewed the album and the band as an attempt by "long-haired hippies" to subvert country music. This was 1968. Parsons' called it, "Cosmic American Music." The big single from the album was "You Ain't Goin' Nowhere" written by Bob Dylan during his self-imposed exile in Woodstock, New York in 1967.

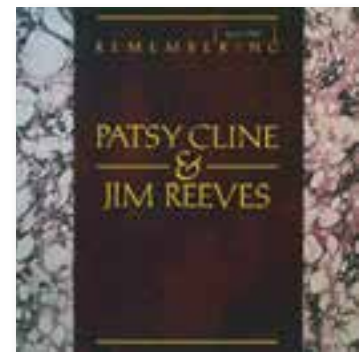
*Rolling Stone* also praised the album in its

September 1968 issue, "The Byrds, in doing country as country, show just how powerful and relevant unadorned country music is to the music of today, yet they leave just enough rock in the drums to let you know that they can still play rock & roll."



The Byrds – "You Ain't Goin' Nowhere"  
<https://youtu.be/s2JnDKvuNzw>

**Patsy Cline &  
Jim Reeves**  
*Remembering*  
MCA



This 1982 tribute album to two giants of country music has a unique feature that introduced the overdub duet. Probably the most famous, recent use of this technique enabled Natalie Cole to sing "Unforgettable" with her late father, Nat King Cole. On *Remembering*, we hear a duet of Jim Reeves and Patsy Cline singing, "I Fall to Pieces." This was only possible because in early 1960s Nashville, when both artists recorded the song separately, both Chet Atkins at RCA and Owen Bradley at Decca had access to then-brand-new 3-track mastering recorders.



In this format, the orchestra was recorded on Track 1, the backup singers on Track 2, and the lead vocal on Track 3 – all intended for mix down to mono in the end. This all came about because Owen Bradley had been approached by Jim Reeves widow, Mary Reeves Davis, with the idea of creating Jim Reeves and Patsy Cline duets and with the approval of the Cline estate, as well as both RCA Records and MCA Records. Work on the project began in early 1981, Owen simply played the original 3-track tapes and recorded both Patsy's and Jim's isolated vocals onto a 24-track tape. As the two performances were recorded a semitone apart in key, subsequently, at Music City Music Hall in Nashville (the former RCA Studio A), engineers matched the keys for the two vocals, edited it all down and recorded the final onto still another 24-track tape onto which they added new orchestration, new backing tracks and remixed for stereo. The rest – as they say – is history. Ironically both would die in separate plane crashes – Cline in March of 1963 and Reeves in July of 1964. The tribute album features six Patsy Cline songs and five by Jim Reeves including his classic rendition of Harlan Howard's story-

song, "The Blizzard." The album ends with the Cline classic "Leavin' On Your Mind."

### **Leavin' on Your Mind**

By Webb Pierce and Wayne Walker

If you got leavin' on your mind  
 Tell me now, get it over  
 Hurt me now, get it over  
 If you got leavin' on your mind  
 If there's a new love in your heart  
 Tell me now, get it over  
 Hurt me now, get it over  
 If there's a new love in your heart  
 Don't leave me in a world  
 Filled with dreams that might have been  
 Hurt me now, get it over  
 I may learn to love again  
 If there's a new love in your heart  
 Tell me now, get it over  
 Hurt me now, get it over  
 If there's a new love in your heart  
 Hurt me now, get it over  
 If there's a new love in your heart

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Patsy Cline – "If You Got Leavin' On Your Mind"  
<https://youtu.be/e10MTBwIVss>





# A Western Moment

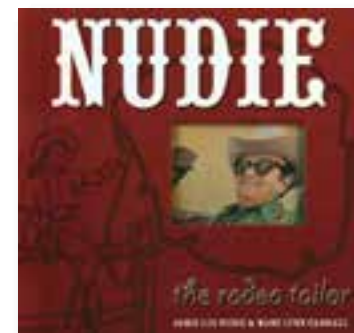
## The Nudie Mobiles



Nuta Kotlyarenko, born in 1902 Russia to the son of a boot maker, would make his way to America with his family to become the picture of the American Dream. He would become known as “Nudie, The Rodeo Taylor,” creating looks for television, film, and music celebrities during the 1940s – until his death in 1984.

One of his signature branding pieces involved a deal he cut with General

Motors in the mid-1950s. GM would provide Nudie with a stripped-down, white, Pontiac Bonneville convertible as a blank canvas and Nudie would go to work. Through the years there were many models, but the result was always classic Nudie. Nudie’s story is an American immigrant story of living your dream. Read about his amazing life in, *Nudie, The Rodeo Tailor* by Jamie Lee Nudie and Mary Lynn Cabrall (Gibbs-Smith).





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## TWO WRAPS AND A HOOEY

# An Evolving, Creative West

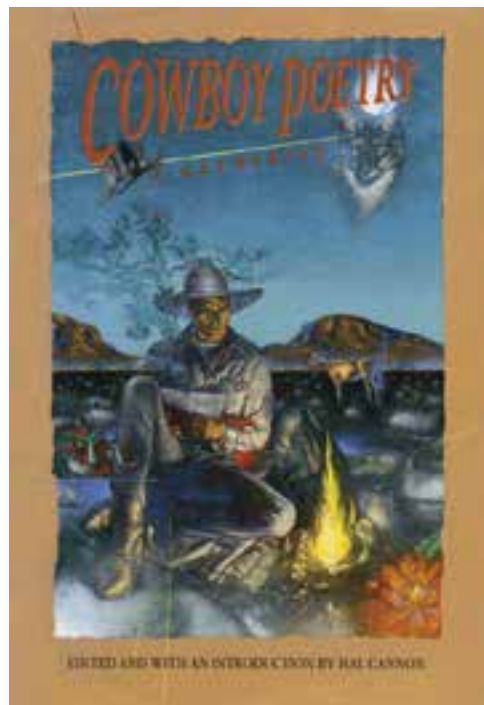
**A**s I write this, the 32nd National Cowboy Poetry Gathering is being held in Elko, Nevada. It is an event that celebrates the creative aspects of the West and those who love the physical and conceptual West. In 2003, one of our regular contributors, Hal Cannon wrote a wonderful essay on the origin of the Gathering first held back in 1985, of what was supposed to be a one-time event. At the time, Hal was the founding director of the Western Folklife Center in Elko and he and the staff and a bunch of volunteers worked on the idea for five years prior to that January weekend in 1985. They didn't know what to expect, as Hal says in his essay, he and Waddie Mitchell were busy setting up folding chairs in the Elko Convention Center. They had about sixty chairs set in place when Waddie said to him,

“Pard, let's not go overboard. We don't want to embarrass ourselves.” Well, they didn't, by the end of the weekend over 1,000 people had showed up. What was to be a one-time deal, turned into a cultural treasure.

Today the event is not only about the spoken word, song writing, art, performance and the cowboy crafts, but it celebrates family and the optimistic intent that new generations will enter “the western life” depicted, spoken about, sung about and celebrated at the Gathering.

I bring this up in part because of the response we received after last issue's essay, “By Hand,” about artisans and the handmade west. It seems for many the West is as much about creative expression as it is about its geographic and agricultural/stock raising aspects. In the case

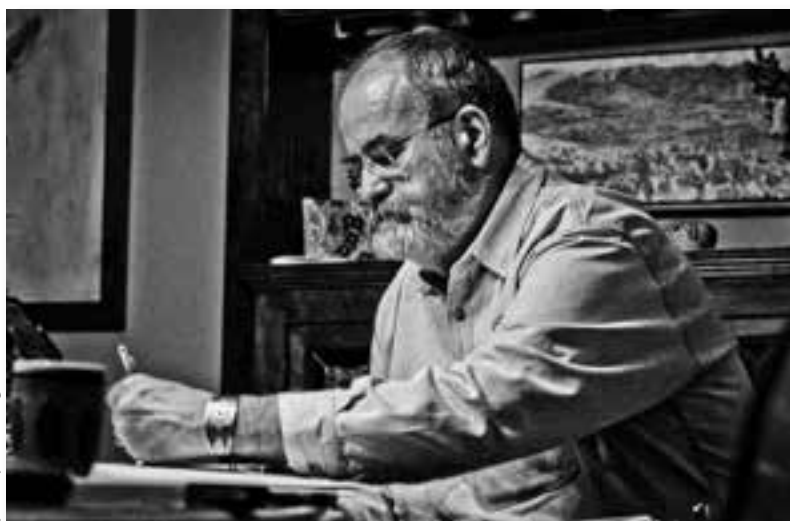
of the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering, many of the





cowboy crafts that have been historically celebrated there are also front and center in the minds and interest of our readers. Stories on hat making, iron-work, silversmithing, saddle making and more are extremely popular with our readers. It is gratifying as most of the stories we share are about the capable and the competent. That craft is alive and well and that one person's effort can matter. Our desire is to bring you the interesting things that are currently happening in the West as well as tipping our hat to those influential artists from the past.

Tom Russell's story on the late, yet still extremely cool Gram Parsons is a good example of a unique individual who gave to and changed the culture. Parsons' influence on the music of the 1970s is unmistakably engrained in what he called "Cosmic American Music" – a hybrid of country, rhythm and blues, folk and rock. A musical style that influenced a generation of musicians and their music, notably in the Byrd's landmark album, *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* that we feature in this issue's Road Trip List. An album that is a must for every...device. (One can still find the vinyl and ah, that album cover with Jo Mora artwork!)



Hal Cannon, Salt Lake City, Utah.

As for important imagery, once again in this issue we are blessed with the work of photographer Kurt Markus, one of the most inspirational photographers of the West in the last thirty-five years and who, along with fellow photographer Jay Dusard, changed the way we view the West.

It is, and always has been our intent, dear reader, to provide you with a publication that – as our editor A.J. Mangum stated in his "Editor's Note" – reflects who we are and what we do. BR



To read Hal's wonderful 2003 essay, here is the link:

[http://www.westernfolklife.org/images/stories/explore/ncpg/CPG2004\\_Hal\\_Cannon\\_Essay.pdf](http://www.westernfolklife.org/images/stories/explore/ncpg/CPG2004_Hal_Cannon_Essay.pdf)





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FARE THEE WELL

# Les Best

1926 – 2016

Hardin, Montana

*A fine cowman, above all, he wanted to be horseback.*



Les Best (left) and his friend, the late cowboy artist Joe Beeler, doing what they did a lot – laugh. Photographed by Bill Reynolds on Wally McRae’s Rocker 6 Ranch on Rosebud Creek, south of Forsyth, Montana, 1995.

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