

The Journal of the American West

Ranch & Reata

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FRONT GATE



photo by Lori Faith

Priscilla Hoback

Priscilla Hoback grew up in Santa Fe, New Mexico, when it was a small, bohemian community, and moved to Galisteo, New Mexico, in 1978, where she creates clay art in her studio on a small ranch. Horses, a large vegetable garden and an orchard create the environment that influences her art – animal portraits in fired clay reminiscent of the murals of Lascaux and Altamira. The materials for her art come from clay she digs from the earth around her home.

Priscilla also raises Arabian horses, which provide her inspiration.

Photograph by Lori Faith

Lisa Bedient grew up riding horses on her grandfather-in-law's farm, apprenticed at a dressage barn, and has managed barns most of her life. She went to nursing school and received her CNA, but returned to training horses for a living. She is now a supervisor at Tucson, Arizona's Tanque Verde Guest Ranch, where she has worked on and off for 15 years. She also runs the Harmony with Horses Program, which offers private clinics.

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Cover image: Hot off the drawing board – actually still on the drawing board, A watercolor by Teal Blake. www.tealblake.com



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PUBLISHER
Bill Reynolds

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
Buddy Purel

EDITOR
A.J. Mangum

ART DIRECTOR
Robin Ireland

PRODUCTION
Curtis Hill

CONTRIBUTORS
Hannah Ballantyne, Buck Brannaman,
Reata Brannaman, Hal Cannon, Lori Faith,
Richard Foxx, Gin Getz, Gerald Haslam,
Pete Healey, Ceily Rae Highberger, Amy Kirk,
Deanna Dickinson McCall, Kathy McCraine,
Rod Miller, Jameson Parker, Tom Russell,
Donna Stegman, Nevada Watt

WATERCOLOR DRAWINGS
Teal Blake, www.tealblake.com

Ranch & Reata
PO Box 714, Santa Ynez, CA 93460
www.ranchandreatata.com

For advertising information contact Buddy Purel
at 949.234.1281 or bpurel@gmail.com

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Legacy

By A.J. Mangum

It's a storyline that could've been inspired by any number of the West's leading craftsmen. In fact, more than a few will read this and think, Is this about me?

Travel back 25 or 30 years. A young cowboy has left the ranch, determined to find an easier way to make a living, one that pays better and that doesn't involve fighting the elements on a daily basis. Equipped with a high school diploma and a skill set that now seems irrelevant away from familiar corrals and pastures, he works the phone and runs the tires

off his aging pickup in search of a hint of an opportunity to earn a steady paycheck. His increasingly uncertain future begins to wear away at his adventurous spirit.

Like most young cowboys, he thinks he knows something about saddles. He's heard of programs in which one can learn saddlemaking. As he ponders that notion, and imagines himself in a classroom, surrounded by unfamiliar tools and virgin leather, he quietly admits to himself that he knows next to nothing – okay, *nothing* – about building saddles. Still, if he could learn the trade,



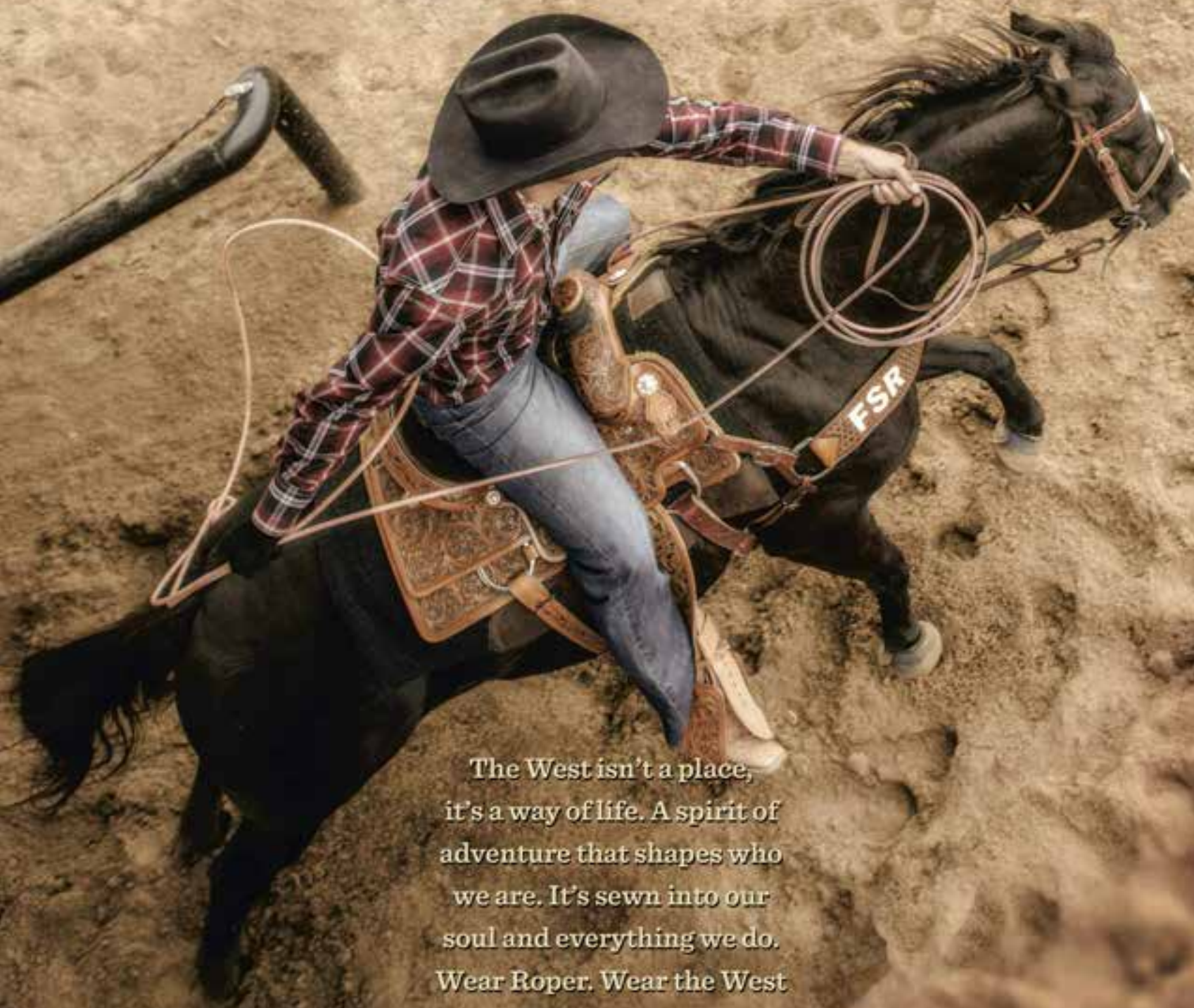
photos by Heidi Stevens

Tote bag, by Logan Willemsma, also exhibited in Elko.



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he's sure he'd enjoy the work. And, it might lead to a livelihood.

Our protagonist finds a saddle-making school, an obscure program in an equally obscure location in the West. Tuition isn't steep, but for this young cowboy, it's a small fortune. He scrounges and borrows, sells possessions, squirrels away meager pay earned at odd jobs. Finally, he sends off his check, packs his belongings and heads to school. All in.

The first thing he learns is that he's almost entirely unqualified to build saddles. He's ridden for as long as he can remember, but quickly discovers that being a horseman doesn't make one a saddlemaker. The learning curve is a cruel vertical line, and more than once he contemplates climbing back into his truck and leaving. For where, though? And for what? In those moments of doubt, the only thing keeping him enrolled is the knowledge that nothing else is waiting for him.

So, he sticks with it. Little by little, things turn around. The vocabulary becomes clearer, the tools more familiar. He learns from each setback. One day he catches himself correcting another student's technique, and relief overwhelms him.

He finishes the program and lands an apprenticeship with a veteran craftsman. Somehow, a career has started. He can't afford fuel for his truck, and he's sleeping in a back room of his employer's shop, but it's a career, nonetheless.

The young saddlemaker spends years mimicking his mentor's style before summoning the courage to market

work that reflects his own sensibilities. To his relief (if not shock), his saddles sell. People call to place orders. They send deposits. He builds a name for himself and, eventually, he opens his own shop. Somehow, while he was busy making saddles, he acquired a waiting list of customers, a backlog of orders.

Years go by. He works his way through that waiting list, but it never shrinks. His customer base grows from a roster of local working cowboys to include some of the country's top horsemen. Occasionally, he ships a saddle overseas, to a buyer he'll never meet. Young craftsmen, each looking to get their starts in the trade, call him constantly, seeking advice he would've treasured at their age.

A wife and family come along. His motivations now reach far beyond simply paying bills, as other daunting themes – college educations, retirement income – fill his thoughts. He balances such worries with memories of being young, with no foreseeable future. He'll take his current situation. He's also bolstered by the fact his kids will have more opportunities than he did. For each, a college education is a given. They'll have their pick of opportunities, and he figures most will likely be outside

of his familiar cowboy culture. Such thoughts conjure for him a sense of loss, an endpoint, especially as he surveys his shop and reflects on all that its contents –

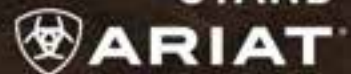


Quirt, by Katie Groves, exhibited at the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering.

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equipment, artifacts, works in progress – represent.

At some point, though, one of his kids takes an interest in his work. The youngster transitions from getting in the way to carrying out minor chores. Before long, he's assisting with real work, for paying customers. His interest holds and he begins producing his own pieces. They're crude and unmarketable but, the saddlemaker admits, they demonstrate a better handle on the craft than he had at his son's age. The saddlemaker thinks: How good might this kid be when he's as old as me?

The son pursues a college education, but still remains active as a saddlemaker, getting better with each project. Making saddles will be a lifelong passion and, in time, a career. But the son's approach will differ from his father's. Business strategies will be informed by college coursework. He'll market online. He'll film

videos of his work and Skype with customers. And as his son pushes their shared craft forward, the older saddlemaker's once-palpable sense of loss will be replaced by hope in an unwritten future.

This issue includes "Into the Future," contributor Deanna Dickinson McCall's coverage of "Expressing the West," a young gearmakers' show held this past January at the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada. The show featured work by western artisans under 40, many of whom are second-generation craftsmen, following in the footsteps of their parents while putting contemporary twists on classic gearmaking traditions. The event reaffirmed that the West is a culture that doesn't stand still. It moves forward, adapts, and looks ahead to fortunes to come.

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Interesting Things and Stories from Out West

HIGH NOON'S SHOW & AUCTION SELLS TO BRIAN LABEL



Brian Lebel

Los Angeles-based High Noon Western Americana, and Brian Lebel's Old West Show & Auction, announced that Brian and Melissa Lebel will acquire the annual High Noon Show & Auction, held every January in Mesa, Arizona, while continuing to operate their annual June event, currently held in Denver, Colorado.

Linda Kohn Sherwood and Joseph Sherwood, owners of High Noon Western Americana, will continue their active roll with acquisitions, private sales and appraisals. With the addition of the Mesa event to its lineup, Lebel's Old West solidifies its position as the leader in the western arts and collectibles market. The Sherwoods and Lebels remain personally committed to the future of the American western antiquities business.

Both parties agree that the spirit of cooperation and teamwork that has always existed between the two entities will continue well into the future. "We feel that this

is the best way to ensure that both events continue to be the finest, strongest, most reputable events in our business," says Old West founder, Brian Lebel. "It's a natural evolution."

Linda Kohn Sherwood agrees. "Both of our companies are known for their excellent reputations and high standards. We are thrilled to be able to continue to deliver honesty, integrity, quality and continuity to all of our clients, in every capacity."

Lebel's Old West Show & Auction celebrates its 25th annual event this June 27-29, 2014 at the Denver Mart in Denver, Colorado. The High Noon Show & Auction celebrates its 25th year this coming January 24-25, 2015 in Mesa, Arizona. For more information on High Noon Western Americana or Brian Lebel's Old West Show & Auction, please visit www.highnoon.com and www.codyoldwest.com.



photos by Steve DeFuria

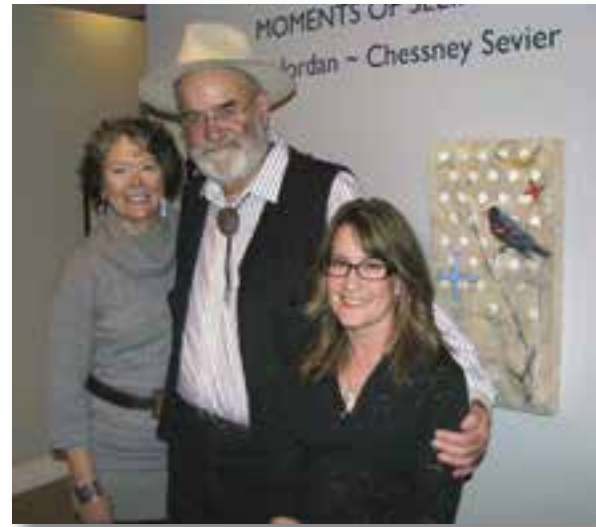
Joseph and Linda Sherwood



JORDAN AND SEVIER MOUNT THE “MOMENTS OF SEEING” EXHIBIT AT UCROSS FOUNDATION

Wyoming’s Ucross Foundation opened its 2014 exhibition year with the work of Teresa Jordan and Chessney Sevier – two artists with deep ties to the American West whose work is strongly influenced by the natural world.

Jordan, who grew up on her family’s ranch in the Iron Mountain country of southeast Wyoming, has said she is interested in a subject’s “essential nature.” Sevier, a native of the Sand Hills area of Nebraska, notes that the qualities of the western landscape – “sunlit days, clean shapes and broad skies” – have always drawn visual artists to the region.



From left: Teresa Jordan, Jordan’s husband, Hal Canon and Chesney Sevier



Work by Chessney Sevier. From left: “May’s baby 6” x 6”; Middle, “Prince of the Moon and Stars, 12.5” x 24”; Right: “Alamosa Afternoon” 8” x 10”.

Sharon Dynak, Foundation president said of the show, “All of us are undoubtedly influenced by our visual environment. What we see shapes our thinking and thus our lives. Part of a visual artist’s gift is to show us elements of our world that we

might otherwise miss. And through the art of Teresa Jordan and Chessney Sevier, we sometimes see that world looking back at us. These moments of fresh encounter can transform and inspire us in a lasting way.”

www.ucrossfoundation.org

www.teresajordan.com

www.chessneysevier.com



Work by Teresa Jordan. From left: “Who’s That?” 24” x 28.5”; “From A Seed” 24” x 28.5”; “Above It All” 24” x 15”.



RING OF FIRE CUFF FROM MONTANA SILVERSMITH

The Ring of Fire Sunflower Cuff Bracelet is striking as a stand-alone piece, or stacking and layering with more narrow bracelets. With a beautiful coppery-colored rose gold center, the subtly antiqued silver exquisitely highlights the details of the flower petals and the intricate, intertwining vines and flowers of the varied garden beneath. www.montanasilversmiths.com

SPEAKING OF CUFFS

Old Cowdogs' Alamar Collection will feature multi-colored 14K gold Alamar knots on cuffs, bracelets, earrings, necklaces and, oh yes, saddle silver, buckles sets and...pens. The Collection will be available late spring. www.oldcowdogs.com



GRACE RANCH CONTINUES PARTNERSHIP WITH NCHA

The National Cutting Horse Association is proud to announce its continued partnership with Grace Ranch as a corporate partner and title sponsor of the NCHA Youth World Finals.

Home of the 2007 NCHA Futurity Open Champion and 2008 NCHA Open Horse of the Year, High Brow CD; Grace Ranch of Jennings, Louisiana, has offered continuous support to the NCHA and the NYCHA. Owned by Chris and Staci Thibodeaux, the family extends their southern hospitality every year during the NCHA Super Stakes by hosting the popular Cajun Cutters Party. With Grace Ranch-raised catfish, and other Louisiana cuisine items paired with live music, the Cajun Cutters party is an event that Super Stakes patrons look forward to year after year.

"The National Cutting Horse Association is fortunate to have people like the Thibodeauxs committed to not only promoting cutting, but also enjoying it through family oriented activities, which is what cutting is all about," said NCHA Executive Director Jim Bret Campell. "Their generous support is greatly appreciated, and we look forward to partnering with them again in 2014."

With more than 16,000 members worldwide, the NCHA's mission is to promote and celebrate the cutting horse, whose origin on Western ranches supports ranching and Western heritage. www.nchacutting.com

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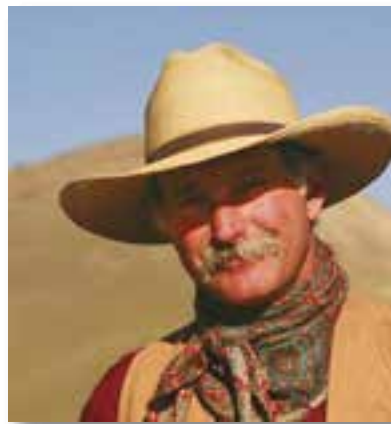
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VAQUERO HERITAGE DAYS RETURNS TO THE HISTORIC MISSION TOWN OF SAN JUAN BAUTISTA, CALIFORNIA

A celebration of the vaquero ways, Vaquero Heritage Days is held biyearly in the charming town of San Juan Bautista, northeast of Salinas, California. The event will be held at and benefit the St. Francis Retreat on Historic Rancho San Justo. This serene acreage was originally part of Mission San Juan's vast ranchland where early vaqueros lived and worked from 1797 through the 1800s and early 1900s.

The event celebrates, educates and raises public awareness of the California vaquero with 30



Dave Stamey



Adrian



Artist Carrie Ballantyne

gear makers, artisans and historians "Show & Sale" sharing knowledge and skills influenced by early vaquero techniques – fine art, saddles, gear, braided rawhide, silver bits, spurs, jewelry, books, music entertainment and more! Visitors will be treated to vaquero-style horsemanship presentations and reata roping demos by seasoned ranching horsemen who are dedicated to "Californio" traditions – Jeff Derby/Colorado; Buddy Montes/California; Paul Woods/Montana; Justin Fields/California. All 3 days offer opportunities to see, hear, meet, learn and discuss aspects of California history with those whose knowledge and wisdom is priceless! Meet Guest Artist Carrie

Ballantyne well known for portraits of those who work the West. New book release and signing by vaquero artist and author Ernie Morris, and celebrate the "Dean of Vaqueros" Ray Ordway's 90th birthday!

Friday Artisan Grand Preview and Sale 4-7pm with chef-prepared hors d'oeuvres and beverages. At 7pm "Welcome

Introduction" and Entertainer Dave Stamey "Concert Under the Stars." Saturday "Show and Sale" 9-5pm.

Saturday 6-8pm hors d'oeuvres, beverages, silent auction and Concert by Singer Adrian BuckarooGirl. Sunday Song and Inspiration Service 9am; "Show and Sale 9:30-3pm. Saturday and Sunday vaquero Horsemen demos. Chef lunches, beverages, raffle drawing for 3 items, all custom made by artisans \$1000 value each! Friday and Saturday concert tickets advance sales a must! Details at www.vaqueroheritagedays.com and www.Facebook.com/VaqueroHeritageDays.



Buddy Montes

photo by Patti Martin



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Justin Fields

Ty Atchison, Saddle Bronc Rider, 2011 NFR Qualifier
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MYERS' MAKERS

Publisher's Note: Recently we celebrated a new book by photographer Tadd Myers – Portraits of The American Craftsman (Lyons Press, 2013) – it is a reverent and joyous look at quiet corners of the country where work by hand is still going on. Be it the venerable Steinway and Sons or Bessell Surfboards; Myers book gorgeously illustrates the fact that here, in America, artisans' work is still going on and valued. Here is an excerpt from the book about Pawless Guitars, located in Gainsville, Texas.

It started, as so many left turns in life do, because of a friend. Vince Pawless had a buddy who bought a guitar-making kit, and Pawless was fascinated by the process. So he bought himself the same kit and went to work on his own guitar. His friend soon gave it up, but it sparked a lifetime passion for Vince. "I got the bug," Pawless says now, "and he didn't."



photos by Tadd Myers

It was 1995, and Pawless threw himself into the craft – reading books, visiting other guitar makers, procuring wood, learning the basics of guitar construction. Then he took it a step further: He asked the Texas singer-songwriters themselves what they loved about their guitars, perfecting and modifying his vision of the perfect guitar.



He'd sell one guitar and use the money to make two more – one for sale, and one to give to an artist. In this way Vince Pawless not only became a master guitar craftsman but also someone who endeared himself to the music makers. Now Pawless works on one new guitar a month as he catches up on the twenty or so he has on back order.

"I don't do a lot of measuring when I'm building a guitar," Pawless says. "A lot of it is feel. My tops aren't sanded to a certain thickness. I sand it to where I feel it has the right flex to produce the sound I'm looking for."



Pawless says that's because each piece of wood reacts differently, affecting the way the guitar ultimately sounds. (The top of the guitar itself is the soundboard, and the sound it produces is shaped from the sound's reflection from its back and sides.) And each piece of wood

has its own transfer and reflective characteristics. Measuring wood isn't good enough to compensate for these inconsistencies so Pawless has to go by eye, touch, and ear.

Pawless works on guitars while also helping with his father's farm, so much of the work is done in batches between farm chores.





series of cuts, or “kerfs,” are put in the corners to help it bend) and glued. The guitar is sprayed, the neck and fingerboards are attached, finishing and detailing occurs, and finally the bridge and strings are attached.

At that point, the final test: Pawless plays his work, looking for that “warm” sound for which his guitars are known. “Some I play and the sound just knocks my socks off,” he says. “And that’s what’s important. Because I always want the next guitar to be better than the one I just finished.”

Signed books are available for order at <http://www.AmericanCraftsmanProject.com/the-book/>

Pawless usually builds one of three standard guitar shapes, although he can do just about any custom job. Once the shape is decided, the process is similar for most orders: The soundboard is “book matched” (sliced and opened up like a book, for consistency on both sides) and glued together, as is the back. The side woods are soaked in hot water before a hot bending pipe is used to shape them, after which they’re glued to form the guitar’s shape. The sides are braced and kerfed (a



DESTINATIONS

Washington’s Olympic Rim

By Donna Stegman



Last year I flew to Seattle with a friend from Texas for a long weekend trip. We had plans to meet up with a touring author and she’d never been to the Pacific Northwest – I had found a victim to play tour guide with, I was thrilled. I fell in love with Seattle the first time I landed at Sea-Tac airport almost 30 years ago, and decades later it still tops my list. The Emerald City stands alone.

Our first morning out we headed north on the highway for the ferries. Washington State Ferry System is not only inexpensive, but as they say, getting there is half the fun. The city is beautiful, but if you want to see the true splendor of the area, you need to see it from the water. Seattle’s shoreline runs along Puget Sound to the west and Lake Washington to the east. It’s almost surrounded by water, both salt and fresh. The two are linked at the Ballard Locks, similar to the Panama Canal, just on a smaller scale. You can take a boat ride through the locks if Panama isn’t on your list of places to go. Puget Sound itself is a huge body of water lying east of Admiralty Inlet, through which ocean waters reach inland some 50 miles from the Pacific Coast. The waterway is a complex system of

channels, bays and islands. The San Juan Islands are due north by ferry from downtown Seattle. In 2012 Nation Geographic named the San Juans and Olympic Peninsula in their top 10 places to see in the world.



The San Juans consist of 172 islands but, only the three major islands – Lopez, Orcas and San Juan have ferry service. You can reach them by ferry, seaplane or boat. Good accommodations and eatery's abound with local fish and produce.

Our first ferry stop was Whidbey Island, just a twenty-minute ride from the Mukilteo harbor. We started our car and pulled off the ferry into a little town with clam chowder shops lining the road. Of course we had to try the razor clam chowder – a specialty home grown, bivalve of the area, it was wonderful! The Captain Whidbey Inn, located in the heart of Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve is surrounded by forest and hugs the shore of Whidbey Island's Penn Cove. Stepping through the Inn's front door takes you back to the early 1900s with its northwest charm and rugged decor. Some of you may recognize the name Penn Cove – at least you will if you love steamed mussels as they are rated by chefs the world over as the very best. For a nominal fee the Inn rents the equipment needed to hunt your own mussels and clams literally right off the porch. If Whidbey is not far enough off the beaten path or if you're the adventurous type, drive back onto the ferry and head off to Friday Harbor on San Juan Island. Be sure to stand outside and watch over the railing, Orcas populate these waters and make a game out of racing the ferries! Once in Friday Harbor it's a must to take a Kayak tour of the bay. Now if you're lazy like me, they'll give you a guide to do the paddling for you and then you'll have someone able to point out all the different whales. The minke, graye and humpback whale live happily alongside the Orcas in the bay; we even had a playful harbor porpoise check us out. And you will see them up close during the summer; they were very friendly and interested in seeing us out too.

Bordered on the west by the Pacific Ocean and on the north by the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the Olympic Peninsula is anchored by the majestic Olympic Mountains as Port Townsend was our ferry stop for this leg of our Puget Sound adventure. No other place in America can match its diversity in terrain and weather in such a compact geographic area. The main attraction is the Olympic National Park; the Hoh Rain Forest is the world's only cold climate rainforest and it's officially the rainiest place in the lower 48 states (it soaks in an average of 12 to 14 feet of rain a year)! So yep, when you visit, chances are you're going to get wet. All of this rain has produced some of the tallest trees on Earth, all dripping with lacey curtains of emerald green moss. Waterfalls were around every corner of our 3 hour drive. My friend and I both commented that the landscape and fauna were reminiscent of the drives we had taken in Kauai, if Hawaii was 50 degrees. If you hadn't felt the temperature outside we would have thought we were driving through dense jungle at times. The Olympic Peninsula truly is a wonder of the natural world and Seattle being the nearest airport is just an extra bonus for one of the best long weekend trips I could ever recommend.



Publisher's Note: This begins a series of stories on some wonderful destinations in, around and near the West by our traveling pro, Donna Stegman. As Donna says, "I have been fortunate enough in my life to have traveled most of this beautiful country. I've seen the good, the bad and the don't bother. But on occasion, I have stumbled onto places that are real hidden – and not so hidden – treasures. We'll start at the top left of your maps in Seattle. Enjoy the ride!"



PLANNING YOUR TRIP

WHEN TO GO

The natives joke that summer in Seattle begins July 5th and ends September 1st. If you're doing the Islands, I would recommend a summer visit.

WHERE TO STAY IN SEATTLE

Inn at the Market – Yes, as in Pike Place Market. This is the place to stay if you're looking for the energy and excitement of the city with an awesome view of the water. 86 Pine St., Seattle.

Woodmark Hotel and Yacht Club – This property is just across the Evergreen Bridge from Seattle and well worth the 15-minute drive. Not only is it a beautiful hotel, the food's fantastic, service impeccable, and it sits on the shore of Lake Washington. The entire hotel has a spa atmosphere in tranquil colors and it's quiet – none of the downtown city noise. And if that wasn't enough, as a guest you can take a ride on the Woodmark II, a flawlessly restored vintage Chris Craft. 1200 Carillon Point, Kirkland.

WHERE TO EAT IN SEATTLE

Breakfast: LOLAS in Belltown – Food Network's Tom Douglas is chef for this gem. Where else can you have homemade doughnuts made to order with vanilla mascarpone cheese and cranberry filling and an omelet with fresh king crab. 2000 4th Ave., Seattle.

Dinner: 13 Coins – This has been a local's favorite since 1967. It has a fun "Rat Pack" atmosphere, famed for its high backed booths, swiveling captain's chairs and an exhibition kitchen known for lively, counter-side exchanges. The food is wonderful with a 24-hour menu and engaging line chefs who banter playfully as they make your dinner. This is the place other chefs go for dinner when their shifts end. 125 Boren Ave., Seattle.

WHERE TO STAY ON THE SAN JUAN ISLANDS

The Rosario Resort & Spa – Guest rooms are surrounded by the natural beauty of the San Juan Islands with views of magnificent East Sound and Cascade Bay. The bayside rooms are a short walk from the Moran Mansion and Rosario Marina. This resort has the feel of a hotel found on the shores of Nantucket – you'll feel a million miles away from your daily duties sitting on the wrap around porch in your rocking chair. 1400 Rosario Road, Eastsound, Orcas Island.

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Chihuly Glass Garden and Exhibition – Dale Chihuly is an American glass sculptor and his works can be seen around the world. Originally from the Pacific Northwest, the Seattle Center built and helped Mr. Chihuly develop one of his largest collections to date. This is a must see when you're in Seattle! 305 Harrison St., Seattle (It's located under the Space Needle).

Sea Quest Expeditions – These are the guys who will paddle your around Puget Sound for whale watching. Friday Harbor, San Juan Island, Washington.

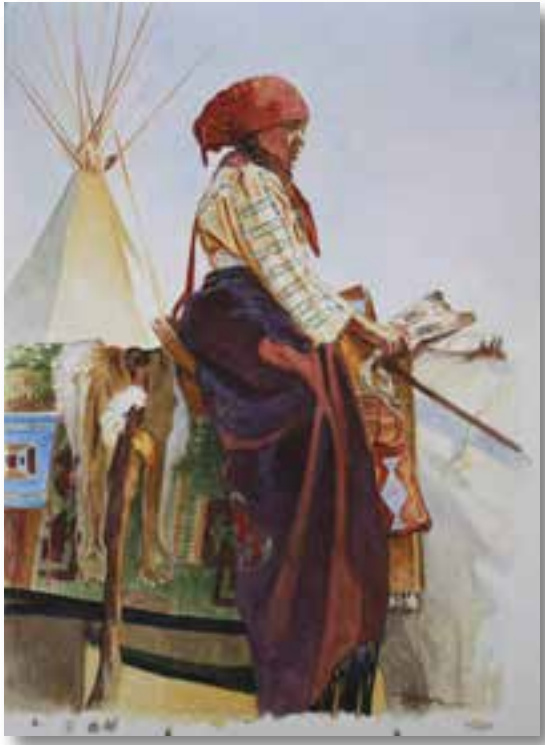
OTHER ESSENTIALS

Washington State Ferry System: One stop shop, complete with maps and schedules. www.wsdot.com/ferries



OUR COVER

This issue we decided to go inside and feature what our own Teal Blake had on his drawing board. Lucky for us this little watercolor was still pinned to the board. We also wish to congratulate Teal and his wife Joncee on the birth of their son, Luca Coke Blake on February 7th at 5:30 am – perfect timing for a little buckaroo. To celebrate we thought we would share some new things of Teal's. To find about these pieces and others, visit www.tealblake.com





EARLY CALIFORNIO'S SKILLS COMES TO SANTA YNEZ.

By Richard Foxx



photos by Lynda Allan

Jeff Derby mounts up

Rancho,” is their tribute to the traditions that originated in the mid-1800s, when the padres that built the California missions along *el Camino Real* had to manage vast herds of cattle for the hide and tallow trade. It was there that the culture of the *vaquero* was born.

The three-day event was held the first weekend of February at the Santa Ynez Valley Equestrian Association’s arenas, not far from the old Mission Santa Ines about thirty-five minutes from Santa Barbara. One hundred eighteen working cowboys and cowgirls who have chosen to follow the *vaquero* path gathered to compete for more than \$50,000 in prizes. Sometimes working day jobs as deputy sheriffs, on oil platforms, as farriers, doctors, or realtors to make ends meet, they are buckaroos in their hearts, passionate about their horses and about what they are doing.



Traditional two-rein setup with a Santa Barbara style spade bit.

Here’s how you get to a great event in Santa Ynez...get off Highway 101 at Route 246 in Buellton, north of Santa Barbara, head east, and go back 150 years. Drive through the rolling hills past the stands of live oak and groves of pepper trees and when you find a bunch of cowboys who look as though they stepped out of a half-remembered dream of an old Spanish mission, you’re there.

The “Skills,” as the locals call it – more properly known as “Early Californios Skills of the



photo by Patti Martin

Horseman Bruce Sandifer

Participants Jeffrey Mundell and Boone Campbell are prototypical buckaroos. Mundell, in his mid 30s, comes down from Eastern Oregon a few times each year to measure his skill and ability against other riders who are keeping the traditions alive.

Boone Campbell enjoys first-name recognition in the *vaquero* community as much for his rope work as for his style, on and off a horse. In his late 20s, he comes from Ada, Idaho but you can find him just about anywhere there is ranch work, plying his trade as a cowboy and farrier. It’s a life he loves. “What you get out of it,” he muses, “is way more than what you put into it.”

By the time he was 12, Jeffrey Mundell knew he wanted to be a cowboy. It wasn’t long before he realized that there was a better way to ride, a way that allowed him to have the greatest control of the horse’s entire body with the least amount of pulling and pressure, a way that was called “Californio style.” Done right, the horse was totally fluid in any movement with minimal input from the rider. “This allowed me to rope or work a cow without getting in the horse’s way, which in turn, allowed the horse to work better with less effort.”

Mundell was determined to learn the secrets but had to dig them out, had to content himself with just riding alongside these old time vaqueros and picking things up by careful observation. His quest took him to Montana and then to California about ten years ago where he sought out a buckaroo who was just getting known as a horseman in the Californio style, a man who had been following the arcane trail since he was 13.



Peter Taylor III Amateur Stock Horse overall winner

The horseman's name was Bruce Sandifer. A self-effacing man of few words, he has watched the Californio method achieve a measure of recognition and respect among working horsemen even though it still remains somewhat of an enigma to most riders. "I read about this refined and beautiful horsemanship when I was a teenager," Sandifer remembers. "There were good cowboys when I was growing up but no one rode like I wanted to. I cowboied from Canada to Texas but I always came back to the Californio method of the hackamore and the spade bit, because it involves the horse working from balance rather than off pressure and that felt right to me."

He was one of the major inspirations for the formation of the Skills when it began in 2013. But typical of Sandifer, he is the last person to take credit for it. "It's not my idea...all I'm trying to do is light a candle to honor the past masters, the old *vaqueros*. If I can keep a flicker of that alive, I'm humbled by that."

Sandifer was adamant in the beginning that it incorporate not only the Californio Bridlehorse method but also the style of working cattle, of stockmanship, and of roping styles. "In this day and age it is a very sustainable style of ranching. It is horse friendly, cattle friendly, and people friendly because everything is done through thought rather than through speed and action. We take the time to build the foundation."

This is not rodeo in the sense people have come to know it. It is about stewardship, about caring for the livestock and the land and each other as much if not more than the ultimate result. As it says in the rules: "Respect should be shown to the horses, cattle, and other competitors at all times."



Jeffrey Mundell, competitor and announcer extraordinaire

The event mimics real working ranch situations and is a thinking person's game. It's more than a discipline, it is an approach to life that creates an attentive relationship between horse, rider and cow. Riders were judged by Bruce Sandifer and Rick Walt. Walt, a well-respected New Mexico rancher and committed *vaquero* says: "We're judging an overall picture so that we are looking at it from a rancho owner or a cow boss's perspective, as if we are auditioning a crew. Our



main focus in judging is in smoothness, efficiency, and the ability to take care of the stock.”

Jeffrey Mundell, Boone, and Jeff Derby teamed up to win the “Open Reata Calf Branding,” where the riders had to rope three designated calves out of a *rodear* – or gathered herd, and take them to a ground crew for simulated branding in a designated time period without scattering the herd.

In “Open Alley Sort and Rope,” *vaqueros* had to sort two specified cows from one pen to another, set all ropes, and lay it down. Points were only given to teams that got the job done within an eight minute time limit. The event was won by Paul Woods, Joel Elliot, and Corby Ward. As in all the events, roughing the cattle was considered grounds for disqualification.

In “Open Alley Sorting,” a team of three riders was required to sort 20 head of cattle by odd and even numbers in a three minute time limit. First place was awarded to the team of Jeff Sanders, Mark Lundy, and Cody Harris.

Several events were set up so that amateurs competed alongside pros. “Pro-Am Alley Sort” started with 20 head of cattle at one end of an alley. Riders had to sort the cattle by odd and even numbers with only teams that got all cattle sorted in the right directions within a four minute time limit qualifying. Peter Taylor, III, from Oakland, California, was declared the amateur winner. Taylor also collected the prestigious top Amateur Stockhorse Award.



Boone Campbell, Jeff Derby, Jeffrey Mundell Winners
Open Reata Sort and Rope

“Mixed Ladies Sort and Rope” required the *vaqueros* to sort one specified animal from one pen to another and hold the animal while a provided ground crew set ropes. Ute Sandifer and Anthony Borgatello, both from Santa Barbara, captured first place.

Stock horse judging went on throughout the event and horses entered in this category were evaluated over the three days. Horses had to have been entered in the roping and stockmanship classes. In the Open Stock Horse competition, high point winner was Dwight Hill from Rexburg, Idaho. Ladies Stock Horse winner was Michelle Prewett, from Gilroy, California, while Viejo Stock Horse Overall winner was Mike Giacapuzzi, from Santa Ynez.

Coveted Open Top Hand honors were won by Chance Gee who was awarded a magnificent framed print of *The Early Vaqueros* by Stanley Galli.

Amateur Top Hand honors were captured by Peter Taylor, III, and Viejo Top Hand was awarded to Jim Prewett from Gilroy, while Ladies Top Hand was given to Cara Hamer, from Ramona, California.

The Open Team Overall was Bill Askew, Justin Fields, and Jim Prewett. They were awarded magnificent Bruce Haener Spade Bits.

To encourage the participation of young riders from ages 7-18, the California Bridlehorse Association created special categories in Stock Horse competition, Breakaway Roping, and Alley Sorting and Roping. At least a dozen competitors participated, giving hope that the skills of the rancho will carry on to the next generation.

Reflecting on the event later, Sandifer said: “Seeing the improvement in the riders over the past year was amazing. Everyone did so well that the biggest challenge for us as judges was to figure out who was the best.”

Richard Foxx is a lifelong horseman and well-known equestrian writer presently based in the California desert. He is finishing work on his second novel. He can be reached at spiritranch@earthlink.net

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Kricket Keetch of Salem, Utah makes some of the nicest hand tied cinches we've seen.

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You can see more examples of her fine work at www.facebook.com/krickets-custom-cinches or email her at i_chirp@yahoo.com.



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2014 SPUR AWARDS HONOR BEST WESTERNS

Anne Hillerman's *Spider Woman's Daughter* – which continues the popular mystery series created by her late father, Tony Hillerman – won the 2014 Spur Award for Best First Novel, while Mark Lee Gardner won two Spurs for works dealing with the James-Younger Gang, Western Writers of America has announced.

Gardner won in the Best Western Nonfiction – Historical category for *Shot All to Hell: Jesse James, the Northfield Raid, and the Wild West's Greatest Escape* (published by William Morrow/HarperCollins) and for Best Western Short Nonfiction with “The Other James Brother,” an article published in *Wild West* magazine that deals with Frank James, Jesse James's older brother. HarperCollins published *Spider Woman's Daughter*.

Since 1953, Western Writers of America (www.westernwriters.org) has promoted and honored the best in Western literature with the annual Spur Awards, selected by panels of judges. Awards, for material published last year, are given for works whose inspiration, image, and literary excellence best represent the reality and spirit of the American West.

The 2014 Spur winners and finalists will be honored during WWA's annual convention, June 24-28 in Sacramento, Calif.

In the novel categories, mystery writer James Lee Burke's *Light of the World: A Dave Robicheaux Novel* (Simon & Schuster) won for Best Western Contemporary Novel; Henry Chappell's *Silent We Stood* (Texas Tech University Press) won for Best Western Historical Novel; and Gary Schanbacher's *Crossing Purgatory* (Pegasus) won for Best Western Traditional Novel.

The Storyteller Spur for Best Illustrated Children's Book went to *Yosemite's Songster: One Coyote's Story* (Yosemite Conservancy), written by Ginger Wadsworth and illustrated by Daniel San Souci.

Other winners:

Earle Labor's *Jack London: An American Life* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux) for Best Western Nonfiction – Biography; William Philpott's *Vactionland: Tourism and Environment in the Colorado High Country* (University of Washington Press) for Best Western Nonfiction – Contemporary; Ellen Gray Massey *Papa's Gold* (Pen-L) for Best Western Juvenile Fiction; Jean A. Lukesh's *Eagle of Delight: Portrait of the Plains Indian Girl in the White House* (Field Mouse Productions) for Best Western Juvenile Nonfiction; Waddie Mitchell and Juni Fisher's “Still There” (Red Geetar Music) for Best Western Song; Brett Cogburn's “Cabin Fever” (High Hill Press) for Best Western Short Fiction Story; Amy Glynn Greacen's “Chamise” (*Orion*) for Best Western Poem; and *Indian Relay* by M. Smoker (Dye Works Film) for Best Western Documentary Script.

For a complete winner list, www.westernwriters.org

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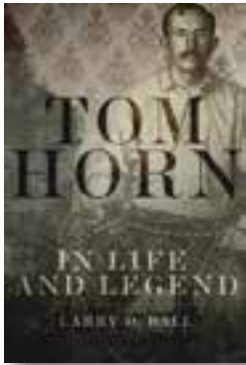
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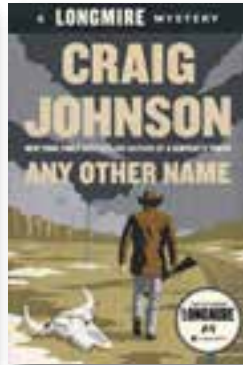
New titles from the Western Writers of America, courtesy our pal, Johnny Boggs.



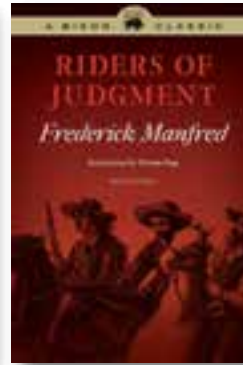
Historian Larry D. Ball separates the truth from the myth regarding the life and times of the controversial Tom Horn, lawman, soldier, hired gunman, detective, outlaw and assassin, in *Tom Horn in Life and Legend* (University of Oklahoma Press).



Ex-Pinkerton agents Charlie Siringo and Dashiell Hammett team up to solve a mystery in 1921 Los Angeles in the long-awaited novel *Ragtime Cowboys* (Forge) by Loren D. Estleman, master of mysteries and Westerns.



Craig Johnson's Wyoming sheriff, Walt Longmire (now seen on the hit A&E TV series *Longmire*), tries to learn what drove a neighboring county's detective to commit suicide in *Any Other Name* (Viking).



If you haven't discovered the literary genius of Frederick Manfred, who turned out Western classics in the 1950s and '60s, check out *Riders of Judgment, Second Edition* (University of Nebraska Press), a novelization of Wyoming's Johnson County War.



Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith celebrate one of basketball's (and the West's) greatest sports stories – the 1904 world champions from Fort Shaw, Montana – in *Full-Court Quest: The Girls from Fort Shaw Indian School, Basketball Champions of the World*, now available in trade paperback (University of Oklahoma Press).



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KEYSTONE STEEL AND WIRE AT 100


It's a view in the West that you can tell a lot about a person by how tight his fences are and by how well his gates close. It can also be true that you can tell a lot about the fencing company by how well their fencing material is made and supported. Red Brand Fence, a part of Keystone Steel and Wire of Peoria, Illinois is celebrating the company's 100th anniversary – thus proving its mettle. And like any great company that can outlive its founder, Keystone started with a simple idea that worked.

In 1889, Peter Sommer was scratching a living out as a farmer in Tazewell County, Illinois. Like all farming operations of the time, wood was the only fencing material available and it was a tough job splitting wooden rails for fencing. The material had inherent problems – it wouldn't last in the elements, could blow down or burn up.

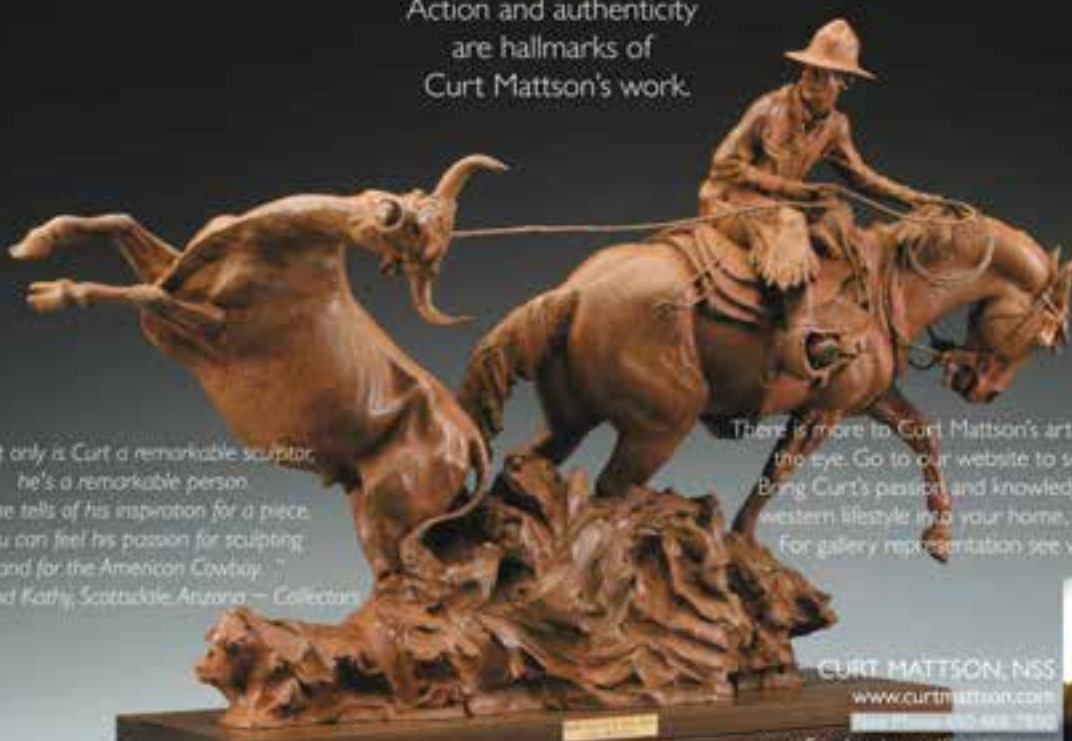
An inventive man, Peter came up with a machine



Original patent. The Keystone names came from the unique shape of the fence mesh.

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There is more to Curt Mattson's art than meets the eye. Go to our website to see it all. Bring Curt's passion and knowledge of the western lifestyle into your home, call today! For gallery representation see website.

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OF NOTE |

that could literally weave wire into fencing. So instead of messing with wooden rails, a farmer could now erect lightweight, wire fencing that would cover more area efficiently and above all, would last. Peter's approach was to always "Find a better way," – an approach to life that became the mission of the company he founded, Keystone. The name came from the unique shape of the mesh in Peter's handmade fence – the same fence that is pictured on his patent issued in 1889. That approach remains today as Keystone Steel and Wire celebrates 100 years.

And while Keystone is a much bigger company today, it continues with its founder's approach to make the best fencing products available today, this while also giving back to the country



Original 10 workers at the Tremont plant in 1893.

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DOUBLE DIAMOND OFFERS BRANNAMAN HALTERS AND ROPES

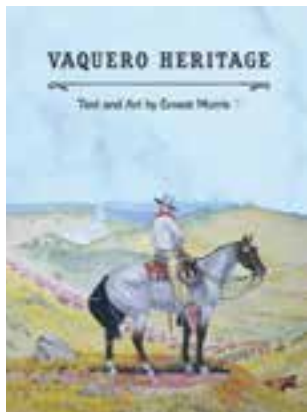
The Buck Brannaman Collection made by Buck's longtime friends, Pete and Sharon Melniker and their Double Diamond Halter Company includes halters, lead ropes, mecates, slobber straps and horsemanship flags. The #124 halter designed by Buck, is made from 6mm rope that is constructed with a nylon core and a 24-strand cover. Buck felt the smaller diameter rope would give greater control of the horse, while the softer rope would be less abrasive. The ½" tree line lead ropes are available in black or white and come in 10', 12', 14' and 15' lengths. The Brannaman mecates are made from parachute cord in ½" (8 strand) or ⅜" (12 strand) diameters. These have a square braid and are finished with a knot that Buck learned from Ray Hunt. The slobber straps are made from 10/11 oz skirting leather, measure 1 ¼" x 8" and have a formed loop on the end for the snaffle bit ring. The horsemanship flags allow the horseman to expose the horse to many situations while staying safe. Made from an epoxy coated fiberglass rod they include a golf-style rubber handle and a stainless steel tip. The 18" rip stop nylon flag is flexible, allowing good control when using around the horse. Pete and Sharon make the best around. Available at fine dealers or contact them at 406-582-0706 for a dealer near you. www.doublediamondhalters.com



control of the horse, while the softer rope would be less abrasive. The ½" tree line lead ropes are available in black or white and come in 10', 12', 14' and 15' lengths. The Brannaman mecates are made from parachute cord in ½" (8 strand) or ⅜" (12 strand) diameters. These have a square braid and are finished with a knot that Buck learned from Ray Hunt. The slobber straps are made from 10/11 oz skirting leather, measure 1 ¼" x 8" and have a formed loop on the end for the snaffle bit ring. The horsemanship flags allow the horseman to expose the horse to many situations while staying safe. Made from an epoxy coated fiberglass rod they include a golf-style rubber handle and a stainless steel tip. The 18" rip stop nylon flag is flexible, allowing good control when using around the horse. Pete and Sharon make the best around. Available at fine dealers or contact them at 406-582-0706 for a dealer near you. www.doublediamondhalters.com



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PENDLETON ROUNDUP – 104 YEARS YOUNG

The Pendleton Round-Up is perhaps the country's most authentic western lifestyle vacation destination. Visitors today still ride into town on routes established during the Oregon Trail emigration and are meet with genuine hospitality. After harvest each year, the entire town emerges from the rolling Eastern Oregon wheat fields to celebrate the rounding-



up of cowboys, Indians, family and friends, both new and old. History and culture are on full display in recognition of the indomitable spirit of horses and the men and women who ride them. The 104th annual Pendleton Round-Up is September 10 - 14, 2014 – it's America's largest four-day PRCA Rodeo, but remains true to its legendary origins as events are contested on a pristine grass infield, where colorful wooden chute gates create the most picturesque backdrop in rodeo. It's where top cowboy competitors recline in the sun and cheer each other on, just as they might have 100 years ago. Get more information/tickets at www.pendletonroundup.com.





BY HAND AND HEART

A Work in Progress

The inspirational power of traditional cowboy crafts is embodied in a young, aspiring bit and spur maker.



By Gin Getz

34

It starts with a hoof pick. This is no ordinary hoof pick. Then again, it's nothing too terribly fancy. It is a little work of art held bright and shiny in my hand with just enough scratches in the metal to show me it's not just meant to be looked at and admired, but used.

I'm surprised to find out this young man made it. And I thought he was just some horse-crazy kid from Texas here to help out at hunting camp and ride around these Colorado



photo by Gin Getz

It began with a hoofpick, one with just enough flash to get noticed.

mountains for a couple weeks. Well, maybe that too.

Right now he's loading horses to head down the mountain. He's due to meet the guided hunters and see if it was a successful day. Doubtful it will have been. The snow chased the elk to lower ground a week ago. He pulls out that hoof pick from the back pocket of his Levis and ... uses it. Cleans out the horses' hooves before loading them in the stock trailer and heading down the mountain. Really, you

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wouldn't expect something so pretty to be...used.

So it is. A hoof pick interesting enough to capture my attention and get me asking questions. I'm curious.



photo by Gim Gretz

Rotan, Texas, bit and spur maker Daylan Nixon is a protege of master craftsman Russell Yates.

And impressed. Chances are I'm not the only one.

The first thing I need to know when we get talking is *how*. How does one learn to make something so pretty?

"Ever hear of Russell Yates?" he asks me? Silly question. On my first trip to West Texas to study under horseman Martin Black, I learned how little I know about traditional cowboy arts, and how much I want to learn. About things like bits and spurs. Not to mention horses, cattle and the whole cowboy culture.

I'm an outfitter here in Colorado. I ride with long Johns, no big belt buckle. My horse's headstall is held together with copper rivets and I used to think that was just fine. Until you see what fine is. Fine craftsmanship. A work of art. Working art. It's a matter of respect. For traditions. For the horse. For the way of life I've chosen. A life working with horses. I have a

lot to learn and long way to go.

My first time to the National Cowboy Museum, seeing the exhibit of the Traditional Cowboy Arts Association, which included Yates' work, I never made it past the first room. Time to go, they told me, and dragged me out.

Yes, I tell the young man, I am familiar with the work of Mr. Yates.

Turns out this kid has been learning from Yates on and off for the past five years. No wonder that hoof pick caught my eye.

Out comes the iPhone, even though there's no cell service within, at best, 45 minutes of our ranch. We're flipping through a series of

pictures of bits and spurs. Stuff this young man made. Beautiful things. Most are his own. He comes to a picture of a piece Yates had recently completed. He explains to me how Yates worked the metals, wavy Damascus steel, hand-forged and hand-folded.

This soft-spoken Texan starts to heat up a little. Clearly, he's got passion for his craft.

"You have to learn from someone," he tells me.

I agree. I'm learning a little from him right now.

"Someone has to teach you," he tells me. I agree. Whether we're talking using gear or making gear. You don't just wake up one day and think you'll figure it out from scratch.

Where do you begin?

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Start from the beginning.

The young man is Daylan Nixon. He is here at our Colorado ranch helping the hunting guide pack camp in to the high country and, if all goes well, pack game out. Some say it's the highest, harshest place to hunt in the Lower 48. You'd think it attracts a rough crowd, and maybe back in the day it did, but now there are a bunch of men in their sixties

photo courtesy Daylan



Spurs by Daylan Nixon.

who have waited over 10 years for the chance to get in range of a trophy bull elk, the kind this mountain is famous for.

Daylan has come to our mountain for several years to help at hunting camp. Horse work. Packing elk, supplies, pulling camp out in the snow. All I know is he's a good hand. A good horseman. With a fancy hoof pick, a bit I can tell he made for himself, and some not too impressive spurs.

I ask him why he doesn't show off his good ones. He doesn't have any left, he explains. They sell, get traded off, and more often than not, are in use by other young men. Besides, he tells me, if he wore good ones, sooner or later, someone would buy them, and

he'd be leaving here without them. Just grab these old ones, and he'll be sure to have spurs the whole time he's here working.

"The last pair I made, number seven," he says. "I like number seven – don't ask me why – so I wanted to keep them." They were sold the first day he wore them to work. Right off his boots.

Day work.

"The way I see it," Daylan tells me, "I got it made. I get to do what I love."

He's a part time cowpuncher, part time bit and spur maker.

The way I see it, here's someone just starting, but with one

bright future ahead of him. Working to continue a respected tradition and fine craft.

He's not slick and fancy yet. Maybe someday. Maybe he never will be. But I'll bet he'll be darn good.

Daylan is 20. He lives in Rotan, Texas. His father runs the cattle operation on a nearby ranch. Straightening operations, Daylan explains to me. Working the calves that have come off one ranch and get pushed through the sale barn. The stresses can take a toll on the calf. It's like being in a melting pot, with the weather added into the mix to really stir things up.

"Like sending your kid off to college," he tells me. Now I understand.

As long as he can remember, Daylan has worked on ranches and trained horses. He's been involved with horses his whole life, following the ranching tradition of his father, uncles, grandfather...He believes in the tradition, and enjoys it.



photo by Gim Grez

Daylan enjoys seeing his work put to use.

38

“When we moved out there (West Texas from East Texas), we ran cows for Buster Welch,” he explains.

Now he works on another ranch close by, tending cows, feeding, lining up trucks, working cattle.

That's his day job.

He enjoys being around crews, working with good hands.

“You can get their knowledge if you're willing to learn,” he tells me. “You might have to get in the way. I've been good at getting in the way most of the time.”

And the old timers? He enjoys working with and learning from them most of all.

“They won't tell you anything unless you show them you're willing to learn,” he says. “Maybe they won't say much to a lot of people, but they'll help you. There's

a lot to punching cows. Unwritten rules. Like you don't ride in front of the boss. Last man through closes the gate. Young kids need to trot up to open the gate. Stuff like that.”

How do you learn, I ask?

“You get in trouble. That's how you learn. People will tell you. Then you learn. I've been fortunate to be around people that will tell you. You can only teach yourself so much.”

And that's just the day job.

“It fits in good with what I do. That's what started the bit and spur thing for me.”

Using gear. These are tools of the trade. They can be simple, store bought, big and flashy, or classy and refined.

“I started on a set of spurs in the shop, cut the shanks out with a torch, bent the bands out of some old rasps. I was gonna build me a set. I wanted a set of handmade spurs. Everybody had their

spurs with initials and brands...”

And so he started. A rough but determined start.

“I couldn't figure out how to cut a slot in the steel. Another friend, who was a good friend of Russell's, introduced us. Russell showed me how and helped me all along the way.”

That was five years ago. Daylan was 15 years old and Yates' shop was only 15 miles away. He spent spring break that year at the shop, building those spurs. Then a bit. And then he continued to spend all the time he could after school at the shop.

When Daylan spent time away with the ranching and feedlot program at Clarendon College, he continued to work on his craft on his own.



“All my furniture fit in the front of my horse trailer. The rest was stuff for a shop. Tools, work bench...” He built belt buckles to help pay his way.

Now Daylan stops by Yates’ shop regularly after work or on days he’s not working cattle. He’s learning his own unique style working beside his mentor.

Yates encourages him to draw every day. An hour a day.

“I don’t always. Neither does Russell. I get frustrated. I don’t quit. But at times you gotta walk away.”

And like most dedicated craftsmen, before too long, he’s back at it.

“I didn’t think about drawing when I started making spurs. There is a lot more to it. When you see it in a drawing, you can see it flow. You can build something big and gaudy that will catch someone’s eye. But when you can draw itty bitty scrolls and vines... it’s those kinds of details that matter. Detail catches the eye.”

And your inspiration, I ask him?

Besides Yates, of course.

“Adolph Bayers. I use a lot of his old patterns. There’s a lot of people that do. He was a master, ahead of his time. I think every bit and spur maker builds a number four shank spur and it’s a Bayers pattern. [Texas collector] J. Martin [Basinger] put together four books of Bayers’ patterns. When I’m thinkin’ of something, a lot of times I’ll catch myself looking through those books. I enjoy getting to build some of the stuff he built. It’s a good way to learn.”

Briefly, our conversation turns to the theme of inspiration versus copying. As in all forms of art, there is a fine line. How do you learn if not from the masters?

“Russell says if you want to build one of his, he’ll give you the pattern. He’s already done it. We’re not inventing the wheel. We’re just trying to make it better.”

We agree that it helps to follow a master’s pattern when you’re learning, and then slowly your own

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personal style emerges.

How does Daylan define his emerging style?

“A work in progress.”

He’s still working on what makes him unique. For now, he feels, he needs to learn more technique and wants to work on refinement. He does not see his own defining traits yet. Though he has noticed other people see his work and recognize it as his.

“It’s using gear, but classy. Not too gaudy, nothing huge. I guess I’m lazier than some, but I don’t want to pack around all day long a big three-inch shank.”

That’s what he’s working toward. Each piece a little more refined than the one before. But used. For using. Maybe even rusty. He enjoys seeing his pieces out there, working.

“The boys I build stuff for are the kind that will wear them. They’re sitting on a horse every day, making their living. It’s got to stand up. It’s got to work.”

Everything he builds is hand cut, milled down, precise, and built with a harder steel.

“Take an extra step,” he tells me. That’s something else Yates has told him. “Start with good metal work. If you don’t start with a good base, you won’t end up with a good piece. Take time with your metal work. Take time to finish. Take another 30 minutes, Russell tells me, to take out the scratches. I used to think he just could see better than me. I think he just looks more.”

A work in progress.

Daylan’s back at our ranch with hunters, but no elk.

The crew that stays at our ranch in season work hard and keep their humor. Yes, they need humor. They’re up at four in the morning, and in the saddle by five or so. It might be in the single digits, snowing, hailing, and the higher you go, the windier

it will get. They’re riding up “trails” most folks won’t walk up, then scrambling up a scree slope at an elevation of over 12,000 feet trying to convince the flatlander it’s really worth it and the trophy bull is just a little bit further.

Anyway, that’s where I am. Where I’m coming from. That mountain in Colorado. Way up there. And although I’m trying to learn, we don’t see a lot of refinement around here, and not a lot of cowboy crafts. It’s a treat for me to talk with Daylan and see his work. Maybe it’s the glimmer I’m attracted to. But I think it’s something more. I can see quality. I can see craftsmanship. I can almost see tradition. I can see that stuff much more than just the shine.

He tells me, “If you throw a rock in Texas, you could hit a bit and spur maker.”

This is not Texas. I’ve never met a bit and spur maker. Not one worthy of showing off, at least.

Anyway, I don’t believe him. I tell him so. I know he’s pulling my leg.

What makes him different, I ask him? Really?

“A good mentor. I started on that set of spurs, and I wanted to do something better. Strive to be better. While I’m building one piece, I’m thinking about what can I do better.”

He hopes to continue working under Yates, and plans on continuing his day work and his craft, working to improve both with time, experience, knowledge, hard work and, maybe, from time to time, getting in the way.

“To me, I got it made,” Daylan tells me. “I get to do what I enjoy every day. I get inspired out there working, and get back to the shop and try it out. I work on my stuff, Russell works on his, and he’s right there, so if I got a question, he’s there to answer. How do you beat that?”




Gin Getz is the author of the memoir *The Color of the Wild*, published by NorLightsPress.



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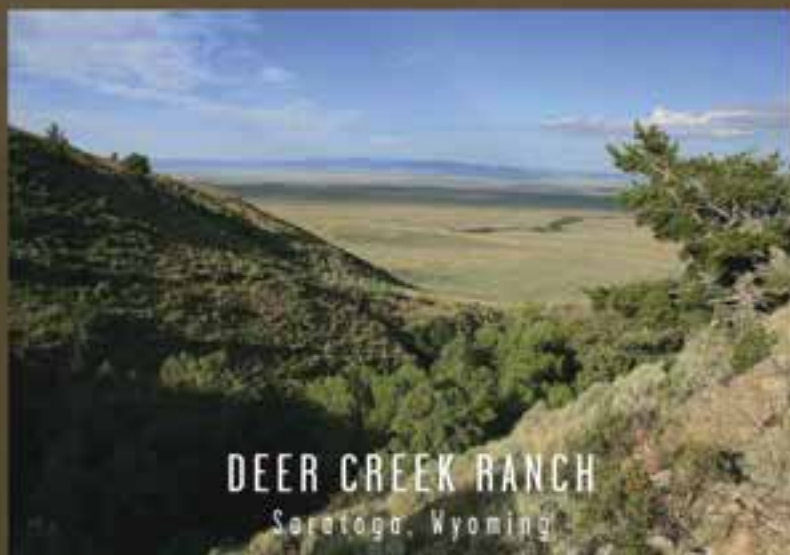
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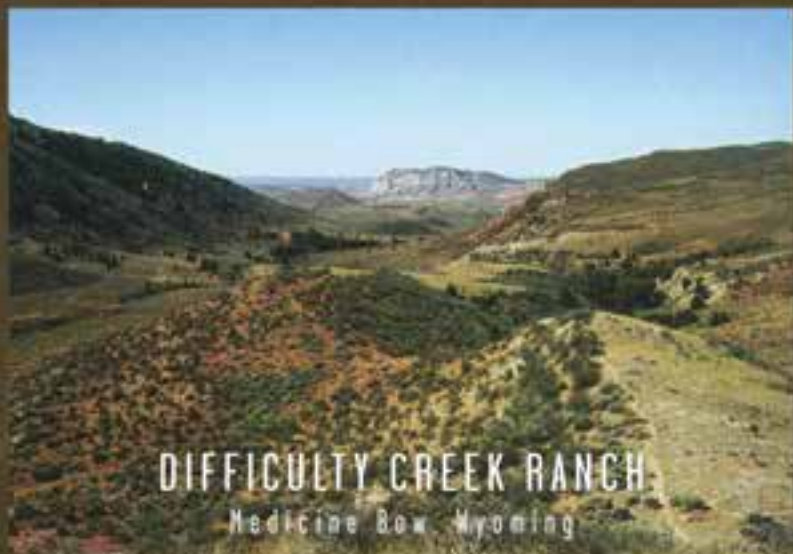
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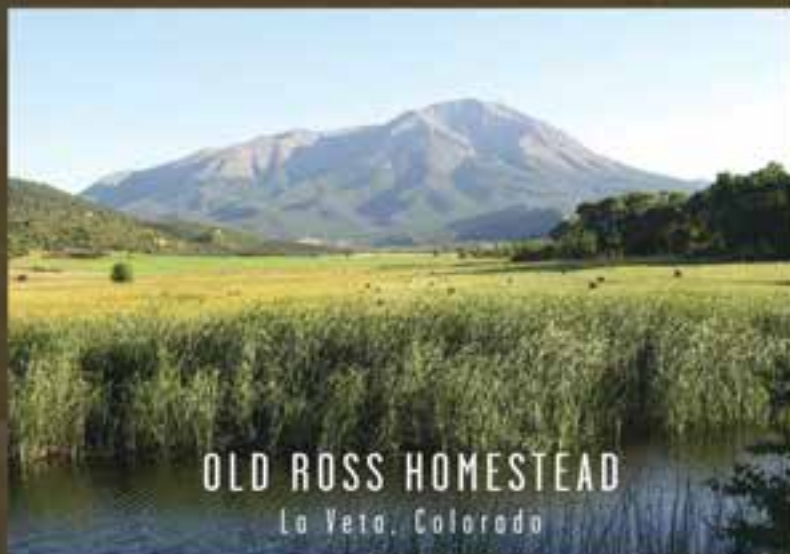
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Located in the beautiful Wahatoya Valley in the shadow of the Spanish Peaks near La Veta, the 70-acre homestead offers true country living with lush hay meadows, ponds, a creek, abundant wildlife and an elegantly restored 2,342 sq. ft. residence with rustic and historic charm. \$1,250,000. Duane Daskam, 719.285.3232 and Ron Morris, 970.535.0881

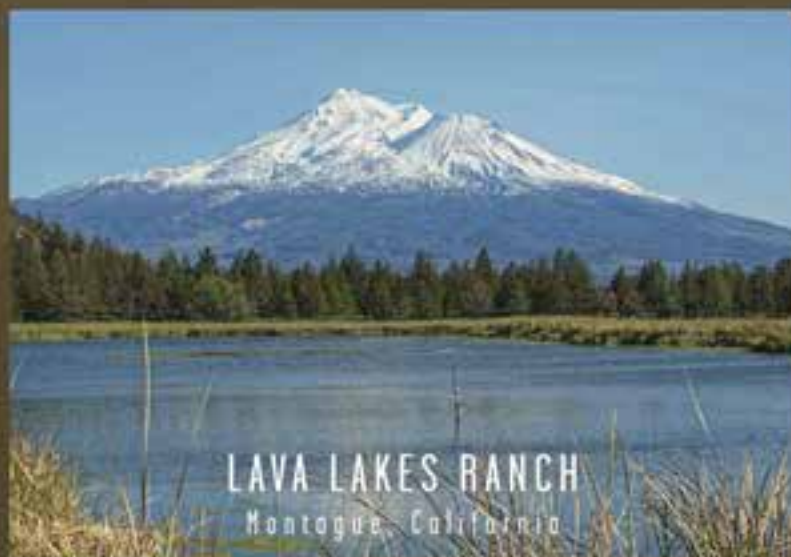
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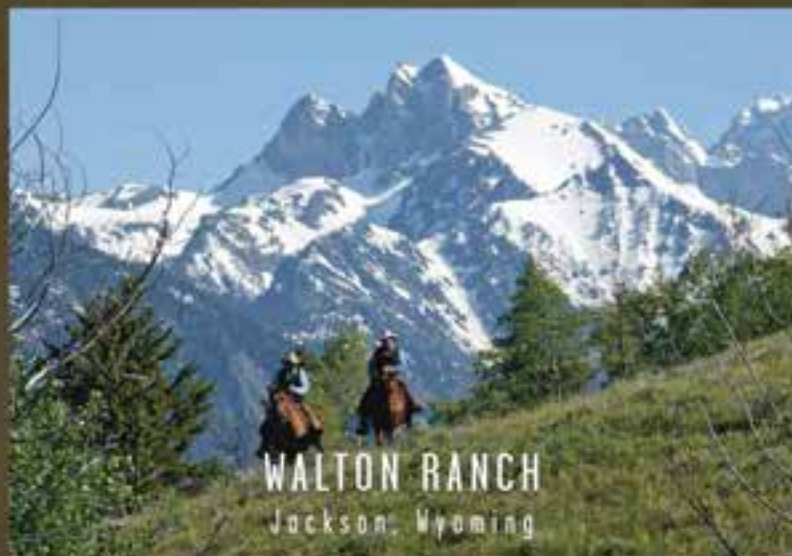
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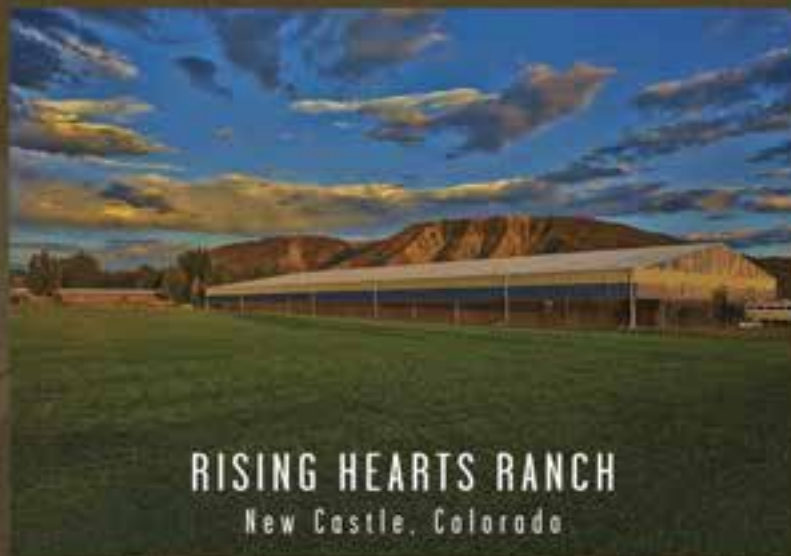
This serene 4.6-acre tract has 380 feet on a freshwater lake in northwest Montana. Manicured lawns extend from the large, 6-bedroom guest home to the 2-acre lagoon which features a sand beach, dock, a comfortable waterfront cottage and access to the lake and boat shelter with docks and automatic lifts. \$3,400,000. Billy Long, 970.948.1333



The 5,329-acre private paradise has a massive 14,000 sq. ft. square log residence overlooking Barton Lake with imposing views of Mt. Shasta. There is an additional 4,200 sq. ft. home with guest house, barns and corrals. The ranch operates as a nature preserve and working cattle ranch supporting 200+ pairs year-round. \$12,000,000. Billy Long, 970.948.1333



An exceptional property in an extraordinary setting, the 1,848-acre legacy ranch abuts three miles of the legendary Snake River, is surrounded by Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks and is just ten minutes from the renowned Jackson Hole. \$68,700,000. Billy Long, 970.948.1333 and Ron Morris, 970.535.0881



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BOOKS TO FIND

Celebrating the American Farmer and West-Coast Country Music

The Farmer in All of Us: An American Portrait
National Geographic

Two years ago a group of highly skilled photographers were brought together to help create a two-minute ad for Dodge Trucks that would run during the 2013 Super Bowl XLVII broadcast. The basis for the ad was a decades old speech given during the Carter-era at a Future Farmers of America convention. The stunning images chosen were from ten world-class photographers creating an ode to the American farmer – many in black and white. The speech – all 409 words – was

from the original recording given by the legendary radio personality, Paul Harvey – famous for his weekday radio show intro of “Hello, Americans, this is Paul Harvey!

Stand byyy for Newwws!”

After his death in 2009, *The New York Times* said of him, “Like Walter Winchell and Gabriel Heatter before him, (“There’s Good News Tonight!”) Harvey personalized the radio news with his right-wing opinions, but laced them with his own trademarks: a hypnotic timbre, extended pauses for effect, heart-warming tales of average

Americans and folksy observations that evoked the heartland, family values and the old-fashioned plain talk



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John Encinias, *Indian Summer*, 24" x 36", Oil on linen



Howard Post, *Part of the Crew*, 24" x 60", Oil

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Tim Cherry, *Mother Goose*,
19" H x 32" W x 20" D
Bronze



Tom Browning, *The New World*, 34" x 50", Oil

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one heard around the dinner table on Sunday.”

The presentation of Harvey’s heartfelt words and the incredible imagery was a surprising contrast to the usual, over the top, Super Bowl collection of ads and created an immediate stir.

The Farmer in All of Us: An American Portrait – a new book from National Geographic – celebrates the essence of the Super Bowl ad and tells the story of American farmers and the responsibilities and sacrifices they selflessly embrace in the name of hard work. It’s amazing imagery includes over 200 new



images by Jim Arndt

photos of the men, women, and land that form the backbone of our country.

This is a wonderful book and is available specifically at www.ramtrucks.com/outfitter. Each purchase of the book contributes to a minimum \$25,000.00 donation by Ram Trucks to the National FFA Organization’s “Give the Gift of Blue,” helping provide the iconic blue corduroy jacket to those members who might otherwise not have the opportunity to own one. Something *Ranch & Reata* has supported for many years.

Here is the text from Paul Harvey’s 1978 speech. You can see the full two-minute commercial at <http://youtu.be/AMpZ0TGjbWE>.

And on the 8th day, God looked down on his



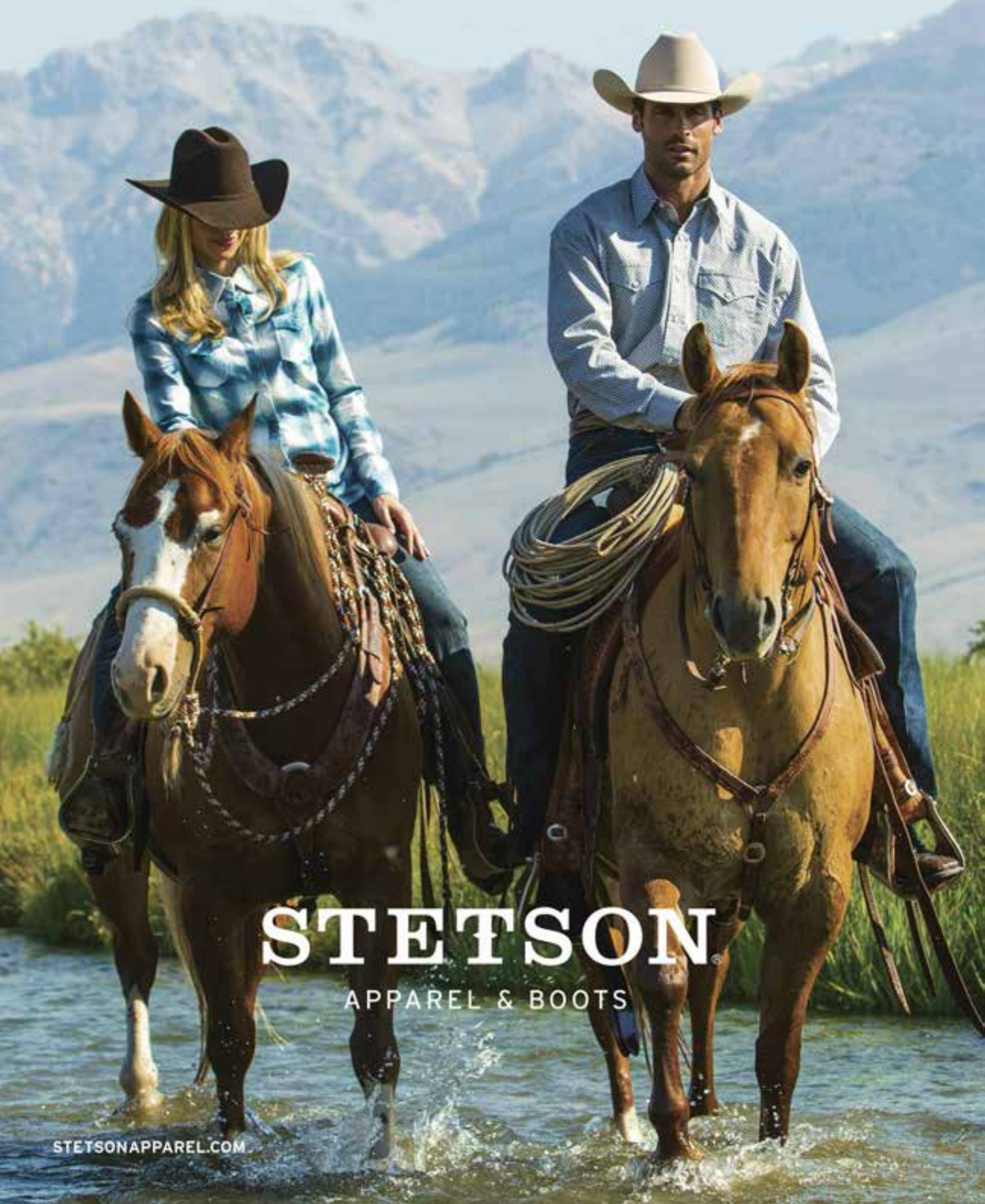
planned paradise and said, “I need a caretaker.” So God made a farmer.

God said, “I need somebody willing to get up before dawn, milk cows, work all day in the fields, milk cows again, eat supper and then go to town and stay past midnight at a meeting of the school board.” So God made a farmer.

“I need somebody with arms strong enough to rustle a calf and yet gentle enough to deliver his own grandchild. Somebody to call hogs, tame cantankerous machinery, come home hungry, have to wait lunch until his wife’s done feeding visiting ladies and tell the ladies



to be sure and come back real soon – and mean it.” So God made a farmer.



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God said, "I need somebody willing to sit up all night with a newborn colt. And watch it die. Then dry his eyes and say, 'Maybe next year.' I need somebody who can shape an ax handle from a persimmon sprout, shoe a horse with a hunk of car tire, who can make harness out of haywire, feed sacks and shoe scraps. And who, planting time and harvest season, will finish his forty-hour week by Tuesday noon, then, pain'n from 'tractor back,' put in another seventy-two hours." So God made a farmer.

God had to have somebody willing to ride the ruts at

smoke from a neighbor's place. So God made a farmer.

God said, "I need somebody strong enough to clear trees and heave bails, yet gentle enough to tame lambs and wean pigs and tend the pink-combed pullets, who will stop his mower for an hour to splint the broken leg of a meadow lark. It had to be somebody who'd plow deep and straight and not cut corners. Somebody to seed, weed, feed, breed and rake and disc and plow and plant and tie the fleece and strain the milk and replenish the self-feeder and finish a hard week's work with a five-mile drive to church.

"Somebody who'd bale a family together with the soft strong bonds of sharing, who would laugh and then sigh, and then reply, with smiling eyes, when his son says he wants to spend his life 'doing what dad does.'" So God made a farmer.

Workin' Man Blues

Gerald Haslam with Alexandra Haslam Russell
and Richard Chan

Great Valley Books, an imprint of Heyday Books

This issue marks the first that we include the writing of Gerald Haslam. Haslam, a native of the Bakersfield area of Southern California has championed the non-glitzy aspects of the Golden State in his celebration of its "rural and untrendy small towns" especially with regards to the Central Valley and its people. Later in this issue don't miss Haslam's piece on Latino writer Arnold Rojas.

So it is appropriate that we look at Mr. Haslam's recent book on the growth of country music from his home state. The title, taken in obvious homage from Merle Haggard's "Workin' Man Blues" – Haggard's tribute to a core group of his fans – blue-collared working types, helps set the stage. California has always had a rich history of indigenous music since the 1920s



double speed to get the hay in ahead of the rain clouds and yet stop in mid-field and race to help when he sees the first



and has many home-grown talents which Haslam discusses in the book including the likes of Gene Autry, Rose Maddox, Buck Owens, Merle Haggard and even our own roving reporter, Tom Russell – to name just a few.



The book gives a broad view of the origins of west-coast artists bands and sounds and what ultimately became the “Bakersfield Sound” celebrating the regional

quality of the style – not bothering to look back at Nashville’s encompassing and somewhat condescending view of the west coast upstarts.



photo courtesy Max Wolf

The late and wonderful singer/songwriter Kate Wolf, from the book.

The book is chaptered into ten-year journeys as we follow artists, styles and their releases as the decades progress – from the 1920s through the 90s and is followed by bibliographic essays for each chapter. Included is a

very detailed index of songs discussed throughout the book and is fascinating to use.

This books gives important ink to “western country” and will be a welcome addition to anyone’s music library. www.geraldhaslam.com



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THE COOK HOUSE

Penny's New Mexico Stacked Red Enchiladas



By Kathy McCraine

50

When Penny Kasun tells people she grew up in Texaco, New Mexico, she sits back and waits for their reactions. “People think I grew up in a gas station,” she says. “Actually it’s a little town of maybe 1,000, sitting right on the Texas-New Mexico line east of Clovis.”

Penny’s folks, Dewey and Alice Pierce, farmed her grandmother’s place there, also raising cattle and horses, until Penny was about 10, when her dad sold all but 20 acres and became a teacher. Penny, her sister, Robin, and brother, Jubal, always rodeoed as kids, Penny



photos by Kathy McCraine

Arizona’s Penny Kasun

competing in barrels, poles, goats and breakaway roping. When Jubal lost his arm in a roping accident, Dewey wanted to sell every horse on the place, but Penny and her mom managed to hang on to some of them, and after high school, Penny took up team roping.

In addition to rodeoing, Penny loved showing steers and entering her 4-H baking and sewing projects at the Curry County Fair. Strikingly tall and athletic, she attended Fort Lewis College at Durango, Colorado, on a basketball scholarship. Fresh out of college with a degree in ag business, she took a job loping



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horses for Lonnie Allsup, a Texaco cutting horse trainer.

“Yeah, I really used my degree,” she says, flashing her big smile. “To be able to ride horses all day and get paid for it? I loved it.”

From there, Penny went to work for Howard Sutton’s S&S Farms cutting stables at Weatherford, Texas. Then she met up-and-coming cutting horse trainer K.J. Kasun, and her life took a 90-degree turn.


“We met in the practice pen at the NCHA Futurity,” she says. “He made a point of getting introduced, and then he made some lame excuse why he needed my phone number. Ten minutes later, I got a text message asking me to supper.”

The two found they had a lot in common. Penny had always dreamed of buying her great uncle’s big ranch at Caprock, New Mexico, while K.J.’s dream was to go back to his native Prescott, Arizona, and ranch. In 2009

they were married and moved to Bagdad, Arizona, where they set up a cutting stable, all with an eye on ranching someday.

That opportunity came less than a year later, when K.J. went to the 7 Up Ranch as a manager and partner in Campwood Cattle Company, an operation that runs some 1,200 cows and stockers on 75,000 acres near Prescott. With kids from previous marriages, the two were especially happy about the chance to raise their family in a ranch environment. Penny’s daughter, Kadence, is now 9, and her son, Kyle, is 6, while K.J.’s daughter, Kayden, is 5. Son Kreed came along three years ago.

Now Penny juggles her ranch life with school and hauling the kids to junior rodeos. She used to drive about three hours round-trip each day on mostly rough dirt roads to get the kids to school in town. Now she spends weekdays in town and comes back to the ranch



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when school is out on Thursday. “It’s hard,” she says, “but once you get used to it, it’s just part of your life.”

Determined not to be left out of the ranch work, she often mounts the kids up on assorted horses and ponies and pitches in dragging calves or sorting. Kadence, who is “ate up” with horses, is already making the big drives with her dad when it’s not a school day.

During roundup, Penny is up at 3:30 every morning making the crew’s breakfast – usually breakfast casseroles or pancakes and bacon. Occasionally K.J. will take pity on her and offer to cook breakfast himself, but she’ll have no part of it.

“That’s *my* job,” she tells him. “I take pride in that. Don’t take that away from me!”

She also enjoys loading the kids in the four-wheel drive and carrying lunch out over washed-out jeep trails to the crew when they’re branding at one of the remote branding pens. That sometimes means changing a flat tire on her own – even once when she was eight months pregnant with Kreed.

“Yeah, that was memorable,” she says, “but I enjoy being a part of it all, being out there, watching them drag calves, and even getting to jump in there and drag a few myself.”

Not surprisingly, Penny is a great cook and gardener, having learned from her mom. “My mom is a good cook,” she says. “Everything was always homegrown and homemade, and everything made from scratch, even pie crust and bread.”

One of her favorite recipes for roundup, and a favorite with the crew, is her mom’s New Mexico Stacked Red Enchiladas.

“I don’t know where it came from,” she says, “but my recipe card is all worn out now, spilt on and dusted in flour. Putting the egg on top just seems to be a New Mexico thing.”

With K.J. and his hungry crew, though, it’s more like several eggs on top.



New Mexico Stacked Red Enchiladas

- 2 pounds ground beef
- 1 large onion, chopped
- Salt to taste
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 2 tablespoons Heinz Chili Sauce
- 1-2 15-ounce cans of red enchilada sauce
- 1-2 8-ounce cans tomato sauce
- 8-12 corn tortillas
- Oil for cooking tortillas
- 4 cups or more grated cheddar cheese
- Fried eggs for topping

In a large skillet, brown the beef and onion. Mix in the salt, chili powder, chili sauce, enchilada sauce, and tomato sauce. Simmer for about 30 minutes. Dip each tortilla in hot oil just until softened and starting to puff, then layer on a plate with meat sauce and cheese, as many layers as you like. Top with the fried eggs.



Kathy McCraine is the author of the award-winning *Cow Country Cuisine: Recipes and Tales from Northern Arizona’s Historic Ranches*. Visit her web site at www.kathymccraine.com.



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Into the Future

A special exhibit at Elko's National Cowboy Poetry Gathering celebrates the work of the West's young artisans.

By Deanna Dickinson McCall

The National Cowboy Poetry Gathering's gearmakers' exhibition is held at Elko, Nevada's Pioneer Hotel, the historic venue for the annual event. This year, which marked the Gathering's 30th anniversary, the exhibition followed a theme emphasizing the future of the West, and of traditional gearmaking.

The showcase drew 34 participating craftsmen, all under 40, from throughout the West, and featured more than 50 works, with its grand opening drawing a capacity crowd. Some participating artists demonstrated their creative processes throughout the Gathering, while others taught workshops in their disciplines.

According to the show's curator, Andy Stevens, and the Gathering's artistic director, Meg Glaser, the exhibition's theme, "Expressing the Rural West – Into the Future," was

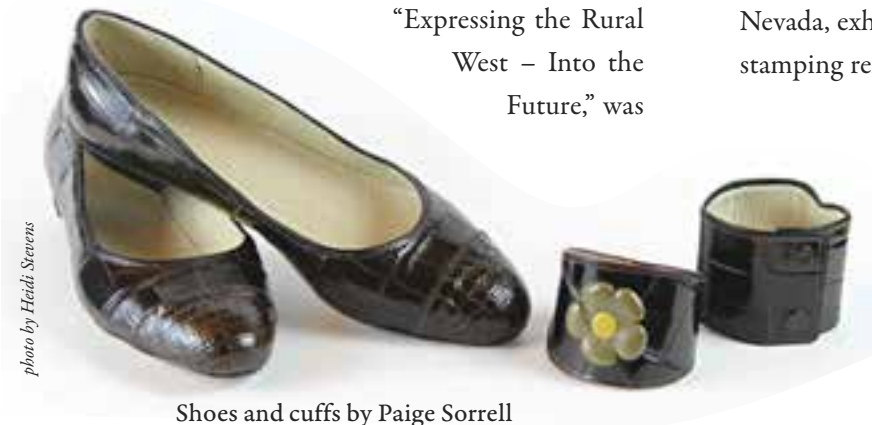


photo by Heidi Stevens

Shoes and cuffs by Paige Sorrell



photo by Heidi Stevens

Bracelet by Nevada Watt

created to recognize the West's often-overlooked younger artisans, and to provide a venue for their work. Stevens is himself a seasoned gearmaker; one of his students, Ryan Carpenter, an ag teacher from Owyhee, Nevada, exhibited a Bill Bean Wade saddle with floral stamping reminiscent of silver engraving, and a cinch made by Carpenter's sister, Laura Estes.

The show also included some of Stevens' work, including an intricately carved hatband on a Chaz Mitchell hat, and a beautiful two-tone split-ear headstall with silver butterfly buckles by Tegan Marsh.

Other items ranged from silver



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perfume-bottle stoppers and baby rattles to mohair cinches, ornate jewelry and fully carved saddles. Among the more unusual entries: a pair of ladies' alligator flats, with matching cuffs, made by 16-year-old Paige Sorrell of Guthrie, Oklahoma; Paige is the daughter of custom boot maker and designer Lisa Sorrell.

Another piece, a copper and silver bracelet by Montana State University student Nevada Watt, daughter of artisans Jeremiah and Colleen Watt, represented the changing seasons of the wagon, and featured a bright-cut silver base overlaid with specially cut copper that allowed the underlying silver to show through.

Gladstone, New Mexico's Matthew McClure displayed a silver baby rattle, intricately engraved and based on an Argentine *mate* straw. Laden Ledbetter, of San Angelo, Texas, crafted Colt 1911 pistol grips with engraved sterling overlays. Brittany Anders, also from San Angelo, made a Damascus steel folding knife featuring a handle made from rare Amboyna Burl wood, nickel and titanium bolsters, a titanium backspring and a hand-filed rope. Craftsman John Wright displayed chaps he made in Capriola's, the famed Elko saddle and tack retailer in which he grew up as part of the family that's owned and managed the business for a half-century.



Saddle by David Rigby



Saddle by Logan Willemsma

Brit Nantz, of Graham, Texas, began working as a leather craftsman 11 years ago. He brought to Elko a set of beautifully carved suspenders and a fully carved day-planner cover depicting a horse, rider and cow-calf pair surrounded by floral carving. Self-taught, Nantz is passing his knowledge on to his 10-year-old son, who is taking an interest in leatherwork.

Kricket Keetch, a 20-year-old cinch and mohair artist from Salem, Utah, began making cinches when her father, saddlemaker Mike Keetch, couldn't find quality cinches for his saddles. She gives her cinches unique designs – such as cattle brands – using natural dyes to create vivid colors. One of her displayed pieces was a 19-strand mohair cinch featuring a card-suit design, with an ace and heart depicted in red-dyed mohair and a club and spade in black, all set against a gray background. Kricket is an admirer of the work of another young woman, Elko cinch maker and college ag teacher Jennifer Whitely, who brought to the show a collection including traditional mohair cinches and

breast collars, as well as a cinch made from yak hair.

Newcastle, Utah's Chaz Mitchell transitioned from shoeing horses and riding bareback broncs to making custom hats. The son of cowboy poet Waddie Mitchell apprenticed at Idaho's Jaxonbilt Hat Company, and

photo by Amy Carpenter/Courtesy David Rigby

photo by Heidi Stevens



credits Roy Jackson with getting him started in the craft. Mitchell displayed a 100X beaver-belly, marbled-felt hat, one of only two marbled felts known to be in existence; the other, also made by Mitchell, is owned by musician Brenn Hill. Both feature a marbling effect that's the result of a secret felting process Mitchell guards carefully.

Katie Groves, daughter of braider Doug Groves, grew up on Nevada's TS Ranch, and learned to braid from her father, developing a classic style with an understated use of color. She exhibited a 12-stand, two-rein rawhide bosal with a long herringbone nose button and a three-pass heel knot, as well as a 12-strand quirt with gaucho buttons.

Kevin Willey, of Faith, South Dakota, showcased a Santa Barbara spade bit with a one-piece steel mouthpiece and Damascus cheek-pieces consisting of 180 layers of



photo by Heidi Stevens

Spur straps by Tyler Krause



photo by Heidi Stevens

Two-rein bosal by Katie

1018 steel and pure nickel. Jake Brown, who works on Nevada's Winecup Ranch, displayed a 60-foot, two-tone, eight-strand reata with an eight-strand *trenza patria* braid around the honda; a six-plait braid inside the honda leads into a 12-plait gaucho knot. He gave the piece a unique color by using coffee to stain half the strands.

In conversations, many of the young artists represented at the show shared their pride at being included, and expressed heartfelt passion for their crafts and the traditions behind them.

Some of the craftsmen make their livings in their trades, but all seem to place a higher value on preserving their art forms, teaching aspiring students, and pushing their work forward by putting modern twists on age-old techniques.

It's a mindset that would seem to ensure a future for the West's gearmaking customs.



photo by Heidi Stevens

Buckle by Tabor Dahl

Deanna Dickinson McCall is a writer living in New Mexico. *Mustang Spring*, a collection of her poetry and short fiction, is available from Amazon and other booksellers, and at www.deannadickinsonmccall.com.

Thinking Up Stuff

Novelist Johnny D. Boggs puts original spins on western fiction.

By Rod Miller

One spring morning in Albuquerque, a little league coach and a handful of his players, including his son, sat in the bleachers at Isotope Park, watching the big boys play triple-A baseball.

“So, what does your dad do?” one of the kids asked the coach’s son.

“He writes books.”

The kid pondered that for a moment and said, “You mean all he does is sit around all day and think up stuff?”

The coach, western author Johnny D. Boggs, had to admit that was an apt description. “Yeah,” he said. “That’s pretty much what I do.”

And it’s what he’s done since 1998, when he quit the newspaper business – in which he’d worked as a sports writer in Texas – to freelance for magazines and write western fiction. “I knew by the time I was in junior high school – probably even earlier – I wanted to be a writer,” Boggs says, “and I knew I wanted to write about the West.”

By any measure, it’s worked out well for Boggs, and

for readers of western fiction. He has more than 50 books to his credit. Most are novels, with a few nonfiction titles thrown in for good measure.

Few western writers have enjoyed the acclaim Boggs has earned. His novel *Spark on the Prairie: The Trial of the Kiowa Chiefs* won the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum’s Western Heritage Award, perhaps the most coveted award in western literature.

Right next to “the Wrangler Award” in terms of prestige is the Western Writers of America Spur Award, and Boggs has bagged six of those, for both novels and short fiction. Only the legendary Elmer Kelton has

more – seven – and only one other writer has as many. It’s altogether likely Boggs will win more recognition for his work, as he still has stories to tell.

“I certainly don’t write for awards,” he says. “Mostly, I write for myself, writing something that interests me, a story I want to tell or something I’d like to experiment with.”

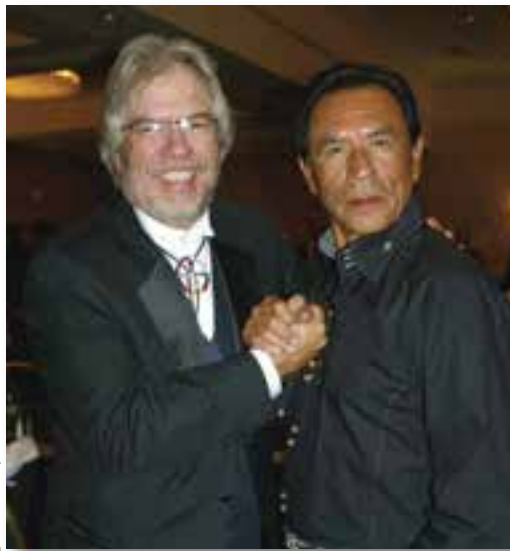


photo courtesy Kirk Ellis

Johnny Boggs with actor Wes Studi at the 2012 Western Writers of America Spur Awards.



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Gary Goldstein, who's spent more than three decades editing western novels for several New York publishers and is currently senior editor at Kensington Publishing, says that while Boggs may not write for awards, his writing certainly merits them. "Johnny's books have three elements that make for first-rate storytelling," he says. "Great premises, three dimensional characterizations, and a sense of humor, an element you rarely see in westerns."

And that, Goldstein believes, will lead to more awards. "I don't know how many Spurs he's won but I suspect he's creeping up on the all-time champ, Elmer Kelton, maybe because Johnny shares with Elmer a passion for the American frontier and the people who helped settle and tame it."

How does Boggs go about writing novels that appeal to readers and set him apart from your average western writer? "For the most part, I don't write about 'white hats' and 'black hats,'" he says. "I try to write about

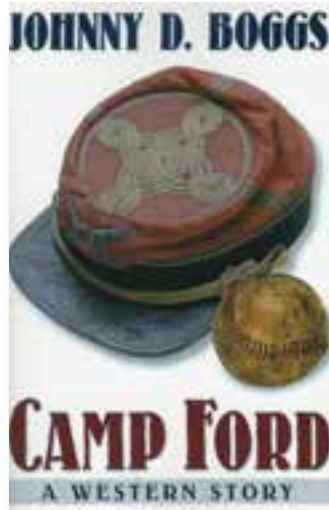
people with strong beliefs as to what's right and wrong, and often those beliefs clash."

Boggs doesn't corral himself with a limited definition of "western." "I don't like fences," he says. "I write what strikes me as a good story. Besides, the West didn't begin in 1865 and it wasn't always west of the Mississippi River. The West isn't just cowboys and Indians. And it didn't end in 1890. I think the western is more a sense of feel than a specific place, and it's certainly not set to any given time period."

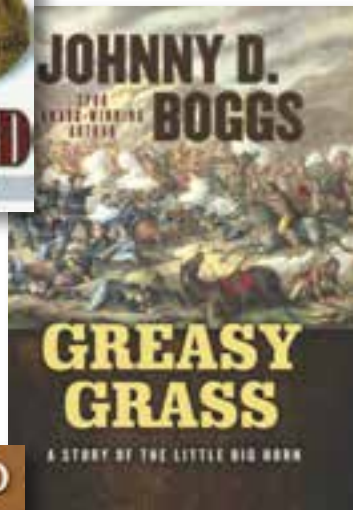
That kind of thinking led to books with a variety of subjects and settings. The Civil War era is a particular favorite for Boggs, and a setting for several of his novels, including the Spur-winning *Camp Ford*, about a baseball game between detainees and guards in a prison camp. Of course, he also writes about outlaws and lawmen, trail drives, Indian wars and other familiar western themes.

And his novels often include well-known characters and events from history: George Custer at the Little Big Horn, the James-Younger gang and the Northfield raid, Quanah Parker, Buffalo Bill Cody, Bass Reeves and more. But he tells those stories with a unique twist, a fresh voice, and a riveting mix of history and creativity.

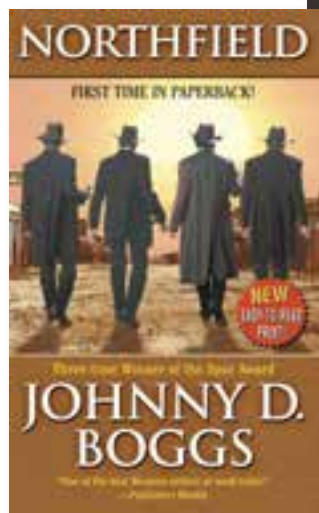
"I've written about subjects that have been covered many times, but I put my own spin on those events or those people," the writer says. "I'm not a one-day-at-the-library researcher. I spend a lot of time trying to find out



Spur Award winner *Camp Ford* tells the story of a baseball game in a Civil War prison camp.



In *Greasy Grass*, Boggs dramatically recreates the Battle at Little Big Horn.



The James-Younger gang's infamous raid on a Minnesota bank is recounted in *Northfield*.

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details. I try to get things as accurate as possible, and for the heavy historical works, I cite sources in an author's note and point readers to where they might find the true story. But I'm not confined by facts. I write fiction."

He is confined to facts, however, when he writes for magazines.

Magazine writing grew out of his journalism experience, and remains important to Boggs. The average year will see his byline in anywhere from six to 10 periodicals; for some he contributes to every issue.

"I like the challenge of moving from a young-adult novel to writing 1,500 words on an Indian artist, and then working on a travel story," he says. "That keeps me fresh, and I hope it keeps my writing fresh. I'm not just typing the same thing day after day."

In the course of his magazine writing, he says he has "met the most amazing people. I got to interview James Arness. I met sculptor Michael Naranjo, who was blinded by a hand grenade in Vietnam. Magazine assignments led to friendships with Larry Mahan, the great rodeo cowboy – he held my son before my mom and dad got to – and Nocona Burgess, a descendent of Quanah Parker."

While a different discipline, journalism contributes to Boggs' fiction. "You learn quickly there's no such thing as writer's block," Boggs says. "You learn deadlines are real. Plus, you learn to write with brevity, clarity and accuracy. And fairness. In my novels, I try to tell both sides of the story." And, there are similarities in the process. "The research is similar. You try to familiarize yourself with the subject. I won't go into a magazine

interview clueless, so I track down as much information as I can on the person I'm interviewing."

Like most writers, Boggs is a reader. He credits a wide assortment of authors, living and dead, and an array of books for inspiration and aspiration. And, like most readers, selecting one favorite from among many isn't easy. "*To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is still my favorite novel of all time," he says. "If I had to name a western, I'd go with *The Rounders*. That book's a riot and, having busted two ribs in a horse wreck, I can identify with hating a horse."

As it happens, Max Evans, who wrote *The Rounders*, has been instrumental in Boggs' career. "Max took me under his wing," Boggs says. "Max pushed me to write beyond the potboilers. The turning point in my career came when I interviewed him for a magazine article and he told me, 'Writers only have so many words in them. So whatever you're writing, make sure it's what you want to write because there's no guarantee you'll ever get to write another.'"

Boggs has no idea how many words he has left in him, but he doesn't plan to slack off anytime soon. And if history is any indication, he'll think up ways to mold whatever words there are into intriguing and enjoyable stories. As editor Gary Goldstein says, "I think the best thing I can say about Mr. Boggs is this: when he e-mails me a copy of his latest manuscript, I know I'm in for a fun and entertaining ride."

And readers can expect the same, every time they crack open the covers of a Johnny Boggs novel.



Spur Award-winning author Rod Miller is a member of Western Writers of America.

Find him online at www.writerRodMiller.com.



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The Hoof-Pastern Axis

By Pete Healey, APF

The set of the pastern as it aligns with the foot of the horse is a big deal, but barely described. I remember years ago when I was a kid and my uncle who was the foreman of a large cattle ranch was teaching me how to shoe; he showed me that in a balanced foot the angle of the pastern should be in the same plane as the angle of the front of the hoof. This is what the industry calls the “Hoof-Pastern Axis” and in most literature it is described the same way as there has been very little written about this, but wait there is a lot more to it than that...

The angle of the pastern has a direct connection to the bottom angle of the coffin bone. As the bottom or Palmar Angle of the coffin bone increases this causes rotation of the pastern around the coffin joint toward the rear of the horse, a 2 degree increase in the palmar angle will move the pastern 5 degrees whereas a 2 degree decrease will move the pastern in a more vertical position toward the head of the horse. The pastern can range in movement from 45 degrees or more in the standing horse to 90 degrees in a horse a full run. In the standing horse the degree of static flexion can be measured by first measuring the angle of the hoof-pastern axis with both feet standing square on the ground, then one foot is picked up and the opposite limb is measured. Weighting the limb will cause flexion in the pastern which will range from 5 to 10 degrees and in **the balanced sound horse this will create a 0 degree hoof-pastern axis and equilibrium in the foot.** The degree of flexion is important because the foot with less flexion has more tension and when things can't bend they break. This tension is directly related to the Deep Flexor Tendon and muscle unit. This conformation is seen on the right front leg of the horse about 80 % of the time and corresponds to an upright or club foot on that side and a flatter foot on the other side. Most horsemen will note that the horse will usually move easier to the lower side as the tighter side doesn't have as much reach. This muscle development can easily be seen from the front of the horse looking at the shoulders, the more developed side has the lower angled foot and more flexion in the pastern.

There are five basic pastern conformations. The first is the sound horse with a good foot, his hoof-pastern axis measures a -10 degrees standing and loads to a 0 degree axis (balanced). The second is the low heeled or palmer angled foot that has a hoof-pastern axis that measures anywhere from -15 to -25 degrees plus. These feet don't flex to balance because the pastern can only move 5 to 10 degrees. The third is the broken forward axis seen on a club foot. These can be measured from 0 to +5 when standing and flex to +5 to +10 degrees, these feet have a Deep Flexor contracture. The fourth is the high heeled foot with a negative upright pastern axis that is usually about -5 to -10 degrees. These feet have contracture of the Superficial Flexor. The fifth is an average to low angled foot that doesn't have a lot of foot mass. These feet stand at a -5 to 0 degree axis and flex positive. These horses usually have some kind of lameness and the tension in the Deep Flexor is from a pain response. Often these feet will return to a normal or negative axis once the lameness is resolved.

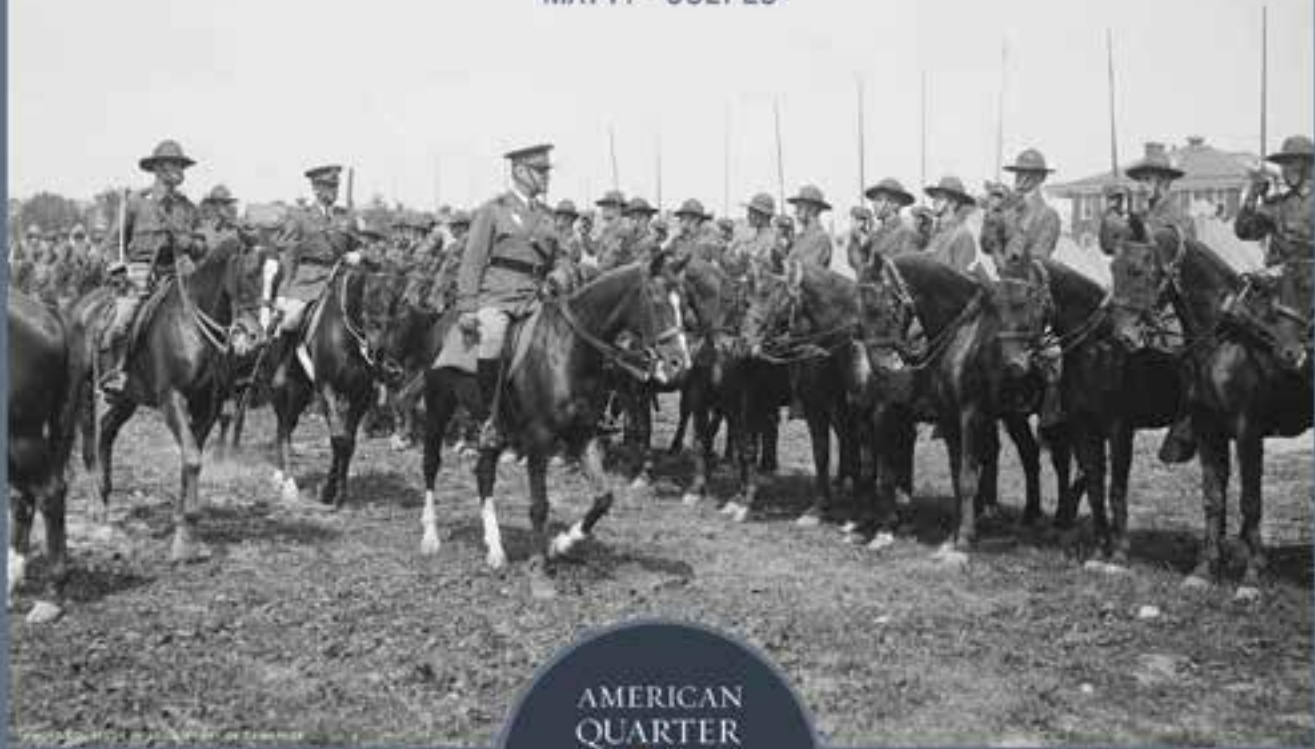
Some of these degree changes are subtle and the only way to evaluate them is with a goniometer which is a simple angle measurer placed on the front of the hoof and parallel with the front of the pastern. Some might say that a few degrees here or there is no big deal, but for a high performance organ like the foot it is. Maybe someday we'll read about it, until then www.balancedbreakover.com.



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Branding Day

A South Dakota writer reflects on spring branding memories and traditions.

By Amy Kirk

It may not be listed as a national holiday on the rest of the nation's calendars, but branding day is one of the biggest days we recognize every spring. Really big outfits have more than one branding day, but since we're just a mom-and-pop operation, our branding gets done in a day with the help of good neighbors.

In our young family years, our son was more excited the night before our branding than he was on Christmas Eve. He would sleep in his branding-day clothes so he was ready when my husband got him up early to ride and gather our herd. His youthful enthusiasm was a welcome attitude amongst all the stress, anxieties and worries my husband and I felt preparing for branding day.

Our son's excitement was a reminder for us to acknowledge the importance of our family's ranching tradition. The fact that it is becoming a rarity to our area makes it that much more special and unique as an American tradition. Other than no longer sleeping

in his clothes, not much has changed for our son since those days. He still looks forward to branding season and calls the set of springtime neighboring brandings the "branding circuit."

Our family is lucky to carry on this tradition every year. Having a big gathering of friends and neighbors show up to help us get a job done, and then putting on a big feed for them, is becoming a thing of the past in most parts of the country. And, branding day is still just as big an event (if not bigger) in the kitchen as it is at the corrals.

Rekindling Branding Day Romance

The romance between my husband and me began in springtime. We'd only been dating a couple of months by branding season, and he introduced me to his family on their branding day.

We spent that day, and the rest of those May weekends,



A Ranch Wife's Slant features dozens of Kirk's essays on "marriage, parenting, the gender gap and problem solving, all under the premise of living and working with cattle."



helping neighbors gather cows, and wrestling calves together to be branded. Our courtship evolved throughout those neighborhood brandings, and every May I feel a sentimental twinge about our beginnings.

We'd make googly eyes at each other through the thick branding smoke while men hunched over us with vaccine guns. My face would flush pink and I'd start to sweat as the space between us heated up every time those hot branding irons came between us. I felt giddy when he'd wink at me while we bore down to hold a feisty calf as the branding iron marked the calf's hide.

While we worked, sometimes he'd gaze at me with those hazel eyes and ask, "Any scours?" while I held down the back end of a calf. After spending all day together at a branding, I could still smell him long after we parted – it was actually the scent of burnt hair. I spent so much time watching him that I'd forget to pay attention to what I was doing. He'd grab my hand and pull me toward him every time I was about to accidentally sit in fresh manure to hold down a calf.

We'd hold each other's hands while waiting for more calves to wrestle, maybe eat a few Rocky Mountain oysters off the branding stove, and swig beer from a shared can. Sometimes we'd sneak a quick kiss before grabbing another calf for branding, vaccinating and castration (where applicable).

Our branding roles have since changed in the 19 years we've been together. I became busy taking care of our cow kids and preparing the branding-day dinners, and he became responsible for making sure branding supplies were ready, and lining out the branding crew with the day's work.

For years, I've sorely missed being around my husband on branding day. One year after our kids had reached elementary-school age, I aimed to rekindle our branding-day romance. I knew it wouldn't be easy to cook dinner *and* help brand, but I told my husband to get a horse in for me because I intended to be out there.

To be able to both brand and cook meant getting up early and staying up late to do as much as possible in advance. The thought of sharing a morning panoramic view of the back ends of cows while riding alongside my husband excited me.

By Sunday morning, I forgot about feeling exhausted, having sore feet, an aching back, and a tension headache. Our daughter and I rode double and I got to admire my husband's cowboying and our son's horsemanship as we all gathered cows toward the corrals.

My husband ran the branding irons, but we shared a memorable branding-day moment when we held down one of the kids' calves so our son could brand it. I spent the day wrestling calves with my son and was only in the kitchen long enough to get the rolls and coffee in



photo by Tom Moates

South Dakota's Amy Kirk writes about ranch life. Her work appears in numerous publications.



the morning and, later, to serve and clean up our branding-day dinner.

Spending our branding day with my husband and kids turned out to be more romantic than I expected. The extra work was worth the effort, but I definitely didn't eat my lunch for free.

Branding Protocol

You may not think a branding requires etiquette, but there are certain expectations that go with attending or participating.

According to an undocumented policy, if you want to help gather cattle, don't be late. Special circumstances can't be helped, but lack of planning isn't one of them. On his branding day, a rancher goes by his own time, not someone else's.

A branding is not the place to ride a green-broke horse or ride a mount that's never been around cattle. Riders should bring horses that know cows. The horses don't necessarily have to know the cows personally or know mutual acquaintances, but they do need to have management skills in working with cows. A horse that blows up, riles other horses, or is difficult to handle can stir up an otherwise smooth cow-gathering operation.

If a dog owner doesn't want man's best friend to become man's only friend, bringing a yapping dog or one that chases livestock isn't recommended. A spooked horse can cause a wreck, and stirred-up cows are hard to handle.

Unless you've been asked to, standing in the way of approaching cattle is a death wish. Nothing irritates a rancher more on branding day than having a herd of cattle heading for the corrals and suddenly scatter

because someone's standing in the way. By the time you've been clipped by a rancher's verbal firepower, you'll wish you could be stoned to death instead.

If you see a better way to handle cattle, or do a branding chore, by all means *do not* tell the rancher. Regardless of how senseless or unorganized a rancher's system looks, these are men who gather, sort and brand a specific way for reasons they probably don't even understand, but they don't like people telling them how to run their ranches or brandings.

Cattle ranchers typically handpick neighbors they trust to do the important branding jobs and they're usually the same people every year. No matter how appealing a job like castrating calves looks, never assume a job unless you're asked to do it. Running a branding iron takes skill and is generally assigned to elder ranchers. Unless they're senile. Old-timers know which brand to use, where on the animal to brand, and how to avoid smearing or branding too deeply.

Careless or novice vaccine-gun operators can waste expensive vaccine if they don't know what they're doing. Most ranchers try to get by as cheaply as possible by buying just enough vaccine for the number of calves they're vaccinating, using only what's recommended, and relying on experienced vaccine-gun users to administer it.

Traditionally, a big meal is provided after a branding as a token of thanks to those who helped out. If you didn't help out in the branding corral, you're still invited to stay for dinner; just don't be the first in line.

Above all else, the most important thing you should remember to do at a branding, no matter where you go, is to compliment the cook.



This piece was excerpted from Amy Kirk's new book *A Ranch Wife's Slant: Cowboys, Kids & Ranch Life*, published by Spinning Sevens Press and available from Amazon and other booksellers.

Outstanding.



All Standing, Shumway Ranch, Juntura, Oregon. Joan, Anna Rose, Gabriel, Claire, Luke and Martin (standing on the horn)
Photograph by Madeleine Graham Blake



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THE WESTERN HORSE

Paige Two

Cutting phenom Paige Hadlock pursues an alternate equestrian identity: trick rider.



By Rod Miller

72

Mention the name Paige Hadlock in certain circles and you'll hear about a young horsewoman who sits cutting horses with the ease of the stripe on a dun's back. And it's a reputation well deserved: In 2011, Paige was cutting champion in both the National High School Rodeo Association and the Utah High School Rodeo Association, following up a 2010 season in which she was runner-up in both competitions; she's been a Utah Cutting Horse Association youth champion and an area youth champion in the National Cutting Horse Association, including winning a western national championship at age 11.

Many of those honors were earned aboard horses with which she had only a passing acquaintance, some under training at her father's stable. "I borrowed

customers' horses most of the time," she says. "I think that really helped me become a better rider because I never really knew what I would ride from one show to the next. In fact, when I won the NHSRA finals, I'd only been on that horse once and riding him was a last-minute decision."

Paige was, for all practical purposes, born to ride cutting horses. Raised in Plain City, Utah, both her parents were seriously involved in cutting and were strong competitors. Her father, Lawson Hadlock, is a trainer. Paige – and her twin brother – attended their first cutting at two weeks old. For as long as she can remember, she's been drawn to horses. "I'd say I took to horses naturally, and them to me," she says. "I feel connected when I'm riding. It's not anything I can explain. It's just there."



photos courtesy Heidi Hadlock Evans

Paige holds several cutting titles, most recently the NHSRA championship.

From the time she was four, Paige begged her parents to let her compete. “They kept telling me I could show when I turned six,” she recalls. “On my sixth birthday, at six in the morning, I was standing by the side of their bed asking when we were going to the show. A couple of weeks later I made my debut on a friend’s turn-back horse. From then on, I’ve been hooked. I think at about eight or nine, I became confident and proficient in showing a cutting horse. For one thing, my legs finally grew long enough that I could kick lower than the saddle pad.”

But there’s more to Paige Hadlock and horses than cutting cattle – a “side two,” if you will: trick riding.

At age 10, Paige was given the opportunity to

choose an activity outside of cutting. She chose trick riding. “I think I took up trick riding because it was different from what my mom and dad did and I could call it my own. And it was an aspect of the horse world that they could not train me in.”

That doesn’t mean her mother, Heidi Hadlock Evans, was off the hook. It started with the purchase of a “how-to” book. Then, Paige says, “My mother found a trick-riding camp in Colorado. She signed me up for a three-day camp and I was hooked the very first day.” That was just the first of many camps. “I’m not sure how many miles my mom logged driving back and forth from Utah to Pueblo over the next three years, but it was a lot.”

The camps, at Colorado's Red Top Ranch, are taught by Karen Vold, legendary trick rider, inductee



Trick riding requires strength, balance, trust and courage.

into the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame, and recipient of the prestigious Tad Lucas Memorial Award. A professional trick rider since age 14, Karen performed at most major rodeos in the United States until marrying stock contractor Harry Vold. Her trick-riding schools aim to keep the tradition alive by passing the skills to new generations.

“Paige was a fabulous student,” Karen says. “She had a lot of background in riding and is a good hand with a horse, so that made it easy. Paige was always eager to learn. She’s a pleasant girl, always with a smile for everyone. She knew how to work, how to ride. She became like a member of the family, like we adopted her.”

Even as a youngster, Paige’s skill with horses served her well. Karen says, “She was magnificent – could ride horses, do anything. She even helped us train the horses

we keep for students to practice on.”

“Those were some of the hardest and most physically challenging days I can remember putting my body through,” Paige says. “I would have scrapes and bumps and bruises from head to toe and show them off proudly after a long day’s work.”

The hard work continued at home, including training her own horses. “It used to drive my dad crazy that he couldn’t train my horses for me, but I was the only one who could do the tricks so I was the one who had to take the first risk,” she says. “I’ve pretty much trained all my trick-riding horses because it’s such a specialized sport, and you have to have such a strong level of trust in your horse that I don’t feel like it’s something I would ever want anyone else to do.”

Paige’s size at that young age determined, to some extent, which horses she rode. “My first trick riding horse was our old gelding, Jet, that did everything for my brother and me,” she says. “One of my passions is vaulting, but when I started I was too short to reach the ground on Jet so I used one of my dad’s customer’s cutting horses to start vaulting on. When I was learning to vault, it was really the only time I can remember taking a spill.”

Despite the spills, bumps and bruises, it wasn’t the tricks Paige found frightening. “The only fear I had to overcome is performing in front of a crowd,” she says. “I didn’t like dressing up at first and I didn’t like wearing makeup and I didn’t like making it a production.”

Like most obstacles she’s encountered, Paige put that one behind her. “I’ve learned to perform for the crowd, and now it’s such a thrill when little kids come



up to me after a performance and want an autograph or want to pet my horse.”

Paige trained for more than a year before she felt ready for her first performance. Over a four-day period, she performed eight times at the Festival of the American West’s Wild West Show in Logan, Utah. “I even signed my first autograph at the event,” she says.

At 13, Paige competed in a trick-riding competition in Oklahoma, on a team made up of Karen Vold’s students. “Our team ended up reserve world champions and I ended up third in the individual competition.”

Her individual performances over the years include rodeos in Utah, Colorado, Wyoming and Nevada. In the future, she may seek entry into the ranks of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association’s sanctioned specialty acts and perform at larger rodeos. According to her teacher and mentor, the talent is there. “With her ability, Paige could go anywhere,” Karen says. “But, for a variety of reasons, it’s hard for specialty acts to get work in the rodeo business these days.”

“I will always trick ride. It’s one of my greatest passions,” Paige says, “It will always be a big part of my life.” She finds time enough to keep her skills sharp and even gives trick riding lessons, but her work with cutting trainers gets the bulk of her attention these days.

Paige moved from Utah to Weatherford, Texas, to work at Hanson Cutting Horses. “There are more shows in Texas and I wanted the opportunity to challenge myself to become a more knowledgeable horsewoman and competitor,” Paige says. “Phil and Leah Hanson are like a second family to me. They’re good friends with my parents, they’ve known me since I was little, and have watched me grow up at cuttings. I helped with the daily prep of horses prior to their



Paige Hadlock, trick rider and national champion cutting competitor.

training, scheduled vet care, tracked billing, managed daily doctoring, loped horses, prepped for shows, and helped with driving and whatever else needed doing.” Paige has now moved on to “a new adventure,” working for NCHA Hall of Fame rider and trainer Clint Allen.

Whether Paige is on the back of a cutting horse or performing her latest trick – holding the American flag aloft while performing a hippodrome stand on an unbridled horse – Karen Vold is confident the young horsewomen will make a success. “She’s top of the line, first class, one-hundred percent,” she says. “She can go anywhere, do anything.”



Rod Miller’s latest novels are *Rawhide Robinson Rides the Range* and *Cold as the Clay*.

Visit him online at www.writerRodMiller.com



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A White Horse Named Tequila

By Tom Russell

*Drunk from tequila
I carry drunkenness in my soul
see if I can heal this cruel melancholy...*

*La Tequilera,
Alfredo D'Orsay*

When I first moved to West Texas there was a widow lady, Rose, down the road, who owned a white horse named *Tequila*. Her



The author, deep in research

late husband once worked as a ditch rider for the water department. He rode *Tequila* up and down the canals,

opening and closing water ditches into ranches and farms. Tom Lea, the great painter and author, once told me the Mexicans called the Rio Grande: *la madre acequia* – the *mother water ditch*. And I was honored to become the *alcalde*, or mayor, of our little ditch.

By the time I had settled-in, the old ditch rider had passed away and his horse, *Tequila*, hung on through a few more winters. He looked to be about thirty years or more. He possessed one milky eye and stood all day 'neath a Globe Willow. Only his ragged tail moved, picking up the winds out of the Southeast and Juarez.

I asked Rose how the horse got his name and she informed me her husband was fond of white tequila. Which I took to mean *silver*, *plata*, or *clear* tequila, as opposed to gold, *anejo*, *reposado*, or the more brown-yellow varieties. She said the old man gargled with white tequila every night



The author in the lab, wearing protective headwear.
Testing, testing, testing.

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to keep away throat infections and evil spirits. If I wanted to understand Mexican life and border culture, said Rose, then I must understand tequila and horse flesh. These things were at the center of the old Mexican songs.

I promised Rose I'd do my homework, which led me to the bars and liquor stores of *Ciudad Juarez*, across the Rio Grande river. I hung out in the historic *Kentucky Club*, sampling the *agave* juice and listening to jukebox *corridos* about horses by such luminaries as Antonio Aguilar and Vicente Fernandez. I went to the frontlines. These two ideas, horses and tequila, would come into clear focus a few years later in Guadalajara, in an airport liquor store, when I ran across *Siete Leguas*.

I The Horse Pancho Villa Most Esteemed

*Siete Leguas, el caballo
Que Villa más estimaba,
Cuando oía silbar los trenes
Se paraba y relinchaba,
Siete Leguas, el caballo*

*Seven Leagues, the horse
that Villa most esteemed,
When he heard the train whistle
He stood up and whinnied,
Seven Leagues, the horse
That Villa most esteemed*

Siete Leguas

It was fifteen years ago, *mas or menos*, and I was connecting through Guadalajara, flying back to Juarez. I may have been down to language school in Guanajuato or amateur bullfight class somewhere in the interior. I disremember the exact circumstances. I had a few hours layover in the Guadalajara airport and there was a well-stocked tequila store in the terminal. I was in the Mexican state of Jalisco, the center of the tequila industry.

In the shop I studied the bottles and labels with their fine *Mejicano* art depicting *agaves*, *charros*, *sombreros*, *caballos*, and other symbols of Mexican drinking culture. The proprietor spoke *Spanglish*, and we chatted for a while about the goods. I asked him his favorite, normal-drinking tequila, and he picked up a bottle with a black horse on the label. *Siete Leguas* silver. Then he whipped an open sample bottle up from below the counter and poured me a shot. He winked. Folks like to wink at you when you're headed down the rabbit hole.



There were no limes or any recommended ritual. I poured it down and let it scour my throat, and in a moment the fumes came whispering up through my nose. The *tequila nose*. Lasted half a minute. The proprietor smiled. Then he told me a few stories about the horse Pancho Villa most esteemed, *Siete Leguas*. A caballo that could run seven leagues without tiring. A league is an approximate measure of distance that a sober person on foot can cover within an hour. About three miles. *Siete Leguas* is sung in every *cantina* in Mexico.

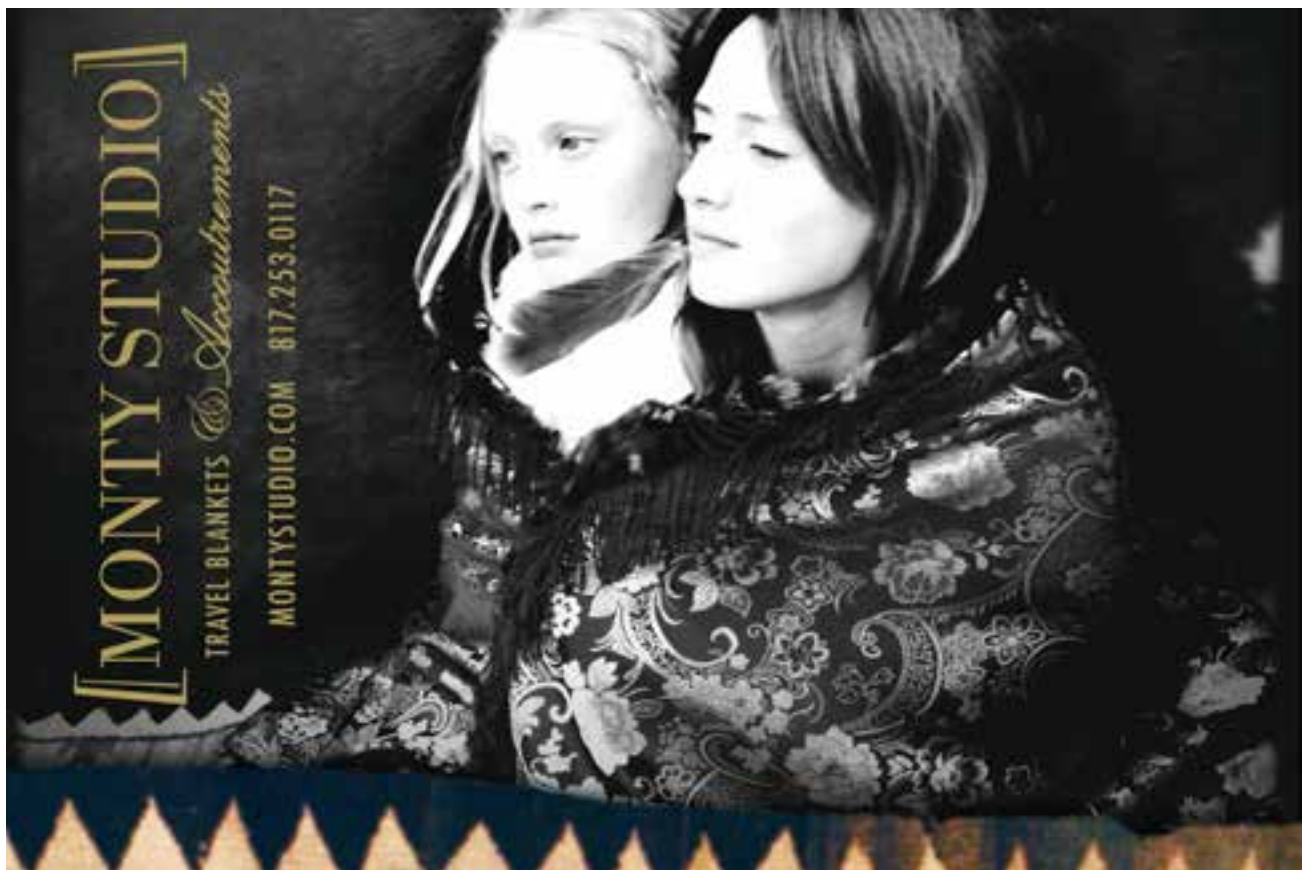
I bought the bottle. It was 100% agave, which basically all I knew at that point – you have to consume only 100% agave tequila. I'd learned that the hard way, ruining perfectly good Saturday nights with *gold* blends and cheap Margarita mixes. In one special moment in

the Guadalajara airport I'd connected with the tequila, which in turn connected with Mexican *corrido* about a famous horse. I was on the right track. I would have told Rose, but Rose had moved to a rest home and the white horse named *Tequila* had vanished from the shade of the Globe Willow. Rest in peace, white warrior.

II The Stone that Cuts & the Nectar of the Petrified Octopus

*Tequila after midnight drives the loneliness away
Makes strangers all around you look familiar..
And they say Tequila kills you, if you drink too much
Well, I hope they make tequila long enough.*

Dee Moeller, **Tequila After Midnight**





Timeless inspiration from Old Mexico

Tequila is a conundrum. A beguiling spirit distilled from the juice of the *petrified octopus*, which is what the Spanish poet Garcia Lorca called the *agave*. Tequila, in the oldest *Indio* sense, means *the stone that cuts*, and its manufacture comes from the state of Jalisco, Mexico. *Mostly*. That's where the town of Tequila is situated and the surrounding countryside and *ranchos* represent the center of the trade. Tequila is the national drink of Mexico.

80 The Aztecs discovered how to draw the fermented honey from the many varieties of the *maguey* or *agave* plant. The Spanish added the distillation process. The West was thus conquered by mounted horseman and distilled alcohol. My neighbor lady, Rose, was right on the beam.

The most common, non-distilled, alcoholic beverage deriving from the *maguey* or *agave* family is *pulque*. This is the juice of the *agave* pineapple which, when fermented, becomes milky white and *beerish*, with a raspy twist. Welcome to the ageless Mexican establishment titled the *pulqueria*, with adobe walls and dirt floors, and maybe a few *borrachos* passed out in the corner. At least in the bygone days.

I've never tried *pulque*, that I can remember, but I drank palm wine in West Africa, so I get the idea. These drinks are difficult to regulate for purity when they come straight from the tree into an old kerosene jar. After a night on palm wine I once bowed down once to the mother of all African dysenteries. I don't want a re-ride.

Here's a description of *pulque* from one of those out-of-print, politically incorrect tomes on Mexico from the 1930s, *Bright Mexico*, by Larry Barretto:

Now pulque is a Mexican national drink and as such deserves a few words since you are never far out of the sight or smell of it. The drink is made by drawing it from the plant in ways usually unsanitary – often by sucking it through a tube – and it is then fermented.

As it ferments rather slowly artificial means are used to hasten the process. These consist of putting in pieces of rope and worse until a proper degree of ripeness is reached...it is then marketed in cans open to all the dust and germs that fly.

It is mildly intoxicating and pleasantly stupefying...it has also certain nutritive qualities to it and for this reason is considered as much food as drink.

This recipe sounds much like Teddy Blue Abbot's description of *Injun Whiskey* in *We Pointed Them North*. All that's missing is the strychnine. Those were the old days. I assume *pulque* is safer now.

Mescal is the next step up. It's distilled from many varieties of the *agave* plant. Some of these bottles have the famous *agave* worm, sunk dead at the bottom. The old adage is: you may gain a certain mystical knowledge



or sexual prowess when you reach the bottom of the *Mescal* bottle and eat the worm. Good luck. I tried it one time, thirty years ago, in a Brooklyn apartment. Your reporter on the beat.

After reaching the bottom and eating the worm I thought my chair was dancing the *cumbia*. I toppled over backwards, spun a few times, and passed out. I was ushered into a long and nightmare-laden sleep, broken only by the sounds of six a.m. garbage trucks at first light, and the smell of bagels steaming up from the shop below. I was alive. There were no mystic revelations in the journey. No Aztec maidens or *curanderos* named *Don Juan*. My tongue felt like it had swept the bottom of the Sonoran desert. Lesson learned. From the worm.

There's also an agave drink called *Sotol* from the plant of the same name – which hails from Northern Mexico. Then there's the mysterious *Bacanora*, which is not readily available. I've never encountered it. I had a bottle of *Sotol*, encased in a fancy wood box, sitting in my kitchen for ten years. I tried a shot the one afternoon. I coughed. I spit. I thought to myself – *I might drink this stuff if I was snowed-in beneath an avalanche in the Yukon*, but it lacked any hint of smoothness or bottom. It was all fire, with a medicinal taste.

I was prepared to dismiss *Sotol* when a man who works for me, *Cuauhtémoc*, brought me another bottle from Juarez. *Cuate*, as I call him, is named after the Aztec King who was executed by Cortez during the Spanish invasion. This was a top-end bottle of *Sotol*. *Cuate* also brought me a great collection of Mexican horse *corridos* on tape and disc. Homework material.

The booklet on the bottle's neck stated that the Tarahumara Indians created this *magical drink* to celebrate their rituals and religious ceremonies. The Tarahumara are an ancient tribe in the Sierra Madre known for their ability to run hours on end without tiring.

Sotol is 100% *Agavacea*. The plant is still harvested in the wild, as opposed to Tequila which is harvested on private haciendas and plantations. This particular *Sotol* was USDA organic and Kosher, and aged from six months to one year in new French Oak barrels. *Sotol* and *Mescal* have now become sophisticated cousins to Tequila.

Agavacea is a plant that grows only in the high desert near Chihuahua – a few hundred miles from my hacienda. Encouraged by a yen to support

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Cody, WY 82414

Jedlickas
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Ranch & Reata

local products I broke the seal and gave *Sotol* a second chance. I tried a shot. Good indeed, and smoother than I expected, though still lacking the depth and finish of its big brother, Tequila. The taste remains wilder. Any port in a storm. Onward towards the top shelf.



The author's hurricane deck. A place of action.

Finally we've arrived at Tequila itself. The trickster. What the hell is it? All Tequilas are *mescal* but not all *mescals* qualify as *tequila*. Sounds like trying to figure out mules. Only liquor that's distilled from 51% of the *Weber Blue agave* may be *officially* termed *tequila*, from distilleries in the state of Jalisco. Only true tequila can carry the pledge of *100% Agave* and a seal from the Mexican government. That's the official story.

I try to avoid the cheaper blends and bottles with

the plastic sombreros on the top. That's the stuff they send to Germany for truck driver festivals. I've played those festivals. You're sandwiched in between bluegrass bands from Poland who play twenty-minute versions of *Country Roads* while fans, dressed as cowboys, Indians, and Confederate soldiers, fire blank pistols. No amount of bad tequila will get you through the gig.

Let's take a side-step and look at the Margarita.

III Consider the Margarita

*A woman walks into a bar in Juarez,
Stop me if you've heard this one before,
She says, "Build me a drink, Panchito,
I survived the divorce wars."*

*"Make it taste like Arthur Miller and Monroe,
Tequila, lime juice, and a dash of Cointreau,
salt on the rim, shake rattle and roll,
You can call it a 'Poison Mosquita...'*

Or name it after me, they call me 'Margarita.' "

The Margarita, Tom Russell

A bartender named Pancho Morales said he invented *The Margarita* over in Ciudad Juarez, in 1942, at Tommy's Bar. He moved to El Paso and became a milkman and passed away in 1997. His son said the old man *didn't even like the drink*. Pancho's story: A lady came in and ordered a *Magnolia*, and he'd never heard of that one, so he played it by ear. Salty, sweet and sour. Tequila, ice, Cointreau, fresh lime juice, a cocktail shaker, and a thin drinking glass, shaped like an upside-down *sombrero*, with salt on the rim. Necessity is the mother of drink inventions.

Other sources say the Margarita was invented at the *Tail O' The Cock* Restaurant in Beverly Hills, or a bar down in Taxco, or Hussongs Cantina on the West



Coast. My bet is on Juarez. Tequila was first imported into the United States in 1873, and it came right through here, on the El Paso/Juarez border, following the old Spanish Camino Real. All things deeply Western have crossed this historic frontier, where the first troubadour, carrying a Spanish guitar, crossed over with Don Juan de Onate in 1598. Don Juan sits atop his iron horse in front of our airport now – the largest equestrian statue in the world.

Lime juice and Cointreau were a way to introduce Tequila to border gringos because it masked the taste of the *maguey* burn. I've often sat in the old Kentucky Club bar and ordered a two-dollar Margarita while looking up at the picture of the great boxer Jack Johnson, who fought in Juarez, and photos of old Mexican baseball players and bullfighters. There is still a tile *spit canal* 'neath the bar stools, where a steady stream of water carries away the chawing tobacco, cigar butts, and contraband. They say Marilyn Monroe waltzed in one afternoon, after divorcing Arthur Miller, and bought a round of Margaritas for the house. This is a good place to drink. I rate it, along the cowboy-historic scale, equal to Rosa's Cantina in El Paso.

The Kentucky Club, as I mentioned earlier, used to have a great jukebox laden with *charro corridos*. There is no one more accomplished at *going on a bender* than the legendary and mythical Mexican *charro* of song, movie, and soap opera fame. He's often depicted with a fancy charro sombrero on his head, black mustache, cigar, knife-wound on his cheek, and a half-empty bottle of tequila at his elbow. Our hero is contemplating love and mayhem.

A back country cowboy, they say, may remain sober for years, and then all of a sudden, perhaps from a romantic setback, jump out of his chair and shriek: *AI YI! I'm Grabbing onto the bender!* He falls off the edge of the world and drinks tequila for a solid month. Until? Until he achieves transcendence, death, or sings his way through the historic catalogue of traditional songs, which heal him or lead him to a psychological breakthrough. Or *breakdown*. Then he eats *menudo* for a few mornings and walks the earth like a Tequila Lazarus who has seen the bottom of the pit and has returned to tell the story in yet another *corrido*. Something which might translate:

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**National Cowboy & Western
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Ranch & Reata

*You have broken and stepped on my heart
With your cruel and diabolical unfaithfulness
I will spit on your memory with one thousand drinks
To rid me of the screeching sound of your voice, you
wench.*

*If I had a gun I would have killed you many times
And your family as well, and all their livestock
But now your face is washed from the mirror of my soul
By the cleansing waters of this tequila.
Rot in your own hell, for I will live on...etc.*

You get the picture. Mexican songsters have a deeper resort to the dark poetry which washes through the tequila-sodden music of revenge. It's a long way from Nashville, folks, and thank God for that.

IV The Heart of the Agave – The Heart of the Matter

*Like coffee and love, Tequila is irresistible,
demanding and powerful.*

*Like coffee and love, Tequila is not
for the half-hearted*

Vicente Quirante

I wanted insider information from somebody who *knows* tequila. There's a thin line between holy water and poison. Hype and history. I've seen a dozen Tequila books filled with pictures of men chopping agaves, and rooms with shiny steel distillation tanks, and those dark chambers with ancient clay ovens where the agave pineapples are roasted prior to the distillation process. Then there's the *rap*. Tequila has now become so popular and dignified you have these characters carping on and on about complexity, depth, elegance, and balance. Steer clear. Do your own research. Carry water.

Lawrence Osborne, a world traveller who writes about drinking better than anyone, has written fine observations on wine (and spirits) – he surmises that, in the end, your memory of a great wine or spirit has much to do with the situation, your love life, the food, the weather, the waitress etc. I'd recommend his book on wine: *The Accidental Connoisseur: An Irreverent Journey through the Wine World*. There's no pretense to it. This gentleman is fearless in his research. Last I heard he lives in Bangkok. Enough said.

Complexity and depth? It depends. I think I *get it*. One night I entered a drinking joint in Naco, Mexico – a dark little hole of a bar with no seats or tables or stools. Just a sinister room with grim walls stained with patches of slaughterhouse green and maudlin blue, layered with a century of cheap tobacco smoke. A ready-made tomb. The one-eyed bartender fed me shots from a bottle of silver Herradura tequila. One dollar per shot. A man in a baseball cap stumbled in, waving a *machete* above his head, howling and hissing. Threatening the ghosts of his romantic past. He circled the room and walked out.

Four shots and six jukebox *corridos* later the walls turned from smoky green to crimson and gold. The man with the *machete* returned swinging the blade, and the bartender told me not to mind him: *that's my brother in law, his mind is rotten from bad tequila and bitter feeling concerning his mistress. If he is swinging a shotgun then it can become very dangerous.*

The situation and circumstances were adding plenty of depth and complexity to the evening. Some of these components might have issued forth from the Tequila. That's my observation. And so I've judged Herradura Silver to be an *intriguing spirit*.

I was considering a trip down to Jalisco, a journey into the tequila heartland, but fate intervened. My friend Brian Kanof, a former Special Forces officer, started his



own tequila brand. He partnered-up with Dianna Offutt, a certified wine *sommelier*, and also Kinky Friedman, the legendary Texas song man who's now in the runoff for Agricultural Commissioner in Texas. Kinky has written dozens of successful detective novels, and also composed a batch of the most irreverent songs in the American canon. The Tequila is called: *Man in Black* and it is a good one. Available only in Texas.

Brian travelled down into Mexico, in search of the truth about tequila, into the very belly of the beast. He arrived at my front gate with samples of his stock. We retired to my private cantina to talk Tequila. And imbibe.

V Conversations with a Tequila Magnate

A computer lets you make more mistakes faster than any creation in human history – with the possible exception of handguns and tequila.

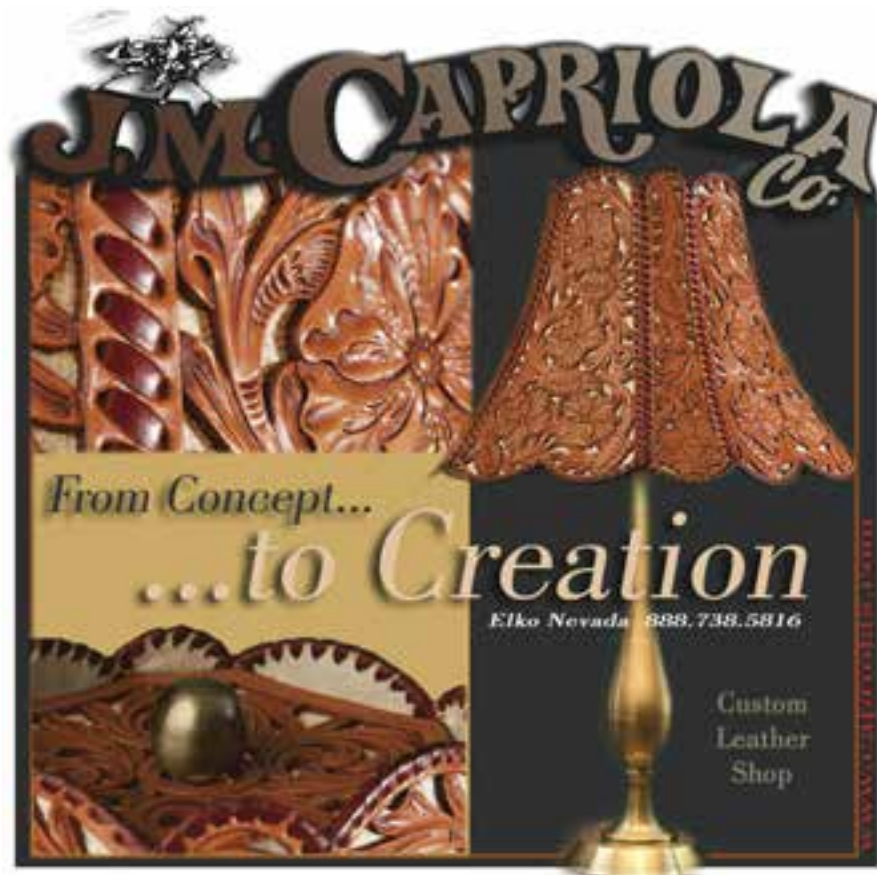
Mitch Ratcliffe,
(via Gary Brown)

Brian's first trip down to Jalisco was an odyssey to find a distillery that would produce a tequila for his newly launched brand. He wanted the top shelf. His Tequila is made by *Industrial de Agave San Isidro*, in Tepatitlan, the company which bottles *Don Ramon*, arguably the best selling premium Tequila in Mexico.

Brian brought me a *glorifier* he'd made. I'd never heard of this object. This is a *presentation stand*,

or bottle holder, or *altar*, for bars and cantinas. Brian hammered this one out in his studio. The idea was to make your brand stand out from the others. Standing tall inside the metal glorifier were three grades of *Kinky Friedman's Man in Black Tequila*, plus another dark bottle on the side. Brian sat the glorifier on my bar. School was now in session. We would see about the strength and courage of his product.

"Look," he said. "I learned what I know from Mexicans. Not foreign snobs who drink holding their pinky fingers in the air, making long, running descriptions of what they don't know. The basics are smell, taste, and finish. I've been drinking tequila since 1963, when I crossed the border into Juarez with my



high school buddies. This is the best tequila in America.”

“Simmer down,” I said. “I ain’t one of those snobs.”

“Good. Americans tend to do with distilled beverages what the French do with wine, and it rubs me the wrong way. I don’t give a damn about that. To rate it too much or equate it with some fruit or spice is for journalists, not tequila drinkers. I drink it straight. Not with lime. Not with salt. Not cold, the exception being *plata*, which I occasionally put in the fridge for a few hours.

“What about Margaritas?” I thought he’d wince in disdain. Or shoot me.

“I love ’em. It’s like drinking coolaid. I love the way they taste.”

“How does your brand differ from Mexican Tequila? That stuff that they don’t import over the border?”

“Mexican tequila varies in proof, but is usually less than 80 proof. That’s why some people think it’s smoother. The exported tequila to the States is *80 proof*. We went down there and ended up working with Don Jorge at *Don Ramon*. We tasted twenty varieties and picked four.”

I told him my ranch employee, the Aztec King, *Cuate*, just brought me a bottle of *Don Ramon* from Juarez, with a tax stamp on it. He’d walked it across the border.

“Good man. That’s the best drinking *reposado* in Mexico, my friend. Exactly the same tequila as ours...there’s a lot of alchemy involved in good Tequila, you know.”

“Such as?”

“Don Ramon won’t harvest in an odd-numbered year. *Superstition*, I suppose. The process involves praying to the gods and following the growing phases of the moon. It goes back to the Aztecs. He has a scale model of the Sistine Chapel on his property...he covers all the mystical bases. His *plata* is called *Cristenos* and

the “t” on the label is a Catholic cross.”

“Let’s get down to the tasting,” I said. “The mountains are turning crimson and happy hour is at hand in the Land of the *Charro*.”

There were three bottles of *Man in Black* sitting in *the glorifier*. *Plata*, *Reposado*, and *Anejo*. There was a fourth one on the side, a dark, squat bottle holding the *Extra Anejo*. The big boy. The top of the line. One hundred and ninety bucks a bottle.

“All our tequila,” said Brian, “has to be distilled twice to reach 80 proof.”

He picked up the bottle of silver, or *plata*. *Unaged* tequila. We poured a half shot and drank it down.

“First of all,” Brian said. “It smells like a great tequila. Right?”

“It doesn’t smell like Kerosene.”

“It’s smoother than most. Our *Plata* is twice-distilled from the *Los Altos Weber Blue Agave*. First distillation is in stainless steel, the second is in copper. The agave is harvested after 8, 10, and 12 years.”

I noticed I wasn’t getting much of that tequila nose. The after-burn.

“It has a long finish for a *plata*. This is a very smooth silver.”

He reached for the next bottle. *Reposado*. The literal English translation would be *rested*.

“Aging changes everything,” he said. “The *Reposado* is aged for 8 months in virgin American barrels that are first smoked in a smoker for three days before being filled. Barrels you might age whisky in. The inside of the barrel is never charred. The smoke comes from burning the waste *agave* fibers after the juice has been extracted. It’s like a Texas brisket. The smoky taste.”

“It’s spicy,” I said.

“Peppery,” Brian said. “At first. That’s the smoking process. The barrels. But that smooths out after ten



seconds or so, eh?

“Definitely.” I would have agreed with anything at this point.

“Most Mexican men prefer *Reposado*,” he said. “The old story is if you’re buying a friend a shot of *plata* he thinks you’re a cheapskate. If you try and show off and order *anejo* he thinks you’re arrogant, or have money. So you aim for middle ground. The *reposado*. It has character, without being pushy. That’s what we’re talking about, here. *Character*.”

He moved his hand to the right and pulled out the *Anejo*.

“*Anejo*. Aged fourteen months in French Red Oak barrels. You don’t get the pepper taste with this one. Smoother, darker. Long finish.”

We stood awhile and looked up at the old film and bullfight posters from Juarez. There was also an original Tom Lea drawing of a bullfighter, and the prints Tom had signed for me. But now Brian was opening the *Extra Anejo*. The little jug with the heavy price tag.

“Aged for over five years in French Oak, and a sixth year in Port wine barrels.”

“It picks up the Port flavors?”

“I’d say so. Some of the distilleries use old Jack Daniels barrels.”

We tasted. We toasted Tom Lea and Manolete, and the movie placard of Bette Davis, who starred in the film: *Juarez*. We toasted a signed photo of Anthony Quinn and Antonio Ordonez’s parade cape, given to me by Sylvia Tyson. Gilbert Roland, the Mexican actor, gifted it to her. Ordonez was Hemingway’s favorite matador. Hemingway wrote about him in *The Dangerous Summer*.

This *extra anejo* was dark, smooth, and enduring. It tasted like a expensive brandy.

“You could substitute this one for any great cognac,” said Brian. “And sip it as you smoke your cigar.”



“I’d get spoiled,” I said. “I can get by on *plata* and *reposado*.”

“I agree,” he said. “There’s not too much of this *extra anejo* around.”

He looked at all my Tequila bottles. “There are over 1,200 different Tequila on sale in the United States,” he said. “Frequently, when a brand grows and begins to become popular, it is purchased by a large spirits corporation. Tequila has become a mainstream spirit over the last three decades. The idea of aging tequila in oak is an American innovation. *Extra Anejo* Tequila is strictly American, brought to market first by a Texan named Neal Williamson.”

Brian keeps his large tequila inventory in a warehouse in Laredo. “You have to manufacture it by the container load,” he says. “It’s like getting plastic kazooos out of China. You have to buy a container load to justify all the trouble and expense.”

Kazooos from China? I was losing the thread.

No matter. Worship was over. He packed up the *glorifier*, grabbed the *extra anejo*, left me a bottle of *plata* and disappeared, driving towards the mountains and a gig somewhere with Kinky Friedman.

VI The Old Agave Bar, The Eisenhower Sauna, and The Pass of Death

*“Tequila is a pallid flame that passes through walls
And soars over the roofs to allay despair.
Tequila is not for men of the sea,
For it fogs the instruments of navigation.”*

Alvar Mutis

When I started my tequila studies I decided the safest way to enjoy my happy hour research was in my own bar. So I built a small cantina in my *hacienda*. I was

a bachelor back then. I knew enough about mental health to surmise it wasn’t wise to drink alone, so I bought an antique dummy and put a *sombrero* on him. I named him Pancho Morales, for the inventor of the Margarita. Here was my bartender. He worked cheap and I’d assumed he’d keep his mouth shut. I was wrong. *Tequila wrong.*

One day Pancho insulted me, after many shots of *Siete Leguas*, and I knocked his block off and sent him to the trash barrel in a beer carton. The next morning I arrived at the realization that I needed to slow down, or contemplate detoxification. What the hell, I purchased a used sauna. It works for the vodka drinkers of Finland, doesn’t it? My own private detoxification unit – a sauna torn out of Fort Bliss, Texas – a wooden room which had once been the think tank for Generals Eisenhower and Bradley. I was awarded this plaque from the company that restored the sauna – it’s hanging on the wall near the glass entrance door:

This sauna was originally installed in the officers club at Ft. Bliss, Texas. It has been used by the likes of Dwight Eisenhower and General Omar Bradley. It has now been commissioned for service by Tom Russell...

Ole! I savored that bottle of *Siete Leguas* for a few years and it sits, empty, in my bar in El Paso, beneath the stuffed head of a brave fighting bull (missing both ears.) On the bar are other oddball spirits from around the world, including *Carlos Arruza Anis*, *Manolete Anis*, *Sotol*, *Mescal*, and a brand of *Vincent Van Gogh* absinthe. I have not sampled the *Van Gogh*. It requires a mysterious ritual with hot flame and silver spoon and besides, Vincent ended up staggering around a French brothel, holding his ear in the palm of his shaky hand.

I’m still chasing the horse corridos. Every Saturday



in July and August the local *Lienzo Charro* ring, near our house, has a *charreada*. A celebration of music, drink, food, and horsemanship. The events include *The Pass of Death*, where a *charro* jumps from his own horse to the back of an un-broke horse and rides it backwards until it stops bucking. The band bangs out *corridos*, beer cans are crushed underfoot, and raised tequila flasks glisten in the desert sun.

Yes, Rose, I am still doing the research, dancing in the shadow of the *Blue Agave*. Running my hand over the *pallid flame which allays despair*. Talking to the

three-headed dog. I have learned to respect the mystical spirit of the juice of the petrified octopus. Two shots per day is plenty.

I'll leave you with a favorite tequila verse, by the late Hoyt Axton:

*There's a great hot desert, south of Mexicali
If you don't have the water, you'd better not go...
For tequila won't get you, across that desert...
To Evangelina, down in old Mexico.*

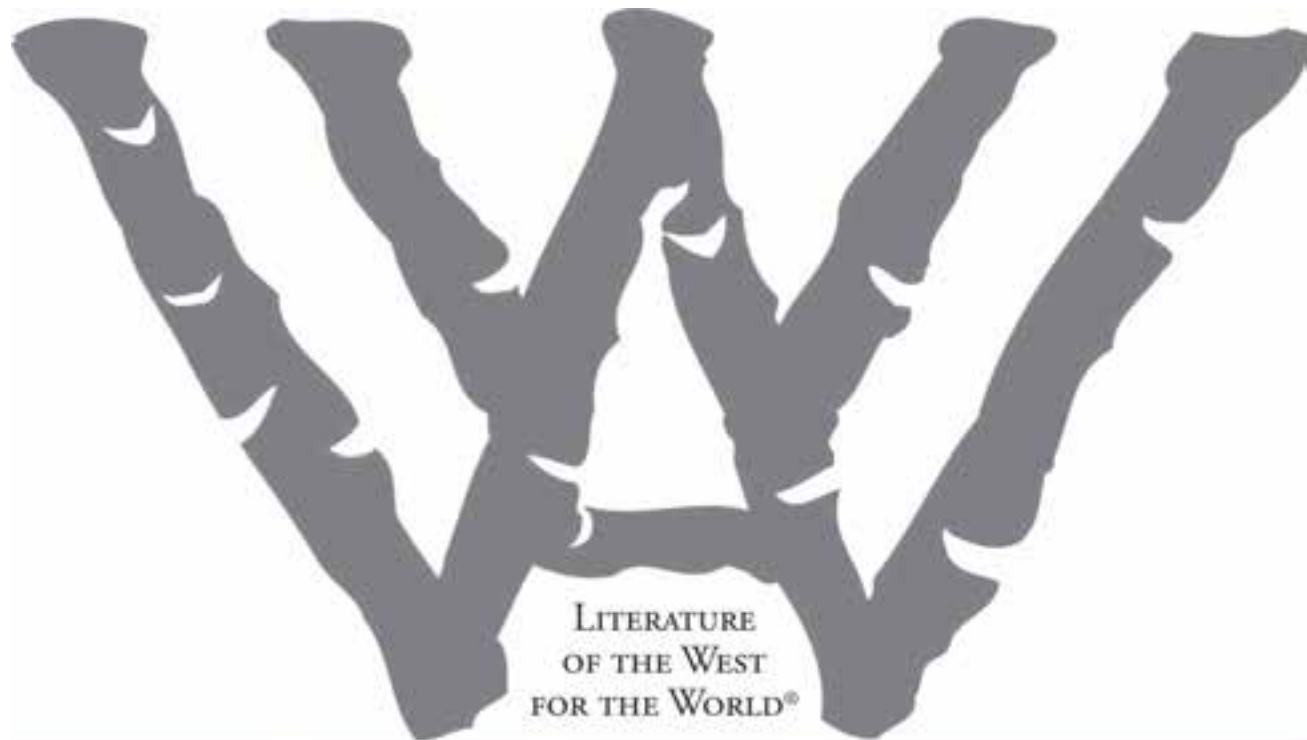
Evangelina, Hoyt Axton



Thanks to Gary Brown, Brian Kanof and Larry Sloven for photos and information.

Tom Russell's records, books, and art are located at: www.tomrussell.com

Tom will be performing at the Durango and Monterrey Cowboy Poetry Gatherings later this year.



Western Writers of America
www.westernwriters.org

Old Paint

One of the West's classic cowboy songs has mysterious roots.

By Hal Cannon

“Many publishers swiped my song and had it published, and many old maverick, ‘Old Paints,’ were running wild and unbranded.”

— Jess Morris, from a 1950 letter to Duncan Emrich, Chief, Folklore Section, Library of Congress

There have been several people who have laid claim to the classic cowboy folk song “Goodbye Old Paint,” including an early Texas cowboy fiddler, Jess Morris. A few have made money from the song, but it is one of those pieces that never could be tamed into authorship.

Morris, born in 1878, was a pioneering cowboy on the XIT Ranch. He played both cowboy fiddle and formal violin, and started a cowboy orchestra in Dalhart just after the Texas Panhandle town was settled. He was obsessed with his claim to have written “Goodbye Old Paint,” and his long stream of correspondence, first with the legendary folklorist and cowboy song collector John Lomax, and later Lomax’s successor at the Library of Congress, Duncan Emrich, bears an element of Quixotic folly.

“Mr. Emrich,” Morris wrote at one point, “can’t you get the Hon. Lyndon Johnson and Hon. Tom Connally to write the proper authorities in Austin Texas to let me hang my picture alongside of Jean [Gene] Autry in their Hall of Fame in the Capitol Building. I can’t see that

Jean has anything on me unless it’s his beautiful teeth.”

Emrich obviously enjoyed his correspondence with the Texan. He wrote, “May I, at this time, thank you for your courtesy of sending me the picture of your dog. He looks like a fine intelligent animal. By [an] odd chance, you purchased him on August 22, 1944, which was exactly



photo courtesy Library of Congress

Charley and Laura Willis. Texas cowboy Jess Morris claimed authorship of “Goodbye Old Paint,” but at times gave credit to Charley, a fellow cowboy and former slave.



photos by Hal Cannon

Roger Renwick, formerly of the University of Texas, links cowboy songs to the tradition of African American “blues ballads.”

100 years after the use of the word ‘folklore’ in England.”

It was suggested to me recently that some of the greatest things about the world happened because no one laid claim. In a minor way this is why many great folk songs have had such lasting power. “Old Paint,” is a potent example. We can trace a bit of its history, but we’ll probably never know its original author.

John Lomax claims to have first heard “Old Paint” in 1910, in a saloon in Cheyenne, Wyoming, where Oklahoma rancher and Lomax’s former college classmate, Boothe Merrill, performed the song. Lomax had come to Frontier Days stalking former President Theodore Roosevelt in order to get an endorsement for his forthcoming collection of cowboy songs. He did not

record the song at the time and did not include it in the collection. In a hand-scrawled note found in the Library of Congress archive, Lomax says he first heard Morris’s version, which he considered the original, in 1915. However, it wasn’t until 1941 that Lomax commissioned Morris to record the song.

Morris claimed authorship and, on Lomax’s advice, even copyrighted the song, giving it the title, “Ridin’ Ol Paint An’ Leadin’ Ol’ Ball,” but he elsewhere gave credit to a former slave and trail drive cowboy, Charley Willis, for teaching him the song on the Jews’ harp when Morris was seven years old, which would have been around 1885. Over the years, Morris gave varying credit to Willis but nevertheless claimed the song as his own. In the *New Mexican Stockman*, Morris reported that he



Rooster Morris, Texas fiddler and great nephew of Jess Morris.

wrote out the music for Lomax in 1927, whereupon Lomax forwarded it to Oscar Fox in San Antonio, who arranged it for a male chorus and published it. Fox did not, however, copyright the song.

By the early part of the 20th century, the song circulated broadly among both white and black cowboys. Margaret Larkin and Lynn Riggs collected the song from a New Mexico cowboy in Santa Fe under the title “I Ride an Old Paint.” This somewhat different song was then adapted for theatrical performances in the east by Larkin and Riggs. This was an early venture into the adaptations for which they became famous. Years later, their “Green Grows the Lilac” was the basis for the Broadway hit, *Oklahoma*.

The first edition of Lomax’s *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* contained 112 songs. In his notes, Lomax credits ancient Anglo-Saxon ballads for informing the

cowboy song. Roger Renwick, a retired professor of folklore at the University of Texas, has written extensively on the connection between Old World and New World ballads. He agrees that many cowboy songs are derived from British folk songs, but notes that some take a different course, “especially [those that] don’t tend to be as sequential and chronological in telling a story as the European ballads...They don’t tend to be as expository, as detailed – who, what, where, when. They just sort of allude to the subject. Indeed some scholars have called this distinct African American genre ‘the blues ballad’ because it synthesizes the more emotional blues approach than the more narrative ballad approach.”

When I spoke to Morris’s great nephew, Rooster Morris, who is also a great Texas cowboy fiddler, he observed that “Old Paint” has many of the attributes of the blues ballad. In his words, “When you first listen to

the lyrics, you think they don’t make any sense. And then before you know it you’re seeing this wonderful movie in your mind of visions, and you can feel it.”

I also spoke to Franklin Willis, a great grandson of Charley Willis, the black cowboy who first sang “Old Paint” to Jess Morris. Franklin told me that his great grandfather came from a long line of cowboy singers. In family lore, Charley’s gift was that his voice was particularly soothing to the cattle. Unfortunately none of the Willis cowboys were ever recorded and, in fact, there are no recordings of any black cowboy singing “Old Paint” from those early days.

Cowboy singer and historian

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Don Edwards explained. “If you go down to deep south Texas where this music was born, down in the coastal bend,” he says, “the white guys learned from the blacks and the Mexicans who were very musical people.” Estimates vary, but some think that as many as one in four cowboys from the Texas trail drives was black. In early photos you see both segregated and mixed crews.

Lomax credited the musical contribution of African Americans as fundamental to the American experience, but when it came to cowboy traditions, he did not go out of his way to acknowledge the contributions of blacks. He was, after all, a 19th century man.

When I was a young folklorist, Lomax’s daughter, Bess Lomax Hawes, was a mentor to me. She told me that her father, particularly in his later life, believed strongly in segregation of the races. He was, however, a revolutionary in his belief in the songs of Americans of all races. His daughter summed it up this way: “Father’s basic message to us was that everybody who isn’t outside of the human condition has the potential for creativity and contribution, and that they should be admired for whatever it is they can produce that is positive.”

In the end, why is it important for us to recognize a beloved old cowboy folk song like “Goodbye Old Paint” as a song coming from the black cowboy experience? For Mike Searles, a historian at Augusta State University, it’s all about how we view the legacy of the West.

“Many people see the American West as the birthplace of this country,” he explains. If the West is viewed only as the

birthplace of white America, “it means basically that all other people are interlopers. They’re not part of the core of what makes an American.”

When I used to sing “Goodbye Old Paint,” with the beloved cowboy singer Buck Ramsey, we both relished its mysterious past and yearned to know what it sounded like when it was sung and played by black cowboys on those early trail drives to Wyoming. Holding these drovers in mind, we would take the song to a very bluesy place. I love “Old Paint” in all its variations. It is a mongrel song that has been changed and shared by many people. It is, in other words, a truly American classic.



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

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A VISIT WITH BUCK BRANNAMAN

You, Your Horse and the Vet. Be ready.

Recently I had the pleasure of giving the keynote presentation at the annual AAEP (American Association of Equine Practitioners) convention held in Denver. I do a lot of speaking at my clinics – and a fair amount now for various non-profit organizations, especially those involved with Foster Parenting, as I have first-hand experience with that subject. This was a unique and really enjoyable experience for me as I was speaking to a room of folks who were there because they all care for and about horses. I was told there were over six thousand veterinarians present and I must admit it was something walking out on to that stage. But realizing I had what seemed to be a pretty friendly crowd, I figured I would speak about a subject that I speak of constantly in my “day job” and that is about relationships. In this

case for the group in front of me, about the triad experience my audience usually finds themselves in – that being with the horse and its owner.

I have found that a lot of horse owners pick their



Buck speaking at the AAEP Convention in Denver.

vets based upon their ability to get along with a given horse but the truth is it not the vet’s primary problem. It is the owner’s responsibility to prepare the horse to be handled long before the vet is ever needed or called. This is especially true when bad things happen – and they can – and they will, at some point. Horses do get injured and when the vet needs to do his or her job, the quality of the relationship between owner and horse is critically important. So it is necessary that we prepare for the unexpected and realize that the horse will look to you



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for trust and support. That comes from working with the horse in the halter and controlling each of his four corners – his feet. Your ability to control your horse’s feet is as important on the ground as it is in the saddle – especially when a third entity is introduced, like a vet.

That’s why I stress with people to make sure their horses are prepared and that means they are good in the halter. I have had a number of people in my clinics come to me and say they can’t load their horses in the trailer. The trailer is not the problem, it’s the fact that the horse won’t lead and the owner has either lost control of the feet or never had control in the first place. Being able to lead your horse, in control of his four corners is essential to establishing a mutual giving relationship between the two of you.

Ray Hunt told me years ago, you get to the horse’s head through his feet. And that means controlling all

four corners of your horse – with softness. Working on that and gaining that control helps not only with a vet visit but also with shoers, crowds, and all sorts of situations. Remember, your horse moves away from pressure and when there is none, he will settle. This is all about trust and awareness. The human must be as aware as the horse is and that can be hard for many people. It is a studied awareness. Look at it this way – it means a person needs to know what happened before what happened happened. Think about that for a bit. Getting your horse soft means the two of you are on equal terms of understanding and that equality and ultimately – trust – will go a long way in any situation. I know your vet will appreciate it during your next visit. I can tell you that for a fact as those six thousand vets I was speaking to in Denver seemed to agree.



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THE HEN HOUSE

Food Makes Friends



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

By the amount of friends we have show up randomly at the Hen House, you'd assume we were pretty cool. Turns out, they only like us for our food. Unlike most college houses, you won't find any bulk supply of Raman noodles in our kitchen! We prefer the homemade approach. Even with our sometimes crazy and mismatched schedules, we somehow manage to gather for at least a few meals a week. Family meals are a must, they followed us to college. You could say we have a reputation here at MSU...one with lots of cast iron skilletts, homemade

biscuits and a sink full of dishes.



We can put off grocery shopping for weeks at a time and somehow manage to whip up a scrumptious meal. Hey! Speaking of whipping up things, Ceily is the mad scientist chef of the house, she pulls out every condiment in the fridge and every spice in the rack, ignoring the apprehensive glances of her roommates. When in doubt pour some beer in it... This is Ceily's cooking motto, 98% of the time it works (Ceily was appalled at our declaration of her 2% failure rate). Safety classes may be necessary when entering into Ceily's lab.



Hannah is the recluse of the kitchen, always ready to taste something but hardly ever gracing the kitchen with her presence. Hannah single handedly props up the butter market in the United States, her high metabolism doesn't quite understand why we can't consume her cream cheese, heavy cream, parmesan, butter pasta sauce; its not that we don't want to, we just can't. But it never fails, when we leave her home alone, our house becomes a 5 star restaurant...We know this because she always calls and fills us in on what we're missing. Three words...Chocolate Guinness Cake. (which was preceded by bacon wrapped filet mignon) We're completely serious, she really did that to us. Can you believe it? (to Hannah's future husband: we're working on her cooking FOR OTHERS). Reata is the comfort cook, whenever you need a meal that simply warms your body, she's the one to go to. Although her cooking is comforting once finished, touch a bowl or try and taste something before its ready...you'll be sorry...the wrath of Reata. Reata's the only one allowed to touch the grill in this house, her secret steak marinade (she literally puts it on everything) is the bomb. Oh Nevada...aka Betty Crocker. Did you know its possible to have snow in the kitchen? well it is in our house! Oh wait...It was just Nevada baking (or murdering a flour bag). There is no such thing as too many dishes; clean as you go? Not in Nevada's kitchen (this drives the comfort cook and the mad scientist completely nuts... Good thing those biscuits are decent). Literally, we will be cleaning flour up for days after one of Nevada's episodes. But really, Nevada is an amazing baker...or so her classmates have told us. She always seems to bake, take, and distribute these delicacies all over campus. 15,000 students here at MSU and half of them know Nevada as the girl who always brings baked goods to class.

Collectively we decided to gather up a few of our



favorite recipes. It shouldn't be too difficult to find out who provided each recipe, answers will follow. Good luck and may the force be with you!

Chicken Enchiladas with Green Chile White Sauce

Ingredient List

Tortillas, 8 to 10 depending on how many people you intend to feed. You can use flour or corn. If you choose corn make sure you don't purchase 'extra soft' tortillas. Trust me. Tortilla mush, not good. I do prefer to use corn for the texture, just make sure to get some with substance!

3 Tbsp flour

3-4 boneless chicken breasts, or twice that number of chicken thighs.

2 cups chicken broth

- 1 cup sour cream
- 3 cups cheese, shredded – I like to use a mix of Cheddar, Monterey Jack and Pepper Jack.
- 3 Tbsp butter
- 4oz can of diced green chilies
- 1 medium onion
- Some Jalapeño peppers if you're feeling spicy. As many as you dare.
- Cumin
- Salt
- Chili Powder
- Pepper
- Cilantro
- Chicken



First, chop the onion. Put a large skillet (cast iron is brilliant) on the stove top, toss in some oil, enough to cover the bottom in a thin layer. You can add more later on if you start feeling decadent. Turn to medium low and throw in the onions. While the onions are sautéing, take the chicken and slap it on the cutting board. If using breasts, butterfly them or pound them out so they're an even thickness. If using thighs, cut off the excess fat. Season chicken with cumin, salt, garlic powder or garlic salt (go easy on this) and a dash of chili powder, I'm not giving measurements because

most people know how much seasoning they like. Do your thing. Thighs naturally have more flavor so less seasoning will be needed if using them. Scoop out the onions and put them in a dish. Turn the pan to medium high and place the chicken in the pan. Usually about 5-6 minutes on each side for thighs and 7-8 for breasts. When the chicken is done, shred into bite sized pieces.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees

- Combine shredded chicken, sautéed onions and chopped Jalapeño peppers if you're using them. Take 1 cup of cheese and set all aside.
- Melt 3 tbsp butter in a pan over medium heat
- Stir 3 tbsp flour into butter and whisk for 1 minute over heat.
- Add 2 cups chicken broth and whisk together. Cook over heat until it's thick and bubbles up
- Take off heat and add in 1 cup sour cream and 4oz chilies. (be careful it's not too hot or the sour cream will curdle)
- In separate pan at medium high, put a splash of oil (I use olive but anything with light/no flavor will do) and lightly heat tortillas until crisp but still pliable enough to roll. Doing this keeps them from getting soggy.
- Fill tortillas with chicken mixture and roll each one then place, fold side down in a greased pan.
- Pour sauce mixture over enchiladas and add remaining cheese to top.
- Bake in oven for 20-23 minutes then you will want to broil for 3 minutes to brown the cheese.
- Garnish with cilantro or diced green onions or whatever else you desire.

Enjoy!



Beer and BBQ Chicken Tacos with Blue Cheese Slaw

This recipe is one of my all time favorites... not only has it given me a following of taco night supporters who demand that I make this concoction on a regular basis, it is easy to make and the ingredients (as wild as they sound) come together absolutely deliciously!!! So if you too want a fan base of hungry taco lovers following you around, this is the perfect dish!

First thing first, the gathering of the ingredients!



You will need:

- 2 lb boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 8 oz beer (you can always add more)
- 1 cup barbecue sauce (again, you can always add more)
- 12 corn tortillas

For the Slaw:

- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 3 tbsp plain Greek yogurt
- 2 tbsp grainy Dijon mustard
- ½ lemon juiced
- Salt and pepper
- ¼ cup blue cheese dressing (you can add crumbled blue cheese too)

Chopped cilantro

½ cup vinegar

Half a cabbage chopped (I prefer red cabbage, its more colorful!)

Concocting:

- Cut chicken into small pieces and sauté with olive oil, salt, and pepper in a large sized frying pan until chicken is browned on the outside.
- Turn down heat and add in the beer and bbq sauce, make sure bbq sauce is mixed in thoroughly.
- Let that simmer until meat is soft and cooked through; make sure sauce is less liquid and more sticky.
- While the chicken is simmering, combine mayo, vinegar, yogurt, mustard, lemon, salt and pepper, cilantro, and blue cheese dressing in a large bowl and mix well.
- Add chopped cabbage to bowl and mix, its best to refrigerate slaw until you are ready to serve.
- Have one of your friends fry the tortillas in olive oil, fold them in half, and keep them in the oven to stay warm (because we all know that cooking the tortillas is the LEAST fun part and YOU will be too busy doing the important chef stuff to do it!).

Assembly and serving:

- To serve, fill tortillas halfway with chicken and the rest of the way with the slaw
- I like to top it off by sprinkling fresh cilantro and lime juice on top, you can also put a tiny bit of pico de gallo on top as well if you feel so inclined (I usually do!)

Serve and consume immediately!

Yield: 6 servings (2 tacos each)

DISCLAIMER: IF THE COOKING OF THIS MEAL RESULTS IN STALKERS... not my fault

Black Pepper Cheddar Biscuits

My dad always said that he married my mother for her amazing biscuit baking abilities. I'll admit that I did get a proposal the other day when I brought these biscuits to class, so I must have inherited some of her skill! Biscuits are a staple around my house and nothing tastes better than a hot biscuit straight out of the oven. You can put anything you want into this recipe, savory or sweet, you can make them how you please. We were feeling like something a little savory so I chose black pepper and cheddar. Let the flour fly!



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What you'll need:

- 2 cups flour
- 1 tsp salt (or for these I used seasoning salt)
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 3 tsp baking powder
- 4 tbsp cold butter grated into mixture
- ½ cup grated cheddar cheese
- ½ cup milk (until the dough comes together: measuring isn't my strong suit)

What to do:

Preheat the oven to 400. Place in a 10 inch cast iron skillet to heat up.

Mix it together...just kidding, I'll explain! Whisk the dry ingredients together in a bowl, grate in the butter, using pastry cutter or hands combine butter with dry ingredients until the mixture looks like coarse crumbs. Grate in the cheese and mix it up! Grab the milk, (make sure to leave a flour handprint, just to let them know you were there) add milk slowly, stir gently until dough comes together. Make sure not to add too much or the dough will be too wet. If you accidentally do, just add some more flour to the mix! Speaking of flour, spread a good layer on the counter top (heaven forbid we would contain the flour). "Plop" the dough right in the middle of it. Be gentle, and mold the dough into a ¾ inch disc. Grab a biscuit cutter or some spherical device and cut those bad boys out! Grab the cast iron skillet from the oven, and arrange the biscuits. Brush the biscuits with a beaten egg white, and top with a bit of pepper and cheddar. Place in the oven for 10-12 minutes, or until the bottoms are golden brown. When done, split open to a steamy bite of deliciousness!

Love in a Pot Roast





It's really easy to mess up a pot roast, but its really easy to make a great one too! This is guaranteed to attract quite a few hungry cowboys, at least it does around this outfit. And it only gets better with time! I've been known to leave it in for a few extra hours on accident and have it be 10 times better than it would have been if I would have taken it out when I was supposed to.

Whatcha Need:

- 3 lb roast
 - 2 sweet onions (quartered)
 - 6 carrots (chunked)
 - 2 ½ lbs red potatoes (halved)
 - 1 clove garlic
 - 1 packet onion soup mix
 - one brown gravy packet
 - 2 tbsp "better than beef bouillon"
 - 1 small can cream of mushroom soup
 - 1-2 can (from mushroom soup) water
 - ¼ cup Worchester sauce
 - 3 tbsp soy sauce
 - 1 tbsp Montreal steak seasoning
 - ½ tsp sage
 - bundle of rosemary, sage, thyme (wrap in string to keep together)
 - salt and pepper to taste
 - honey (trust me)
- There really isn't a set bunch of spice, just throw stuff in as you wish!

How to make it:

Preheat oven to 300.

- I prefer using a cast iron dutch oven, but a crock pot will work too.
- In the pot, place roast, cover with onion soup mix and gravy packet.
- Strategically put onions, carrots, and potatoes around and under roast.
- Put in Worchester sauce, soy sauce, beef bouillon and water.
- Put in spices, dump cream of mushroom soup over the contents.
- Put bundle of herbs in mixture
- Drizzle honey over top of mixture.
- Cover with dutch oven lid
- Place in oven for a minimum of 6 hours, until the beef literally crumbles when you touch it!



The Ranch Women Project

Fueled by childhood inspirations, an Arizona photographer documents the inspiring women of the ranching culture.

By Lori Faith

*We rode hard, hard and long all day
For something more valued than pay
A time honored code, for this we rode.*

– Deanna Dickinson McCall

Horses have been the center of my life since 1971, when we got our first horses and I discovered the world through their eyes and from their backs. They have been my greatest teachers and truest companions. I grew up at the edge of the desert, with thousands of acres of unspoiled land to explore. I could ride from our home, past one house, across a little dirt road, and I was in the *real* world, a world where nature and horses and God were my teachers and companions, where I built forts, corrals and round pens out of mesquite branches, and where my horses taught me and I them.

I studied the environment and animal husbandry and how to herd jackrabbits on a green colt. I learned what happens when you ride a four-year-old bareback into an arroyo suddenly alive with a den of rattlesnakes. (Thanks to quick teamwork, adrenaline and muscles strengthened from riding bareback, we got out unscathed, but I still clench my jaw when I remember that sound.)

Except for a friend who rode with me often for

years and shared my joy of all things horse and desert, and the times my mom rode out with me, I was alone on these outings, riding the circle steadfastly and observantly at times, focusing on the art of the desert at other times, and working my horses over that landscape of rock and sand and hill until they were capable of anything I asked.

I didn't care much for people. They were nice to "visit," but I wouldn't want to live there, if you know what I mean. People told me it wasn't safe out in the desert, and I answered back that, most times, it was safer out there than in my home. I didn't have cattle, but could've related to ranch gal Becky Carr, who says, "I would rather work with an angry mother cow than most people." So, I stayed away from the rare homes I came across out in the desert and went my merry way, just me and my horses.

I was 12 when I noticed on one of my rides a swirl of dust rising about a quarter-mile away. It didn't fit with what I knew about dust devils. Curious, I rode toward it and came upon a ranch where a woman was driving a



Becky Carr

Becky Carr grew up on a Nebraska Sandhills ranch, and ranching has stayed in her blood. A few years ago, she moved from the Horton Ranch, near Hot Springs, South Dakota, to the historic Collins Ranch, north of Gillette, Wyoming, where her husband and his uncle run cattle. She loves the peaceful outdoors, working cattle, horses, milking cows and tending chickens, and having the opportunity to pass on the ranching legacy to her children.

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small herd of cattle toward old wooden pens. I figured out the swirl of dust when I saw her trotting from side to side at the back of the herd, tightening them up to funnel them through the open gate.

Through they went, and when she closed the gate, from my vantage point behind the trees, I saw the most beautiful thing. This woman, caked in dust and sitting on this lathered-up horse, untied the bandana that had been around her neck (I didn't know what a wild rag was back

then), wiped the sweat from her face, and then tipped the horse's head toward her, one side then the other, and wiped its eyes. Then she shook out the bandana, tied it back on her neck and leaned back. She let the sun hit her face and she smiled. Oh, how she smiled.

I sat there, barely daring to breathe, willing my horse not to move, and I noticed her tanned leather skin was grooved deep. She must have been 30 or even 40 years older than I had first thought when I saw her



Lori Faith of Photography By Faith specializes in equine and western culture images, emphasizing western music and cowboy poetry, horsemen and horsewomen, cowboys and ranchers. Her images have been published internationally, utilized in equine advertising and western music and art promotions, and enjoyed by private collectors. She provides art reference images to painters and other artists, and has served as an official photographer for the Western Music Association's Festival and Awards, National Day of the Cowboy, Festival of the West and other special events. In 2009, she was accepted as the guest photographer for Gathering of Nations. Volunteering for organizations that provide rescue services for horses and other animals, and those that provide equine therapeutic assistance, inspired her to become a founding artist of HeARTists for Horses, a group of equine artists dedicated to using their work to benefit horses. Based in Tucson, Lori travels extensively for portrait sessions, to provide photography for ranches and barns, and to create images for her portfolio. She has gathered images for several years for her *Ranch Women*, *Legacy* and *Bringing The West To Where You Live* projects. Contact Lori and view her work at www.photographybyfaith.com.

riding so skillfully and gracefully. I have never seen such a beautiful woman, I thought. Truer still, I felt deep in my soul *why* she was so beautiful. She was *alive*, fully and freely, living the life that I suddenly knew I wanted. Without saying a word, she taught me one of my life's greatest truths: All those people who told me that a horse and the desert couldn't possibly mean as much to me as I said it did? They were wrong.

From that day on, I looked for ranches in the desert. There weren't many, but they were there, "hidden" from those who saw only buildings and landscaped yards. I didn't tell anyone about this new college I had signed up for because it was *mine* and that was a rare thing, to have something so important that I didn't want to share the experience for fear it would somehow be taken away.

I usually watched the ranchers, especially the ranch women, through the trees and cacti. Sometimes I got a little braver or someone would see me and wave me in. These were sacred experiences, and I did my homework all the way back home as I rode through the desert with a lighter soul and deeper understanding. I knew this was meant to be my life, and at 19, I was freshly married and had landed a job as a ranch manager.

Life takes its twists and turns and sometimes has surprised me and even bucked me off, but through relationships, (blessedly short) times spent living in apartments, and other jobs taken to pay the bills, I continued to train horses, muck stalls, fix fences and manage ranches, and keep the *heart* of a ranch woman, though I still would not call myself one. I have a little plot of land at the edge of the desert, and have had horses, and live with that heart and purpose, but I am not a ranch woman, for now.

Those women can pull calves, fix tractors, train dogs for work, start colts and transform those colts into fine bridle horses. Each can hold a child to a hip



Heather Raftery

Heather Raftery throws herself full bore into anything she sets her heart and mind to. She worked as an assistant trainer for Scott Raftery Cutting Horses for seven years, and is now pursuing a career as a photojournalist.

while throwing hay to horses, break winter ice and never let themselves break in the drought and heat, get up before dawn and lay down long after dark while keeping the home and hearth and horses and husband in good health and spirits.

Ranch women come in all shapes and sizes and the jobs they do may vary, from telling the stories of ranch life in poem and song to running cow-calf operations to

training horses and horse folk alike. Some may not get horseback often, as husbands might ride the circle as wives keep the home fires burning and care for each critter and child and friend that drops by. Every ranch woman, though, has a story and I am determined to document all of them that I can convince to step in front of my lens, so their heritage lives on. As the images and words in my *Ranch Women Project* grow, so does my dream.



Georgie Sicking

Georgie Sicking was born in Kingman, Arizona, in 1921. Through her exceptional life, she has lived passionately and strongly as a wife, mother, mustanger, cowboy poet and cowboy. (Yes, cowboy, for in her world, cowboy is a verb, as in “to cowboy.”) This photograph accompanies Georgie’s exhibit at the National Cowgirl Museum, where she is a Hall of Fame inductee.



Sarah Henderson

Sarah Henderson worked at the Rockin' R Ranch as wrangler and horse trainer, spending her summers leading trail rides, assisting on cattle drives and giving lessons. Clean air and a remuda of horses to work with every day brought out the heart of a ranch woman in Sarah, and she looks forward to each day in the saddle.



Brandi Snyder Hanks

Brandi Snyder Hanks has found her heaven in Antimony, Utah, as a ranch manager (with her husband, Brandon) on the Rockin' R Ranch, where she oversees operations with her daughters, Nyle and Naavah, growing up in her shadow. Brandi is up before dawn and down late at night with a whole lot of "busy" in between, so she finds that the simple things, like bringing in the remuda each morning, are blessings indeed.



Lynn Ismond

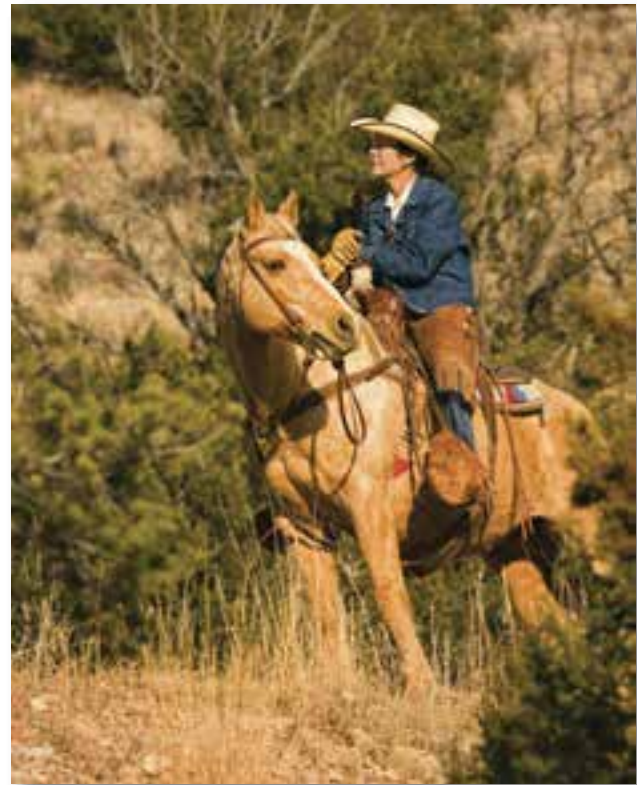
Lynn Ismond is one of your "what do you need?" ranch gals. She's worked as a dude string wrangler and ranch manager, and has devoted time to working at a horse rescue. Get her far away from a city and she's a happy gal who considers ranch work "real work," throwing her shoulder into it with grit and grace that many of her ranch sisters share.



Mona Black

Mona Lundgreen married her sweetheart, Burns Black, in 1944, and they moved to Antimony, Utah, a few years later. They started the Rockin' R Ranch in 1971 as a boys' and girls' summer camp and, with the help of their four sons and others, built it into a fine ranch that people from all over the world have been coming to for over 30 years.

Burns died in 2012, at 88, but ranch matriarch Mona is active in continuing to fulfill their dream.



Deanna McCall

Deanna Dickinson McCall ranches in the mountains of New Mexico with her husband, after 22 years spent raising their three children on a remote Nevada ranch without electricity or phones. She is from a long line of ranchers and reveres the ranching way of life, and its ethics and philosophies. Deanna is also a cowboy poet and author, and her book *Mustang Spring* has garnered high praise for its authentic tales of gritty existence, simple honest love, a code of honor still upheld, and beating overwhelming odds.



Kristin True

Alongside her husband, Michael, Kristin True lives and breathes the White Stallion Ranch, a ranch that started as a working cattle operation and has become one of the best guest ranches in the nation. She can often be found working horses in the wee hours of the morning, taking advantage of the calm before the storm of the day's activities.



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Arnold Rojas: Voice of the Vaqueros

Straddling the boundary of history and fiction, the stories Arnold Rojas gathered “around the campfire and in the bunkhouse” speak eloquently for the vanished California vaqueros.

By Gerald Haslam

California’s vaqueros rode ranges seldom mentioned in popular western novels, and few motion pictures featured them, so the general public even today knows little of their lives and accomplishments. Ironically, at the very time Hollywood was beginning to produce the Western, vaqueros still rode – albeit in diminishing numbers – the mountains and great valley not far north of the studios.

Given Southern California’s slick, urban image, it is sometimes surprising to realize that in the last century it *was* the Wild West: Los Angeles in the 1850s was, according to Lawrence Clark Powell, “the toughest town in the West, a cesspool of frontier scum.” Horace Bell, in *Reminiscences of a Ranger* (1881), documents the period when the future megalopolis was still very much a Mexican pueblo. Americans adjusted to the region, not vice-versa. Bell, referred to by a contemporary as a “black-mailer, murderer, thief, houseburner, snake-hunter and defamer of the dead” but otherwise a fine chap, offers a sense of that society when he defines *gringo*:

Gringo, in its literal signification, means ignoramus. For instance: an American who has not yet learned to eat chili peppers stewed in grease, throw the lasso, contemplate the beauties of nature from the sunny side of an adobe wall, make a first-class cigar out of corn husk, wear open-legged pantaloons, with bell bottoms, dance on one leg, and live on one meal a week.

Though Southern California would be known as “the cow counties” until the 1880s, in the 1860s a terrible drought devastated the area’s beef industry. Robert Glass Cleland describes its effect this way:

The thousands of head of “black cattle and beasts of burden”, which once carried the familiar brands of the proudest of California families, disappeared forever from the plains and valleys and rolling hills. Reduced to the unromantic realism of assessment lists and tax returns, the story of the passing of the old



rancheros is written in the long-forgotten, dust-covered records of every Southern California county.

Thus ended the region's primacy in ranching. But just north of Los Angeles, in the Tehachapi Mountains, cattle and sheep roamed the canyons and meadows of Edward Fitzgerald Beale's vast Rancho Tejon, and a few miles farther north lay the vast San Joaquin Valley into which the Tejon's holdings extended and where the ranches of Miller and Lux (encompassing more than 1,000,000 acres) developed later in the century. Consequently, the San Joaquin's southernmost town, Bakersfield, "early became the 'feeder cattle' capital for the livestock producers of the Southwest and remained so for many years," explains W.H. Hutchinson.

Beale's Rancho Tejon, in many ways prototypical of the state's cattle and sheep industry, also mirrored the developing state's culture with what Kevin Starr refers to as "its assertive amalgamation of Indian, Spanish, Mexican, and American elements." Most of the Tejon's riders in that period were Mexicans, that equally assertive combination of Indian and Spanish and what-have-you that still characterizes many Californians. From 1874 until 1939, the fabled Don Jesus Lopez served as *mayordomo* on the Tejon. Ranching was a Hispanic industry employing technology and riders directly linked to the region's Hispanic past, and Beale wisely recognized that reality. As Kevin Starr summarizes, "For 30 years and more, Beale kept vital on the Tejon an American recapitulation of the previous social order."



Vaqueros Frisco, Sal Carmelo, John Gomez, Jake Smith and Jim Gorman, 1917.

One man remains a living link to that place and what it represents in our history. He is Arnold R. "Jefe" Rojas, author of seven books dealing with his fellow vaqueros. Beale was long dead when Chief Rojas rode into a Rancho Tejon vaquero camp in the 1920s, but the legendary *mayordomo* J.J. Lopez was not. Rojas recalls in *California Vaquero* (1953),

I had sat down and was fixing something on my saddle when, looking up, I found watching me, an elderly man dressed in a pair of corduroy pants faded white from countless washings, a pair of World War I G.I. canvas leggings, a mohair coat affected by office workers of that period, shoes and an old hat. Surely, I thought, this couldn't be the renowned Don Jose Jesus Lopez.

It was. "I got the job," Rojas continues, "and as time passed I found Don Jesus a man of many parts – shrewd, well educated, with a keen sense of humor." At that time,



Rojas doctoring; Bill's helping out.

Rojas had already been riding on various ranches in the San Joaquin for more than a decade and would continue doing so until 1935, when he purchased a stable in Bakersfield – “I called it the Bar-O because I borrowed everything.” – and began serving as a dentist for horses, a profession he still practices avocationally.

Arnold Rojas was born in the cow counties (Pasadena) in 1896, into a family that had migrated to California from the western Mexican states of Sonora and Sinaloa in the 1820s. His Indian ancestors were Yaquis and Mayos; his Spanish progenitors were Sephardic Jews who migrated to the Americas to escape the Inquisition. When his parents died in 1902, Rojas was placed in a San Luis Obispo orphanage, but ran away when he was 12. “I wanted to come to the San Joaquin Valley and I did,” he explains. Rojas wanted to be a rider, not a fruit picker, and the San Joaquin with its surrounding mountains, was cattle country. Also, “The only work a man of my race could get in those days was a mule skinner or vaquero, both cheap labor.”

He rode first for the V7 Ranch in San Luis, then on the massive San Emideo Ranch operated by the Kern County Land Company and later on the Tejon. For the next quarter-century, Rojas worked horses and cattle on

the California range, knew its denizens, learned its legends. He was different from most of his fellows in one respect: he became self-educated, reading voraciously.

As a teenager, he was staying at his uncle's cabin in Soledad Canyon near Acton when a neighboring homesteader asked to be staked to some coffee, flour, beans and sugar. “He was starving out,” Rojas recalls. The old man noticed that young Rojas was reading an O. Henry “Heart of the West” tale in a magazine so, when he returned, he brought books – Dumas, Cervantes, Kipling, Irving – which he exchanged for the loan of food. Thus began Rojas' literary training.

His reading was like frosting on his cake of practical knowledge, for he not only learned the technology of ranch work and how to survive in a rough environment but he also talked to men who claimed to have known the legendary bandit Joaquin Murrieta, to have eaten ostriches on the Rancho Tejon and to have ridden camels there, to have been singed by the Devil at San Emideo or to have confronted the mythical weeping woman *La Llorna* in San Antonio. When his collected works were published in a single volume in 1974, the old horseman placed his writing in perspective: “I started as a skinny kid, and the men I admired were the vaqueros who wrote this book.” This is a prescient statement, for if his reading polished his style his content – gathered “around the campfire and in the bunkhouse on winter nights” – directly reflects the *hombres del campo* with whom he rode. In the work of Chief Rojas, the vaqueros have found their collective voice.

Rojas began writing after World War II, when he was chairman of a rodeo sponsored by the American Legion in Bakersfield. Jim Day, editor of *The Bakersfield Californian*, suggested that he compose something that could be used as publicity for the event, so Rojas wrote thumbnail sketches of several old vaqueros to be honored at the rodeo. A few days later, the *cuentitos*



appeared in Day's column "Pipefuls". *Californian* editorial writer and local historian Ralph F. Kreiser encouraged Rojas to continue recording his stories and, before long, they were appearing in the newspaper and the local historical society's newsletter under his own byline.

Finally, in the early 1950s, Chief Rojas received a letter from California historian Monsignor James Culleton, who offered to publish his material in book form at the Academy Library Guild in Fresno. He released Rojas's first three volumes: all sold out. And typical of critical response was William Hogan's description of *The Lore of the California Vaquero* in the *San Francisco Chronicle* as "as wondrous a recall of the California cowboy as has been seen in print ...one of the finest pieces of Americana published in 1958."

Chief Rojas' seven books are collections of sketches that, like most good folklore, straddle the boundary between history and fiction. A man of prodigious memory, Rojas writes of incident after incident, character after character, no two exactly the same. For example, he reveals that "professional vaqueros rode first for one company, then another. A youngster, 12 to 14 years of age, school not being compulsory, received a starting wage of \$5 a month. After a year or two it was raised to \$12 and it usually took five years of working experience to earn \$25 a month. *Reatas* and hair ropes were furnished free to the vaqueros."

California's buckeroos – the word derives from English pronunciations of "vaquero" – employed the Spanish *la Jineta* style of horsemanship in which a rider's body directed his mount, a distinction Rojas considers



A rodeo for real: vaquero Raphael Sanchez riding "a bad one".

primary: "We were *not* cowboys." In the conventional American cowboy style, reins rather than body are used to control a horse. The vaquero's riding style symbolizes a heritage: "By vaquero I mean the man who brought the cattle to the West and herded them for a hundred years or more before the U.S. took possession of half of Mexico's territory. The vaquero was a westerner, a Californian. His influence went north and east while the cowboy never got west of the Rockies. These are two cultures and their ways are very different. The vaqueros were driving cattle north to Canada in 1836, long before the gold rush." Many historians do not agree with his contention: Rojas' work is weakest when he ventures historical generalizations.

Rojas' books capture the sense of those great ranches where he worked early in this century. He is one of those rare literary talents who seems to have blossomed without instruction once encouraged to write. Arthur L. Coleman calls him "a first-class natural-born storyteller, whose self-teaching has left his narrative style as unspoiled as the clear range air and the content as authentic." John Clark Hunt praises the old horseman's "talent for writing lean, sensitive, almost



A typical California landscape: Mala Palabra (“Bad Word”), on the Tejon ranch.

poetic prose,” but Rojas’ is the poetry of the yarn, not the sonnet, unique and true to his time and place. For example, he describes his meeting one fabled vaquero this way:

One of the three, a little old man, stands out in my memory. He was a little dried up gnome of a man so old that his eyebrows and eyelashes had long since fallen out; his beady little eyes seemed to be the only things alive in his shriveled old mash of a face. But when he rode up on a little sorrel horse, I noticed that his back was still flat and he sat erect as the proverbial *grenadier*. He rode up to me there as we held the cattle and I learned that he was Avelino Martinez of whom I had heard much. He was then a hundred years old and still an active rider.

Rojas employs the tale-teller’s rambling manner and uses it effectively. His weaknesses as a writer – repetition that sometimes borders on redundancy, inconsistent

punctuation, an occasional lack of coherence and a tendency to over-generalize when dealing with historical matters – are largely products of his unsystematic self-education. He is at his best when writing about the vaqueros with whom he rode and when discussing the gear and techniques they employed. Working *these* ranges, he is very effective indeed.

Although as an author and, to a degree, as a man, he harks to an earlier time, Rojas has also been an important figure in Mexican-

American writing because of his uncompromising pride in his heritage and his tolerance of the diversity implicit within it. For example, in what may be the most succinct observation ever made on the subject, Rojas explains the genesis of the “pure Spanish” Californios – a miraculous group considering how many years passed between settlement and the arrival of any numbers of Spanish women in the region. When gringos entered the area and sought title to its riches, Rojas says,

the only way to acquire the land was to marry a daughter of the landowner. But they (the gringos) had already started a campaign of discrimination. They very neatly solved that problem by creating “Old Spanish Families” and marrying into them. But those who had no lands left became Mexicans, doomed to work for cheap wages and to suffer discrimination.

His work is most noted for its often-delightful chronicling of that bygone time when the vaqueros rode. Reading his tales is not unlike leaning on a corral and



listening to an old-timer talk about the past. *In Lore of the California Vaquero*, for example, he recounts the experience of a buckaroo who tried to ride a bronco while wearing a pocket watch:

The watch fastened to a buckskin thong dropped out of his vest pocket at the first jump and swung in an arc and hit the buckaroo in the nose. The next jump, the watch gave him a black eye and as long as the horse bucked, the watch swung. If the horse had not quit bucking, the watch “would have beat me to death”, as the vaquero afterward said. He untied the buckskin thong and threw what was left of the watch as far away as he could.

The language Rojas employs has merited comment.

In the *Mexico City News*, Margaret Shedd observed that Rojas’ use of Spanish featured “*español que no está escrito*” (“Spanish that is not written”) – California terms such as “*chirriero caballo pajarero*” (a horse that shies at shadows) or “*agarrarse del sauce*” (literally, “take hold of the willow”, meaning grab the saddle horn when riding a bucking horse). His is the language of the vaquero rather than the schoolmaster, idiomatic and colorful.

Rojas also imparts practical lore, especially in *Bits, Bitting and Spanish Horses*. “To a vaquero,” he says, “a horse was an open book in which his rider’s virtues and

vices were written for all to see...He could tell if a horse had had a young or an older rider. A horse ridden by an old man was always quiet, because old men never quarrel with their horses. A young man, on the other hand, will often fight his horse.”

His character sketches are fascinating. Of Harry Gillem, a black vaquero, Rojas writes, “Seeing that he was bandaged I asked if he had been in an accident. He told me of having been set upon by three men. He had fought them until he had just about whipped all three, when one of them drew a knife and slashed him. Harry was cut badly and spent some time in a hospital. But he carried off the honors of war, however, because he had fought fair and when he was out of the hospital, two of the men with whom he had fought paid him five dollars a piece to

not fight with them again.”

Of a lady’s experience with the famous bandido Tiburcio Vasquez, who was Rojas’ uncle, he writes, “The bandido met her the night she wore hoop skirts at a dance. The sheriff and his deputies, hunting the fugitive, surrounded the dance hall, barring all windows and doors. When the sheriff walked in to look over the dancers Vasquez crawled under Teresa’s skirts which hid him effectively. The sheriff, baffled, left empty handed. She was *muy lunatica*.”

And here is Rojas on various *vaqueros viejos* (old buckeroos): “Victor Ortega would put a dollar on each



Frank, Ramon, Joe and Bicente, vaqueros on the Tejon ranch, 1930.



stirrup and ride a bucking horse without losing either coin. Juan Perez, nearly 90, could rope a hundred calves before he missed a throw. Tiny, shriveled old Avelino Martinez tucked a six-shooter into his shirt to command the respect he got from all men. Jesus Lopez sat aching

on his horse until all his men had eaten before himself dismounting to eat. Bruno Contreras picked his old body off the ground when bucked off by the white horse and climbed on again for a repeat performance.”

The books of Chief Rojas are treasure troves. If some of his yarns seem apocryphal, they probably are, but particular incidents need not be factual for truth to be achieved. There is a veritism in his writing that bespeaks the sense of a time, a place and way of life now passed. He writes about proud men who did hard work, and the vaqueros are fortunate indeed for through Rojas, a writer literally without peer, their era lives.

Ninety years old now and composing his eighth book, “Jefe” Rojas has seen one of America’s great ranching areas, the San Joaquin Valley, become an agricultural larder, then increasingly urban and suburban, with several thousands of farm acres lost to housing tract and shopping malls each year. He is not sanguine. “Except for the lupins and the poppies, which covered the valley in the spring, the country was semi-desert,” he recalls. “No one ever thought it would one day be covered with orchards and vineyards. But today there are too many people. Some day we will have to plow up the mall and plant something to eat.”



photo courtesy Dorothy Rogers

Arnold R. Rojas 1896 – 1988



This story on Arnold Rojas, reprinted here with the author’s permission, originally appeared in a 1986 issue of *The Californians*. Its author, Gerald Haslam is credited with having created an awareness of “the other California” (in a book of the same name) – the state’s seemingly “untrendy small towns and rural reaches.” A native of Oildale in the Bakersfield area, Haslam has often written about the Great Central Valley, about country music (See the review of *Workin’ Man Blues* in this issue), about the despair and exultation of blue collar people in the golden state (*That Constant Coyote*, *Condor Dreams*, *Straight White Male*, etc.) A celebrated author, he has won numerous literary awards including the Distinguished Achievement Award from the Western Literature Association and most recently the Award of Merit from American Association of State and Local History. Most recently he (and wife Janice E. Haslam) have examined the life of another maverick, Senator S. I. Hayakawa (*In Thought and Action: The Enigmatic Life of S. I. Hayakawa*). Reviewer David Peck has called Haslam “the quintessential California writer.” We are honored to have his writings in *Ranch & Reata*. www.geraldhaslam.com

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Closing the Gap

Artist Russell Chatham's work bridges existential chasms.

By Jameson Parker

I met the painter Russell Chatham in a restaurant in northern California, over a dish of roasted olives and a bottle of Semillon. Chatham is a world-class gourmet, and the restaurant he started and owned in Livingston, Montana, was considered the finest in the Rockies. He has been acclaimed by his peers, by critics, by household names, and by some of the richest and most influential men in the world, not only as a restaurateur, but as a first-class writer; as the publisher and editor of one of the late 20th century's finest small publishing houses; and as one of the three best fly-fishermen alive today. But above all, Chatham has been acclaimed as one of America's greatest landscape artists, alive or dead.

As you might expect, he is a man of diverse and exuberant passions, laughter and tears mingling easily even as he watches a pretty waitress across the restaurant, his eyes wielding more satyr's appraisal than artist's appreciation. At 74, Chatham has made few, if any, concessions to age, painting with the obsessive intensity

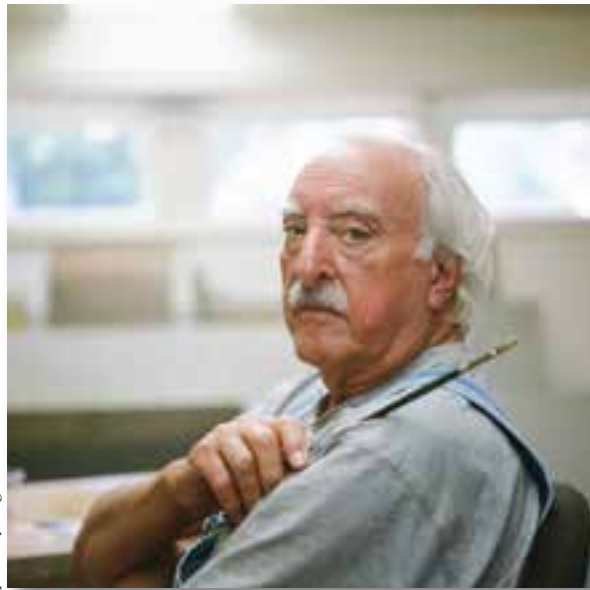
of a genius, but happily dropping everything on a moment's notice to go fishing anywhere around the globe, wherever the fishing is best.

Though he has traveled the world many times over,

Chatham has always been exclusively a *western* landscape artist; almost everything he has painted has been inspired by either Montana or Northern California. When I was first getting to know him, he suddenly vanished – as I gradually learned he is wont to do – with emails and telephone messages going unanswered for weeks. When he finally resurfaced, he said he had been fishing in Nantucket, adding apologetically, “I had to go see what the light was

like. [His client/host] has commissioned a painting and I've never painted anything back there.”

Chatham was born in the San Francisco Bay area, back when California's population was less than the population of Los Angeles today. It was a time when stripers clogged the bay and salmon ran up every undammed stream and river from Los Angeles



photos by Paige Green

Artist Russell Chatham in his studio.



1974 – The Old Lambert Ranch

to Anchorage.

At 10, Chatham learned to fish from members of the renowned Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club, men who valued technique over tools. He learned well: he caught the world-record striped bass on a fly rod in 1966, and by his own reckoning he has caught more striped bass and anadromous fishes than anyone alive today, learning from legends like Ted Trueblood and Bill Schaadt, and traveling the world with serious anglers – not to mention serious writers and revelers – such as Jim Harrison, Richard Brautigan, Tom McGuane and Guy de La Valdène.

Chatham was even younger when he started

painting, being sent out at seven with a box of paints and brushes as other children might be sent out with a ball and bat. It was a natural thing within his family. His great-uncle was the painter, illustrator and muralist Maurice del Mue, and his grandfather was the renowned tonalist Gottardo Piazzoni, for many years, Chatham's single greatest influence, and whose presence still lingers in Chatham's studio, almost 70 years after his death. Piazzoni's finished landscapes hang in places of honor above Chatham's canvases in progress.

Working our way into the past through Piazzoni's own influences, we may say Chatham was influenced by the Barbizon school and the echoes of Millet, Corot and



2001 – Summer

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Rousseau. The primary difference between Chatham and the artists of the Barbizon school is that they worked almost exclusively *en plein air*. Today, while a few landscape artists still work *en plein air*, most work from photographs, sometimes even projecting a photograph against a canvas and then, essentially, painting by numbers. Chatham disdains both methods, working exclusively from memory.

“A fisherman looks at one percent of the river because the other 99 percent doesn’t have any fish,” he says. “It’s the same thing painting a landscape. I dismiss 99 percent and focus on a pinpoint in space and time. Then I go back

to the studio and paint from memory. It’s sort of like taking a photograph with my brain and letting it out through my fingertips, so there is a transformation of reality into an essence of time and place.”

That transformation of reality entails a patient and painstaking discipline that may demand years to complete a single painting. Where most artists use diagonal lines to achieve perspective, Chatham uses a technique called *atmospheric perspective*, developed by Velázquez, where multiple layers of color – in Chatham’s case, infinitely subtle shades of color – are gradually built up to create an illusion of depth.



1987 – Boulder River Valley

Focus, overlapping and diminishing scale are also part of the process, but it is the many layers of color that trick the eye into a sense of perspective. A natural consequence is that his studio floor is lined with scores of paintings, in various stages of completion, leaning against the wall, waiting for the oils to dry enough to tolerate the next layer.

Chatham's process also involves an attention to detail with which few contemporary artists bother. As one minor, but significant example, where other artists

buy their canvases pre-stretched, Chatham builds his internal frames and stretches his canvases himself. Instead of using faster, easier and cheaper staples, he uses the hammer-and-tacks technique Rembrandt used.

Also unlike most artists today, Chatham regards the external frame as an integral part of the painting. He designs a frame for each individual painting, then has it made to his specifications, combining the massive protective strength of laminate with a walnut veneer he "washes" with an oil pigment to complement the



1988 – River on a Summer Evening

painting, sometimes adding a delicate gold border, all of it subtly enhancing the art without distracting from it.

The late art critic Robert Hughes (who collected Chatham’s work) once wrote: “The basic project of art is always to make the world whole and comprehensible, to restore it to us in all its glory and its occasional nastiness, not through argument, but through feeling, and then to close the gap between you and everything that is not you, and in this way pass from feeling to meaning.”

That assessment goes a long way to explaining Chatham’s art. Chatham has said, “To me, nature is chaos,” and in an interview he once stated, “All genuine art grows outward from the heart, and is a matter of sensations. Art inspired mainly by the intellect may induce awe, excitement or even laughter, but never tears, and there is no great art without tears.”

At another restaurant, overlooking Tomales Bay, Chatham and I ate oysters and drank wine outside in



1989 – Thunderstorm over the Gallatin Mountains

the sun as he talked of fishing and painting and how both obsessions provided him and a few like-minded friends with a place of refuge, "...away from the erratic and sometimes frightening behavior of our young peers. Or, in other cases, our parents."

Chatham has been very frank about his parent's loveless, troubled marriage and the childhood solace he derived outside, with his paint box or fishing rod. His landscapes reflect that, evoking a sense of peace and calm, sometimes tinged with melancholy but always

serene. Only very rarely will you find a Chatham landscape with a human figure in it; when you do, that figure is always – with only one exception I am aware of – a fisherman. The result is that his art captures the essence of those places that are the opposite of the electronic and mechanized hurly-burly that dominate most people's lives, places that are whole and comprehensible, places that are part of us. When you see a Chatham landscape, the gap between you and that which is not you ceases to exist.



1993 – Approaching Snowstorm



1990 – The Seasons: Missouri River in April



1979 – Spring Afternoon



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30 Dave Stamey

Live In Santa Ynez

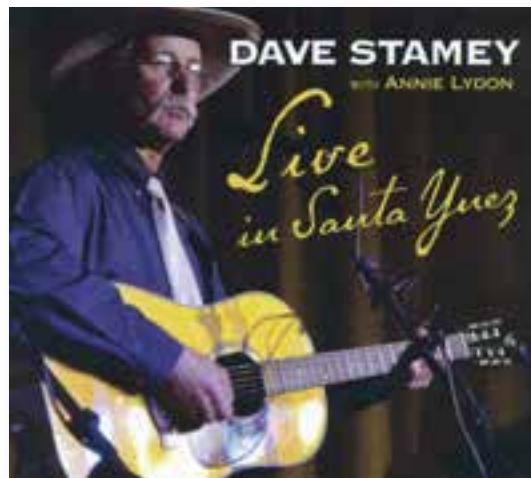
Dave Stamey

“Cowboy Entertainer” Dave Stamey has created a very loyal following and along with it a rather impressive catalog of recordings of his very personal homage to his “region” – that of the cowboy and vaquero culture of the Pacific Slope. Known for his very visual writing style, he can

pull the listener in pretty deep into his world. His songs are so visual that in an earlier album review, I had called him “the Charlie Russell of western music.” And as the years go by, he continues to live up to that description.

This record is no exception, even as a live recording with many of his classic tunes, Stamey, as usual, brings life and his evolving and wonderfully self-effacing stage presence to wherever he plays – in this case the stage at the Ranch & Reata Roadhouse in Santa Ynez.

Live at Santa Ynez features Stamey backed by the ever graceful and skilled presence of Annie Lydon and together they wowed the crowd with two back-to-back sets of 13 songs that became this record. Many of the songs performed you have heard – but with Stamey live,



he has a way of making old favorites a newly glorious and memorable experience. This may be why he has for so many years been awarded Entertainer of the Year by the Western Music Association.

By far his story songs are the favorites of the crowd –



“Black Jack Was a Mule” is about a herd of mules “sentenced” to pull ore carts in an underground mine, many never seeing the light of day for the rest of their lives. As Stamey says of the tune, “This may not be one of my happy songs...” something he is known for. “Spin That Pony” is here telling the story of a humble vaquero and his amazing horsemanship. In the charming “Free



and Easy” he invites the audience to sing along with the chorus – a dicey inclusion sometimes – but with the very friendly crowd – a seeming constant when Stamey plays live; he made it fun, telling the crowd, “Look guys this is a song, not a commitment,” and “We’re looking for volume, not quality.” The evening ends with Dave Stamey’s own sort of “Goodnight Irene” in “Come Ride With Me” – an uplifting invitation to get into life and be a participant – whether you ride a horse or not. The evening ended too quickly but thanks to this album, it doesn’t have to.

Stamey is a true crowd pleaser but beyond that he has – in musical career and in person – helped to validate a region and its culture and in turn the ways of the people who love his music, no matter where they live. www.davestamey.com

“Come Ride With Me”

By Dave Stamey

Copyright Horsecamp Music, BMI

Come ride with me
 Time to saddle up n’ ride away
 Is so much to see
 Don’t worry I know the trails
 I know the way

I caught a gentle horse
 His eyes are big and brown
 He’s ready to carry you the whole world round
 Come ride with me, let’s ride away

Come take a chance
 I’ll show you where the mountains touch the sky
 It’s a horse back dance
 And we can ride forever if we try

That dream in the distance
 There for you to chase
 Out in the sunrise with the wind on your face
 Come ride with me, let’s ride away

The smell of the leather, the sunlight on your skin
 They’ve got us achin’ to begin
 The rumble of hoof beats much stronger than wine
 The dust in your hair, the light in your eyes

Come ride with me
 We’ll run the hills and watch the eagles soar
 It’s where you want to be
 So tell me just what you’re waitin’ for

We’ll camp near the meadow and love the night away
 And saddle up again when the dawn is turning gray
 Come ride with me, let’s ride away

The smell of the leather, the sunlight on your skin
 They’ve got us achin’ to begin
 The rumble of hoof beats much stronger than wine
 The dust in your hair, the light in your eyes

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 We’ll camp near the meadow; we’ll love the night
 away
 And saddle up again, when the dawn is turning gray
 Come ride with me, let’s ride away

Come ride with me
 Come ride with me
 Come ride with me
 Oh come ride with me.....



A Western Moment

Dialogue from *The Big Lebowski*.



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At the bowling alley, the Stranger sits at the bar as the Dude orders two beers.
They greet each other and the Stranger asks how he's been doing.

DUDE

“Oh, you know, strikes and gutters, ups and downs.”

The Dude collects his beers and goes to leave. The Stranger tells him to take it easy and The Dude turns back to him.

DUDE

“Yeah, well, The Dude abides.”

And all is as it should be.



TWO WRAPS AND A HOOEY

Three Years and Counting. Thank you.

This April marks the third anniversary of *Ranch & Reata*. From the beginning it has been an experiment in a new kind of journalism for the West and the western enthusiast. We view the magazine as a partnership with both our beloved readers and treasured advertisers. It could be stated that we are really a “publicly held” enterprise, in that we cannot exist without the support of our readers and subscribers and a small group of handpicked advertisers. With that in mind we realize that this effort, by design, creates a community that supports each other and must cross communicate to be representative and relevant.



Our goal is to have *Ranch & Reata* reach beyond the passionate and be invitational to those interested in this root-based culture of ours that celebrates not only

the entrepreneurial and pioneer spirit embodied in “westerners” but promotes the idea of proper stewardship of the finite resources of the region. The West and its people go a long way in feeding this nation and many beyond its borders. That balance of land

use and stewardship is something we all have a stake in and *Ranch & Reata* is part of the process in helping communicate the ways of the region and its culture.

So how are we doing? We asked a number of our founding subscribers – those who just heard the name



and signed up – if they had questions about the publication, three years in. Here’s a sampling of some of their thoughts.

How do people find you?

We view *Ranch & Reata* as reader-supported journalism. That means folks may buy one or two issues and then decide they like what they see and subscribe – 99% from ranchandreata.com as we do not have newsstand sales, by choice. It’s a harder way to go but those who subscribe are the real-deals and believe in what we are doing.

Why no mass-market selling, like newsstands?

General newsstand placement is, for a publication like *Ranch & Reata*, a wasteful crapshoot. What’s not sold is pitched. Bad deal. The waste of energy and resources in the hopes that someone might pick up the magazine is a no-win gamble. In addition to our subscribers, targeted placement, meaning being in a retail environment that is either genre-based or supported by a proper demographic makes sense and we are available at a number of fine retailers. We are continuing to add selected retailers so if there is a spot you would like us to consider, please let us know.

Why do you cost \$14.95?

We don’t – if you subscribe you save 30% off the cover price! Most of the magazines in the category sell from \$4.95 to \$7.95. They are printed differently, have much lighter paper, and have more ads – way more ads – and less editorial content. *Ranch & Reata* is printed on a precise, highly color accurate sheet-fed press. I am not knocking other printing methods but we feel that our readers deserve a fine-printed journal, with less advertising and more content. That’s what you are paying for, and not to be a direct mail device for ads. So for that paper quality, more precise printing, and less non-editorial based content, it costs a little more. By far, our subscribers have been pleased.

What about the digital version? Is it different?

Of course, today many people choose to read *Ranch & Reata* on mobile devices to see the enriched content – and to be able to go deeper in to what the advertisers offer. In the online version, available to all subscribers, every ad page is linked to the advertiser’s web page or video or audio presentation. The online version also allows us to provide the publication to non-English speaking readers as it can translate into over 60 languages. A benefit not lost on our advertising partners. Did you know our fifth most translated language is Mandarin?

What’s next?

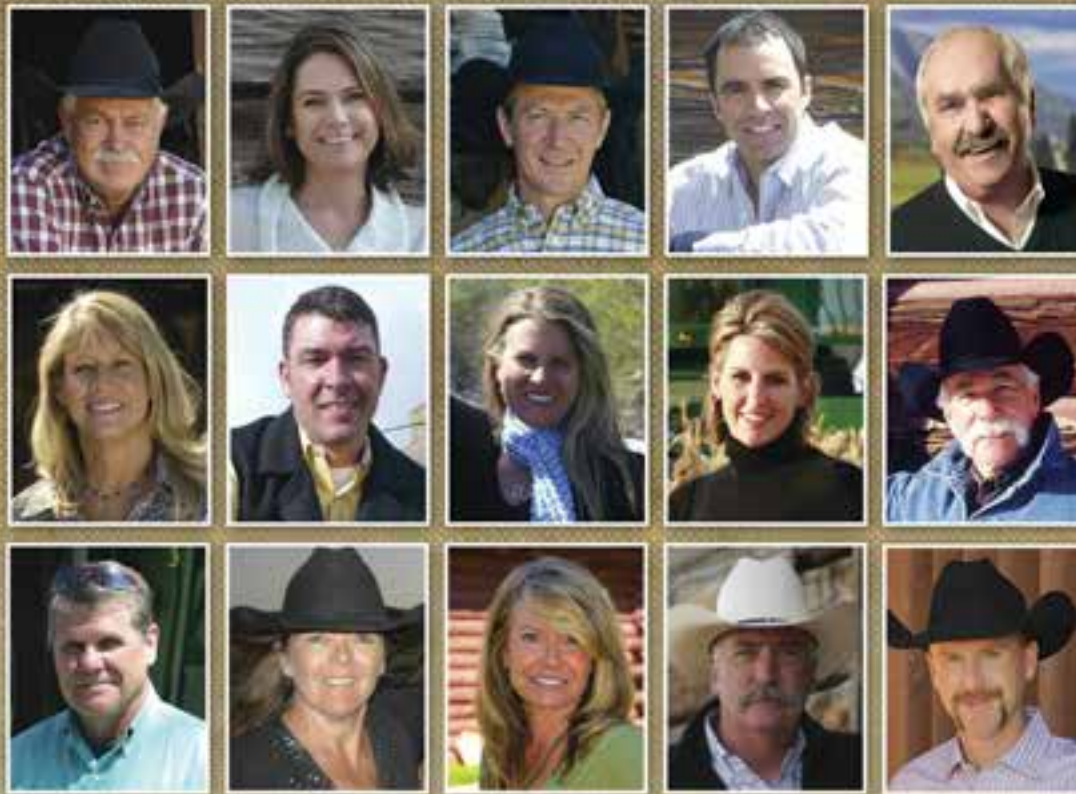
We have lots of things coming up and one of our most exciting is the launch of our online gallery. This will be an ever-changing array of collectable, artisan-produced, one-of-a-kind and must-have items – all available at a single web-based location. We will have more news shortly so keep checking the website. In addition, this summer we will be launching a series of eBooks, available at a discount to subscribers, and with content you would expect from *Ranch & Reata*.

What does the future hold for a \$14.95 magazine in today’s digital world?

Tangible media, while under siege, is not going away anytime soon, but it must evolve to remain relevant and value based. While I do not like to think of our “Journal of the American West” as precious, it is amongst a few category-based journals that do value passionate readership over demographic dilution. We realize you, our readers, made a conscience decision to subscribe for a reason. We hope you are happy with your investment and that you will continue to support this extremely specialized, high quality, print publication. I can guarantee we will continue to work to make every issue of *Ranch & Reata* worthy of that decision. Thank you, BR



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