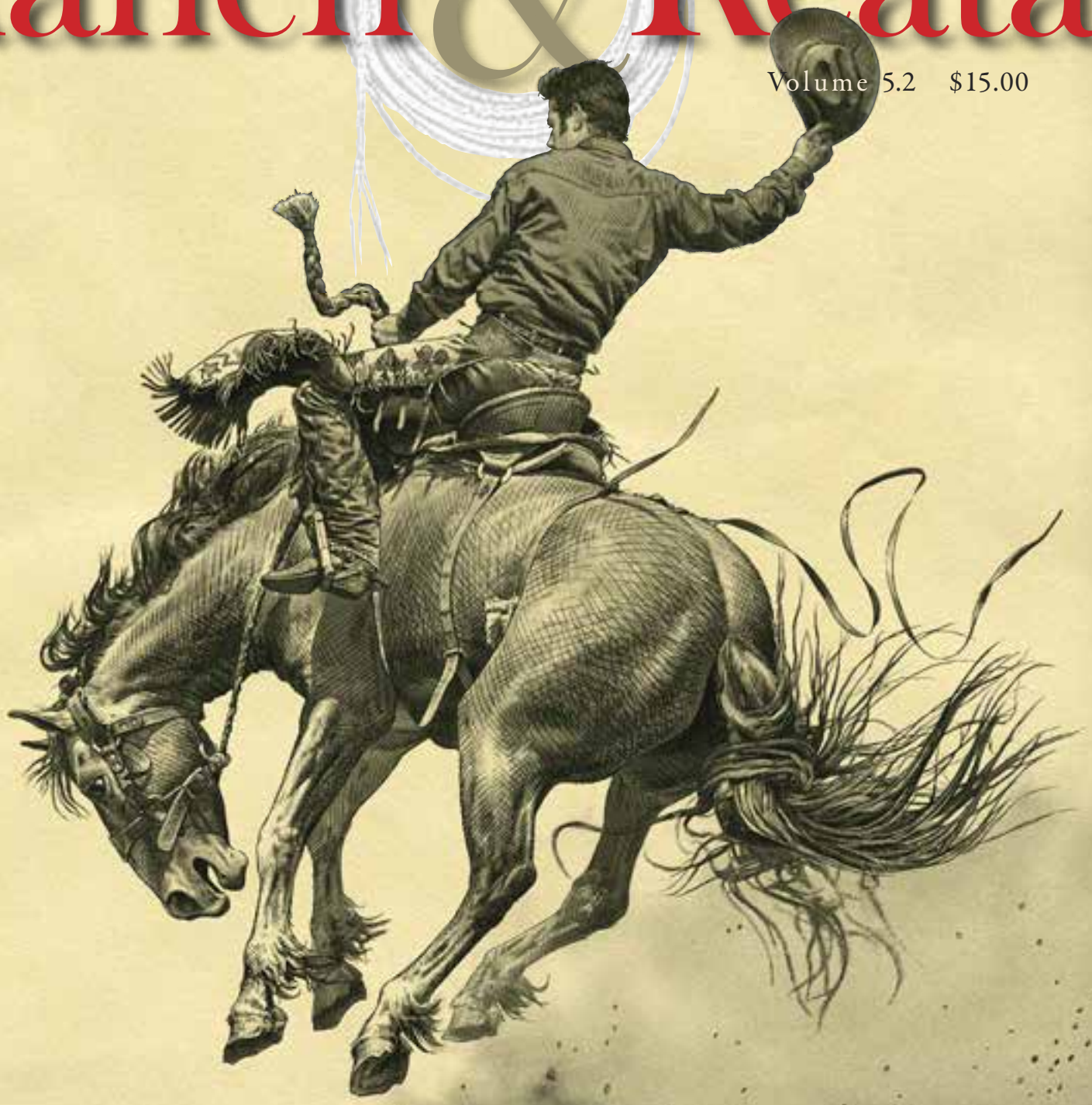
The Journal of the American West

# Ranch & Reata

Volume 5.2 $15.00



## The Art of Bob Coronato

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# FRONT GATE

*photograph by Scott Ripley*

The evolving West. Agriculture and renewable energy share space along Scott Canyon Road, north of Wasco, Oregon.

Wind turbines in the wheat fields of Sherman County, Oregon. Photo by Scott Ripley.

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**Cover image: Artist Bob Coronato on how he did the paintings that make up his limited rodeo series and the one on our cover:** "I create these paintings using a technique known as *pittura di strati*. Multiple layers of acrylic paint are applied, and on top of the acrylic, then the silkscreened line work is applied. It is a glazing technique very similar of the artists of the Italian Renaissance."

# Ranch & Reata

Volume 5, Number 2 • June/July 2015
www.ranchandreata.com



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Publisher:
Ranch & Reata Magazine,
PO Box 714, Santa Ynez, CA 93460

Email the Publisher:
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Advertising Information:
Buddy Purel
949.234.1281 • Buddy@rangeworks.com

Subscriptions:
www.ranchandreata.com
or to subscribe by phone call 800.551.5109
Customer Service 877.458.1320

View issue at www.ranchandreata.com. Limited Edition print journals published six-times a year. Subscriptions are available at the website. Current individual, Limited Edition copies are available for $15.00 and are sold in U.S. dollars with appropriate postage for destination additional. Some hard-copy back issues available. All online editions are available with a subscription. 

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EDITOR'S NOTE

# Blasphemy, or the Inevitable Future

By A.J. Mangum

Let's jump forward in time. Imagine it's 10 years from right now, a summer day in 2025. Somewhere in the heart of the North American West's ranch country, cowboys eye a cattle herd grazing on a remote pasture. Their job this morning: gathering the animals and moving them to an adjacent parcel, a routine task traditionally accomplished on horseback.

Brace yourselves, though.

On this particular day, the crew aren't on horseback. Instead, they work from the comfort of an office at the ranch's headquarters, miles from the herd, where they monitor the cattle via real-time imagery provided by cameras mounted on airborne drones – quadcopters the ranch hands control remotely from tablets and laptop computers.

Guided by the cowboys' commands, the aircraft take up positions at the rear of the herd. The drones' presence pushes the animals toward a distant gate. Within minutes, the cattle have funneled through the gate and the job is done. The gate, responding to a signal (essentially an incoming call) from a ranch hand's smartphone, shuts itself behind the herd. As the cattle scatter excitedly onto fresh pasture, the deskbound cowboys put the quadcopters on autopilot and the vehicles return to headquarters, where they come to rest on landing pads.

Pure science fiction, you're thinking. Louis L'Amour meets William Gibson.

But the technology to perform such drone-based, long-distance, virtual cowboying likely already exists, although perhaps not in one neat package. I'm told by drone-industry experts that some elements from the above scenario – live closed-circuit feeds from drones, for instance, or quadcopters with the range necessary for such

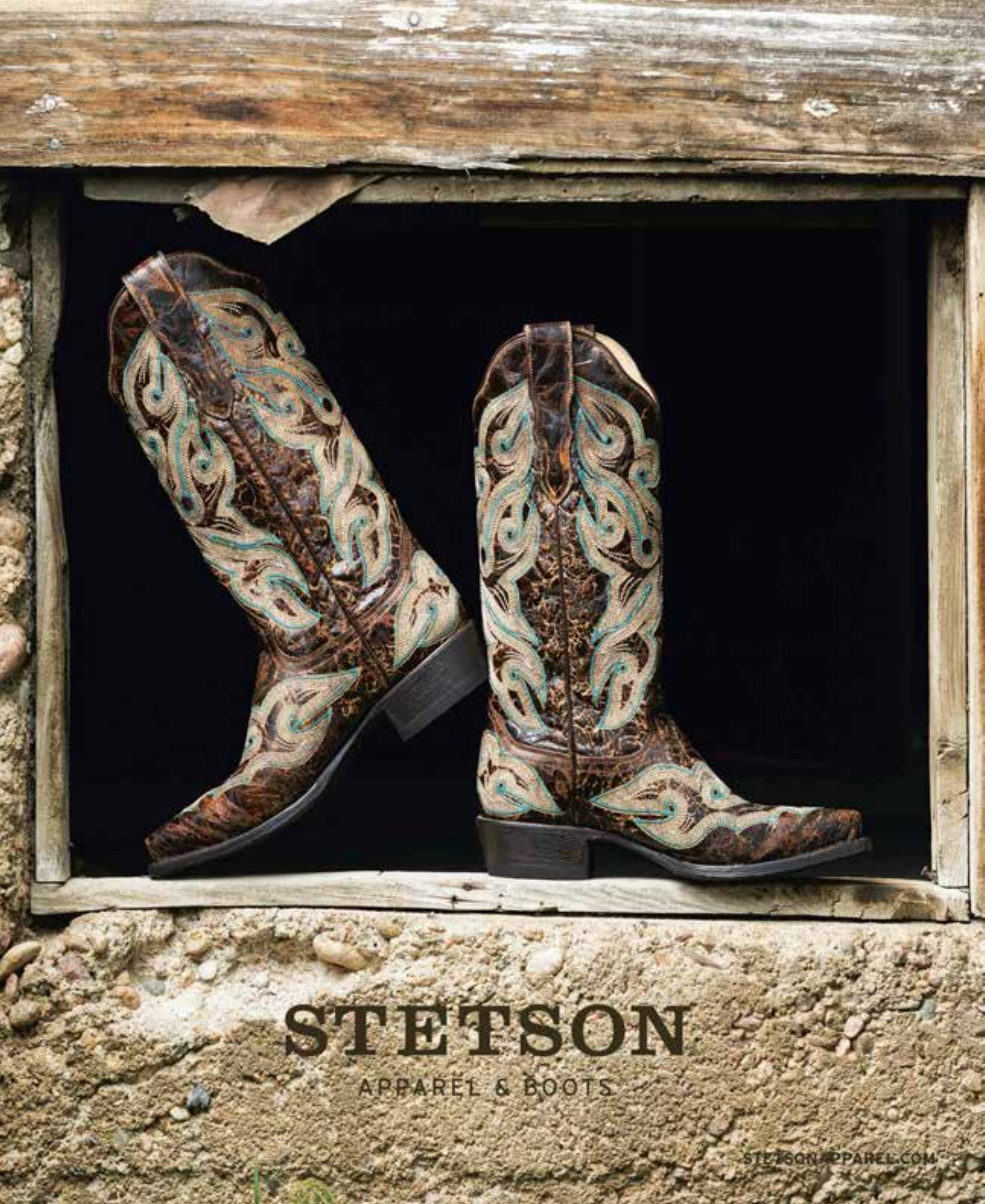
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*photo courtesy HoneyComb Corporation*

Unmanned aerial vehicles, such as this "drone in a box" built and marketed by HoneyComb Corporation, could revolutionize ranching and farming. The HoneyComb drone packs into a case that can fit in the back of a pickup.

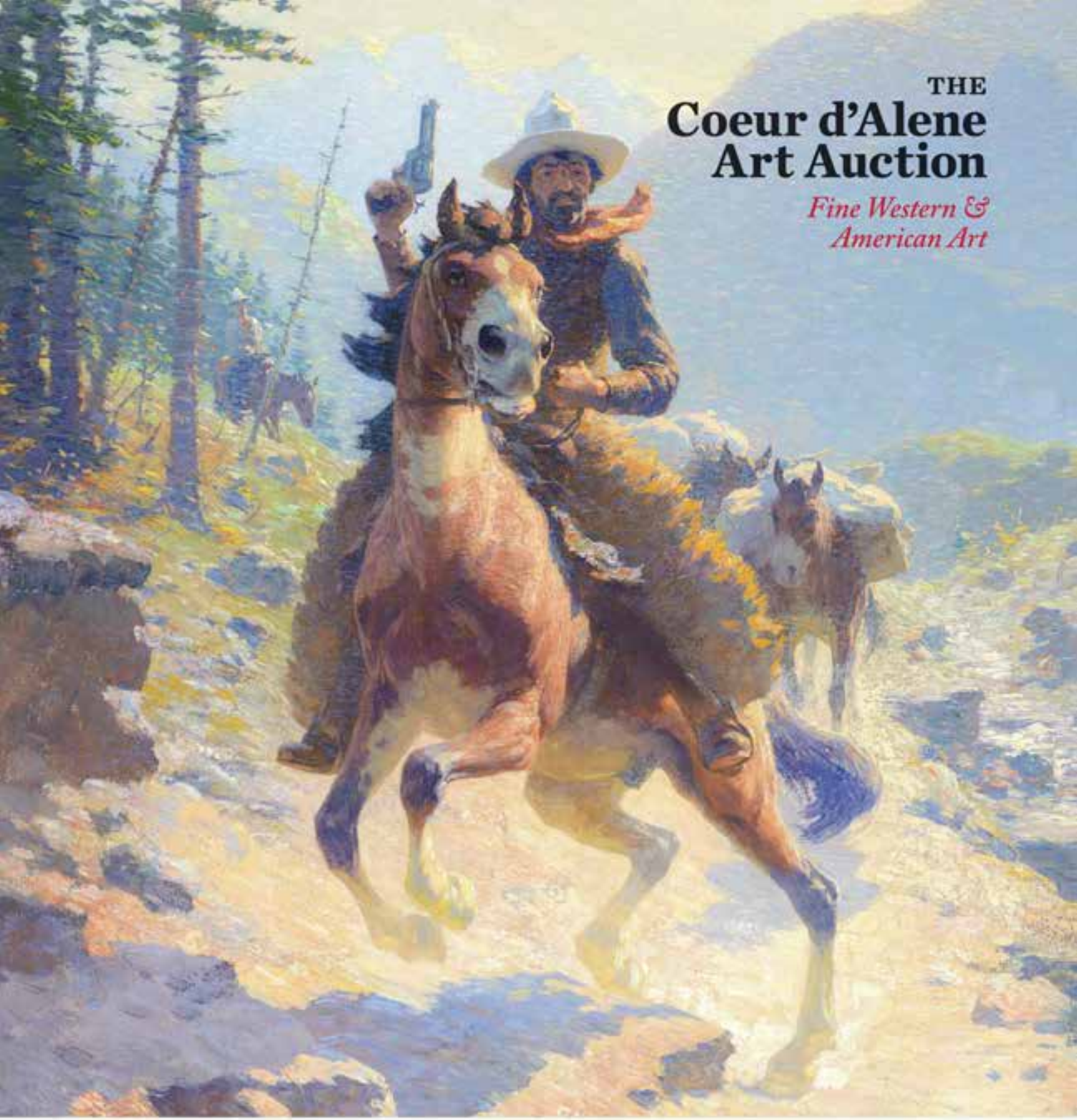


an operation – are still unrealistic, or at least impractical, but it wasn't that long ago that the majority of an iPhone's basic functions – capabilities we take entirely for granted – would've seemed technologically unlikely, if not outright batty. If the past 25 years has taught us anything about technology, it's this: if it seems like something *ought* to be possible, it likely is, or will be soon.

Entrepreneurs in the UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) industry, and plenty of folks outside that rapidly emerging field, are banking on the notion that such scenes, or at least variations, will become commonplace on ranches and other ag operations as stockmen discover drone technology's economic benefits: increased efficiencies, reduced manpower, reduced risks to horses, and fewer predawn horseback departures to distant grazing ground.

For many westerners, of course, the notion of remote-controlled drones taking the place of horseback cowboys is nothing short of blasphemous, an attack on traditions that extend back for generations – centuries, really.

Let's remember, though, that ranching is a business, not a costume drama. Engage bona fide ranchers in a conversation about the "mystique" of their profession and the "romance" of their daily work, and the least you'll get is a set of raised eyebrows. Ranching, fundamentally, is all about resource allocation,



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William R. Leigh (1866–1955), *The Right of Way* (detail), oil on canvas, 28 × 22 inches, Estimate: $600,000-900,000

efficiencies, cost controls and returns on investment. Introduce a piece of technology that sends arrows pointing upward, and ranchers, at least those interested in financial success, will embrace it. Romance and mystique, after all, don't pay a stockman's mortgage.

This issue includes my interview with two UAV-industry pioneers eyeing the agricultural market: George Bye of Bye Aerospace and John Faus of HoneyComb Corporation. Bye's company handles design and engineering for an unmanned fixed-wing aircraft that's emerging onto the market; Faus and his partners produce and sell a drone specifically designed for use by farmers and ranchers. The two offer some fascinating insight on the future of drone technology.

I asked Bye and Faus for their thoughts on the ways in which their products could alter the culture of the West, potentially contributing to job losses for cowboys and the sidelining of saddle horses. Each offered reassurance that, while drones have the potential to dramatically change the ways in which they work, saddle horses and cowboys aren't going anywhere.

For starters, it turns out drones aren't cheap; for smaller operations, horseback work will continue to make more sense than a hefty investment in technology that might never pay for itself. And, as impressive as drone tech might be – or become – it's tough to imagine unmanned aerial vehicles performing *all* jobs currently done on horseback. Picture a quadcopter pulling a calf to a branding fire, or a ground crew attempting to use remote-controlled quadcopters to separate calves from cows in a dusty corral.

Unlikely – I would think.

Nevertheless, drone tech promises, in the years to come, to alter all aspects of the commercial landscape and a good deal of the literal skyscape.

Ranching will not be immune.



"Eyes in the Sky," A.J. Mangum's interview with George Bye and John Faus, appears elsewhere in this issue.

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# Interesting Things and Stories from Out West

## The New Farmers

A growing number of young Americans are starting farms. Why?

By Lauren Markham

*photo courtesy Peaceful Valley Farm Supply*

Robbie and Deena Martin of Sweet Roots Farm

Spring is the time of year when Deena Miller, owner and operator of Sweet Roots Farm in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, thinks of quitting. Her body hurts, money is tight, and just enough of her organic, love-sown seeds have sprouted from the ground that she can see her failures: wimpy leaves, frost-stunted sprouts, roots chewed through by beetles. It's the fourth season that thirty-year-old Miller and her partner, Robbie Martin, have farmed three and a half acres on a slight slope in the fertile Grass Valley, north of Sacramento. And yet despite the challenges, each year has proven better than the last as they have learned the particulars of the region's microclimates and their farm's soil – what grows best where, just how long to wait to plant the heat-loving tomatoes and cucumbers.

"This time of year is always really tough. But it gets easier," Miller says, adjusting her cap. She sports a tool belt and well-padded iPhone, allowing her to simultaneously work the fields, answer e-mail, and receive business calls. "I've been weeding carrots for the last hour, so I'm a little grumpy," she says with a smile. She snaps off a lingering asparagus stalk – its brethren were harvested last week and sold to the local co-op – and hands it to me. We chomp our snack, and I admire the farm. To my untrained eye, it looks handsome and bountiful with its rows of green cascading down the hill, not a disappointment in sight.

Growing up a few hours away in Lake Tahoe, Miller wanted to work in the environmental movement but never expected to be a farmer. She was nineteen before she even met one. "I wanted to work outside, and I wanted to better the environment, but I just didn't know how to engage," she says. "There aren't many jobs out there, and a lot of the messaging felt kind of negative: 'Don't do this, and don't do that.'" While studying at the University of Santa Cruz, she

photo by Deena Martin

Robbie Martin harvests Swiss chard

enrolled in agriculture classes with the thought of becoming a school garden teacher. "But the more I learned about agriculture, the more I saw it as a tool for change," she explains. "I realized that, to me, the difference between the environmental movement and growing food is that growing food is really positive. You're saying yes, instead of asking people to stop something." She met Martin at a farm education program in Santa Cruz, and the two relocated to this plot of family land to try their hand at cultivating organic vegetables, fruits, and flowers.

Miller and Martin are part of a growing demographic of young, beginning farmers – farmers by choice, not by heritage – who have committed themselves to small-scale agriculture. Often with strong educational backgrounds and urban or suburban upbringings, these young people have chosen their vocation over many other options available to them, and, like Miller, they've done it largely out of a deep environmental ethic.

Miller looks out onto her farm. The diminishing daylight suffuses everything with a saffron glow: young apple trees not yet bearing fruit, her partner running the tractor, a shaggy llama, like a gangly guardian, standing attention at the fence. "Here I'm building something," she says. "And I like that. I like that we're stewards of this land, that we're building the soil and taking care of the pollinators, the bees, the birds – it's just so positive."

She thinks for a moment. "But then what's hard is when you're so tired, and your body hurts so much, and you're so poor. We finally figured out we make less than five dollars an hour. How much do you sacrifice for this vision?

"When I get down, I think about a conversation with my mom that really helped me," she reflects. "She asked, 'If everyone was doing what you're doing, would the world be a better place?' And the answer is, of course, yes. Yes, it would. And that's why I do it."

She perks up and listens for a moment. "Oh man," she says. "I hear a gopher." She turns and inspects the ground behind her. I'm sure she's joking. The wind rustles through the leaves, the adjacent stream gurgles by, and Martin turns the tractor in the fields behind us. It should be impossible to hear anything so small over all this ambient noise. But she knows these three and a half acres so well that she's certain she can hear a gopher, that tiny subterranean threat to all she's built, burrowing underfoot.



**"My decision to become a farmer had to do with my feeling very strongly that farming is a nexus for social, ecological, and political change."**

In the summer of 2004, I fell in love with a boy who lived down the road from the tumbledown house I rented with friends in central Vermont. He was home for the summer from college, and one of his jobs was to paint his sister's barn. She was a goat farmer who, at the age of twenty-three, had started Blue Ledge Farm, along with her husband. I'd drive to Blue Ledge in the still-warm evenings to find my new boyfriend packing up the ladder while his sister, Hannah, and her husband, Greg, let the goats out to pasture. Their two-year-old daughter assisted, tugging at their pant legs and chasing the goats into the field. The couple met at Bates College; starting a farm had been their collective dream, one that at first surprised their friends and family. They borrowed and scrambled to purchase land in Leicester, Vermont,

along with milk equipment and goats, and got to work on what is now, ten years later, a successful small farm.

Hannah and Greg were the first people I'd known who'd chosen farming rather than inherited it. My mom grew up on a farm in California's Capay Valley, about two hours north of San Francisco, where her family grazed cattle and harvested almonds. She and her six siblings spent summers picking tomatoes; in high school she was teased for wearing second-hand clothes. She left for college at sixteen and went straight to Berkeley, ready for city life and big ideas, bidding the Capay Valley goodbye forever. My grandfather also fled farm life. He grew up a dirt-poor farmer's son near the Chesapeake Bay, but trained his eyes on a future at Harvard University. Although I'd been raised to respect farming, I'd also understood that it was something you inherited and, often, left behind.

Now, ten years after meeting Hannah and Greg, I have more than a dozen friends around the country who have started successful commercial farms. While I feel unreasonable pride in my two backyard tomato plants and my teeming pot of mint (three varieties!), these friends post pictures of their tractors and kale fields on Facebook and Instagram, send mass e-mails advertising their CSA (community supported agriculture) shares, and fashion adorable, hand-drawn logos to brand their goods – their lives and livelihoods a combination of hip and nostalgic. One friend calls it the "farmster" movement. Just flip through the pages of *Modern Farmer* magazine to see how the aesthetic and identity have become almost sexy and chic. Agriculture is no longer the life that people are leaving.

Sheep in a pen on wheels at Cycle Farm, near Spearfish, SD

For many of its participants, the movement stems from a sense of social and environmental responsibility. "My decision to become a farmer had to do with my feeling very strongly that farming is a nexus for social, ecological, and political change," explains Matthew Shapero, owner and operator of Buckeye Ranch, a lamb and garlic operation down the road from Sweet Roots Farm. A dashing 2006 graduate of Columbia University with a BA in Eastern religions, Shapero's clothes are equal parts rancher and Brooklyn-hip. Like many of the new farmers, he came of age during a time of economic hardship, climate change, and general disenchantment with business as usual. For Shapero, "becoming a farmer felt like the most radical vocation I could choose."

Matthew Shapero at Buckeye Farm in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada

Environmental advocacy can be an obvious path for young people inclined toward radical vocations. Today's green movement is considered by some Millennials and Gen Xers to be an equivalent to the Civil Rights struggle – the

organizing principal propelling young people into action. Recent decades have seen unprecedented environmental demonstration in Washington, as well as committed political activism from the likes of 350.org, which is staffed almost entirely by Millennials. Yet during this same era, the movement has nevertheless suffered major blows due to legislative action (or inaction). As a result, disbelief in government as a driver of meaningful change seems to be growing, as well as turning some young, would-be activists, like Miller and Shapero, toward small-scale farming.

One young farmer who works land in the Black Hills of South Dakota told me that the connotation of what it means to be an environmentalist is changing. "To me, twenty years ago, it meant people who saved the rainforest," she said. "But we're making a difference on our own land. We're storing food, we're sequestering carbon, we're using our bicycles to take our crops to market. People still need to write letters, and lobby, and wear their 'Save the Whales' t-shirts. But they need to do the hands-on work, too."

Jeremy Smith and Trish Jenkins of Cycle Farm

It helps that, as a farmer, one can see the results of that work everyday. As Severine von Tscharner Fleming, a young farmer and activist, explains, "I think for a lot of people, the economy of the farm is comfortable and manageable. It represents a level of complexity that's compatible with the human spirit and capacity for change." In addition to growing food, von Tscharner Fleming stewards an almost impossible list of other projects, including Greenhorns, a resource-sharing and networking platform for beginning farmers. "The farm can be a refuge," she says, a place removed from the tiresome systems of degradation, a chance to reshape the scale and nature of economic and ecological transactions.

The surge of new interest in agriculture comes at a good time. According to Jill Auburn of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, "The American farmer on average has gotten a little older, and we need replacement farmers." Today's average farmer is fifty-eight, and the question looms: what will become of U.S. farmland in years to come? Congress tried to tackle that question this year when it authorized $100 million in grant funds for new farmer initiatives (up from $75 million in 2012). And the number of new farmers is certainly growing. The most recent agricultural census shows that, between 2007 and 2012, the number of young, beginning farmers increased nearly 12 percent. Though small farms remain on the decline nationwide, they are very much on the rise in states like Vermont, with farms earning up to $50,000 in sales showing the most growth – meaning that it's small farms like Blue Ledge making such a noticeable comeback.

These new farms look very different from the large-scale agriculture that defines much of rural America. California's Central Valley, for example, is a landscape that feeds millions of people in part by forsaking its own. Although Fresno County gleans more agricultural profit than any other county in the U.S., it has some of the most atrocious air quality rankings, highest pesticide poisoning rates, and worst labor exploitation statistics (largely of undocumented Latino workers) in the country. Spend enough time in these pummeled places and one can feel the ecological and spiritual burn of industrial-scale food production. Some also hear a quiet call to arms, the urge to start a venture of one's own – to do something more than just spend dollars at the farmers' market.

Severine von Tscharner Fleming explains that we have for a long time needed "a compromise between humanity's

Cycle Farm's top-bar beehives with hop yard in the background. Top-bar hives are minimally intrusive to the bee colony.

needs and ecology's needs, a kind of peace path that is the very opposite of top-down." Environmentalism, she says, has often been associated with a top-down, regulatory approach: "some white guys getting some tax benefits for some nature preservation for some polar bears. But the small farming movement is a populist approach to this problem."

Small farms tend toward ecologically intelligent practices, like the use of organic fertilizers, crop rotation, renewable energy, composting, and local distribution. Though the market for food grown with these practices represented only 4 percent of total national sales in 2012, organic sales are up 183 percent since 2007. And the number of farms that have moved beyond the "certified organic" stamp and integrated other sustainable practices, such as renewable energy production, into their operations and culture has more than doubled since 2007.

Despite these efforts and a growing food consciousness, changing the agricultural industry is extremely hard – and not just on the body, but the spirit, too. Matthew Shapero, from Buckeye Ranch, had decidedly high hopes when he got into this radical affair of sustainable meat production five years ago, but now there's a bit of jadedness setting in. As he puts it, a small-scale farmer is "still very much strapped and inured by the current food market and by the practices of industrial agriculture."

Another barrier to change is financial. New farmers need money to get going, and most enter the profession thanks to access to land or capital. There's also the added cost of equipment, a huge upfront investment. All of which skews the demographic of new farmers toward those who've got money or access to it. Matthew Shapero borrowed family money to kick-start his lamb operation. Deena Miller and Robbie Martin farm family land. Blue Ledge Farm also borrowed family funds to get started.



The cynic might wonder if they've seen this before, a modern version of the back-to-the-land movement. Today, that movement – which saw thousands of flower children, some from privileged backgrounds, retreat to the woods to set up self-sustaining cooperatives and communes – is often regarded as a cliché of failed idealism.

When asked how the current small-farm revival is different than the back-to-the-land movement, von Tscharner Fleming says, "Oh, I've only been asked that question a thousand times." She points out that the back-to-the-landers had cheap land. "And we don't. But we do have a market place that's craving what we're producing, and the back-to-the-landers had to build that from scratch. Also, we have the internet."

The internet allows farmers to share resources and best practices so that newcomers can easily solve problems, such as how to stave off aphids or mitigate late-season frosts; it can also link farmers to lower-priced land and equipment. Customers are easier to find, too, especially given the rise of CSAs, which provide a reliable market and source of capital in advance of the growing season. There's also the new ubiquity of agriculture: it's happening everywhere, including in cities and suburbs. All of this amounts to a web of relationships – an emerging connective tissue among farmers and consumers – allowing more small-scale goods to be sold.

That emerging connective tissue is likely to be an important factor in new farmers' long-term success. It's the antidote

to isolation – to the disconnect, and ensuing loneliness, of life on a farm away from civilization – which was a crux of the back-to-the-landers' short-lived experiment. After too much time on a farm with too few people, many of them retreated from the woods and fled back to cities and towns. But the new generation is building a culture of connectedness and solidarity, supported by initiatives like Greenhorns, which might be regarded as isolation inoculations. On the days when farmers feel like quitting, on the days that overwhelm, on the days when they can't take a break from the sun or hide their disappointment that their high-hopes garlic is blighted, it's possible to remember all the others around the world who, just like them, are engaged in a common struggle.

"The thing about farming – it's like one of the more fragile and tragedy-fraught and heartbreaking pursuits you could choose," says von Tscharner Fleming. "Being part of a community, you get used to overcoming setbacks. I find when I am around farmers, people don't complain about I can't – they just figure out how to get it done."

Will the Farmsters and the Greenhorns, the Millers, Martins, and Shaperos stick around? Or will they meet the fate of the back-to-the-landers,,, look for easier lives, urban or suburban comforts? Or, worse, will they ultimately crumble under the weight of the agricultural system, massive and heartbreaking, that they're trying so mightily to change by their own hands?

**"The farm represents a level of complexity that's compatible with the human spirit and capacity for change."**

Surely some will quit, move on, make a change. This summer, Shapero is selling off his yearlings and harvesting the last of his garlic, at least for a while, and getting ready to enter a master's program in range management at University of California, Berkeley. He wants to improve the environmental practices of farmers – his own or those of others, he's still not sure. Miller and Martin don't have plans to leave, but if they ever do, they say that they'll take their farm experience and the ethic with them. And if the current trend continues, each year will bring thousands of new, young farmers who could take their place.

I'd last about three days as a farmer, this I know. But as I drive out of Sweet Roots Farm, bidding Miller and her guardian llama goodbye, past the farm's trickling brook and into the emerald foothills of my state, I feel both the import and the appeal of farm life. I see how interacting with small-scale agriculture – as a consumer, visitor, or farmer – is healthy for us all.



I remember an overcast day ten years ago at Blue Ledge Farm in Vermont, when Hannah and Greg's two-year-old daughter, the farm's tiny blond empress, came upon a dead goat out in the pasture. It was splayed on the grass, stiff and unmoving, ready for burial. She gave the creature two nudges with her rain boot. "Dead," she proclaimed. Then we turned toward her family's plentiful farm where her mom was planting peas, her father was setting newly poured wheels of cheese on shelves, and newborn goat kids were scrambling frantically around their pens in search of their mothers' udders. She ran to join the parade.

This child understood much more than I did about the mysterious workings of the earth. Will she one day take over her parents' farm? Or will she, like some children of the back-to-the-landers, sit in an urban apartment, poking fun at the naïve experiment of the previous generation? It almost doesn't matter. She'll be better fit for the perils of the changing world than so many of us, I remember thinking, as we trudged toward the barn for milking.

This story first appeared in *Orion Magazine* and has been reprinted with permission and revised by the author Lauren Markham. Ms. Markham is a writer based in Northern California. Her work has appeared in a variety of publications including *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *The New Republic*, the NewYorker.com, *Vice*, and *This American Life*. Listen to Lauren Markham talk about the next generation of farmers at www.orionmagazine.org/multimedia.

## #Farmstanding

At 8:30 Saturday mornings in the village of Los Olivos, California, out-of-town visitors as well as residents find their way to Tracy Fleming's and her husband Glenn Landon's Bakery Farmstand for some of Tracy's infamously tasty baked goods. Fruit-filled muffins, pies, fresh granola, specialty breads and scones greet the early morning visitor along with a cup of hot coffee from one of Glenn's vintage coffee pots. Along with breakfast treats, fresh eggs and local honey and jams; the farm stand offers a chance to catch up with friends and meet Glenn and Tracy who seem to simply adore greeting one and all who stop by. Tracy Fleming is not new to the culinary world. Since 1997, she and her husband Glenn have operated Stewart & Clark Fine Foods, a thriving mail-order dessert company (Stewart & Clark comes from the couple's middle names) that has been praised by the likes of *Saveur*'s Top 100, Dean & DeLuca, *The New York Times* and The Food Network. One of Tracy's specialties, her signature and handcrafted marshmallows, is among the first things to be grabbed up by waiting customers. To learn more visit, www.stewartandclark.com/The_Bakery_Farmstand



## Rusty Spur

The beauty of the Vaquero tradition does not stop at beautiful gear, but carries through in these exquisite Italian Leather Coverable backpack purses created by Rusty Spur Couture. Moda in Pella from Italy has done the "Sara" purse right; the best selling purse is a Shoulder Bag as well as an instant backpack. It is medium size and tablet friendly with a zip closure and the crock-embossed Italian calfskin leather will last a lifetime. Comes in 4 color variations at www.rustyspur.com.

## Baru's Silver

Baru Spiller's custom buckles, conchos, hoofpicks, scarf slides and jewelry are hand-crafted at the Spiller Ranch, located between Abilene and San Angelo, Texas. The ranch is also home to horses that have garnered championships in ranch and stock horse competition.

Baru's father, Bud Forell, was a rodeo champion who made his own rodeo equipment and had Baru competing by age nine. He remains a huge inspiration in her work. Her spur- and bit-making husband, Joe Spiller, encouraged her to begin silver work and has mentored her in fabrication techniques. Paying homage to rodeo towns where her family has competed, Baru's custom buckle styles have names such as Dodge City, Ogallala, Plainville, and Mankato. She believes becoming a good craftsman is like becoming a good horseman – both are a journey. She strives to raise the bar with every piece while blending her creative style with the customer's taste. See more of Baru's work at www.spillerranch.com/silver

## New Moisture-Wicking Denim From Wrangler

Premium Performance Cool Vantage™ jean, is a new addition to Wrangler apparel incorporating technology innovations for performance, comfort and durability. Wrangler designed Cool Vantage jeans with sweat-control technology that wicks five-times faster to keep the wearer cool and dry by pulling moisture to the outside of the denim. The denim, which is developed to last two times longer, has cooling benefits woven into the fabric that won't wash out over time.

As part of its commitment to provide solution-oriented innovation in its apparel, Wrangler conducted years of extensive consumer research through focus groups, fit observations and wear testing. Through the evolution of the Premium Performance apparel line including the Advanced Comfort jean debut in 2013 and now the Cool Vantage jean, Wrangler meets the identified demand for a comfortable and durable jean. Offered in regular and slim fits, Cool Vantage jeans are available for sale on Wrangler.com and will hit specialty store shelves early June. More at www.wrangler.com

# Western Style with Ashley Riggs

## Indigo

photo by Fryd Frydendahl

The two predominant colors of my childhood memories in the west are blue and brown. The brown of the earth, the dust hanging in the air, a sorrel gelding; all these humble colors highlighted by the brilliant blue of the expansive Nevada sky. Another blue we are all very familiar with in the West is the blue-indigo of jeans. Indigo is one of the oldest forms of dyes, originating in India. It spread to the Greco-Romans, the Japanese, and to Africa, with each culture interpreting it a little different than the next. The dawn of the 17th century brought with it vast amounts of trading between Europe and Asia and indigo made its way to the town of Nimes, France. There, the weavers of the town created a hard-wearing twill fabric *"de-nimes"* and denim was born.

Chloe and Gucci Spring '15 ready-to-wear

In women's ready-to-wear designer collections, Spring '15 found a huge resurgence in this versatile cloth. St. Laurent, Chloe, Gucci, Stella McCartney to name a few, featured denim and indigo shades in a big way. Texas tuxedos are no longer *passé*. The more denim and chambray the better! In menswear for the past decade, the die-hard, raw-denim (unwashed/unsized) enthusiasts pride themselves in *never* washing their Japanese selvedge jeans for the perfect worn-in look.

Nothing is more Cowboy than a pair of blue jeans, with the first pair being patented by Levi Strauss in the 1870s. Ever since, they have been a staple of mainstream American. The uniform of the working man. Where I come from you buy a new pair of Wrangler or Levi's at the feed store around fair-time. These are deemed "town jeans." Soon they slip into the "work jeans" realm and then the last stop on the station...Fencing jeans. No need of fancy "washes," repairs, or rhinestones; just buy them new and wear them in yourself. The dirt, blood, stories and "wash" are free. *"The best things in life are free, the second best are very expensive." – Coco Chanel.* Follow Ashley on Pintrest at Ashley_e_Riggs and on Tumblr at nynv-ashleyriggs.tumblr.com

## *Some favorites...*

A great womenswear look featuring layers of indigo, image credit as attached in file name.

RRL indigo discharge print shirt, inspired by the indigos from the turn of the 20th century
ralphlauren.com

Levis Western denim shirt from the ’50s, now a denim collectors piece

Texas Cattlemen clad in denim
*LIFE Magazine* 1948


Stifel indigo cloth is the most sought-after of antique workwear; with swatches ranging from hundreds of dollars and garments in the thousands.

St. Laurent and Stella McCartney Spring ’15 ready to wear

# The Irma Hotel Collection

Cisco's recently discovered and acquired what appears to be the original hotel desk registry for Buffalo Bill's Irma Hotel in Cody, Wyoming, complete with original guest registration from 1911, with a separate page for each room. Of interest, room number 577 was rented six times with guests from Casper, Texas, Colorado Springs, Helena, Denver, and New York. The registry is about three feet long, complete with brass letter holder, ink well, pen rest, and bell, and hand-carved wood buffalo, all mounted.

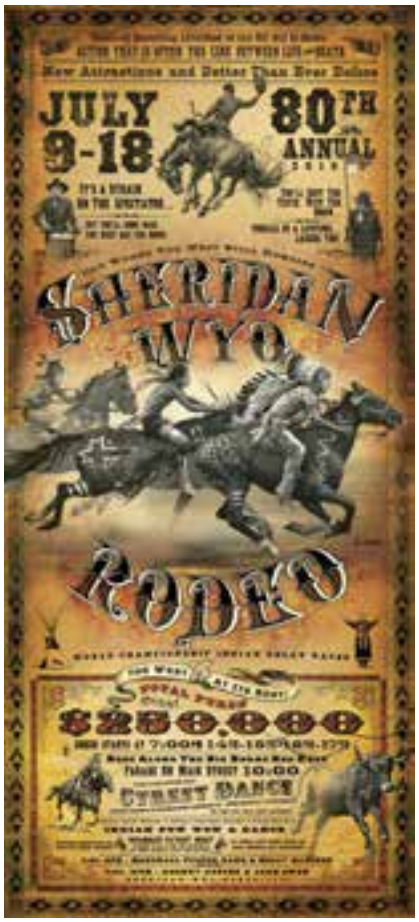
The Irma opened with a party on November 18, 1902, to which Cody invited the Press and dignitaries from as far away as Boston. The hotel quickly became the social center of Cody. The hotel is still open for business today, both as a hotel and restaurant, and included in the National Register of Historic Places, the landmark and focal point being his famous back bar, made of cherry, that was a gift given by Queen Victoria to Buffalo Bill. See more at www.ciscosgallery.com

## Western Heritage Furniture

Successfully blending design elements from Rustic, Early American, Western, Modern Tech, and Industrial, Tim McClellan, creator of Western Heritage Furniture, has launched a new furniture/design movement: Western Industrial. Built in the old copper mining town of Jerome, Arizona, this extraordinary desk is an example of how Tim combines materials representative of the complex variety of reclaimed barn woods, exotic hardwoods, and unique metalwork that Western Heritage has become recognized for worldwide. Complimented by more than five hidden compartments, this working Presidential Desk automatically transforms into a fully stocked three cabinet bar with dual pistol storage. Accented by hand-stitched leather and ambient lighting throughout, this unique piece has more watering holes than the town of Jerome! When the deal is done, the swipe of a thumb literally turns the workday into a celebration of success, and brings an historic concept to modern mechanistic convenience. How cool is that?! For more information, visit www.westernheritagefurniture.com

# The Art of Bob Coronato

Bob Coronato believes in his subject: "All artists of any historical merit, painted from first hand experience," he says. "I have been painting, drawing, and a full time intaglio print maker for the last 20 years. My focus has been documenting aspects of the contemporary Cowboy and American Indian life. I try to find the most rural and pure people that still hold the old traditions, and hang on to the historic ways. I paint from first hand experience as I travel through the rural areas of Wyoming, Montana, and South Dakota."





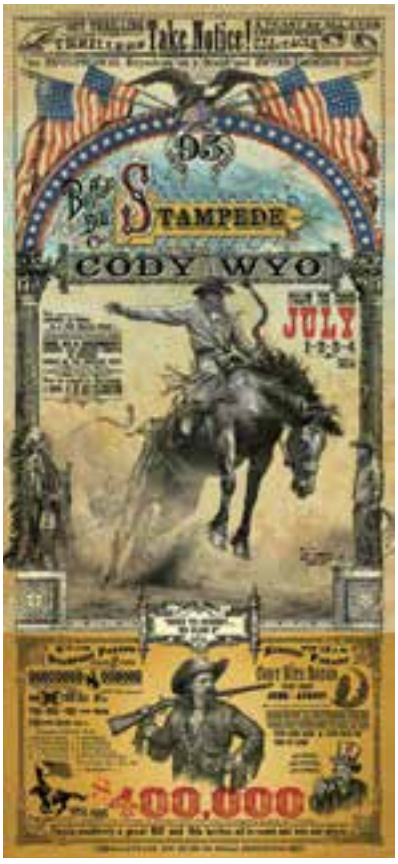

He will tell you he is passionate about what he does. "In tiny hidden corners of our country, you can still find places untouched by time. There are ranches that gather on horseback 2000 to 3000 head of cows, across 100s of miles of fenceless landscape. Hulett Wyoming is one of these hidden treasures. 20 years ago I attended Otis/Parsons Art institute in Los Angeles, and upon graduation, I moved to a town of 408 people called Hulett, to find the west I was looking for. The time has come where land is becoming too valuable, and it is no longer affordable to have cows roaming free, on open range. This forces ranches to sell off lands to survive, and before long, the "West" will be gone. Even now I can see dramatic changes and the things I was lucky enough to be a part of just a few years ago, are now gone. For example, old style ranch rodeos, traditional brandings, log cabins with no electricity, and running the chuck wagon during roundup. I no longer have to wish to be a part of the old days, but have become part of the



west I was searching for. We are at a clash of two times where traditional cowboy'n ways are being overridden by modern technology. This has been the focus of my paintings as I try to document moments in time that show the ways of a fading lifestyle that so many people have admired. The freedom of the west, and the wide open spaces have become a symbol of our great country. As our lives become more regimented and the rules become more numerous, we long for those places of freedom."

The subjects of Bob's work reminds people that there still is a remote, free west and provides a sense of relief, that we are not a completely modern country just yet. The question he hears most often is, "Do they still do that? Well...yes they do," he says with a smile, "but maybe not for much longer." By living in a very remote section of Wyoming, and working with ranchers and cowboys, Bob has been lucky enough to be a part of this current chapter of the American frontier. For now, he says, "The West" is alive, it's just hiding, in small corners of our country, trying desperately to hang on, and not be forgotten."

Bob Coronato resides half of the year in Hulett, Wyoming, and the other half on the central coast of California. See more of Bob's work at www.bobcoronato.com

## The Russell Casa – on the Market.

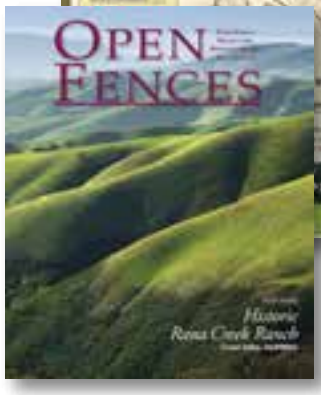
We show lots of real estate in these pages but this might be a topper. Tom and his wife Nadine Russell have found new digs in Santa Fe, New Mexico and their historic 1930s El Paso adobe is now being listed for sale. The fully renovated home sits on just over two and a half acres within the city limits. The property has Rio Grande water rights and full ag rights along with its own well with access to city water. The front house features three bedrooms, two baths, library, historic "Dwight Eisenhower wet sauna from Ft. Bliss" (a story in itself), all oak hardwood floors, fully renovated modern kitchen, all glass Frank Lloyd Wright style office and workout room. There is a separate guest house with bedroom, bathroom, small kitchen, office, and gym. Separate painting studio, above ground swimming pool. Perfect border getaway! Gateway to Mexico! For more information, contact Debbi Hester at 915.252.5753 or www.debbihester.com

## Rumsey River Ranch

The fine folks at Cal Ag Properties are representing a superb recreational ranch in Yolo County in Northern California. On the market for the first time in thirty-five years, this property is nestled between Cache Creek and Capay Valley. It features a beautifully restored ranch house, bunkhouse, incredible shop and great room with bar and full kitchen for large groups – way too many amenities to list, plus – pig, turkey, and deer hunting. www.calagprop.com


## *Ranch & Reata* and *Open Fences*

One of the most popular aspects of this section is the focus we put on "extreme ranch real estate." Our wonderful real estate advertisers represent some of the finest ranches in the U.S. and beyond. Nobody covers ranch real estate like David Light does with his publication – *Open Fences*. We have teamed up with David to help spread the word even wider about the insanely incredible properties "out there." Stay tuned to ranchandreata,com for video tours of some of these fine ranches represented by the best real estate firms in the nation. *Open Fences* and *Ranch & Reata* want you to know where everything is, that matters. See more at www.openfences.com

## The Joe Beeler Foundation

photo by William Reynolds

Helping to perpetuate Western Art in the tradition of Russell and Remington and to reach out to a new generation of artists to help keep the art alive; The Cowboy Artists of America have founded The Joe Beeler Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The purpose of the organization is to raise monies in order to provide scholarships to promising Western artists, so they may attend workshops conducted by Active CAA Members. The foundation is named after Joe Beeler, one of the founding fathers of the CAA, and scholarships will be presented in Joe's honor and in the same giving spirit Joe was known to possess. This fall, workshops will be sponsored by the Foundation and will feature the following artists and mediums:

*The Nature of a Cow Horse* by Joe Beeler.

Bruce Greene/Martin Grelle – oil painting
Jason Scull/Paul Moore – sculpture
Ron Riddick – oil painting
John Coleman – sculpture
Jim Norton – oil painting
Grant Redden – watercolor

To learn more about The Joe Beeler Foundation, to make a tax-deductible donation, or apply for a scholarship, please contact Ruth Kaspar at Info@CowboyArtistsOfAmerica.com.

photo by Kurt Markus, Courtesy Claggett/Rey Gallery

## Ian Tyson releases new album, *Carnero Vaquero*


Now 81, Ian Tyson has just recorded a new album for Edmonton-based Stony Plain Records – and he still plays some 40 concerts a year as well as managing the Tyson Cattle Ranch south of Calgary.

*Carnero Vaquero* includes 10 songs that can be described as true and clear as the western sky, the foothills of the Rockies and the changing cowboy tradition. The album's title – "Carnero" is the Spanish word for ram, and "Vaquero" is Spanish for cowboy, and indeed, the cowboy tradition, particularly in the south-western United States – is an accurate indication of the music.

The songs range from the traditional ("Doney Girl") to co-writes with Calgary's Kris Demeanor. There are five new Ian Tyson songs, as well as a tuneful remake of "Darcy Farrow" (originally

recorded in the early '60s Ian & Sylvia folk duo days). "Wolves No Longer Sing" is written with Tom Russell – the pair co-wrote "Navajo Rug," one of Tyson's biggest hits.

Tyson's voice, which has recovered from the accident that severely damaged it in 2007, recorded the album with his core touring band. Instead of a formal studio, Tyson cut most of the CD in a 100-year-old stone building, a mile down a gravel road from his ranch house; it's the building where Tyson works every day when he's not on the road. "I think that the ghosts of all the songs I've written here approve of the new ones," he says. www.stonyplainrecords.com

## Dr. Tyson

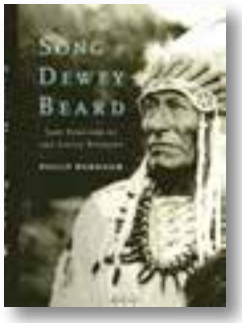
In addition, Ian Tyson has been announced as The University of Lethbridge Senate's fourth 2015 Honorary Degree recipient.

"It's very exciting to have one of our country's foremost musicians and entertainers accept an honorary degree," said University of Lethbridge chancellor Janice Varzari. "His music has long reflected the values and lifestyles of southern Albertans and his contribution to Canadian culture is indelible."

The U of L will present Tyson with the degree of Doctor of Laws, honouris causa, at the Spring 2015 Convocation Ceremony IV. Fellow southern Alberta country entertainer Corb Lund will read Tyson's citation at the official ceremony.

## New Books from Member Authors of the Western Writers of America

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




**Philip Burnam**'s Spur Award-winning biography *Song of Dewey Beard* (University of Nebraska Press) follows the life of a Lakota warrior, the last survivor of the Battle of the Little Big Horn.


In her Spur-winning nonfiction account of the 1989 oil spill, *Red Light to Starboard: Recalling the Exxon Valdez Disaster* (Washington State University Press), **Angela Day** recreates one of America's worst ecological disasters.


Author-illustrator **Donald F. Montileaux** tells how horses came to the Lakota people in *Tasunka: A Lakota Horse Legend* (South Dakota State Historical Society Press), this year's Spur winner for best illustrated children's book.

Cowboy poet **Red Steagall** teams with Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer **Skeeter Hagler** to examine West Texas cowboys of today in *Born to This Land* (Texas Tech University Press).


*Buell: Journey to the White Clouds* (Five Star Publishing) by **Wallace J. Swenson**, who died before this first novel was published, tells a traditional but psychological Western set in an Idaho mining town.

## Tim Cox, CA

Artist Tim Cox is part of a new generation giving the Cowboy Artists of America a freshness and energy in his very popular works. Here are just a few examples. See more on his website – www.timcox.com

## Sandra Jones Campbell

Sandra Jones Campbell remembers growing up in Eastern Oregon. Her mother was used to moving around that tough and windy wide-open country. It was noted she would say, "I'm not hanging curtains as we're not staying long enough." Sandra was the final and fourth girl in her family and grew up picking berries in the Blue Mountains remembering deer and fishing seasons as much as Thanksgiving and Christmas. Hers was a rich youth filled with color and a life exposed to characters and interesting people. She's been drawing what she has seen since those early years. Today her art is a sophisticated depiction of not only the essence of those early days ranching with her family but of social and political scenes that reflect both her professional respect for the 30s style German Expressionists Max Beckman, George Grosz and Otto Dix, and her uniquely gentle wit. Multiple figures populate lively acrylics on paper or canvas images that blend Sandra's optimism and candor, along with the artist's keen visual skill: balancing color, form composition, humor and subject matter.

Sandra describes her paintings as composites of social sightings portraying evocative associations from a voyeuristic perspective, often at moments of personal social apprehension or sociological attitude. Her visual narratives achieve effects that are simultaneously playful and sophisticated be they about cowboys or not.

Sandra's provocative paintings have been shown in over thirty-five one and two person exhibits (at the Attic Gallery every May), and at museum exhibitions in California, Oregon, Massachusetts and Arizona. She is represented currently by Attic Gallery in Portland, Oregon and Pacific Edge Gallery in Laguna Beach, California. www.sandrajonescampbell.com

# Renee Kelleher

Light dances in the paintings of Santa Ynez Valley artist, Renee Kelleher. "I have always been fascinated by the play of light and shadow, as well as by the ever-changing aspects of atmospheric light. Often, I am excited by the light path on something familiar. It's as if I am seeing it for the first time, and I am inspired to capture the moment with my paint brush. If my viewers are able to experience that moment in my paintings, I feel that I have successfully expressed myself," she says.

When asked about her approach, "My style would be impressionistic realism inspired by Monet, Sargent, and Schmid and though do I enjoy watercolor sketches, I primarily paint in oils now even though I started as a watercolorist back in the 1990s. I was represented by Waterhouse Gallery in Santa Barbara and a stranger bought one of my paintings off their wall. It was all I needed surge ahead."

Ms. Kelleher has also exhibited at Newmasters Gallery, Carmel, California, and Cody Gallery in Los Olivos, California. Her work has hung in many Santa Barbara County venues such as the Elverhøj Museum in Solvang, The Wildling Museum in Los Olivos, Santa Barbara Art Walk at the Museum of Natural History, Casa de la Guerra, Santa Barbara Historical Museum, Faulkner Gallery, The Fielding Institute, Cabrillo Arts Center, Meisel Gallery, and Gallery 113. Today, she represents herself from her Santa Ynez Valley studio. To see more visit, www.reneekelleher.com


STETSON
APPAREL & BOOTS
STETSONAPPAREL.COM

# Once again, The Coeur d'Alene Art Auction is set to amaze

For over 25 years the Coeur d'Alene Art Auction has specialized in the finest classical Western and American Art representing past masters and outstanding contemporary artists. The auction principals have over 100 years of combined experience in selling fine art and have netted their clients nearly $240 million in the last ten years alone. With scores of world record prices, this is truly one of the amazing western art events held each year. The Auction will be held July 24 and 25 at the Peppermill Resort in Reno, Nevada. Here is the schedule of events, which includes a book signing by renowned author, Larry Len Peterson. For more information, www.cdaartauction.com

Howard Terpning (b. 1927)
*Bad Medicine Crossing* (1996)

**The 2015 Coeur d'Alene Art Auction – Schedule of Events**

- Friday, July 24, 2015
  Auction Preview: 9 AM - 5 PM
  Book Signing: 3 – 5 PM
  Larry Len Peterson – John Fery: Artist of Glacier National Park & The American West
  Preview Party: 6 – 8 PM

- Saturday, July 25, 2015
  Auction Preview: 8 AM – 12 PM
  Book Signing: 8:30 AM – 10 AM
  Lunch: 10:30 AM
  Auction: 12:00 PM

Frank Tenney Johnson (1874–1939)
*When Trail-Weary Cattle are Sleeping* (1936)

Charles M. Russell (1864–1926) *Wild Horses* (1900), watercolor on paper

Charles M. Russell (1864–1926) *Meat for the Tribe*

## Preifert

Once again Preifert presents cool stock handling equipment with their Single Animal Scale with Indicator – a great choice for weighing cattle. Capturing an accurate weight for livestock is essential for proper management, medication applications, and optimum marketing. This NTEP legal-for-trade scale is certified by the National Conference on Weights and Measures. The single-animal scale features a rugged structural steel channel frame, stainless steel load cell with adjustable feet, and rubber mat interior flooring for sure footing and noise reduction. Animals enter and exit the weigh cage through simple sliding gates that operate on a durable roller system. It is extremely accurate featuring a 5000 lb. capacity and includes the Priefert 190 Storm Indicator. With its watertight polycarbonate enclosure, this indicator is made to withstand the harshest of environments with the ability to tolerate extreme weather conditions and high-pressure wash downs. The indicator is easy to read with a large five-color LCD display and easy to operate with its capacitive touch buttons. For more information, visit www.priefert.com

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## Destinations

### The Forgotten Coast

By Donna Stegman

It feels like just yesterday that planning our family's summer vacation usually included a trip to Disneyland or finding a resort with a great kids club. Outside of working around naps, our kids were easy and experienced travelers at a very early age. When we became parents of two wonderful daughters, we decided that we would do everything within our power to ensure that our children would be well traveled. I'm proud to say that we met that goal and then some; at last count we've visited at least 28 states and 7 countries together.

Planning our vacations sometimes made me think that pulling together an invasion on foreign soil would have been easier than the feat of finding a destination that pleased everyone. I hit the mark more often than not, but toss in a few moody teens and the stakes only go up. As our children got older the theme park vacations took a back seat to more exotic locales full of beaches, boats, snorkeling and zip lines. So when a friend and native Floridian asked if we had ever been to St. George Island Florida, I was intrigued. I had never heard of it, I couldn't even find it on a map. Turns out St. George is a charming barrier island off the panhandle of Florida – we've been to southern Florida many times, but the panhandle was all new territory for us to explore. The little island boasted sunny beaches filled with warm gulf waters, powdery white sand, shells, turtles and its claim to fame – Florida's least-populated beaches – I was sold.

Our family piled into our rental car at the Tallahassee airport, thankful to be off the plane and with map in hand,

we headed due south for the island. The drive's an easy hour-and-a-half along the highway that just skims the boarder of the majestic Apalachicola National Forest. Before anyone in the car could whine, "How much longer?" forests gave way to marshland and pristine sugary-white beaches and the air took on that unmistakable taste of ocean salt that says you're almost there. Highway 98 cuts south through the heart of old Florida and for the bulk of the scenic 60-miles it gently hugs the Gulf of Mexico. The locals call this area the "Forgotten Coast."

*photos courtesy www.collinsvacationrentals.com*

When we arrived on the peninsula, you couldn't miss our turn off – St. George Island Bridge is 4 long miles of amazing engineering and would have been worth the drive alone. It is the 3rd longest bridge in Florida, only bested by the Keys. Pulling onto the quaint little seaside oasis we hit the stop sign in town and quickly found our way to Main Street. We opted again to rent a beachfront home, but just a warning, once you do this you'll never want to go back to crowded resorts again. We were immediately charmed by the 1950's themed home, aptly named "American Pie." It came complete with a vintage diner counter and barstools in the kitchen and the family (husband) loved the old fashion milkshake machine. It was amazing to stand on the back porch, taking in the breathtaking views of the sea and being close enough to call everyone out of the water for lunch without leaving the house. At that moment, I was sure they would never get me to go back home. For decades the island has managed to resist the condo and resort jungle of southern Florida, so outside of one tiny 1940's style motel, the only accommodations on the island are home rentals. Typical of the beach front towns of the south, our rental was a Southern cracker style 3 story home set on stilts with the mandatory metal sheeting roof and screened in porches, all designed for lazy afternoons sipping tea. The locals have kept a tight lid on building permits since the 1950s and have successfully managed to keep out urban sprawl and the crowds that go with it, and they're quick to tell you that's how they like it.

Our beach town came complete with a handful of unique eateries, sports rental shops and a catchall sundries store. We were surprised to see so few cars on the sandy streets, apparently the preferred mode of transport for SGI (local speak) are bikes and jazzed up golf carts. One of our first stops was a rental shop to procure our own set of wheels.

Realizing we needed serious supplies for our 7 days of beach frolic, we were off to the big city. Apalachicola is perched just across the bay, just a short hop on the bridge and we were back on the mainland. Although it's only marginally larger than the little beach hamlet of SGI, it has everything you need for your vacation. The locals proudly boast that Apalach (locals' name) now has 2 grocery stores, 8 restaurants, a street full of unique boutiques and 10 churches.

I'm not sure what we expected, maybe that all of Florida was Miami or Orlando-esque, but I sure didn't expect to find that the panhandle of Florida was the beating heart of Southern culture. Pulling into Apalach was like setting foot on foreign soil for us West coasters. This was true Southern small-town life – picturesque Southern historic homes with shady wraparound porches, manicured rose gardens and old oak trees with Spanish moss dangling off the branches like tattered lace curtains dotting the sleepy streets of town. You could easily imagine what life had been like here over a century ago, because almost nothing had changed.

We stopped in for lunch at Boss Oyster. This riverside seafood shack even has an in-house oystermen just to shuck and guarantee the quality of each bivalve on your plate. We sat on the deck for lunch and were quickly joined by half a dozen giant brown pelicans. Our new feathered friends sat just feet away presumably keeping tabs on our seafood sampler plate. Oysters and shrimp are king in this old delta town and are on every menu, even for breakfast. Apalachicola Bay

estuaries produce over 90 percent of Florida oysters and still harvest them with "tongers," which we were told is a long metal rake that the fishermen painstakingly dredge along the river's muddy bottom. We were all enchanted by the sweet Southern drawl of our waitress who when asked a question of where to do our shopping, pulled up a chair and with child like enthusiasm told us everything you would ever need to know about local shopping and the Piggly-Wiggly. Nothing can ever compare to Southern hospitality.

We decided to check out the historic fishing village on foot and walk off a bit of our lunch. Since Apalachicola's downtown area is all of about 2 blocks, it's a blissful stroll through century old buildings, chalk full of eclectic shops and restaurants. You're not going to find a Cheesecake Factory, fast food or a Starbucks for miles. A must stop is the Gibson Inn, the only high rise around (it's a mind bending 3 story building) and still standing proud since 1907. The Gibson Inn will lure you in with her covered porches and rocking chairs, and is a fine example of true Cracker architecture that has dodged the bullet of modernization and more than a few hurricanes. The grand dame still lodges and feeds out-of-town gusts with the same grace and charm of when her doors first opened over 100 years ago. My daughter was enthralled because it's also on the list of the 5 most haunted building in the United States.

A boat excursion up the river is a fun day excursion. Learn about the abundant wild life and estuaries found in the deltas from your captain as you glide through swamps and marshes. You'll get a glimpse of some of the few remaining groves of Tupelo trees in the country and, if you're lucky, you'll get to try the famed Tupelo honey straight from the source.

St. George Island is what other beaches would love to be, relaxed and low key, the undeveloped natural beauty with all the Southern hospitality they can muster. The amazing food of low country comes together with fresh-off-the-boat seafood and a decadent dose of deep-fry that will make your mouth water for days. We still talk about the corn fritters dipped in spicy Cajun sauce from Harry A's! The forgotten coast of Florida is a soulful Southern hideaway like no other.

For all the charming sights we found on this trip, the shining star for us was the simple beauty of the powdery white beach we had all to ourselves – literally out our back door. All the hours spent relaxing and laughing together in lounge chairs after a refreshing swim and cell phones that had long been forgotten back in the house, were truly priceless. What I have learned from 25 years of being a family is to take time to reconnect with one another, time moves quickly. Vacation like you mean it and enjoy the simple pleasures of walking back to the house together with an ice cream cone as the sun sets over the ocean.

**PS:** A little something I brought back for you, dear readers. And it's easy to double for a crowd!

**Low Country Beer Shrimp**
2 lbs fresh shrimp with shell on (and heads if you can find them)
2 Tbs bacon drippings
2 Tbs Worcestershire sauce
1 tsp rosemary
2 Tbs minced garlic
1 tsp Cajun seasoning
1 tsp Tabasco sauce (or to taste)
Heat bacon drippings in hot skillet and add all the above ingredients, cook on medium heat stirring occasionally for 5 minutes.

Add...
Juice of 1 lemon
½ cup of beer
½ stick butter
½ cup chopped scallions
¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
Salt and pepper to taste

Simmer until sauce is glossy and shrimp are cooked. Serve over cheese grits or rice.

# PLANNING YOUR TRIP

## WHEN TO GO

Mid summer on St. George Island ushers in high season prices and hot humid temperatures, so I prefer visiting in the milder and less expensive months of spring and fall.

## PLACE TO HANG YOUR HAT

**COLLINS VACATION RENTALS** – A fantastic company that in this age of all things on-line also still produces a lovely 10 page color brochure on their rental properties and will cheerfully help you find just the right accommodations, bless their heart. www.collinsvacationrentals.com

**GIBSON INN** – This off island gem is true Southern living, for those whom need the whole hotel experience. www.gibsoninn.com

## FOR YOUR DINING PLEASURE

**BOSS OYSTER** – The freshest seafood on the gulf, rustic in appearance but don't let that fool you. Dockside digs, just pick your picnic table and enjoy low country boil at it's best. www.bossoyster.com

**HAIRY A'S** – Once I got past the name, I couldn't get enough of this place. Fresh fish, grilled steaks and the best corn fritters I have ever tasted! They have an outside bar that gets hoppin' at night with live music and dancing. And for added entertainment sometimes guests are brought up on stage to sing a song or two, maybe after a few rumrunners. And maybe *some people* think they can belt out Proud Mary just like CC&R or Tina Turner. I'm pretty sure I have confiscated all those incriminating photos...www.harryas.com

**BLUE PARROT OCEANFRONT CAFÉ** – Great place for an afternoon cocktail, just feet from the waves. Be sure to try their in-house special, Blackberry, mango, lime juice and rum, lots and lots of rum. www.blueparrotsgi.com

## OTHER ESSENTIALS AND HELPFUL TIPS

**KAYAKS AND FISHING CHARTERS** – Journeys of St. George Island, preorder for the best rate and remember that the fishing charters fill up fast. www.sgislandjourneys.com

**BIKES AND GOLF CART RENTALS** – You just think you don't want this now, but ya will. www.sgiadventures.com

**TIP #1** – Don't bother with a daily rental, just book the bikes/golf cart for the week. You'll use it the whole time and it's far less expensive this way.

**TIP #2** – Bring your sunscreen, but don't you dare leave home without DEEPWOODS OFF! Those tiny little flies with the pretty purple wings bite. Never leave the house in the evening without a good spray. Or as the locals say, "You done got yourself bit sick."

**TIP #3** – Funny that this should matter, but it does. Unless you want the gimlet eye from the wait staff, never under any circumstance accidently order any Pepsi product. Southerners become enraged and tell you they only serve and drink Coke below the Mason Dixon line. I'm really not kidding, they act as if you just ordered a hamburger made of puppies.

# Homes on the Range

**Located in Twin Oaks Ranch**

Our friend, Rick Sawyer is representing Twin Oaks Ranch in Aguanga Valley near Temecula, CA. The ranch offers the historic Butterfield Stage Stop, monument and building. Additionally this unique property has 10 legal parcels with 10RR zoning and borders the Cleveland National Forest; 6 wells @ 400 – 1000 GPM with two reservoirs; 220 acres of farmland; 4800 sq. ft. crop barn; ranchland grazing and huge roping arena; two homes. This Wonderful Ranch and Farm property is full of promise for the future of Aguanga Valley and the Temecula Wine Region. This property offers a very functional landscape ready for multiple uses and diverse income. Please contact Rick at ricksawyer.com

Twin Creek Ranch owner, Chris Thompson, has been riding and roping since he was a teenager. He and his partner won the United States Team Roping Championship at the West Coast Regional Finals in Paso Robles, CA.

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# Neo-Shaker

## A New England craftsman reinvents himself in Montana, where he creates some of North America's finest custom furniture.

By Melissa Mylchreest



Sometimes, inspiration comes along under the most unlikely circumstances. Say, for instance, while sweeping a sidewalk in front of an art gallery in Helena, Montana. On a sunny summer day a couple of years ago, that's just what happened for furniture maker Al Swanson.

*photos courtesy Al Swanson/by Brian D'ambrosio*

Montana craftsman Al Swanson.

Recalling the moment, Swanson says, "I'm sweeping out there in front of our shop, which is full of pretty high-end, expensive pieces. They can be shipped of course, but we get a lot of tourists, and we didn't have anything that people could just cash and carry. So I'm wondering what kind of small product we could make, and I realize that I'm watching all of these fly fishermen milling about, because we're a hundred feet away from the hotel where they all stay."

The idea hit him: fly boxes. Also known as fly caddies, these small boxes hold the tiny fuzzed and feathered tools of the fly

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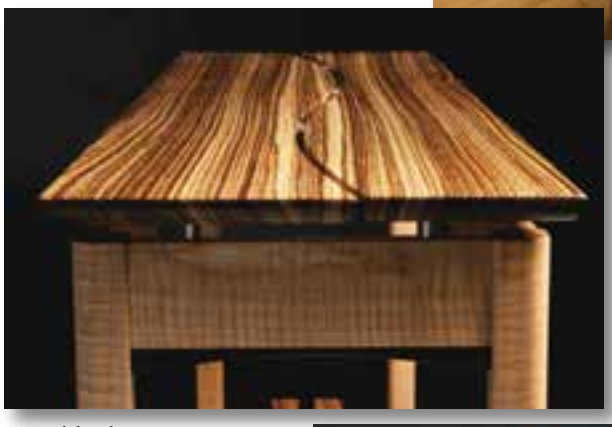
fisherman's trade. More often than not, they're cheap plastic contraptions, concerned far more with utility than aesthetics. But what if, Swanson thought, we could make them useful *and* beautiful?

Swanson is no stranger to utility and beauty. A master craftsman, Swanson has spent a lifetime not only perfecting his chops in the woodshop, but honing a refined, signature furniture style he refers to as "neo-Shaker." Riffing on the clean lines and intricate joinery of classic Shaker design, Swanson adds his own flair to every piece of furniture he makes, whether it's a bed frame, desk, chest, or dining table and chairs.



Tables by Montana craftsman Al Swanson. Swanson learned his trade in his native New England, finding inspiration in Shaker woodworking traditions.

Often Swanson's pieces highlight the inherent beauty of an individual piece of wood – a particularly showy slab of birdseye maple, perhaps, or the striking grain pattern in a slice of black cherry. But he's not content to simply let the wood speak for itself; instead, he'll add a bit of inlay here, a slight curve of a leg there, to transform his work from a mere piece of furniture into an heirloom-quality work of art.

Born and raised on a farm in Maine, Swanson grew up around wood and woodworking. "We were pretty self-sufficient, lived in a rural part of the state, cut our own firewood, tapped maples for syrup, learned to identify trees," he says. "My dad was a hobby woodworker, and in our barn we had cows and pigs and chickens on one side and a table saw on the other." His family also lived 15 miles from a Shaker community, where Swanson had the opportunity to see and be inspired by 100-year-old furniture. "I saw the tool marks and the plane marks, and was in awe of it. It's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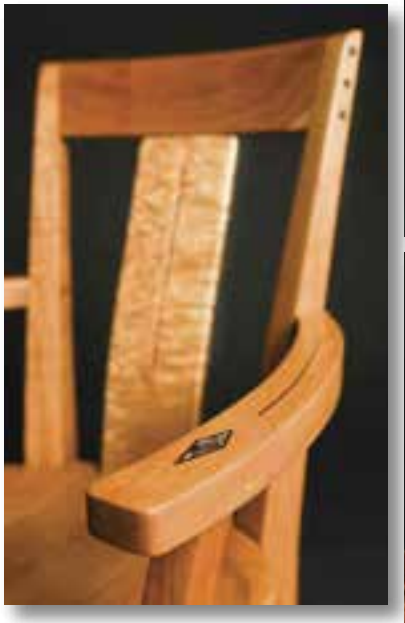
an aesthetic I fell in love with. It's both very simple and very complex."

Swanson attributes a good deal of his success as a furniture maker to the rich and long-standing tradition of woodworking in New England. "I think it was partly osmosis," explains. "That neck of the woods is so deeply entrenched in woodworking, and it's so highly regarded. I apprenticed for many years under a cabinetmaker from Boston who was just amazing, and I was able to work with some other people who were much older than me and didn't have to take the time to teach me, but did."



Chairs by Montana craftsman Al Swanson. Collections throughout the country include Swanson's work.

Swanson didn't head straight into woodworking as an adult – he holds degrees in business and agronomy – but the woodshop kept calling him back, no matter where he found himself. "It didn't matter where I was, I was always the wood guy," he says. "If we needed a sign built or something, everybody would always say, 'Ask Al, he'll do it.'" Finally relenting to his lifelong infatuation, he set up his first shop in a bedroom in downtown Portland, Maine. "Here I was, making all kinds of racket, and the neighbors were wondering what on earth was going on up there. But I was finally making this cool stuff, and it just grew from there."

Despite developing what became a thriving business – and reputation – on the East Coast, Swanson wasn't entirely settled. With a brother and sister living in Montana, he decided to give the Big Sky state a chance. In the summer of 2000, he packed a U-Haul with tools and moved west with nothing but ambition and talent to guide him. And he's stayed put ever since, letting the aesthetics of the West – its rivers and colors and people – influence his work.

And so the story comes full circle, back around to fly boxes. While Swanson's furniture sells for big bucks and is housed in collections around the country, he knew that to expand – to hire more craftsmen, and get the Swanson name into broader circles beyond Montana's borders – he would need to dream up something that was affordable and small, but still built to the same top-quality standards that define his furniture.

After months of testing and prototyping, Swanson and his team had perfected their fly-box design. Ready to market them to the world, they decided to go for broke, and approached the Orvis Corporation, the largest fly-fishing company in the world. "It was a shot in the dark," he recalls. "They replied and said, 'We get lots of these inquiries, but send them along and we'll take a look." So Swanson did, thinking he'd never hear a word from them again. Then, a few weeks later Orvis responded, saying they had fallen in love with the box. "They asked, 'How many can you build?' and I said, 'I don't know. I didn't think you were going to say yes.'"

Swanson and his team were subsequently featured prominently in Orvis' *Sporting Gift Catalog*, and they've been consistently selling out of their fly boxes as fast as they can make them. But even as the company grows exponentially, they are still determined to maintain the highest quality craftsmanship and attention to detail that they always have.

Additionally, Swanson remains committed to giving back to the community – especially through his classes, which are designed to introduce non-woodworkers to the craft. "I bring people to the process," Swanson says. "My goal is to take an average person and teach them a craft that they may not otherwise be involved with. These are people who have zero experience, have never touched a table saw. And ultimately the pieces that we build– sure, I could build them quicker and less expensive. But when they do it, it's an heirloom and they're going to have it forever, pass it down to their kids."

And ultimately, these are the attributes that shine through in Swanson and his work – patience, practice, aesthetics, the continuous pursuit of beauty. Simplicity and complexity married harmoniously, as evidenced by dovetails and abalone inlays, hidden hinges and graceful accents. Just as he has balanced his East Coast roots with newfound influences in the West, so too does his work balance form and function. And, as all the best craftsmen must eventually do, he has figured out how to balance the nitty-gritty of a capitalist economy with the rarified world of fine-art furniture – without compromising any of his principles along the way.


https://youtu.be/EMpH4eAnNSg
Al Swanson discusses his craft in this interview with Helena Civic Television.

**Melissa Mylchreest is a writer living in Montana.**

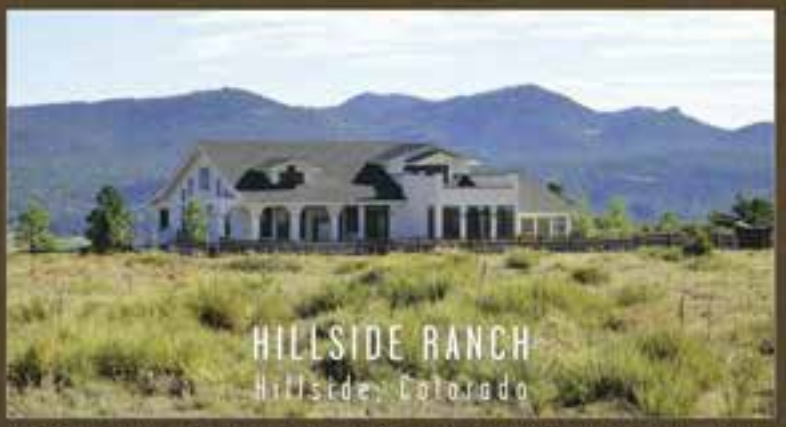
RMA

# THE WEST IS OUR HERITAGE.


Located in the scenic Wet Mountain Valley south of Westcliffe, this productive 162-acre irrigated hay farm has a modern 2,800 sq.ft. ranch home and hay storage barn plus abundant water resources with Grape Creek, deeded irrigation water rights and spring-fed water for livestock. $1,649,000. Duane Daskam, 719.285.3232 and Ron Morris, 970.535.0881


Perfect for the discriminating buyer, the 1,400-acre estate is convenient to Colorado Springs and Denver and includes a 17,000+ sq.ft. owner's home with attached horse barn, two staff houses, custom indoor arena, heated horse barn, cattle barn, equipment/hay storage along with working facilities, turnout pens and fenced pastures. $6,600,000. Ron Morris, 970.535.0881


Four miles west of the charming town of Buffalo with a mile of Clear Creek meandering through the property, the 68-acre retreat is at the end of a private road and bordered by a large ranch. Improvements include a 4,500 sq.ft. main house with a guest apartment and a separate 1,550 sq.ft. home nearby. $1,595,000. Matt Johnston, 307.655.2273 and Ron Morris, 970.535.0881




This 580+ acre executive ranch nine miles from Westcliffe features luxurious improvements, 360-degree views, pastures and meadows set up for livestock grazing. Ideal for entertaining, the elegant 7,350 sq.ft. home has a large open floor plan. A well-designed multi-function barn is set up for horses. $2,900,000. Ron Morris, 970.535.0881 and Duane Daskam, 719.285.3232


The perfect setup for horses or a small herd of cattle, the 160-acre ranch includes a nice 2,784 sq.ft. home, horse barn, Quonset barn, loafing shed and corrals. Four pastures, forty hayable acres on most years plus additional 172 acres of grazing and hunting pasture are also available. $899,000. Duane Daskam, 719.942.3734 and Ron Morris, 970.535.0881


385-acre turnkey lifestyle equestrian ranch located twenty minutes north of Westcliffe offers over five miles of groomed trails, a 3,942 sq.ft. custom cedar log home, a 110-year-old miner's cabin, indoor arena and horse facilities for up to seven horses plus unlimited recreational opportunities both on and off the ranch. $1,750,000. Ron Morris, 970.535.0881

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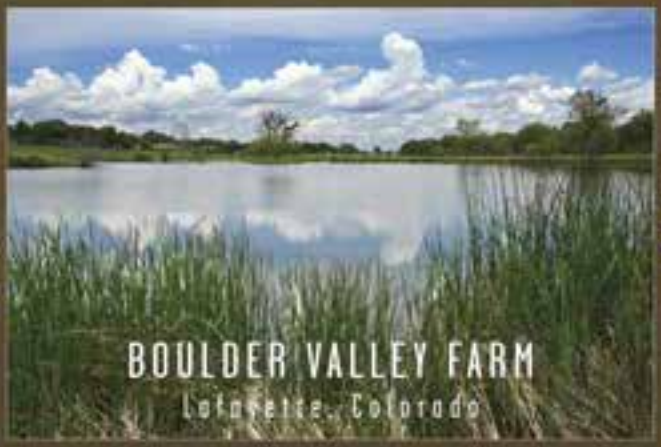
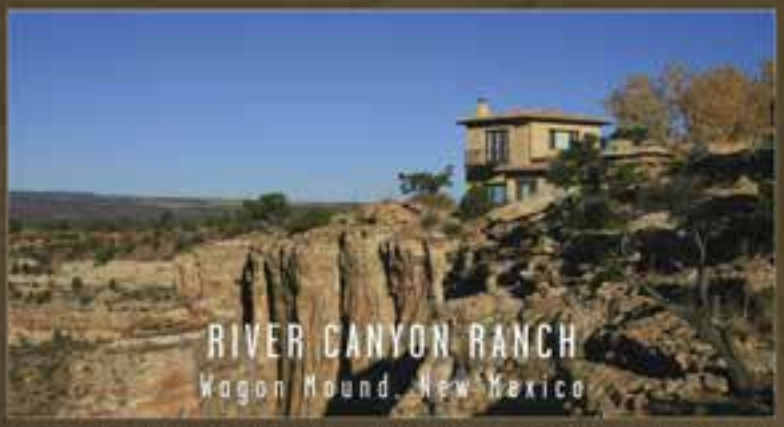
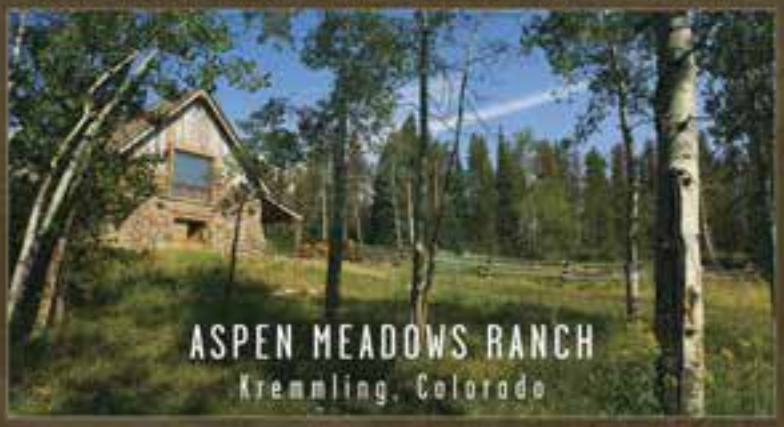



Located northeast of Boulder with direct access to the Denver corridor, this spectacular farm on 642 acres has been a working cattle ranch supporting 100-150 head and producing 500 tons of grass hay, while providing exclusive and comfortable rural living. The farm features 1.5 miles of Boulder Creek and eight ponds with outstanding fishing, water fowl and a Heron Rookery. It includes valuable water rights, a 3,834 sq.ft. owner's home, guest house, manager's home, 1890 farm house, barn, cattle sheds and equipment sheds. $16,000,000. Ron Morris, 970.535.0881

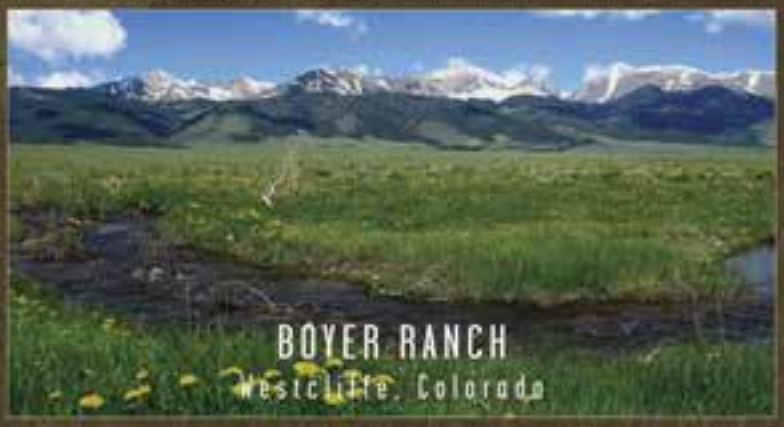



10,000 total acres with year-round paved highway access in a private setting on the mesa looking down the Canadian River Canyon providing dramatic views of the area's expansive rugged natural beauty. First-class improvements include a 3,800 sq.ft. home, guest house, shop and horse barn. $7,800,000. Ron Morris, 970.535.0881 and Ryan Tatsch, 719.565.8318


Contiguous 55,486 deeded acre legacy ranch with 5 creeks, 12 reservoirs, 25 springs providing water for livestock and wildlife that includes elk, mule deer, antelope, bear and mountain lion. Operated as a bison-cattle-horse ranch with quality improvements, this one-of-a-kind ranch NOW INCLUDES ALL LIVESTOCK & EQUIPMENT. $54,700,000 Ron Morris, 970.535.0881




Part of the 19,000-acre Grand River Ranch shared ranch community which offers an assortment of amenities including equestrian center, two fishing camps, sporting clays range and guest lodge, the 176-acre ranch with beveled log home and barn is in a private setting with a creek, two ponds and incredible views. $7,000,000. Ron Morris, 970.535.0881




12,505 total acre (11,380 deeded + 1,125 state lease) cattle and hay production ranch rimmed by the Sangre de Cristo Mountains just 1.5 hours from Colorado Springs. Well watered with over 18 CFS of water rights, streams, ponds and wells irrigating 700 acres putting up 1,200 tons of premium hay. Runs 900-1,000 yearling cattle. $8,500,000. Ron Morris, 970.535.0881

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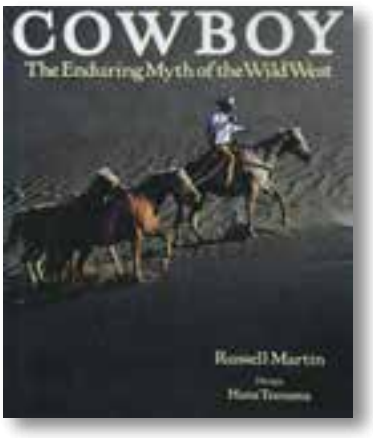
BOOKS TO FIND

# Cowboy, Poets, Posters and more Wendell Berry

**Cowboy: The Enduring Myth of the Wild West**
Russell Martin
www.amazon.com

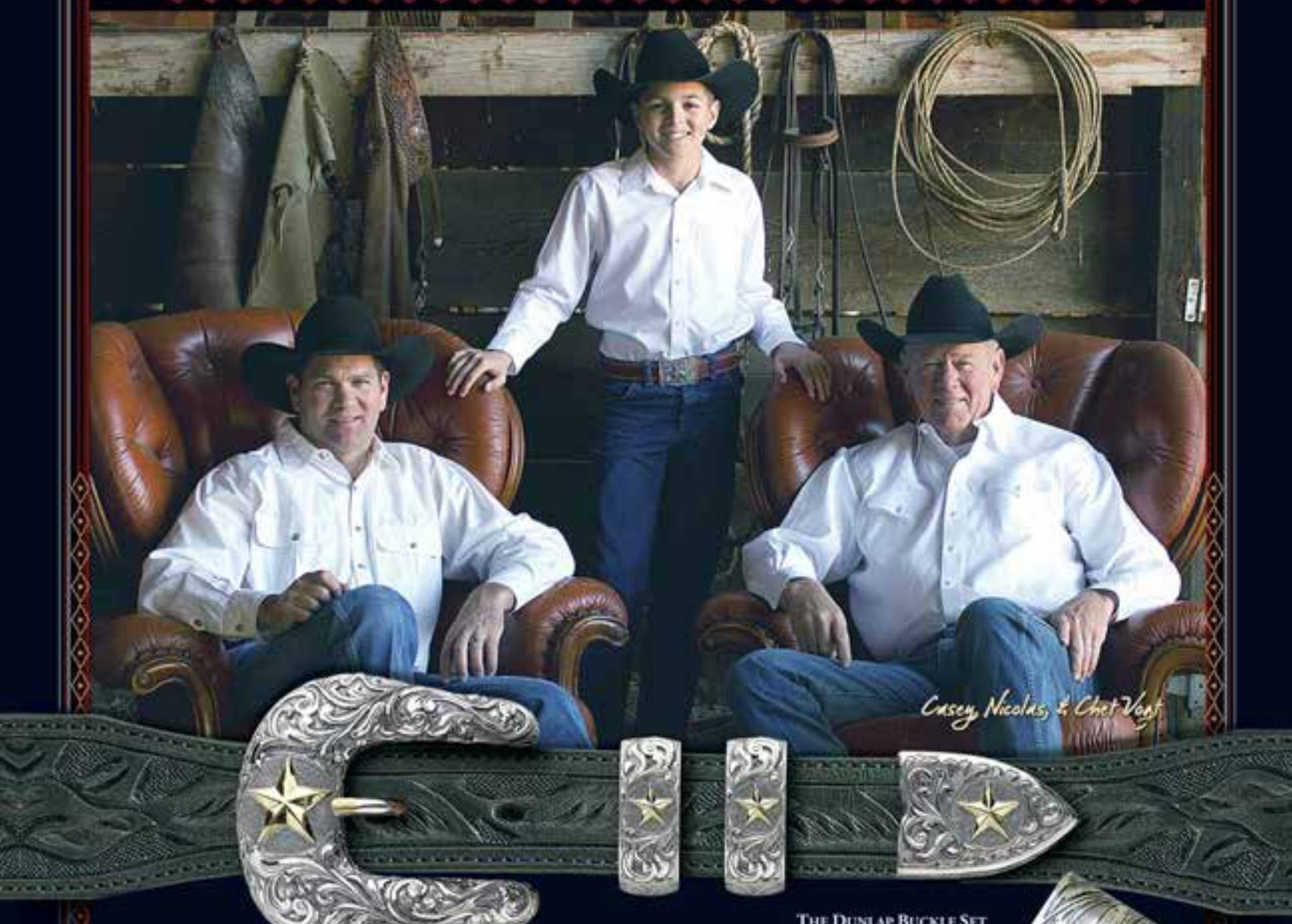



Here is one of the great books of the West – but – it's really hard to find. It was originally published in 1983 and contains some of the finest photographers ever to work the West. One review of the book – when it was published – couldn't stop drooling over it, "Colorado-born Martin has created a monumental, synoptic portrait of the cowboy, tracing the amazing evolution of this mythic figure through the early dime novels, on to Wild West shows and rodeos, movies, television, country music and advertising...This is one of the most beautiful books I've ever seen." Whew, but they were right. If you can find one of these, buy it. The rumor is that Russell Martin and the book's art director are considering bringing it back into print – or at least as an eBook. If you can find a used copy – get it. Don't wait.

**Open Range: The Collected Poems of Bruce Kiskaddon**
Bill Siems, Editor


*"While a flood of cowboy fantasy swept over American popular culture from the 1920s through the 1940s, a Los Angeles bellhop who had been a real cowboy, quietly and persistently wrote poetry."* — Editor, Bill Siems

The 1980s saw the creation of a new foundation event in cowboy culture – the Poetry Gathering. And while there are many that have sprouted up all over the

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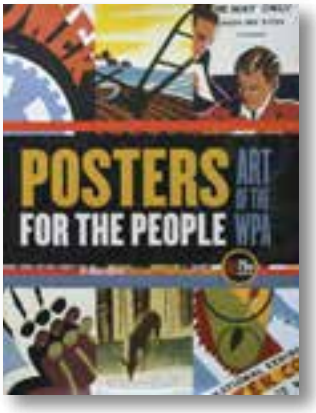
West – the daddy-of-them-all is the Elko Poetry Gathering, now called the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering. Cowboy poetry was, for a time, a genre left to the stockman of the west who filled their long days reminiscing and constructing simple rhymes. Bruce Kiskaddon was largely unknown until the genre's recognition was discovered once again. Editor and Publisher Bill Siems' passion was to find and collect all of Kiskaddon's 481 poems – along with the line drawings of Kiskaddon's longtime collaborator, Katherine Fields. What Siems did in assembling this collection is nothing short of a miracle. His passion has given us all the gift of remembering a simpler time when the spoken word-picture was enough to fill a night sky with wonder. This was an extremely limited edition of only 300 – when we reviewed the book back in issue 2.1 – all 609 pages of it – in 2012 – they were going fast as it had been published in 2007. The book is so important to cowboy culture, we had to mention it again. They are very hard to find, Ebay and Alibris have shown them over the years but the search will be worth it if you are a lover of the spoken word of the West. It includes all of Bruce Kiskaddon's known poetic works (481), the Field illustrations along with prefaces by Hal Cannon and Waddie Mitchell. *(See Hal's story on Page 151.)*

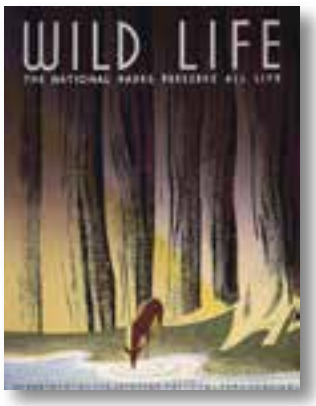
**Posters for the People: Art of the WPA**
Ennis Carter and Christopher DeNoon
www.quarkbooks.com

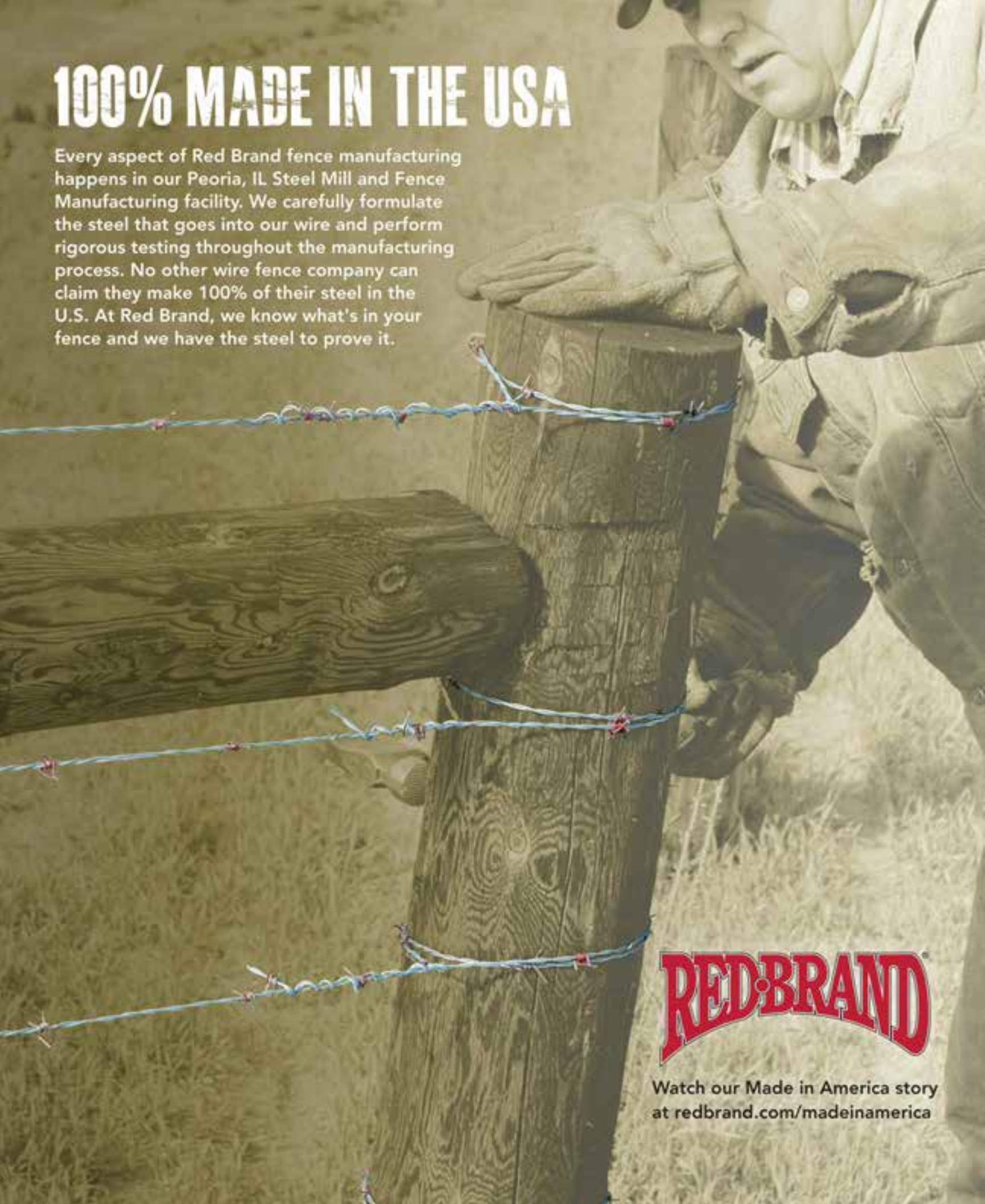
Seven years and counting after the Great Recession, today's generation continues to feel its effect. Throughout the 1930s and beyond the effects of the Great Depression shook the lives of almost every working person in America. It was especially devastating to members of the artist community of the time.




This included an artist of western note – Maynard Dixon. After the market crashed on October 24, 1929, Dixon would paint over one hundred easel-paintings and at least as many oil sketches over the next four years and sell only twenty-four. Architects who had contacted him for mural work, cancelled their orders. Museums

dropped big shows and collectors stopped buying. The art world fell on hard times, as did every other sector of the economy. Only the WPA (Works Progress Administration) projects in the 1930s would save some of the floundering artists. Dixon would be involved in PWPA – Public Works of Art Project that called upon artists with significant regional awareness to

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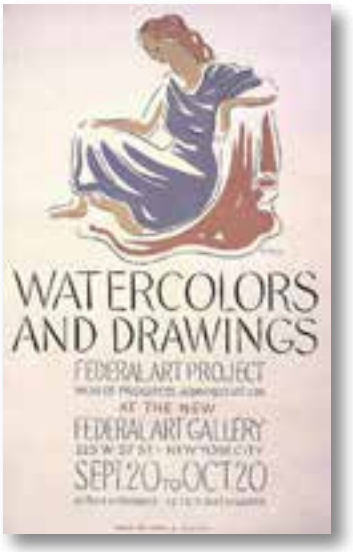
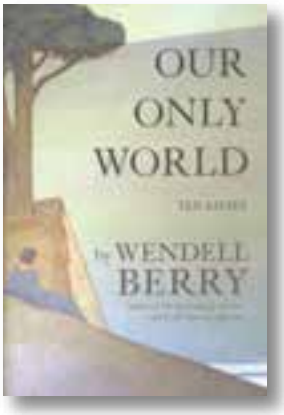
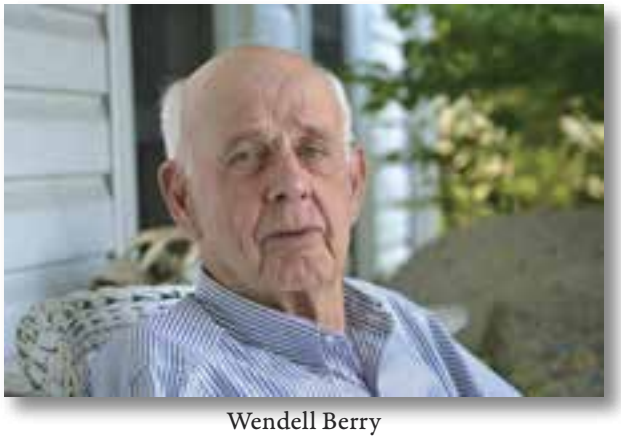
paint for the American people, images they could be prideful of and the art is and should be an integral part of our civilization. Dixon – who painted the land he loved, the American southwest – was a natural. Art became murals and then incentive based posters that would go on at the beginning of the WWII to be used as strong propaganda devices to spur the spirit of the war effort. Writers and designers Ennis Carter and Christopher DeNoon have created an amazing volume of posters and artwork created as a part of FDR's New Deal initiatives that would help to energize the nation's people to "boot strap" their lives and future. Back when print mattered, posters were engaging images – a people's medium they could connect to. The messages were simple: be aware, be engaged, care, and help your fellow countrymen. Something we could use a bit more of today.




**Our Only World: Ten Essays**
Wendell Berry
www.amazon.com



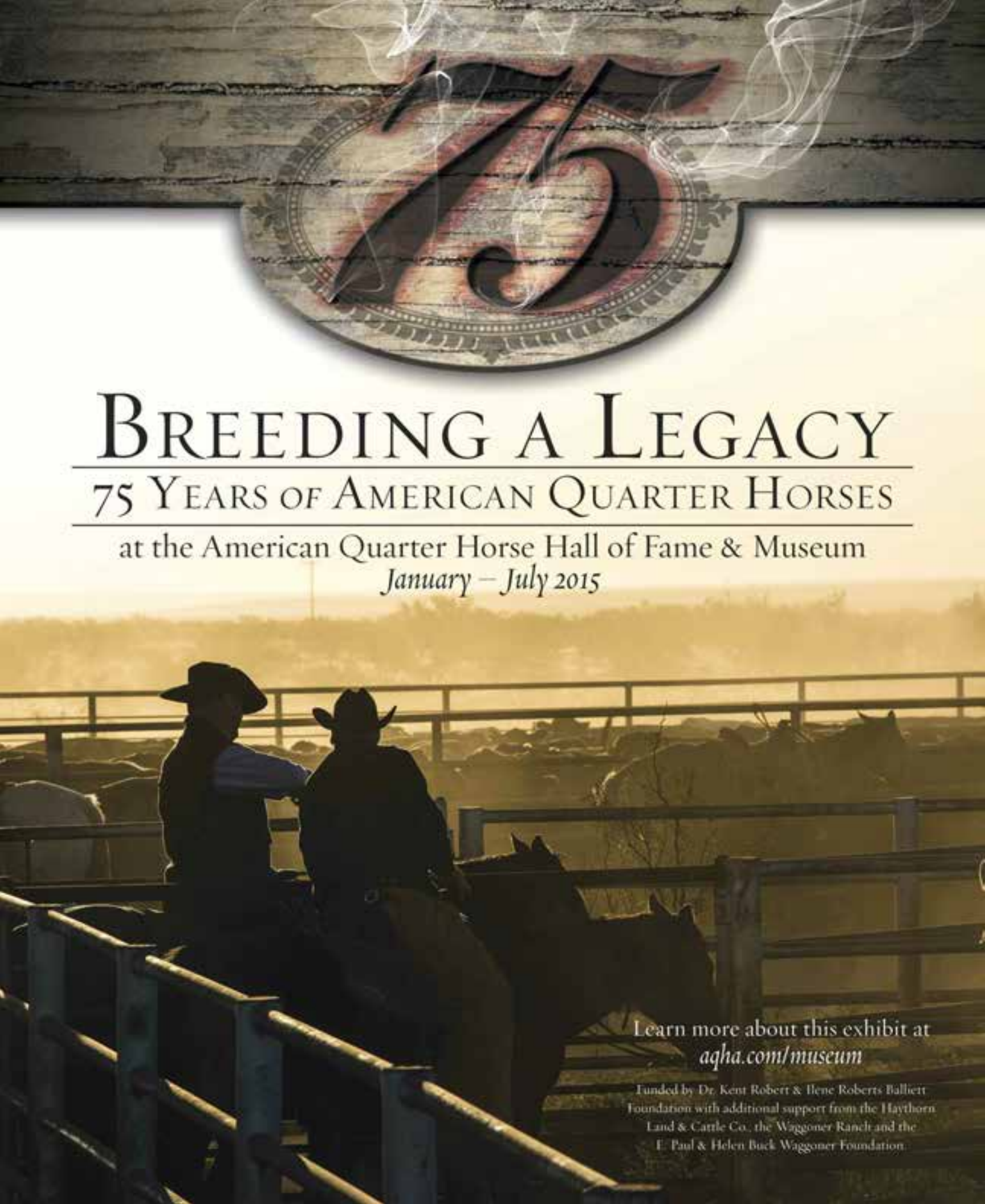

Finding clarity is a rare thing but it is something regularly found in the writing of Wendell Berry. He has written over fifty books of poetry, fiction and essays and while he is known as a champion of land use, agriculture and farming; many of his essays deal with human condition and the many directions it can take. In his new book of ten essays, *Our Only World*, he looks to convey the importance of understanding the contemporary misfitting of the



Wendell Berry

human economy and the economy of nature – the distance between economy and ecology.

The planet's environmental problems respect no national boundaries. From soil erosion and population displacement to climate change and odd energy policies, Berry states, "American governing classes are paid by corporations to pretend that debate is the only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Wendell Berry with his firewood

democratic necessity and that solutions are capable of withstanding endless delay." Clarity of action is the responsibility of each citizen as an informed and self-empowered citizenry is a thoughtful and mighty power.

In this new book of ten essays, Mr. Berry approaches the necessity of clear thinking and direct action in a variety of subjects, all of which require individual action.

This is a quietly presented book – much like hearing Mr. Berry in person. But his message is strong and empowering. At age 80, we have an inspiration in Wendell Berry. If you are weary of the injustice embedded in daily American life, Berry offers here not easy answers, but rather a vision of a rich and sustainable way of life.


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# Dolores Ojeda's Argentine Empanadas

By Kathy McCraine

It's lunchtime at Estancia La Taba, a working sheep and cattle ranch in Argentina. Sitting at a long picnic table in the yard of Martin Jones' and Dolores Ojeda's ranch house, we watch Dolores scoop *empanadas*, little moon-shaped, meat-filled pies, from a black pot that's boiling on a homemade grill, the traditional *parrilla* that Argentinians use for grilling and frying all manner of meats.

When they arrive at the table, the perfectly fried, golden brown pastries taste as good as they look, crispy on the outside and deliciously cheesy on the inside.

Dolores, a slender, 40-ish young woman with a broad smile and sun-streaked hair, wears the loose-fitting *bombacha* pants favored by Argentine gauchos, tucked inside tall English-style riding boots. Later in the day she will switch gears from cooking to receiving a load of 100 sheep being trucked in, while Martin heads to his other ranch to ship a load of wool.

Located in the remote and sparsely populated Patagonia region, about an hour south of the lake town of Bariloche, on a primitive dirt road, Estancia La Taba is a rancher's paradise. Trout-filled streams crisscross the grassy plains, which rise into rolling

*photos by Kathy McCraine*

Dolores Ojeda of Estancia La Taba in Argentina.

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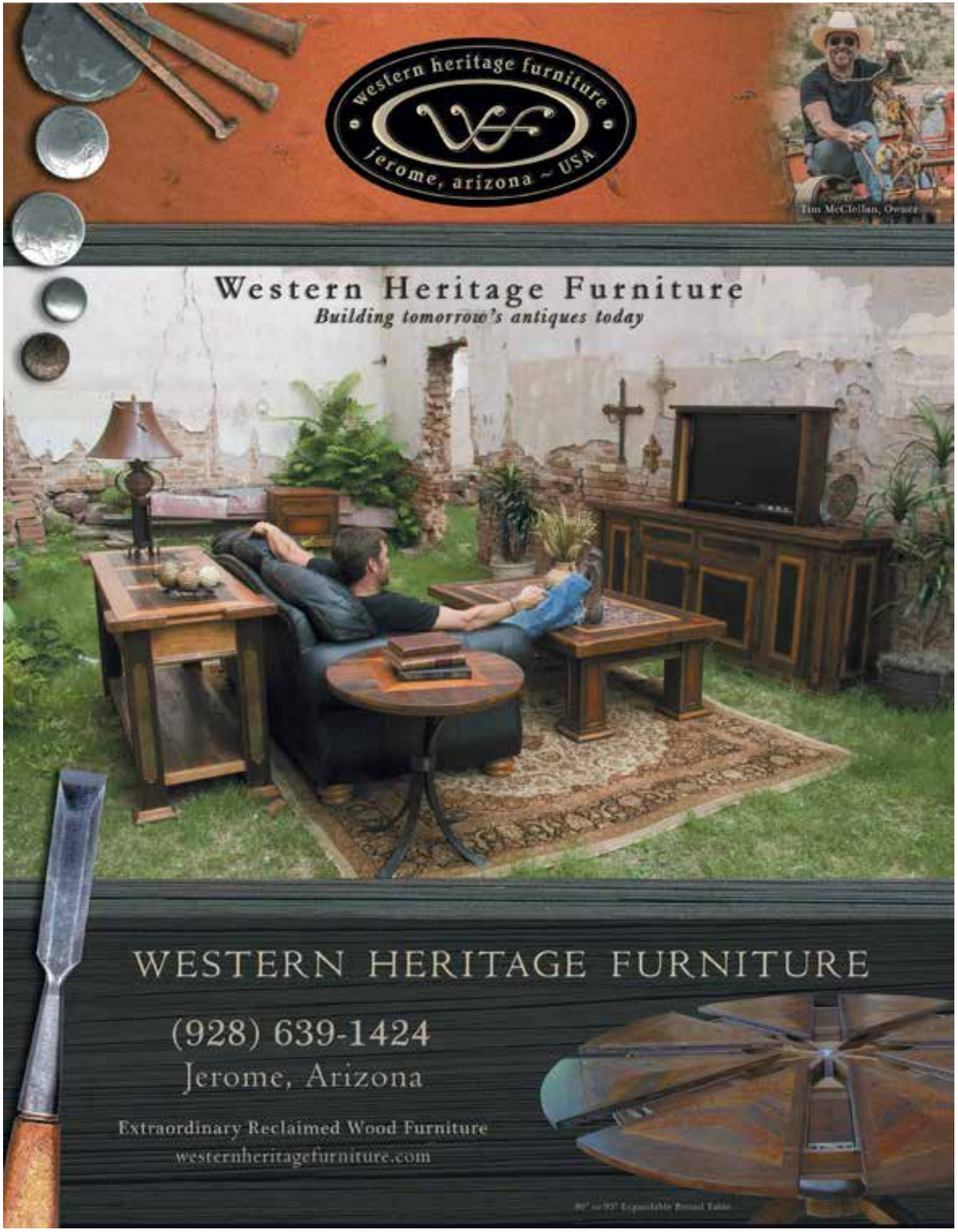
foothills and then to the snowcapped peaks of the Andes in the distance.

The *estancia* gets the name *La Taba* from a game of chance gauchos have played since early times. Participants toss a small square bone from the knee of a cow, and – like heads or tails – how it lands determines the winner.

Dolores and Martin have been together for 20 years. Martin, 50, is a third-generation Argentinian. His grandfather, Jarred Augustus Jones, was one of the first people to settle in this area of Patagonia when he migrated there from Texas in 1885 and established the family ranch, Estancia Nahuel Huapi, on the other side of Bariloche. Dolores was a city girl, born and raised in Buenos Aires, but she adapted well to ranch life. "I love working with the sheep and cattle," she says, "not so much the riding, but I love the animals."

After Martin bought the 3,500-hectare (8,650-acre) Estancia La Taba in 2001, the couple decided to take guests in for horseback riding, deer hunting, fishing and hiking. Martin raises his own horses, native *Criollos* crossed on Thoroughbreds, and keeps 30 ranch horses. The old ranch house, which Martin restored, is rustic but comfortable, with three guest rooms and baths. The couple spends most of the summer here and the rest of the year at the other ranch.

When it's too cold to cook outside, they grill steaks or lamb ribs on a giant *parrilla* Martin has set up on one side of the massive rock fireplace in the living room. Argentine barbecue cooked on the *parrilla* is called *asado.* It's a tradition that dates back to the days of the early gauchos, who hunted wild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cattle on the *pampas*, the grassy plains around Buenos Aires, living entirely on beef slaughtered and cooked over open fires on the range.

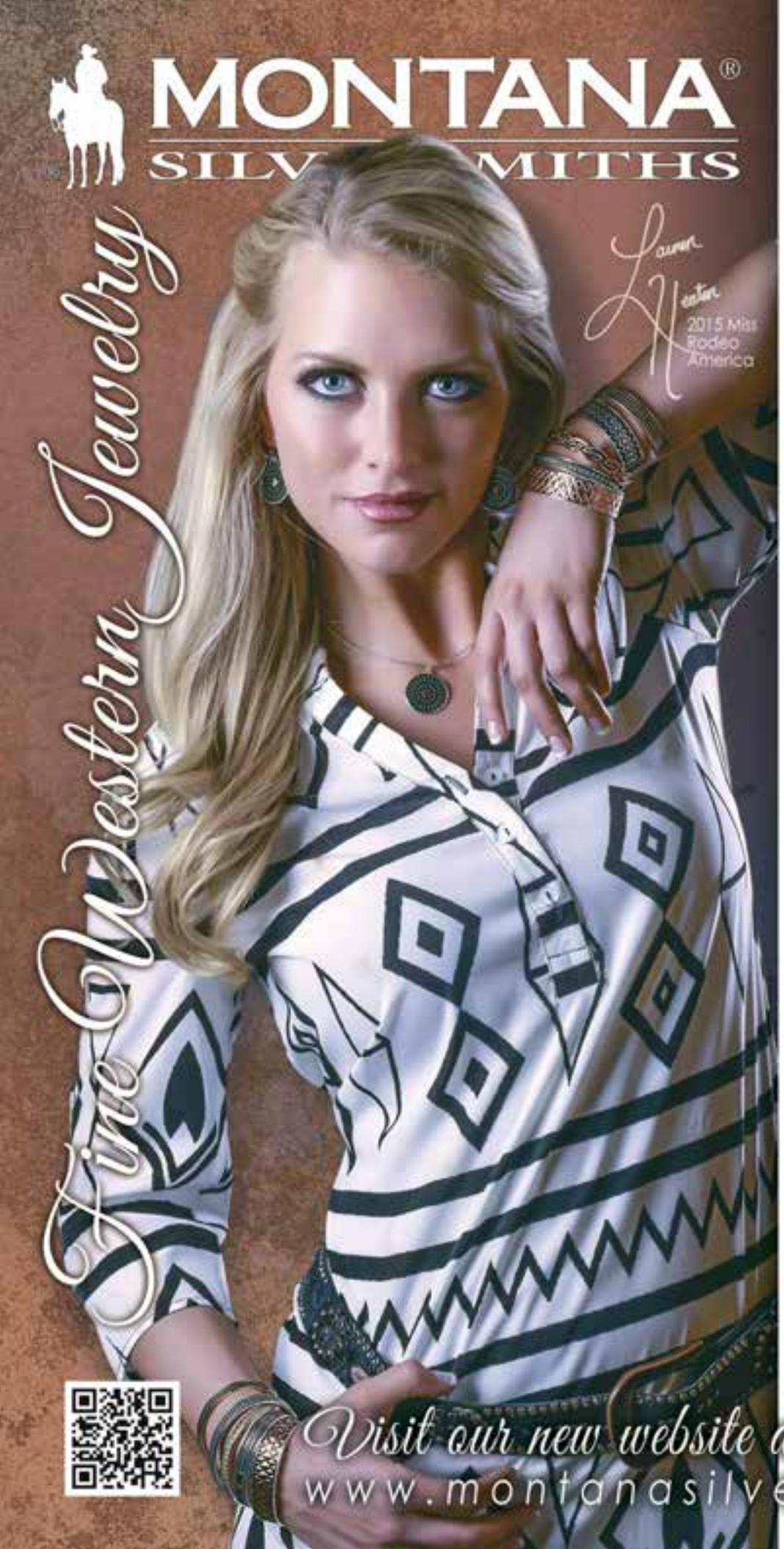
That grilling tradition continues today in restaurants and backyards all across the country. Argentine food is just one more reason to visit this beautiful country, and Dolores' cooking is one more reason to visit Estancia La Taba.

"I love to cook and for me it's easy," she says. "I usually start out with a menu, but then I always end up experimenting and changing things. It's just natural for me."

The menu at the estancia varies from *milanesa* (breaded fried steaks), to roast chicken with a rich sauce, to lamb or beef *guiso* (stew). And, of course, her *empanadas*, which she makes with a variety of fillings.

The word *empanada* comes from the Spanish word *empanar*, meaning to wrap in bread. The first *empanadas* originated in the northern Spanish region of Galicia, during the Medieval period at the time of the Moorish invasion. The dish arrived in Argentina centuries ago as Europeans migrated there, and since then has become popular all across Latin America.

Every region in Argentina and each country in South America has its own style of *empanada*. They can be baked or fried, and filled with any combination of beef, lamb, chicken, ham, cheese, onion, peppers, hard-boiled eggs and olives. In some areas you'll even find dessert *empanadas* filled with different types of fruit. Aside from *asado,* no other dish more genuinely defines the Argentine identity.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**Argentine Empanadas**

250 grams (about 1 cup) flour
50 grams (1.8 ounces) butter or lard
100 cc water
2 tablespoons lemon juice
¼ teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
Oil for frying

**Fillings:**

*Jamon y Queso:* ham, cheese, onion and tomato
*Choclo/Humita*: corn, cheese and onion
*Carne:* tender meat, cut in small pieces, onion, olives and boiled eggs

Mix the pastry ingredients and knead until well combined. Roll out thin and cut in 4-inch circles. Chop your choice of ingredients very fine, mix together and place enough on each circle to fill. Fold the dough over and press the edges to close. Fry in very hot grease until golden brown. Makes 12-14 *empanadas*.

Kathy McCraine is the author of the award-winning *Cow Country Cooking: Recipes and Tales from Northern Arizona's Historic Ranches*.

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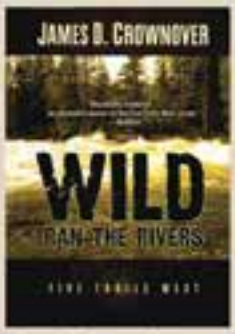


**Historical Novel**
*Wild Ran the Rivers*
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**Contemporary Novel**
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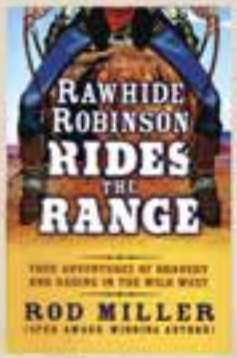


**Juvenile Fiction**
*Rawhide Robinson Rides The Range: True Adventures of Bravery And Daring in the Wild West*
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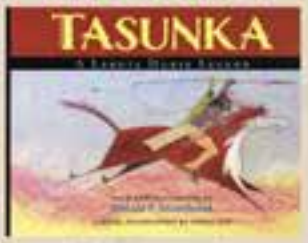


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*Tasunka: A Lakota Horse Legend*
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"Calamity Jane: A Life and Legends"
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**Historical Nonfiction**
*American Carnage: Wounded Knee, 1890*
by Jerome A. Greene
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**Contemporary Nonfiction**
*Red Light to Starboard: Recalling the Exxon Valdez Disaster*
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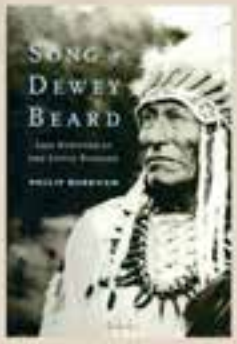


**Biography**
*Song of Dewey Beard: Last Survivor of the Little Bighorn*
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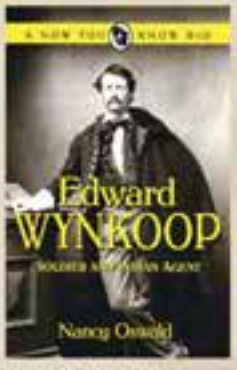


**Juvenile Nonfiction**
*Edward Wynkoop: Soldier and Indian Agent*
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(Filter Press)


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*The Homesman*
by Tommy Lee Jones, Kieran Fitzgerald, Wesley A. Oliver (Ithaca Films)


**Documentary Script**
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*Reshaw: The Life & Times of John Baptiste Richard*
by Jefferson Glass
(High Plains Press)

**Song**
"Charlie and Evangeline" by Doug Figgs and Todd Carter
(self-published)

**First Novel**
*Wild Ran the Rivers*
by James D. Crownover
(Five Star Publishing)

**Poem**
"A Little Longer Than the Moment" by Alan Birkelbach
(Cowboy Poetry Press)

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# Private Moments

## The art of New Mexico's JaNeil Anderson.

JaNeil Anderson was born in Safford, Arizona, has lived and worked on various cattle ranches in the Southwest, and currently ranches with her husband, Walt, in southern New Mexico. Firsthand experience with ranch work, from gathering and branding to cooking for a crew, has given Anderson the insight to accurately depict in paintings the life she knows and loves. And, raising a ranch family has created opportunities to capture the lifestyle in a realistic manner rarely seen. Her work portrays the varied and often overlooked roles of women on ranches.

Anderson's love of her lifestyle is evident in her work, which is often intimate, bringing viewers into quiet, private moments. In her paintings, husbands and wives work side by side, children play and work, and ranch couples find time for a bit of romance. The work builds narratives through subjects' gestures and expressions, and highlights relationships that define the western culture – horses and riders, dogs and kids, cowboys and cowgirls, and connections to the land.

*Burning Daylight*

*Only Until Dad Gets Back*

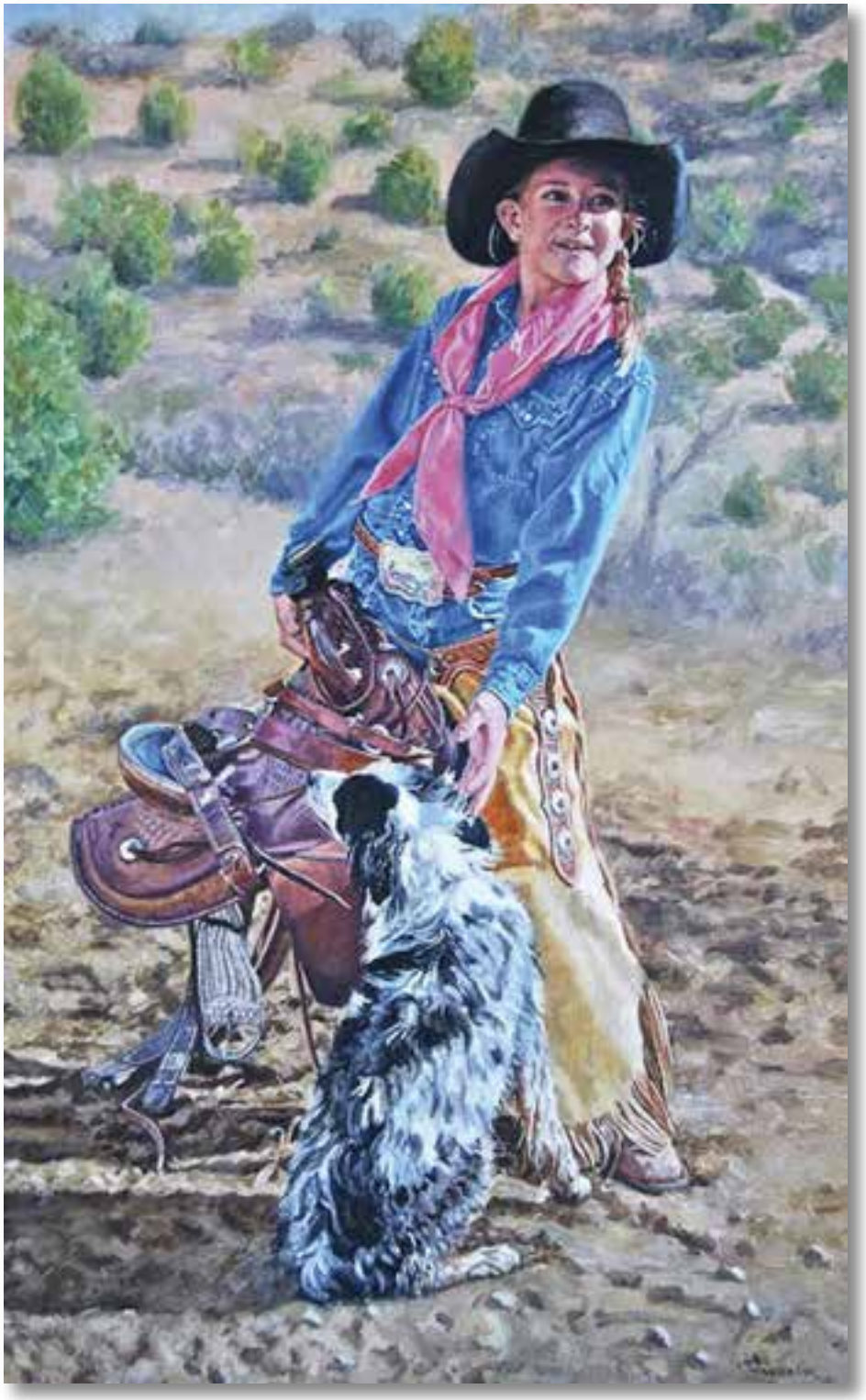
*Building Another Loop*

*Waiting on Sis*

*A Welcome Break*

*Jump Start*

*Cowboy Jump Rope*



*That Girl is a Cowboy*

*Lean on Me*

*Bunkhouse Beauty*

*Eye to Eye*

*Catching a Ride*



https://youtu.be/z7oUpzy_mUc
Dianemarie Collins interviews JaNeil Anderson for the online program *The DM Zone*.

JaNeil Anderson is represented by Cowboy Bronze Fine Art Gallery in Fredericksburg, Texas, and Thunder Horse Gallery in Ruidoso, New Mexico. Her painting *You Know You Will Miss Me* appears on the second edition of the poetry and short story collection *Mustang Spring*, by Deanna Dickinson McCall.



# Eyes in the Sky

## Unmanned aerial vehicle manufacturers seek to revolutionize ranching and farming.

By A.J. Mangum

In the last couple of years, the online megaretailer Amazon has made headlines with its ambitious plan to use drones – unmanned aerial vehicles – for product delivery. This past April, the company actually earned FAA approval to test "delivery by drone" in the United States. During its testing phase, Amazon drones will be allowed to fly at altitudes up to 400 feet, and at speeds up to 100 miles per hour.

Sound implausible as an order-fulfillment process? Do you find it tough to picture a quadcopter following GPS coordinates to your front lawn, where it'll drop off some toner cartridges, a box of diapers and the latest *New York Times* bestseller? Maybe. Maybe not.

Imagine traveling back in time to the mid-1990s, when Amazon (then primarily a bookseller) regularly made headlines with its seemingly endless red ink, and describing to anyone the commercial behemoth Amazon would become. Imagine throwing in some sidebar material about land lines disappearing, CDs going the way of 8-tracks, and cable television fading into irrelevance. Folks would likely greet your descriptions of the future with no small amount of skepticism. (Twenty years ago, after all, there were still newspaper publishers looking ahead to bright futures, and it looked like the dial-up phenomenon America Online would take over the world.)

Experience has taught us that mind-blowing advancements in technology have a way of sneaking up on us. As far as what drone tech will mean to each of us 20 years from *now* ... the skies could be filled with the little buggers, and they might have as much of a role in our daily lives as smartphones and wi-fi do today.

Ranchers and farmers will not be exempt. Drone manufacturers are looking with particular interest at the agricultural industry, foreseeing a market for unmanned aircraft that can be put to use monitoring remote cattle herds, spotting predators and gathering data on everything from fence conditions to wildfire risks to water levels in stock tanks. Drone-oriented startups are banking on the idea that their machinery will become standard equipment for large-scale (and, even small-scale) ranchers and farmers. If they're right, the inventory at your local farm-equipment dealer could come to include not only tractors, balers, swathers and combines, but all manner of unmanned aircraft, as well as the hardware and software required to operate them.

Last fall, we spoke to two entrepreneurs in the field – engineer and former U.S. Air Force pilot George Bye, founder and CEO of Colorado-based Bye Aerospace, and John Faus, COO of Oregon's HoneyComb Corporation – about their products, and their expectations for the ways in which drone tech will change the landscape, and the skies above it, in the American West's farm and ranch country.

***Ranch & Reata:*** *Tell me about your companies.*

**George Bye:** We were formed in 2007. We design a UAV called Silent Falcon. *[Editor's note: Silent Falcon is manufactured by Silent Falcon UAS Technologies, based in New Mexico.]*

**John Faus:** Our company is about three years old. I had an idea for using drones for aerial surveying. *[Editor's note: Bye prefers the term "UAV," while Faus uses "drone."]* One of my two co-founders had an idea for using drones for the precision-spraying of crops. And my other co-founder had been at work writing an autopilot program. We were working on similar projects, so a company came together perfectly for us.

***R&R:*** *Boiled down, and in layman's terms, can you describe your flagship product?*

**GB:** Silent Falcon is a fixed-wing aircraft, in the 25-pound weight class, with a 13-foot wingspan. It's solar-electric, so it can stay in the air a long time. It's been flight-tested, and it's now in production.

**JF:** We make drones that use multispectral cameras to measure crop health – specifically the crop's chlorophyll intake.

***R&R:*** *How will your products be utilized in the ag industry?*

**GB:** Commodity traders operate on data collection, including data on crop health. With a UAV like Silent Falcon, large areas can be surveyed quickly to understand how commodities are coming along, or to do head counts of cattle and sheep. And, UAVs can monitor the integrity of a ranch's fences, the location of its stock, the availability of water and feed. Gathering that data becomes immensely more efficient.

**JB:** We market what we call the AgDrone System, which runs off a battery. *[Editor's note: This system includes a drone the size of a kite. The drone and its components fit inside a box that, itself, can fit in the back of a pickup.]* So, a farmer owns the drone, and flies it whenever he wants. The drone gathers crop data, storing it on an SD card. The farmer downloads the card to a tablet, and pipes the data to us via the cloud. We process it, and the farmer gets back a mosaic map of the field, showing stress areas. He can zoom in on a high-resolution image of a particular area in the field.

*photo courtesy Honeycomb*

A Honeycomb drone in flight.



Everything is geo-referenced, with imagery overlaid on a Google Earth map, so the exact location of a stress area can be found.

***R&R:*** *And these are fixed-wing aircraft, not the quadcopters we see in the news all the time?*

**GB:** Yes. A quadcopter might be suitable for smaller operations, but their time aloft is limited compared to fixed-wing aircraft. Most large farms and ranches would need fixed-wing aircraft to cover more area.

**JF:** Everyone pictures quads, and quads are cool. But they'll never give you the acreage coverage a fixed-wing aircraft will.

***R&R:*** *What prompted your interest in the ag market?*

**JF:** I was raised around farming and worked as a farm hand here in Oregon, moving irrigation pipe, driving tractors. I'd always hear farmers say they didn't have enough time to see what was happening on every acre of their property. A farmer once mentioned to me that he used to take photos of different fields to compare how they were doing. That got my mind turning: there had to be a better way of doing that. My initial

thought was putting a camera on a remote-controlled airplane. Years of engineering later, it's more detailed. Once we started testing with some local farms here, the demand was so apparent. It's going to make farming more manageable, with better resource allocation and loss mitigation.

***R&R:*** *What are the costs of your products?*

**JF:** Our basic system is $15,000, and includes everything you need out of the box – the tablet, batteries, everything. With a thermal camera, which ranchers would want, you'd look at another $10,000.

**GB:** Price point. It's a great question, and it'll be a matter of volume. *[Editor's note: At the time of this interview, pricing had not been finalized for Silent Falcon.]* I could see pricing from $30,000 to $50,000, up to $200,000. It would depend on the specs – the type of camera, the sensors, the vehicle size.

***R&R:*** *Who have been the early adopters?*

**JF:** All sizes of operations, but so far, it is definitely the "early adopter" types latching on – people comfortable with new technology and excited by it.

***R&R:*** *How do FAA regulations impact marketability?*

**GF:** Experimental adaptation of the technology has been underway for some time, but commercial operations have been hindered by the FAA's rulemaking process. That's not been the case in many locations overseas, though. So the benefits are being realized, just not here in the United States. There are a host of issues: qualification of the vehicle itself, its safety, operator experience. Until those guidelines exist and are understood, it hampers the benefits from being realized here. We're looking for the FAA to move along briskly to bring benefits to U.S. farmers and ranchers.

***R&R:*** *How do consumers learn to operate these vehicles, and how will that evolve?*

**GB:** Anyone operating something like this will need training. It'll be a combination of learning what to do with the computer and how to operate the aircraft, including launch and recovery. The aircraft is operated from a laptop. You program a screen for what you want done. The plane actually then flies itself from point to point to point.

***R&R:*** *What about maintenance? If a farmer or rancher buys a UAV, who works on it if it breaks down?*

**JF:** We have a customer-service department that takes care of anything that can be taken care of over the phone. Otherwise, it means shipping the drone back to us. We're looking at opening dealerships all over the nation, though, so customers would be able to take planes to dealers for servicing.

***R&R:*** *How do you expect the technology to evolve in the next few years?*

**JF:** We've talked with camera and sensor manufacturers. They're developing cameras that will detect specific crop diseases. There will be programs that can actually diagnose crops. Then, a drone could collect data that tells you *exactly* what's going on.

***R&R:*** *And what about further into the future? Give us the most out-there, sci-fi prediction for this technology.*

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**JF:** I see agricultural drones eventually being fully autonomous, with no operators. A drone will sit on a base tower. Every morning it'll go out and make its rounds. It'll land and upload data for processing. By the time the farmer is at his computer in the morning, he'll have real-time data he can push to field hands.

***R&R:*** *Do you foresee UAVs being sold in farm-machinery dealerships?*

**GB:** I don't imagine ground vehicles would be co-located [with UAVs]. It's possible, but not something we've pondered. In our case, I would expect customers to come to the company directly, at least at this stage of the industry's development.

**JF:** I actually do envision drones being sold by farm-machinery dealers. They have customers already asking for this. It makes sense because you go there to buy farm equipment, which is what this is – equipment for the farm.

***R&R:*** *A big question: you're developing products that could replace horses and cowboys, at least for certain tasks. Have you contemplated that cultural change and whether it'll be accepted? Do you think it'll hinder you?*

**GB:** Agriculture has lots of deep history, traditional ways of doing things, but this will *benefit* farmers and ranchers. And a lot of farm equipment has computer screens. Folks are comfortable with the computer age.

***R&R:*** *What personal rewards do you get from your work with this technology?*

**JF:** One bad crop can make or break some farms. My goal is to save farmers money by helping them mitigate losses and keep better tabs on crops. And, what kid didn't dream of playing with radio-controlled airplanes all day?

**GB:** Airplanes have long offered value to businesses, to our nation. This is another way to leverage that technology. It's a cool way to contribute to our country, our people.

https://youtu.be/JgpPtz5ewVo
Bye Aerospace's George Bye discusses solar-powered aircraft at a DaVinci Institute event.

https://youtu.be/3aVUbcPnTM4
See an agricultural drone in action in this video from HoneyComb.

A.J. Mangum is the editor of *Ranch & Reata*. He lives in Colorado.

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# The West's Land Sculptures

## Exploring transformations made by artists and industry.

By Jonathan Thompson
Photography by Jonathan Thompson

*"Art erodes whatever seeks to contain it and inevitably seeps into the most contrary recesses, touches the most repressed nerve, finds and sustains the contradictory without effort."*
— Robert Morris in a 1979 essay in which he suggested hiring land artists to reclaim spent industrial sites and open-pit mines.

When I first see them, fuzzy and burnished brown on the horizon, ambling among the creosote bushes, I freeze. Grizzlies? I think. In the southern Nevada desert? I've been walking for an hour, maybe two, my sense of time and distance distorted by solitude and a thick blanket of clouds that has kept the sun invisible and unmoving all day. They aren't grizzlies, you idiot, I tell myself. They're cows. I approach cautiously, anyway: They might be mad cows. Six million-year-old caliche, a sedimentary rock, crunches under my feet at every step.

But the brown fuzzy things aren't even cows; they turn out to be barrel cacti. I feel stupid and discouraged, not just because I can't tell a cow from a cactus, but also because I haven't found what I'm looking for: *Double Negative*, a land art icon made up of two huge trenches, separated by empty space. Michael Heizer blasted and bulldozed it into the edge of Mormon Mesa in 1970. Instead of following the directions, I decided to forge my own path – always a temptation in the West, sometimes a mistake. I figured I could take Exit 100 off I-15, follow the road south until the rental car's oil pan got knocked around a bit, get out and just start walking south and east.

And that's what I've done. Still no artwork, though. I didn't think to print out the map, or calculate distances. The sculpture could be over the next subtle rise, or another 10 miles away. How would I know?

I continue, prodded by a fantasy in which I reach the sculpture and find it surrounded by a group of effete art-critic types straight out of *The New Yorker* – drinking chardonnay and eating fancy little crackers. When they see me staggering toward them like some bedraggled desert hermit, they will not only pour me a glass, they'll succinctly explain *Double Negative*'s meaning and significance.

Because, frankly, I don't get it. *Double Negative* is well-known in the art world, and aficionados from everywhere pilgrimage out here to see it, along with some of the West's other famous land art – Robert

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photo by Jonathan Thompson/High Country News

Bob Phillips, the foreman of the crew that built *Spiral Jetty*, tells his story to a group of art historians and architects from Switzerland.



Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, Walter De Maria's *Lightning Field* and Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels* among them – as though they were the *Mona Lisa* or *Starry Night*. Yet the photos I've seen of *Double Negative* look less like art than a pair of road cuts without a road. And the most succinct description I've found is this: "*Double Negative* presents the void, not by the failed strategy of abstraction but using 'figure against figure to figure what cannot be figured.'" Good luck untangling that.

I think I've walked nine miles, maybe more, but the dark mountains on every horizon look the same as when I started. Then, just as I'm about to give up, a stark white post on Mormon Mesa's edge catches my eye, almost glowing in the eerie light. I race towards it.

But there is no giant trench, no negative space from which 240,000 tons of material have been removed. The concrete post marks the Old Spanish Trail, which crossed Mormon Mesa at this spot. In May 1844, John C. Fremont came through here and described the place thusly: "We left the Rio de los Angeles and continued our way through the same desolate and revolting country, where lizards were the only animal, and the tracks of the lizard-eaters the principal sign of human beings."




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photo by Jonathan Thompson/High Country News

ATK rocket garden on the route to *Spiral Jetty*.



I have not encountered anyone out here, either, lizard-eater or not, but humanity haunts the landscape: a rusted iron grate with no discernible function, plants growing up through it. Wooden stakes poking up randomly from the earth, one with a small vial containing a document that claims this particular tract of land for Powerline Precious Metals of Reno. A cluster of deflated balloons that say "Babies R Us." The razor slice of a power line against the clouds, the stream of big rigs sliding down the distant interstate, and the ghost of that old trail where wagons once rolled.

I have yet to eat a lizard, but the sight of a huge, hairy, cross-eyed spider, puffing itself up to look even bigger, is strangely tempting. The thought is enough to break my spirit, and I trudge back to the car.

Despondency washes over me on the drive back. Not because I didn't find the sculpture, but because my sojourn on the mesa has ended. Being lost like that, wandering aimlessly through vast spaces, with every step one mystery solved and a brand-new one created, is as exhilarating as finding one's quarry, whatever it is. Is there a better way to see the terrible beauty of the Western landscape?

**A Movement is Born**

If there was a primordial soup from which land art emerged, it was the post-abstract-expressionist art scene of New York in the early 1960s. Carl Andre was making his "sculptures as place." Future land artists Heizer, Holt, Smithson and De Maria, along with Donald Judd, Richard Serra and Sol LeWitt, were not only pushing the boundaries of what is considered art, but also challenging our conventional, Cartesian ways of thinking about space. They were even doing some small-scale land art. All they needed was a catalyst for the next evolutionary step. They found it in the West's big desert spaces.

"It was the most terrific experience of my life, experiencing the Great Plains and the Rockies, but especially the desert," De Maria said of first seeing the Interior on a trip from New York to the Bay Area, where he'd grown up. Heizer, who was born in California, had deep roots in the desert: His grandfather was a Nevada tungsten miner and his father an archaeologist who did important work in the Great Basin. New Jersey-ite Smithson developed his own fondness for the region after he embarked on a Kerouac-style hitchhiking trip in the 1950s, with life-changing stops in Hopi and Canyon de Chelly.

In 1968 – the same year that Edward Abbey published *Desert Solitaire*, his ranting love song to this abused and empty place – Holt, Smithson and Heizer flew from New Jersey to Las Vegas. "As soon as I got to the desert, I connected with the place," Holt later wrote. "The openness, the expansiveness, was similar to the spaciousness I felt inside."

During that trip, the trio filmed their movie, *Mono*

*Lake*. Smithson gathered rocks for his non-sites, collections of earth and rocks from specific places that were reconstructed as sculpture in galleries. Heizer did his first drawings and a series of trenches on dry lakebeds in the Mojave. He also did "dispersals," in which he'd fill a pickup with dirt and have someone drive it around really fast while he rode in the back, scooping dirt out onto his "canvas," which was the lakebed (the same method rural Westerners have been using for ages to dispose of their garbage). Holt embarked on a photographic study of western graveyards because "they reflect how people thought about space out West; their last desire was to delineate a little plot of their own because there was so much vastness." Also in 1968, De Maria made his *Mile Long Drawing* – actually two parallel lines, drawn in chalk – on a Mojave lakebed.

The following year, Heizer moved huge rocks from the Sierra Nevada and put them in depressions he had carved in Silver Springs Lake bed near Reno (reversing the glacial transport of the same rocks millions of years earlier) to create *Displaced-Replaced Mass*. De Maria made his *Las Vegas Piece*, a bulldozer-etched, half-mile square in a valley about 100 miles north of Las Vegas. Then New York art patron Virginia Dwan commissioned Heizer to do a piece of his choosing. He disappeared into the desert, and in 1970 unveiled *Double Negative*.

"When I finished, I laughed," Heizer told *The New York Times Magazine* in 2005. "I knew I'd done it. There was no precedent in the history of mankind."

Later in 1970, Smithson and a crew of earth-moving contractors completed *Spiral Jetty* in the red water in Rozel Point on the northern half of the Great Salt Lake. Few people actually visited it, but photographs were widely disseminated. During these early years, Holt (who had been married to Smithson since 1963) abstained from the large-scale, drunken-redneck-with-a-bulldozer-fetish stuff her male

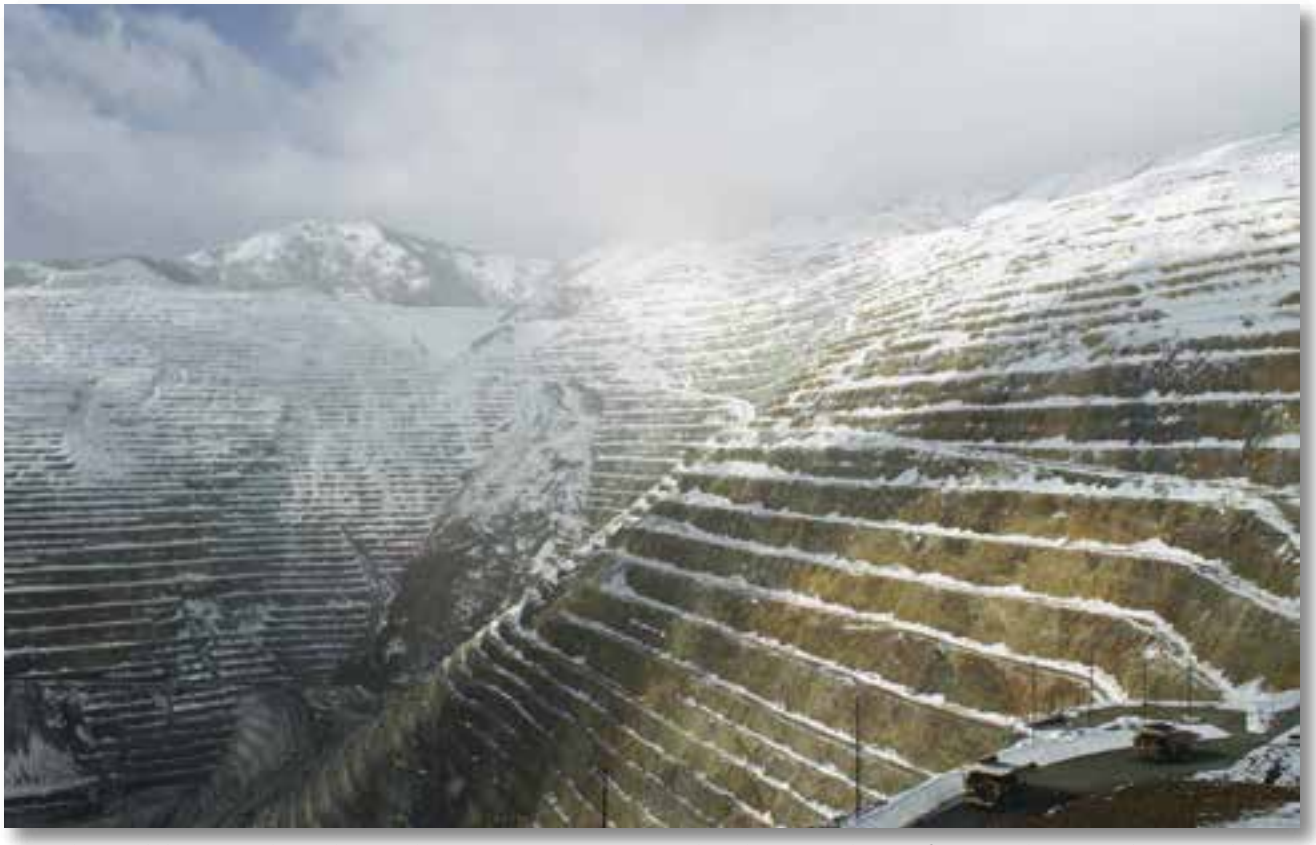


*photo by Jonathan Thompson/High Country News*

Benches and dump trucks at the Bingham Canyon Mine near Salt Lake City. The site fascinated artist Robert Smithson.



counterparts relished. Instead, she created her own sort of land art, writing and burying poems in places like Arches National Park, then providing maps to the poems, in a sort of low-tech geocaching.

As is always the case with major art-world shifts, it's difficult, in retrospect, to comprehend the significance of any particular work. Yet these pieces were groundbreaking, so to speak. At a time when artists were spouting rhetoric about breaking free of galleries and institutions, as well as de-commodifying their work, Heizer, Smithson and De Maria were pretty much bulldozing gallery walls along with the contemporary convention that important art only happened in New York City. And most of the work continues to defy commodification, by virtue of its scale, if nothing else. It sits in the desert as if abandoned, available to anyone who will seek it out.

*Double Negative* and *Spiral Jetty* were both part of, and a response to, vast societal shifts. The land-art movement arrived on the heels of the first moon landing, and some art historians see it as a sort of return to the Earth, an attempt to find solid ground in destabilizing times threatened by nuclear apocalypse. At the same time, the environmental movement was blossoming.

Land art's relationship to the green movement is complicated. *New York Times* art critic Alan Gussow wrote, in the early '70s, that land artists "cut and gouge the land like Army engineers." Allen Carlson, an environmental

photo by Jonathan Thompson/High Country News

*Double Negative* as it appears today.



philosopher, famously called most land art "an aesthetic affront to nature." And Suzaan Boettger, an art historian and author of *Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties*, writes that Heizer's works "manifest no connection to the idea of nature or of the earth as a source of living being. Instead, the land was viewed as a flat, hard surface on which to boldly make one's mark."

Nor did the land artists' philosophy mesh with the '60s green Zeitgeist as embodied in the 1964 Wilderness Act. Smithson and company, while concerned for the land, were less interested in "untrammeled" spaces than they were in the interaction between man and nature. Smithson bashed "modern day ecologists with a metaphysical turn of mind who still see the operations of industry as Satan's work," he wrote. "The image of the lost paradise garden leaves one without a solid dialectic, and causes one to suffer an ecological despair. Nature, like a person, is not one-sided."

Such writings anticipate the Anthropocene theory, which has gained a lot of ground recently and posits that we have entered a new geologic epoch, in which every inch of the earth has been altered by humankind. Smithson often referred to humans as "geologic agents," a label confirmed by his and Heizer's blasting and bulldozing tons of earth around in the Western desert.

Smithson died in a 1973 plane crash in Texas while he was surveying his unfinished *Amarillo Ramp*, a ramped circle of earth and rock nearly 200 feet in

diameter. His compatriots, however, kept the movement going. Holt built *Sun Tunnels* on a sparse piece of land West of the Great Salt Lake, completing it in 1976. De Maria's *Lightning Field* – a one-kilometer-by-one-mile grid of 20-foot-tall stainless steel spikes near Quemado, New Mexico – was finished in 1977. Christo, with his huge pieces of fabric draped across buildings and landscapes, was also active in the West in the '70s, and is currently – and controversially – trying to drape a section of Colorado's Arkansas River. Since his works are designed to be ephemeral, however, they are seldom formally categorized as land art.

The most monumental land art dreams of the '70s remain unfulfilled, testament to the amount of time, energy and money they require. Heizer's been working on his massive *City* complex in Nevada for more than three decades, but it's still not finished. The same goes for James Turrell's greatly anticipated *Roden Crater* in Arizona and Charles Ross' *Star Axis* in New Mexico. Land art is anything but dormant, however. This spring, Heizer oversaw the epic transport of a 340-ton rock from an inland quarry to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where it's perched over a big concrete trench. *Levitated Mass*, as it's called, opens June 24.

**Spiral Jetty**

*"For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror we can just barely endure, and we admire it so because it calmly disdains to destroy us."* – R.M. Rilke, *Duino Elegies*

Two days after my negative *Double Negative* trip, I stand on a concrete platform at the edge of the three-

quarters-of-a-mile-deep pit of the Bingham Canyon Copper Mine near Salt Lake City. Trucks the size of houses rumble along the terraces that line the pit's slanted, snow-dazzled slopes, and the after-springtime-storm sunlight imbues everything with a sort of fuzzy softness.

Many of us are drawn to such weird places. Some 40,000 people per year pay the $5 entry fee to see the Bingham Pit. The Center for Land Use Interpretation leads tour groups into landscapes like this one, onto nearby bombing ranges – even to oilfields in Los Angeles. The day before, I had marveled at the way a hazardous waste incinerator's smoke plume reached up and touched the tempestuous sky. Is our attraction to ruined landscapes similar to that of a passerby gawking at the steaming, blood-strewn remains of a car crash? I wonder. Or is it just a variation on the classic nature lover, entranced by the play of evening light on a rugged mountain peak?

Joseph Imorde, a German expert in Baroque art and a visiting scholar at Los Angeles' Getty Museum, stands next to me on the platform, here with a group of about 20 Swiss art historians and architecture students. This is their first stop on a weeklong tour entitled "Art, War and Energy in the American West." I've stowed away for a couple days, including this stop at the mine. "Sublime," mutters Imorde, gazing out at the pit. Then he says it again, his face overcome by what appears to be reverence. It's the same word John Wesley Powell used to describe the Grand Canyon during his 1869 expedition.

Philosophers have long tangled over the definition of "the sublime," but they generally agree that it is something that both attracts and repels us, that is beautiful but somehow terrifying. The light playing on the snow-covered terraces of the gaping Bingham Pit is, indeed, beautiful. It's also scary, an instance of human-caused geological change occurring in real time. Even back in 1974, a mining executive estimated it would take $7 billion and 66 years, at the rate of 400,000 tons per day, to fill in the pit – if, that is, anyone ever tries to "reclaim" this landscape. The Anthropocene, indeed.

"We find ourselves simultaneously awed and disgusted; impressed and depressed" by sites such as these, writes Jonathan Maskit in *Line of Wreckage: Towards a Postindustrial Environmental Aesthetics*. "The power of technological culture to transform nature is made manifest here in its starkest form. And yet, we do not turn away. We both rue what is no more and are smitten by what is." Maskit proposes that we formally classify such sites as the "Interesting," or "that characteristic of an object of aesthetic appreciation that leads us to think otherwise."

Land artist Smithson was a devotee of the Bingham Pit, drawn as he was to "low-profile landscapes...the quarry or the mining area which we call an entropic landscape, a kind of backwater or fringe area." He wanted to build a revolving disk in the base of the spent Bingham Pit that would monitor and record nature's long reclamation of the site. Kennecott wanted nothing to do with it, and anyway, it wasn't done mining: Even now, the company has plans to expand operations. A mining company in Creede, Colorado, did offer its tailings piles to Smithson for reclamation art back in 1973, but the artist died before he could pursue the project.

Six years after Smithson's death, Robert Morris, a conceptual artist with his own notable "portfolio" of land art, tried to resurrect Smithson's mine-reclamation dreams, seeing such work as a great way both to restore spent industrial sites and fund art.

"What...could be done for the Kennecott Bingham site, the ultimate site-specific work of such raging, ambiguous energy, so redolent with formal power and social threat, that no existing earthwork should even be compared to it?" Morris said. "It should stand unregenerate as a powerful monument to a one-day nonexistent resource...the mines...the Four Corners

Power Complex, the dams of the '30s. All of these structures are testimony to faith in science and technology, the practice of which has brought the world to a point of crisis which nobody knows how to resolve.

"Every large strip mine could support an artist in residence. Flattened mountain tops await the aesthetic touch...Bottomless industrial pits yawn for creative filling – or deepening."

Though Morris' concerns lined up with those of the mainstream environmental movement – he even spoke about climate change in the aforementioned speech – his approach did not. The generally accepted way to clean up a mine is to try to return it to its "natural" state in the hope that observers, if not the landscape itself, will forget that it was ever disturbed. Turning strip mines and waste dumps into art, on the other hand, monumentalizes, perhaps even consecrates, the harm they inflict upon nature.

*Spiral Jetty* is not reclamation art, but it is a direct engagement with the industrialized landscape of the Great Salt Lake. It's about a three-hour drive from Bingham Canyon, past Salt Lake City and clusters of housing developments, what Smithson referred to as "slurbs." Robert Adams – another artist of the Anthropocene – photographed Denver's slurbs in the 1970s in all their stark and soulless beauty.

Turning away from the slurbs toward the lake, one encounters the great paradox of places like this: The further you get from "humanity" and into "emptiness," the more likely you are to encounter the types of human intervention that we'd rather not witness on a daily basis. Among farm fields, still muddy from winter, sits

a giant Walmart distribution center, rows of tractor trailers getting loaded with goods. We pass bucolic bovines grazing golden, grassy hills and see signs on a low fence warning of grievous danger. The Thiokol Promontory Complex, now owned by ATK, tests its rockets here, in reportedly spectacular events that scorch entire hillsides. Farther up the road, the rocket facility itself sits in the middle of "nowhere," with a surreal-looking "rocket garden" out front.

Beyond that is the Golden Spike National Historic Site, where the Union Pacific and Central Pacific branches of the Transcontinental Railroad were joined in May 1869. It's yet another reminder that this landscape has been prodded and poked and bulldozed and grazed and even blown up for decades, maybe millennia. In the theory of the Anthropocene, no one is really sure when the epoch begins. Was it when humans started fire to manage game, when they first cultivated crops or at the dawn of the industrial age? Whatever the starting point was, we are now deep into it.

"The lesson here," says Philip Ursprung, the leader of the Swiss expedition, as we stare at the rockets, "is that there are no neutral landscapes." Or natural landscapes, for that matter, the distinction between trammeled and untrammeled having been wiped away long ago.

As many as 40 people a day visit *Spiral Jetty*. Given the proliferation of academic papers, blog posts and even a sort of *Eat, Pray, Love* of land-art tourism known as Spiral Jetta – it seems that more people are writing not just about the art, but about the journey they make to see it. Perhaps that's because the trip is part of the artwork; Smithson's own account of searching for and then discovering the site is more than context, it is an actual extension of the *Jetty*.

The travel accounts, often narrated by non-western urbanites unaccustomed to this sort of emptiness, not to mention washboard roads, tend to become a bit effusive. Philosopher of art Stephanie Ross called the work of Smithson and Heizer "masculine gestures in the environment" because of their scale and because "traveling to see them requires braving wilderness, rattlesnakes and the desert's climatic extremes" – the worst being automobile air-conditioning. One blogger spends several sentences earnestly describing cattle guards and warning readers not to trespass on ranches "if you are at all fond of your current good state of health and approximate proper count and localization of body parts."

Mysterious cattle guards and murderous ranchers aside, the final stretches of the gravel road to *Spiral Jetty* are smooth and easily traveled in mid-March. At road's

*photo by Jonathan Thompson/High Country News*

end, we see the same reddish water that so inspired Smithson and experience the same "crushing light" he did. Like Smithson, we see detritus from earlier oil drilling, though the old truck and amphibious vehicle that fascinated the artist have since been hauled away. And, just like Smithson, we see the big empty place where *Spiral Jetty* is supposed to be. We don't, however, see *Spiral Jetty*.

Just a year after Smithson completed his colossal sculpture, it was inundated by the rising lake. It reappeared in 1993 and re-entered the art world's collective consciousness more forcefully than when it was first built. Then it disappeared, and then re-emerged. Today, it's completely submerged, invisible except for the white foam piled up where it connects to the land. A couple of the people I'm with, determined to experience it, wade out into the water, getting their shoes wet and foamy and salty.

The rest of us listen to Bob Phillips, the foreman of the crew who drove the dump trucks and earthmovers that actually constructed the *Jetty* more than four decades ago. Phillips remembers everything and relishes recounting his own journey from dumbfounded skeptic to full-on Smithson convert. "He (Smithson) wore very dark clothes, dark, horn-rimmed glasses, black hair that kept getting in his eyes. He was completely different than me. I was blond, short crewcut. I was prepared to tell him, 'I can't do that.'"

Smithson showed Phillips pictures of his work, including his *Asphalt Rundown* in Rome and a box filled with rocks. He told him of his plans to turn the Bingham Pit and the empty spaces around various airport runways into art. While that didn't inspire Phillips, Smithson's intensity and intellect did.

"He kind of convinced me he was on the up and up," says Phillips, "though I couldn't possibly see how he could make a living doing that."

Phillips described the site as "a really crummy-looking place," what with the abandoned vehicles, scattered oil barrels and an actual oil seep oozing into the water. But after a lot of rocks and dirt had been moved, "It was just a beautiful piece of art."

**Sun Tunnels**

*"As in nature itself, everything connects with everything else."*
– Lucy Lippard, activist and writer known for her work on contemporary art (and neighbor of Holt's in Galisteo, New Mexico), in an essay about Holt.

Nancy Holt once said that it was the "dialectic between human-made elements and raw nature that drove her creative process and introduced an exhilarating



Approaching *Sun Tunnels*, by Nancy Holt.


photo by Jonathan Thompson/High Country News

A highway underpass on a back route to Michael Heizer's *Double Negative* mirrors the sculpture.

tension into the work." That tension is palpable in the first leg of the drive between Salt Lake City and Holt's most famous work, *Sun Tunnels*, which sits near the Utah-Nevada border. Here there is a wilderness of sorts, mostly void of humanity but irrevocably trammeled. You name it, it's happened: salt mining, hazardous waste incinerators, a chemical weapons dump, even bombing ranges on both sides of Interstate 80.

With a Swiss student and an artist as my passengers, I turn north at Wendover, where the Los Angeles-based Center for Land Use Interpretation – which is devoted to the "exhilarating tension" Holt spoke of – has its major field station. We venture onto an empty washboard road across the flats, driving way too quickly in hopes of smoothing out the bumps. (It doesn't work.) A series of straight lines, not unlike the Bingham Pit's benches, etch the slopes of the mountains that rise up from the plain. They mark the drop, over thousands of years, of the ancient Lake Bonneville, which once covered this whole expanse. We encounter a flock of sheep, but their big white canine minders chase us away. Finally, we find what we're looking for, a jumble of what looks like culverts out on the flats.

Holt began work on *Sun Tunnels* in 1975, on 40 acres that she bought the year before. It consists of four 22-ton concrete tunnels arranged in a big X, in what at first appears to be an utterly random location and configuration. It is both sculpture and observatory: Each tunnel has holes drilled into it that line up with the constellations, and each pair of tunnels respectively aligns with sunrise and sunset on the summer and winter solstices. The work is a descendant of the ancestral Puebloan solstice markers in Hovenweep and on Fajada Butte in Chaco Canyon (both of which mark the sunrise with spirals), as well as the more sophisticated observatory at southwestern Colorado's Chimney Rock, which pinpoints the moon's maximum declination every 18 years. There are plenty of other ancient precedents, from Stonehenge in England to the Southwest's Chacoan "roads."

Your first impulse at *Spiral Jetty* is to seek out a higher vantage point in the landscape in order to better see the work. At *Sun Tunnels*, you want to climb inside the sculpture and peer through its holes from the inside, in order to better see the surrounding landscape – exactly as Holt intended.

"I wanted to bring the vast space of the desert back to human scale," wrote Holt in 1977. "The panoramic view of the landscape is too overwhelming to take in

without visual reference points." It's like a super-sized version of Holt's earlier "locater" works, one of which she built near Missoula, Montana, in 1972 – metal poles topped with tubes through which one could look and "locate" something on the landscape.

There are no somber museum guards here, snipping at us for standing too close to the art. A Cézanne or a Caravaggio can be comprehended from a reasonable distance, even from a good print or photo of the work. Land art demands that the viewer physically interact with it, even clambering on or through the sculpture. The old subject-object relationship that exists with more traditional art is demolished, and the boundary between the artwork and its surroundings is also lost. The empty space between *Double Negative*'s two trenches is as much a part of the sculpture as the trenches themselves, as are the field, the sky and the lightning at Walter De Maria's *Lightning Field*. When oil companies considered drilling within view of *Spiral Jetty* and then *Sun Tunnels*, art lovers worldwide rose up in protest: Drilling nearby was essentially the same as drilling the artwork itself. After all, who can say where *Spiral Jetty* begins and ends?

In this way, successful land art serves as a bridge between human beings and the landscape. At its best, it repeats and shares the experience Holt had when she first ventured West, and realized that "inside and outside were the same. I was the land and sky and the land and sky was me."

**Double Negative Positive**

From I-15, Mormon Mesa appears just another bland, scrub-covered chunk of desert, a handy place to

shoot at refrigerators or dump an inconvenient body. But it's much more than that.

It was on Mormon Mesa that Truman Bethurum claimed to have conversed with beings from the planet Clarion back in 1952. Perhaps the Clarionites were drawn to the mesa by its remarkably flat top, covered with a calcified soil that took 2 million years to form, or by the fact that, from space, Mormon Mesa looks like the beak of a crazy bird.

The day after my failed attempt to find *Double Negative*, I return to that terrestrial bird beak, this time following the directions right up to the sculpture's edge. It's not marked in any way, and is barely visible from most angles. That no one has plummeted into this man-made gorge while on a motorized midnight bender seems miraculous. Erosion has rounded its once-squared edges and even taken a huge chunk or two out of the walls. I enter carefully.

In the depths, it is calm and cool. It still reminds me of a road cut, but that's not a bad thing. I know of two road cuts, parallel to one another and about 10 miles apart, in southeastern Utah. They slice through the burgeoning sandstone wave of Comb Ridge in such a way that the westward traveler passing through them feels as if he's slipped through a portal, into another time or reality behind the Slickrock Curtain. One of them was even a villain in Abbey's *Monkey Wrench Gang*. I think they are wonderful.

Then again, I'm not particularly upset that Bright Source Energy has asked the BLM for permission to build a glimmering concentrated solar thermal plant on Mormon Mesa not far from *Double Negative*. It seems like a part of the bigger story – a land sculpture that just keeps growing.

The sky is outrageous today, with big clouds flying across the blue like the "skows" that Bethurum saw so long ago. Should his Clarionites return, what will they think of *Double Negative*? Will they see it as art or as a mass grave – an abandoned road cut or another piece of the landscape? Will they ponder its dimensions and note that it is almost perfectly aligned with true north? Or will they even notice it, dwarfed as it may be by a huge array of mirrors directing sunlight into a turbine on top of a tower, a circle of shiny worshippers channeling the sun's power toward a 200-foot-tall phallic deity. Clearly a cultural and religious site: a cathedral, perhaps, of the Anthropocene.

Maybe the alien visitors will see the artwork as signposts of sorts, guiding visitors to see this landscape with all its intrusions in another way. That's what Robert Adams said he hoped to do with his photographs: Show us "a landscape into which all fragments, no matter how imperfect, fit perfectly."

https://youtu.be/i8A8FQ2hq6A
Ovation TV produced this segment on the *Sun Tunnels* installation west of the Great Salt Lake.

**For more information and directions to land art, visit diacenter.org, clui.org, lacma.org, moca.org and doublenegative.tarasen.net. Jonathan Thompson is a senior editor with *High Country News*. This article originally appeared in the June 25, 2012, issue of *HCN*.**



# Back in the Saddle

## Rodeo athlete Amberley Snyder learned to ride – and win – all over again.

By Rod Miller

At the final college rodeo of the 2014 fall season, Amberley Snyder turned the last barrel and crossed the finish line with the fastest aggregate time to win first-place honors. Then, she rode her barrel horse, Power, out of the arena and to her trailer, unbuckled and unwrapped the straps that help her ride, and waited for a Utah State University rodeo teammate to lift her from the horse and into her wheelchair.

Amberley accumulated a pile of first-place belt buckles and trophy saddles in the years before she broke her back and lost the use of her legs in a 2010 truck rollover. And the pile has only grown higher in the years since. But recovering and getting back to her winning ways hasn't been an easy ride for Amberley, especially since competing and succeeding at a high level had become all but routine, and not only in the rodeo arena.

In high school, she enrolled in agriculture classes and joined FFA. "I joined because it seemed like the place for me. I could involve horses and animals in my classes," Amberley says. "I got more involved as I progressed through high school." That involvement led to the presidency of her high school and collegiate chapters, and culminated with her election as FFA president for the state of Utah and a run for national office.

But rodeo is Amberley's first love, and it's an affection she has felt since before memory. She started riding a pony – because she wanted to be able to saddle it herself – at age three at a California riding arena. The need for speed was already evident. "I got frustrated because my legs weren't long enough to pass the saddle

photos courtesy Lauren Anderson

Amberley's confidence and competitive spirit aren't diminished by adverse conditions. Here, she turns a barrel at a college rodeo where the footing looks less than ideal.



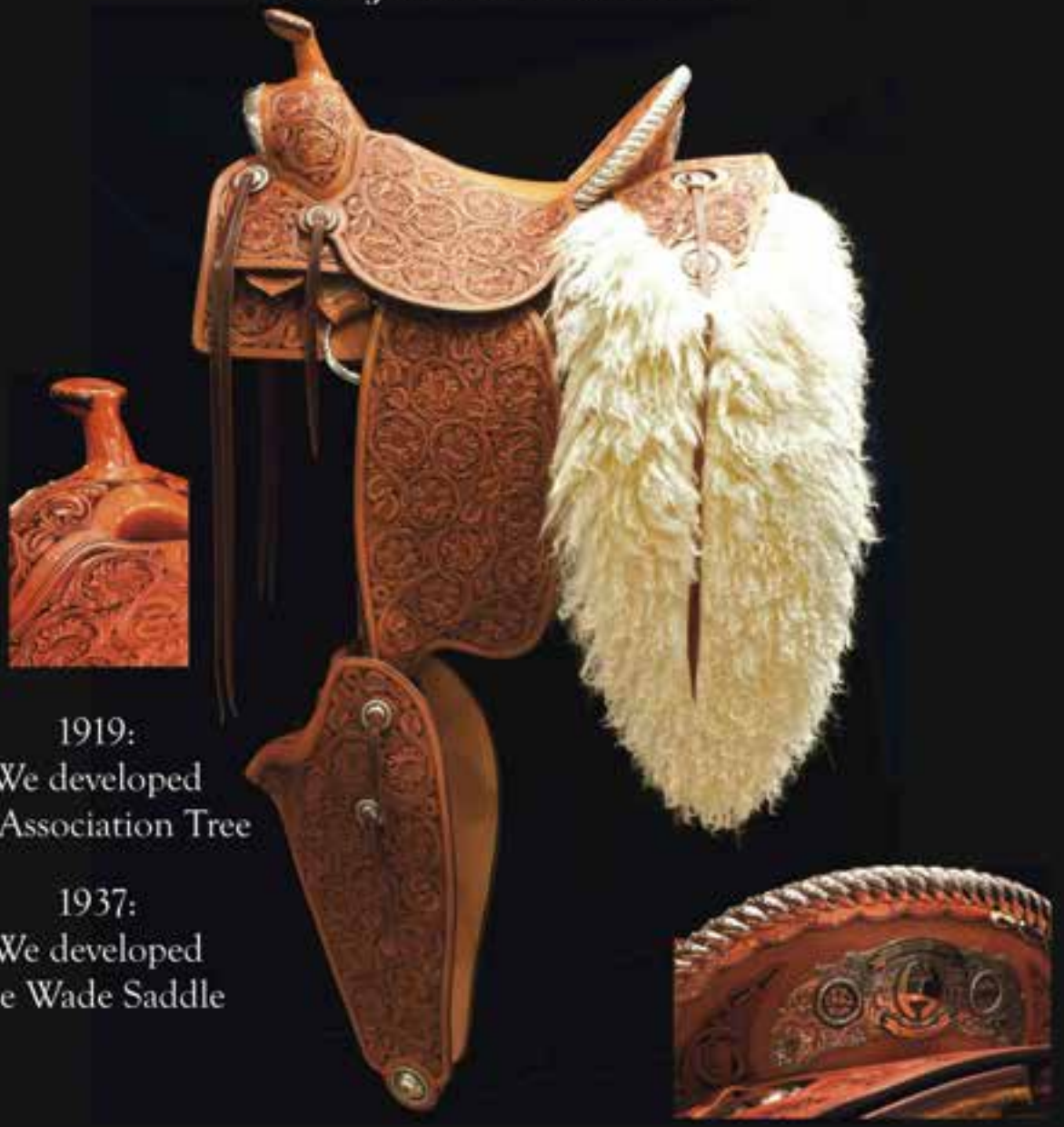
pad," she says, "so I couldn't kick to go faster." Competitive events like barrel racing weren't part of the program where she rode, but that didn't stop Amberley from trying. "I would take my pony, Gabby, out and set up cones for my own barrel pattern."

Like most youngsters, Amberley tested other activities, trying her hand at gymnastics and softball, but only horses and rodeo held her interest. When told, at age seven, that the family was relocating to Utah, she demanded a barrel horse as a condition of the move. Her parents humored the ultimatum and rewarded her passion with an experienced barrel racing mount. From then on, it was success in one Little Britches rodeo arena after another, followed by the same winning ways in high school rodeo, qualifying for the state finals in four events each year.

"In my senior year, I qualified for the National High School Finals," Amberley says, "as well as the Little Britches Finals, where I won the finals and world all-around title, and finished top six in three of my events." Amberley's tack room held seven trophy saddles and she had accumulated enough championship buckles to hitch up 60 pairs of jeans.

When Amberly became paralyzed after rolling her truck on a Wyoming freeway, she considered giving up her rodeo dreams. "I even told my mother to sell my

# Do You Ride A Hamley
## Or Just A Saddle?



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Amberley and her barrel horse, Power, who she trained to run barrels, share a special bond.



horses at one point," she says. "I felt like I was wasting such talented animals. I went to school for a year without them and with barely any contact. I still surrounded myself at school with pictures, buckles, and other reminders of my rodeo life. I never pushed it all away. I couldn't."

So, it was back in the saddle for Amberley. And she approached re-learning to ride with her usual drive and determination. The first time she got back on a horse was unforgettable, but not for the reason one might expect. "The reason I remember is because that was the moment it hit me that my life was not going to be the same," she says. "I realized that every part of my life was different and I had to deal with that. I was surrounded by family and friends the first day I got on, so I smiled on the outside, but I remember that day being one of the hardest days of my life."

As every rider knows, the weight of feet in the stirrups is crucial for maintaining balance and control, and the pressure of legs against the horse helps signal a rider's intentions. For Amberley, all that is missing. But she, and her horses, learned to adapt. There were no therapists with specialized training to show the way – just Amberley, her family and friends.

The first task: devising a way to stay in the saddle. "I have a seat belt we cut out of a junkyard car. I have Velcro straps that go around my legs and stirrup fenders which hold them still," she explains. "I have a nylon strap across my left hip to keep me centered. I also sit on a kind of pillow with air cells so I don't have to worry about pressure sores when I ride."

Not only was it all new to Amberley, her new way of riding took some getting used to for her horses, as well. Since she can't use her legs, she depends on her hands and voice to communicate with her horses. "They really did not struggle with the new style," she says. "I got Power, my barrel horse, off the track and trained him, so we already had an understanding with each other." Her roping horse, Wrangler, also caught on quickly. "The biggest problem I still face is that my horses have learned to ignore the slight movements of my legs. They know I don't kick, so they don't always run as hard as they should in a barrel pattern or after a calf."

Once she found a secure seat in the saddle and established communication with her mounts, Amberley and her horses moved along with training. "I just made little goals along the way, and once I accomplished them I would make another one," she says. "When I knew I could lope a circle fine, I set up the barrel pattern. When

I could lope a barrel pattern, I wanted to add speed. Once I knew I could do all that, I entered a race less than a week later."

She is back to her winning ways, but Amberley faces challenges other riders do not. "It is still trial and error every time I get on," she says. "Horses don't always move perfectly or in the same patterns, so I always try to compensate to stay ahead of them, especially when running. I do not want to fall behind and become a hindrance to my horse." And she habitually looks on the bright side. "I am blessed to have a pretty good feel on my horses' backs and have been able to communicate with my horses, in most cases, just as well as when I had my legs. I like to forget about what I can't do and pay attention to what I can."

There is, however, one ever-present threat: "The biggest worry is that if my horse falls, I could not get out but would be stuck with my saddle and horse," Amberley says. "That makes a lot of people nervous."

Beyond being horseback, there have been other modifications. Amberley has learned new ways to handle daily chores like feeding and watering and grooming her horses. And when it comes time to ride, "I have help to get on and off my horses. My horse trailer has a few adaptations, such as widening a door and putting a bar in the bathroom. We take a ramp to come off the trailer so I can get into it. I have hand controls in the truck as well, so I can haul my horses to rodeos and barrel races."

The situation hasn't been without humor. Amberley tells of one incident involving her Utah State rodeo teammates. "After a breakaway run, I went back to the horse trailer and they all forgot about me needing help getting off my horse," she recalls. "Luckily, my wheelchair was next to my trailer. After some contemplation, I decided I was going to get off by myself. So, with the saddle horn on one side and the trailer tie-ring on the other, I lowered myself down. The brakes on my wheelchair weren't set, so it pushed back a little. I had to swing like Tarzan for a minute to land in the wheelchair. It all worked out, though, and I was able to get off, unsaddle, and do my horse chores."

*photo by Rod Miller*

Getting mounted and dismounted are among the few times Amberley requires assistance.

That tale aside, Jeffery "Doc" Hall, rodeo advisor at Utah State and 2011-2012 National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association coach of the year for the Rocky Mountain region, says such oversights are rare. "All of the USU rodeo team members are supportive of Amberley," he says, "and lend a hand to help her saddle, push calves or handle other tasks."

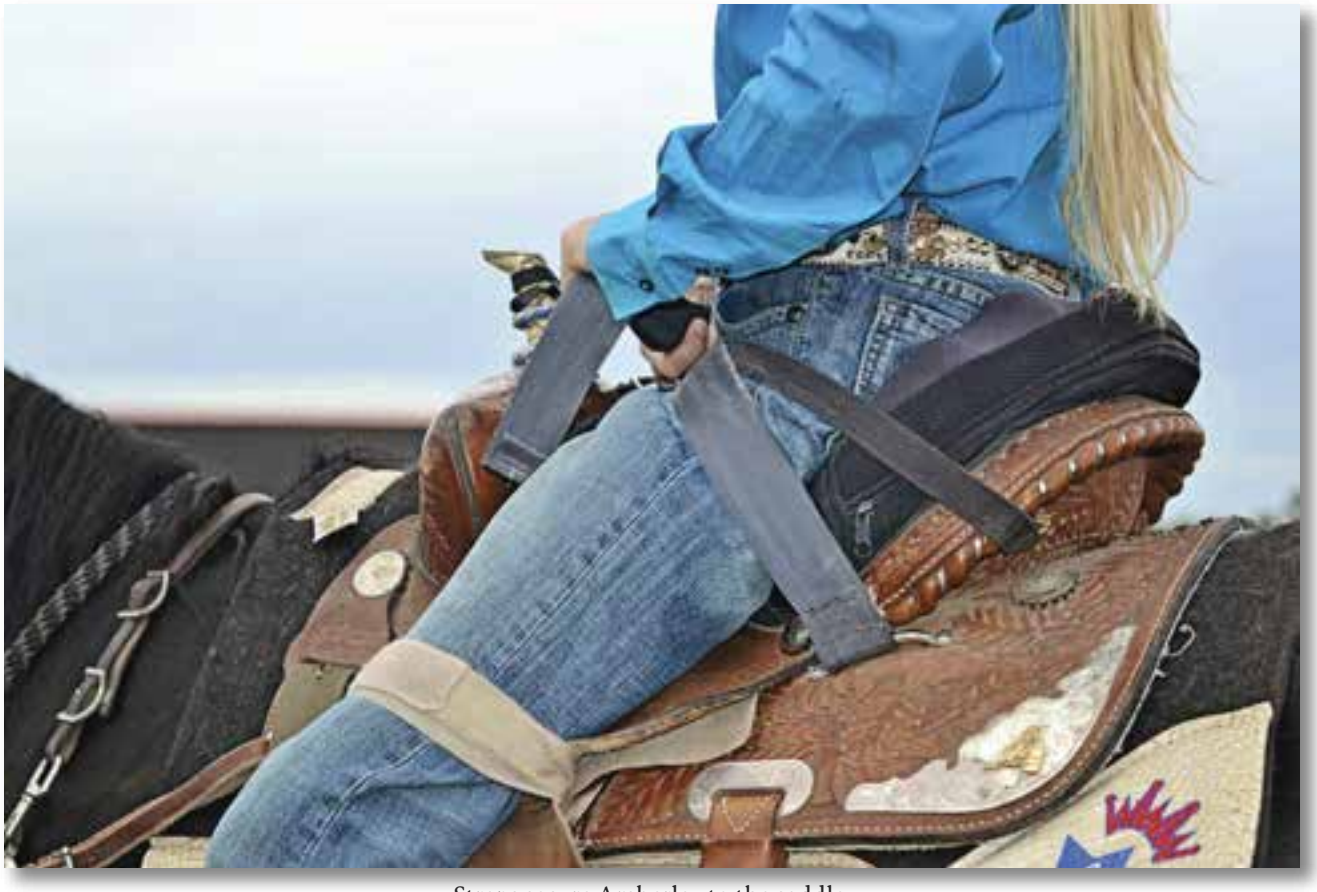

*photo by Rod Miller*

Straps secure Amberley to the saddle.



Hall says competitors from other colleges are also aware of Amberley's accomplishments, both in and out the arena. "She is well respected and admired by students from all of the other schools," he says. "Last year, the Rocky Mountain region nominated her for the Walt Garrison Award, given to rodeo students who exemplify integrity, commitment, perseverance, loyalty, honesty and leadership. Amberley is extremely hard working. She manages to be a full-time student with excellent grades, finds time to practice, and provides motivational talks at numerous events all over the United States."

Talking about her trials and triumphs is important to Amberley. "I talk to people everywhere I go," she says. "I always try to answer questions or help others when they need it. I get online messages daily and am able to help others overcome personal obstacles. I try to keep a good attitude when I compete as an example to those around me. I know that, no matter how I run, I have someone watching me and wanting to see how I react." On a more formal level, Amberley travels to speak to groups at a variety of events, including the National High School Finals and various state and provincial finals.

A degree in agricultural education is imminent, and Amberley plans to pursue an advanced degree in school

counseling. As a graduate student, she'll have another year of eligibility to compete in college rodeo. She'll also be barrel racing, breakaway roping and team roping at other events. And she'll be pursuing the biggest rodeo dream of all. "I still have my life goal of barrel racing at the National Finals Rodeo," she says, "and will, hopefully, one day accomplish it."

Given the resolve Amberley's demonstrated so far, you wouldn't want to bet against her.

https://youtu.be/V7pGEYL0jYU
Cord McCoy profiles Amberley Snyder for *The Ride* with Cord McCoy.

Utah writer Rod Miller's latest book is *The Lost Frontier: Momentous Moments in the Old West You May Have Missed*, which chronicles events in western history you didn't learn about in school. Find him online at www.writerrodmiller.com.

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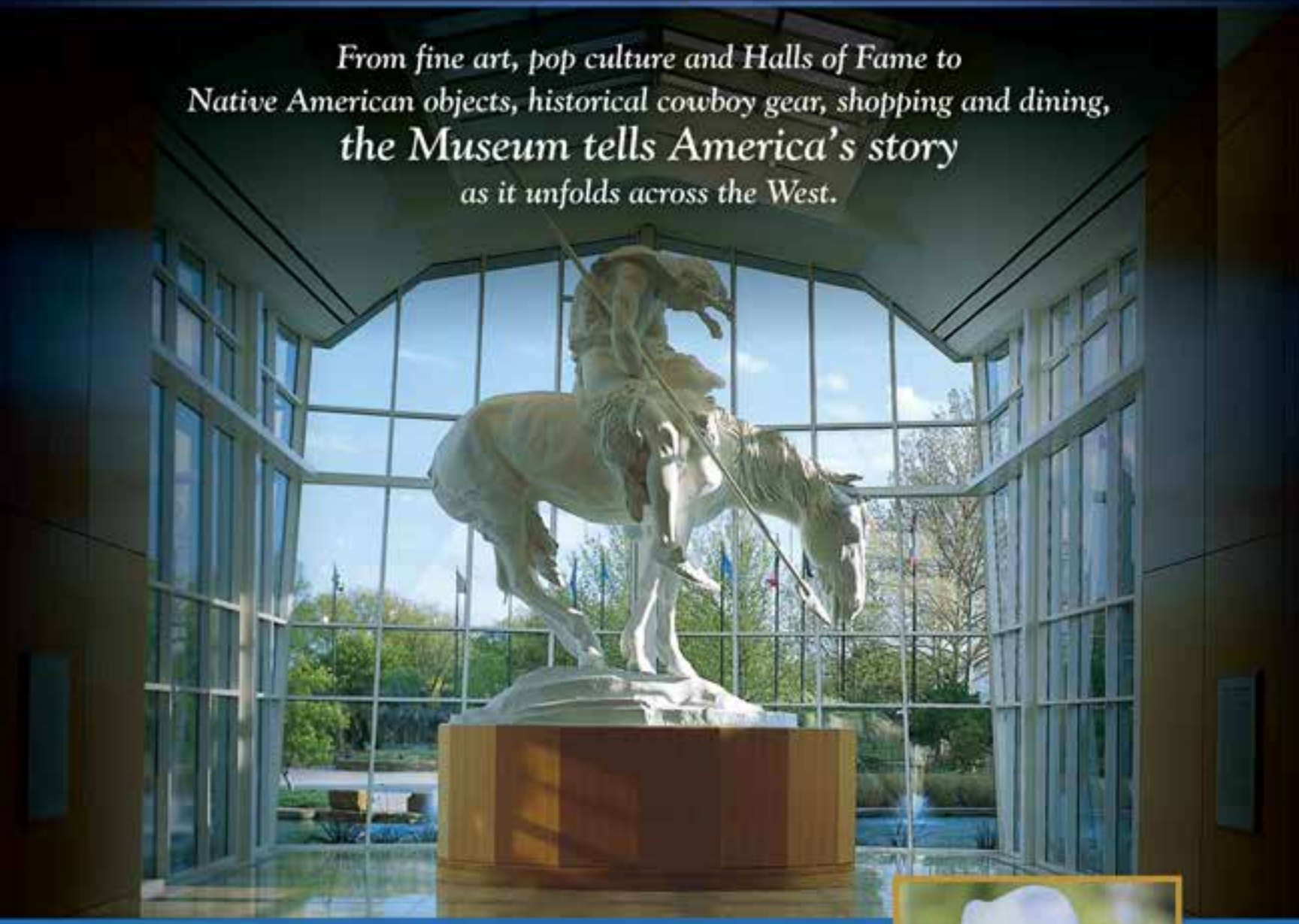
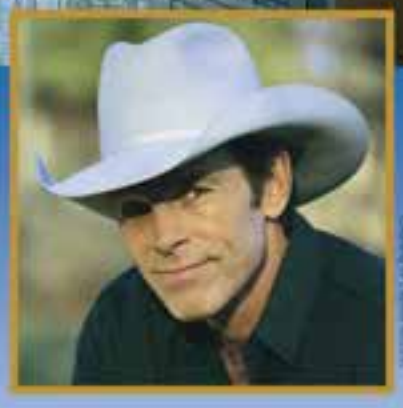


**July 25, 2015**

## *Remembering Chris LeDoux: A Western Underground Concert*

Chris LeDoux (1948-2005) was inducted into the Museum's Rodeo Hall of Fame in 2006 after a career as a world champion bareback rider. His legacy endures through his success as a cowboy, music entertainer, songwriter and artist. Celebrate the National Day of the American Cowboy at this concert by **Western Underground**, which for 16 years was LeDoux's recording and touring band. LeDoux artifacts and art will be on display.



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## Your Horse's Feet, A Series

# Horses on the Moon

By Pete Healey, APF

The humans at NASA are for sure smart; consider the physics it took to get man on the moon. I wonder if they could get a horse on the moon? I'll bet they could but you'd have to leave them rocket scientists alone and let them figure it out. If you got the equine community involved, it would sour the whole deal. From my perspective in the foot care industry; vectors, rotational centers, moments and reaction forces aren't well understood. It's like trying to find a liberal that doesn't believe in free child care.

The other day I was asked to pull the shoes and trim the feet on a mare that going to have surgery for a P2 fracture in a hind leg. P2 is the second phalanx or short pastern bone; the one between the long pastern and the coffin bone. Unlike the coffin joint and the fetlock, the pastern joint has very little movement; when subjected to abnormal conditions, this can cause problems. What's interesting is that the feet on this horse were probably the best quality feet I have seen in I don't know how long. This is a nice mare from a reputation ranch and I am sure she is worth quite a bit of money. Her feet were extremely long and she was shod with a very short shoe causing a lot of leverage to the back of the foot and lower leg. Her feet are so good that even with all this leverage she still had a good heel. I trimmed about an inch of foot off of her toes; the equivalent to about a ten degree wedge. The feet could take the beating but the pastern couldn't. A lot of people would say that the fracture was just one of those things that just happen but if you put the mechanical formula of the foot on a black-board, it would say different.



An owner at the clinic was anxious to get the shoes put back on her horse after an MRI (shoes are pulled so as not to interfere with the magnet) because the horse was sore footed. It was no lie; when he walked up to me he was extremely sore. His feet were horrible and the shoes they had on him offered no help. I mention this to the veterinarian when I saw him and he said "Yeah but nothing showed up on the MRI." And that is how it goes; it looks like a lame horse, it walks like a lame horse and it has the feet of a lame horse but the MRI says no problem. Will Rodgers once said "Common sense is not so common."

The industry is still putting flat shoes on a moving object with round joints. Horses on the moon? I think we could probably get the hay delivered, but the horses? I don't think so. www.balancedbreakover.com.

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# When the Wolves No Longer Sing:

## Ian Tyson & the Re-invention of Cowboy Song

By Tom Russell
Photographs by Jay Dusard and Kurt Markus

*Empty house, children grown,*
*Old man rides these hills alone*
*How long? How long would it take*
*To find me?*

Ian Tyson
"Love Without End"

Winter. Elko, Nevada. 2005. Midnight. Holed up in a parked rental car. The windshield wipers are scooping away wet snow, and the fabled Montana poet, Paul Zarzyski, is sitting shotgun beside me. Wiping his eyes. Zarzyski being the bronc-riding poet from Great Falls, Montana, by way of Northern Wisconsin.

We're parked with the engine running and the music blasting. Two old high school football players in cowboy hats, caught up inside a deep Nevada winter. There's a fifty-foot concrete Polar Bear rearing up above us, pawing at a neon casino sign. Clawing at the frozen moon. Ice is falling off the beast's snout.

The statue is a monument to White King, the world's largest polar bear. The old boy himself is on display in the coffee shop, forty feet feet away, inside Elko's Commercial Hotel and Casino. The stuffed bear stands 10 feet 4 inches and weighed in at 2,200 pounds, before they shot, gutted, and stuffed him. He keeps a glass-eyed vigil on the old ladies at the slot machines. Elko is a long way from Vegas, baby.

The car heater hums and whirrs up against Ian Tyson's song "Love Without End." Love's gone way bad and the cowboy in the song rides away. Disappearing into the hills. The soul of a man is dying. How long will it take to find the body?

*Work it out, it don't take long,*
*suddenly you're strong.*
*But I don't know what you do,*
*about the lonely.*

"Damnit, I'm gonna cry," Zarzyski says.
"I know," I say. "The lonely."
"Goddamnit that's sad. Great song."
"Yeah," I say. "Chilling."


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photo by Jay Dusard

Chillingly bleak. Sad to the core. Too close for comfort. I know about the old man's personal life, you see. The man who wrote the song. Hell, it's about *all* our personal lives. Most cowboy songs don't go to that place in the heart. Cowboy *aloneness* is something you ride away from and become a night guard on a trail herd. Or you sign on to wrangle cattle in Mexico and bitch about your gal who ran off with a Philadelphia lawyer.

That's the way the old songs went down. *I've got no use for the women.* Or maybe: *Her parents didn't like me, now she's gone the same, if I'm writ' on your book love, just blot out my name.*

But what about the raw truth of Tyson ranching alone in that far Northern country, Alberta, a landscape he's declared unfit for anything but buffalo? The frozen earth goes eight feet deep and winter lasts forever. The dog has died. The best horses are gone. Sold. Twenty-year marriage falling apart. Kids won't talk to you. Lover disappeared. The divorce money is "hemorrhaging out of the bank." The Cowboy poetry scene has become a "petrified forest." No country for old men, gunsels, or grousers.

Try writing about *that*, amigo. Well the old man summed it up pretty damn good. "Love Without End." Could be a Tom McGuane story. But this one rhymes and rings through your bones. It invades the comfort zone. It questions the tired poetic maxim that love might last forever.

This was Ian Tyson circa 2005. The record is *Songs From a Gravel Road.* The gravel road runs between the main Tyson Ranch house and the stone cabin where Ian writes. The road is Ian's walking think-tank. Discarded song lines fall and weave themselves into the gravel. Crumbs for magpies.

*Songs From A Gravel Road* portrays a veteran cowboy-songwriter in his late 70s, *facing eternity or the lack of it every day*, to quote Papa Hemingway. Or shall we site Williams S. Burroughs, who surmised: "there was only one way out, I had to write my way out." This was after old Bill shot a cocktail glass off his wife's head in Mexico City, in a "William Tell experiment." Bill missed. Killed her. Went to Mexican jail. Became a writer. Love without end.

Ian Tyson. His friends, or those who use the word "friend" in the classic cowboy way, they all want him to be the legendary cowboy songwriter. No one yearns to talk about the personal crap. The closest shrink is in Calgary – forty miles away. And cowboys don't go to psychologists. Naw. They chew on it and spit it out into an empty tomato juice can. They ride off into the hills

*photo by Jay Ducard*



like Kirk Douglas in *Lonely Are the Brave*. They talk to themselves, and finally get run down by a toilet-fixtures truck on a rainy highway. They die like Kirk, talking to their dead horse. Alone. Brave. Clawed up inside. Roll the credits.

Back to that Elko winter's night in a rental Chevrolet. Another slab of ice falls off the polar bear's snout and Zarzyski is rubbing his eyes, moved to tears by a song. This was a moment when I understood once again what a great song is able to do. Make us cry. Or elevate our souls. Slap us around. Three minutes of truth serum, straight to the heart.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the esteemed Beat poet, now over 90, recently wrote: *Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash and you songwriters are the true popular poets of America...voices moving everyone more than poets in books, the printing press having made them so silent.* It took

photo by Jay Dusard



guts for a famous poet to say that. The songwriters, the good ones, inhabit permanent rooms in people's souls, while out in the literary world poets and novelists get the grants and suckle on the tired teat of the University system. *If you can't write, teach.* Old Indian dictum.

But I'll give a nod to W.B. Yeats. "Love Without End" rings with the feeling etched in lines from Yeats' "A Prayer for Old Age":

*God guard me from those thoughts men think*
*In the mind alone*
*He that sings a lasting song*
*Thinks in a marrowbone*

Great songs don't issue forth from the mind alone. The arise from deeper wells. Love or sorrow welling up in the blood and marrow. Foaming over. In the Elko rental car Tyson is moving onto the next song.

*I passed over Raton, stood there alone*
*Staring into the heart of the night*
*Across that dark plain to El Paso...*

Tyson looks down from Raton Pass and envisions the lights of Las Cruces and El Paso. Fragments and scenes from a desert evening. A panorama of images. Across that great Chihuahua Desert plain, *The Queen*

*of El Paso*, sleeps alone in a distant house. Dreaming. Out of reach. Cattle on the desert are milling around. The horses in Tyson's trailer *will not stand*. Mexican illegals are moving up from the border, underneath the wire and through the ditches, headed up the brutal escape route the Spanish called *El Camino del Muertos*. The Highway of the Dead.

It's a Breughel painting. Muted oils and starlight. Hidden Mexicans, sleeping beauties, trailered-horses, and an elegant melody pushing it along. A modern cowboy waltz. With guts and grace.

*At the line of desire*
*Seven strands of barbed wire*
*To hold back the on-rushing tide*
*Many dreams have been brought to the border*
*Down in the canyons, down in the culverts...*

The cowboy in the song has poetic night vision. He sees into culverts filled with ditch water, hubcaps, and hidden Mexicans. A desert wind is building. Something is coming at us. Something else is out of reach. Much of it is behind us. We move on.

Tyson gets back into his truck and drives over the high pass of Raton and closes the door on it all. Enters another scene. Another song. The melody drifts away, but the images do not fade. Who the hell mentions culverts in a song?

This is songwriting.

I recall Tyson turning to me once in his stone house and declaring: *I fell in love with the English language at age 50*. That was it. You have to love the lingo. Taste the weight of words. Ride the slang. Steal from tradition. Then pray for the muse to intervene.

*Art*, I guess you call it. Sleight of hand. Everything is beautifully out of reach and persistent in memory. But forgive the witty hogwash. Leave it to music critics. Songs need to be absorbed and enjoyed, not torn apart. The good ones stick with you. Forever.

Back, one last time, to that Elko winter night. The music rolls through the rental car. Zarzyski is shaking his head, staring at the lights across the parking lot at The Stockman's Casino. White King's marble eyes shine through the fogged-up Commercial Hotel window. An old lady lights another cigarette. Retired waitress. Insomniac. Flat-hat buckaroos stagger from bar to bar. The whorehouses are heating up and the Basque Cafés are closing. Tyson's opera continues. He's seen all this.

A last slab of hard ice falls off the polar bear. The windshield cracks. The record ends.

*photo by Jay Dusard*

Back-of-album image for *Ian Tyson*

## II Stories He'd Tell

*All along the shoreline,*
*Arbutus trees do grow*
*And watching from their red limbs,*
*Kingfishers come and go*
*And their secrets of hidden coves,*
*As they call cross the bay*
*Late in the afternoon on salt rocks*
*Where we lay*

Ian Tyson,
"Stories He'd Tell"

photo by Jay Dusard


The 1983 landmark album

Above are the well-carved lines from an early Tyson song, "Stories He'd Tell." Ian is a kid, sitting on rocky shoreline with his father. They're staring at a wilderness bay in British Columbia. Tyson's father is asking his boy what he intends to do with his life, and Tyson hasn't figured it out yet. Young Ian is still caught up in his *aimless ways*. He's enthralled by his father, George Tyson, who'd emigrated from Liverpool, England in 1906. A man who knew horses and had fought in The Great War.

*Was his faith so strong,*
*had he doubts that didn't show?*
*Seeing life and death,*
*had he learned what I don't know?*

That song always took me to a place that the literature of my youth could not. *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, or *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I love those books. But the loss of innocence rang through Tyson's "Stories He'd Tell," sailing on a vocal instrument that hit all the high notes. Not the same Tyson who, sixty years later, would end up on that gravel road. Voice half shot. Women gone. No way out but *through*. Dead wildflowers on the kitchen table next to a bottle of vodka. Still writing his way into a deeper understanding of what went right or wrong, and how the country was. Enduring the heavy weather. Making it rhyme. Reinventing cowboy music. Wondering what old Irving Berlin might have said about all *this blowed out country* and love gone bad.

Ian's first thirteen albums were recorded as one half of the groundbreaking folk group (and country rock

photo by Jay Ducard

Back-of-album image for *Old Corrals and Sagebrush*



pioneers) Ian and Sylvia. The 1960s. While my father and older brother were drawn to the rodeos, racetracks, and Los Angeles Horse and Mule Auction, I was sneaking into the back door of The Ash Grove, a folk club on Melrose in Hollywood, where I first saw Ian and Sylvia. I was a teenaged wanna-be songwriter, bone dumb in the ways of the music business.

Ian met Sylvia in Toronto in 1959. They recorded a dozen albums. They were the real thing. Their concerts weren't peppered with *shtick* jokes about tuning guitars, or the *faux seriousness* and moral righteousness of protest songs. When Bob Dylan picked up the electric guitar and the protest movement was all but over. Protest songs had a *shelf life*, to quote Sylvia.

When Dylan walked onto that Newport Folk Festival stage and sang "Maggie's Farm" backed up by the Paul Butterfield Blues Band (with the feral screaming of Mike Bloomfield's Stratocaster guitar) Pete

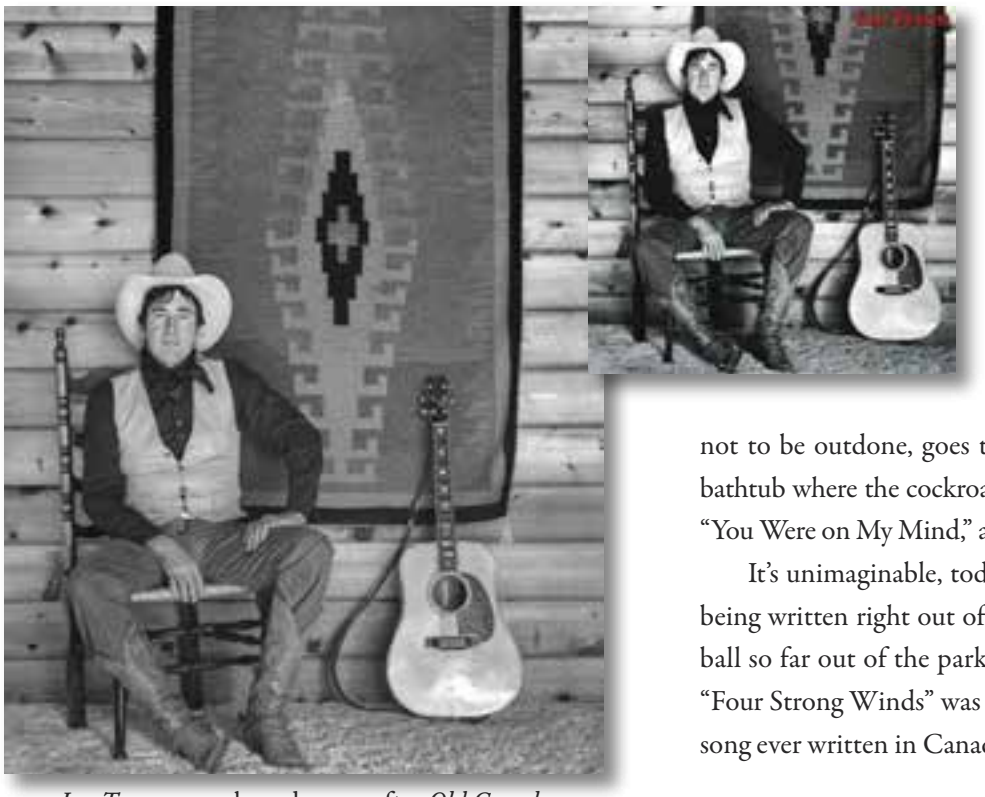


photo by Jay Dusard

*Ian Tyson* was released a year after *Old Corrals and Sagebrush* in 1984



Seeger began to weep. Literally break down. Sylvia Tyson told me that one. She was standing right next to Seeger. Bye-bye protest movement, hello Rock and Roll.

Dylan wasn't deaf to the overwhelming impact of The Beatles. In the next eighteen months Bob Dylan would record three albums filled with over thirty songs which changed the shape of modern music. Tyson sang up arbutus trees, but Dylan sang of *haunted frightened trees* and a *windy beach of crazy sorrow.* He was absorbing Arthur Rimbaud and Allen Ginsberg.

The first snare beat of Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone" was the shot heard round the world. Most songwriters of that era were drowned in Dylan's wake. Tyson observed and stuck to his own game.

But hold on. A few years earlier Bob Dylan writes "Blowin' in the Wind" and then walks into a Greenwich Village bar and sings it to Ian Tyson. Tyson thinks, *hell, I can do that,* and retreats to his manager's apartment to write "Four Strong Winds." Sylvia Tyson, not to be outdone, goes to the Earl Hotel, sits in the bathtub where the cockroaches can't get her, and writes "You Were on My Mind," a hit for the group "We Five."

It's unimaginable, today, that these big songs were being written right out of the box. These folks hit the ball so far out of the park no one ever found the ball. "Four Strong Winds" was later voted the most popular song ever written in Canada.

Tyson remarks:
*Damned if I know what the four strong winds are. It was basically the first song I'd written. It came real easy...when I got the first check I went and bought a big cattle farm East of Toronto...when I got the first big check for 'Someday Soon' I bought the adjoining farm... I started getting seriously into breeding cutting horses.*

Horses. The code. Dylan broke the code. As did Ian and Sylvia, and few others. In search of *the code* I ended up, much later, writing songs with both these folks. Ian and Sylvia. It's a helluva' way to grow up and become a writer, sitting across from your idols, trying to contribute something that doesn't ring off their *built-in bullshit detectors*.

Songwriting school. Bring you lunch, dinner, and a bedroll. Hold fast.

### III The Bars Along Main Street and The Code of Tradition

*So I'll work on the towboats,*
*With my slippery city shoes*
*Which I swore I would never do again.*
*Through the grey, fogbound straits,*
*Where the cedars stand watchin'...*
*I'll be far off and gone like summer wages.*

Ian Tyson
"Summer Wages"

Back history: Ian Tyson was born on Vancouver Island, did a turn of bronc riding in the 50s, and took a degree in the graphic arts. He broke a leg on the broncs and, recovering in the hospital, picked up the guitar. He read Kerouac and Hemingway. He's a voracious reader to this day. If he has one piece of advice for young songwriters it's: *read, read, read*. How many other cowboy singers subscribe to *The New Yorker*?

I've seen him peruse *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* for hours and then look up at me and declare*: Old Tennyson sure knew a few things about love*. He's a fan of Toronto poet/novelist Michael Ondaatje (*The English Patient*) who crafts sophisticated love poems like "The Cinnamon Peeler":

*If I were a cinnamon peeler*
*I would ride your bed*
*And leave the yellow bark dust*
*On your pillow.*

In the late 1950s Ian played with a rockabilly band, *The Sensational Stripes* in Vancouver, B.C. They opened once for Buddy Holly. He gigged in the rugged bars along Main Street. Twenty years later I paid my dues in those same bars on Skid Row, Vancouver: The Gulf Club, The Commercial Hotel, and The Smiling Buddha, where in the 1970s, there were still separate entrances for men and women. The whore and knife bars of Apache Pass.

Hastings Street, near Main St. in Vancouver, is the first known Skid Row (or Skid Road) in history. The term connects back one hundred and fifty years to the logging trade in Vancouver. Tyson later wrote about it all in "Summer Wages":

*photo by Jay Dusard*

*In all the beer parlors, all down along Main Street*
*The dreams of the season, are all spilled down on the floor*
*Of the great stands of timber, just waiting there for falling*
*And the hookers standing watchfully, as they wait there by the door.*

The trained visual artist in Tyson allowed him to paint western landscapes into the song lines. Cedar trees, magpies, hidden coves, fogbound straits, and Main Street hookers. A touch of Maynard Dixon, Charles M. Russell – an urban dash of Edward Hopper. The word paintings are built atop a solid foundation of old Scots-Irish folk music. As Bob Dylan revealed recently, his (Dylan's) song ideas can be traced back to folk and blues music. Ditto Ian Tyson.

Sayeth Dylan:

*These songs didn't come out of thin air. I didn't just make them up out of whole cloth...It all came out of traditional music: traditional folk music, traditional rock & roll and traditional big-band swing orchestra music.*

*I learned lyrics and how to write them from listening to folk songs. And I played them, and I met other people that played them, back when nobody was doing it. Sang nothing but these folk songs, and they gave me the code for everything that's fair game, that everything belongs to everyone.*

Code talkers.

Another anecdote: It's the late 1950s. Tyson's driving an old Dodge down from B.C. to visit a beautiful Greek gal-friend in L.A. The car breaks down on the Grapevine Hill, outside of Bakersfield. Tyson puts on his beat straw cowboy hat and sticks out his thumb.

The two Tyson auto-biographies.

Sam Peckinpah, then working on the TV series *Gunsmoke,* stops and picks Ian up. He asks Tyson if he can ride horses. Tyson boasts: *Hell, yes, I can ride anything*. Pecikinpah gives Tyson a business card and says he can get him cowboy film work.

Later Tyson gets kicked out of his girlfriend's joint and hightails it back to Canada. Forgetting Peckinpah's offer. Years later he meets Sam, on the set of *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid*. Dylan's in the film and also composing the music. The two code talkers. There's more of Tyson's influence on Dylan in Suze Rotolo's book – *A Freewheelin' Time*.

"There hasn't been a Bob Dylan in cowboy poetry," said Tyson in his book *I Never Sold My Saddle*, "The Bob Dylan of cowboy music has been me."

The 60s faded into the 1970s and Ian and Sylvia broke up. Tyson moved out West. Re-married and bought a ranch near Calgary with money from Neil Young's cover of "Four Strong Winds."

There was a great record from the 70s – *Old Eon* – but it was a time for Tyson to reorganize. He couldn't relate to Nashville networking or the Cosmic Cowboy scene down in Texas. He edged deeper into the cutting horses and his ranch. Part one of his career was fading behind him. The music biz passed him by, and he didn't seem to give a damn.

photo by Jay Dusard

## IV The King of the Mood Swings

*Walking on a gravel road*
*Trying to think of higher things*
*Trying to shift my heavy load*
*I'm the king of the mood swings*

Ian Tyson
"This is My Sky"

There was an old Irish horseshoer that frequented Tyson's Ranch in the early 1980s. A man named Neil Hope. He shoed Tyson's horses and always asked Ian to sing a song or two. Tyson would pull out the guitar and sing old ballads like "Rambler Gambler" and "The Streets of Laredo."

"The Streets of Laredo" can be traced back hundreds of years to "The Unfortunate Rake," a song about a man dying on the street outside a syphilis clinic in London. Singing the traditional cowboy standards in the kitchen gave Tyson the yen to record *Old Corrals and Sage Brush* in 1983. He covered one of my first songs: "Gallo del Cielo," at a time when no other backslapper had the guts to take a shot at it. A seven-minute song about cockfighting? Tyson could relate. We began corresponding about co-writing and met in New York, traded ideas, and came up with "Navajo Rug."

On the third record, in his 1980s resurgence, Tyson hit the groove, dead on, with *Cowboyography*. He never

The album that changed everything. *Cowboyography* was released in 1986, with package photography by Kurt Markus, to whom Tyson dedicated the album.

looked back. *Cowboyography* embodies at least five Western Music classics: "Fifty Years Ago," "The Gift" (about Charlie Russell), "Cowboy Pride," "Old Cheyenne" (a reprise), "Navajo Rug," and "Claude Dallas." I co-wrote the last two.

Still the student.

Fast forward three decades to present and at least a dozen records of finely crafted, soulful songs, and more Tyson classics: "Will James," "M.C. Horses," "Blue Mountain of Mexico," "The Rockies Turn Rose," "The Road to Las Cruces," "Blue Mountains of Mexico," "This is My Sky," and others – take your pick.

Over the years we co-wrote "Navajo Rug," "Claude Dallas," "The Banks of the Musselshell," "The Rose of the San Joaquin," "Heartaches are Stealin'," "Ross Knox," "When the Wolves No Longer Sing," and a few more. I kept learning from the master. Let's open a window, back in time, into that cabin where we used to write.

## V Songwriting School, Bring Your Bedroll

*Nashville has a stranglehold on radio, and I don't relate to what they do. They don't want to play sixty-year old guys, they want to play twenty two year old guys...these writers and their songs about 'personal relationships.' They can't write knife and whore songs like Tom Russell.*

Ian Tyson,
"I Never Sold My Saddle"

The cabin stood in the foothills of the Canadian Rockies. *The rocks* the old man called them. There was a small knotty pine kitchen with a coffee machine. An icebox filled with beer and soft drinks. We brought a large thermos of coffee from the main ranch, thirty miles away. There were sandwiches for lunch. Ham. Cheese. Tuna. Roast Beef. This was in the late 1980s.

The nearest neighbor was a mile off. A woman who kept goats. The cabin shelves were filled with books on the West. Western prints on the wall above Tyson's working table. The tools were set down there in strategic places, next to a writing pad where he wrote fragments and lyrics, left-handed, in strong script.

He put the words down with the firm hand of a sketcher. He did not trifle with words or ideas that weren't strong enough to be committed to the white sheet. The hands of a graphic artist who'd once designed the label of Resdan Dandruff Shampoo.

More tools: Pencils and pens. A metronome for practicing guitar grooves and strict musical time. A small cassette tape recorder with melodies and ideas. And the reference books: Dictionary, Bible, Thesaurus, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotes*, and a road atlas to look up place names.

It was that eternal quest for the big song. Tyson signed a book for me back then: *Friend Tom Russell, may we always quest and chase the big one.* Then he drew a buffalo skull in the spirit of Charles M. Russell. The search for the big one. The reaching back for the code. A prayer for the alchemy.

Ian and I would drive out to the cabin every morning after chores and work on songs most of the day. Tyson might leave me up there for the night, to contemplate wolves and bears, as I supped the red wine. To work the songs all evening. A twenty-four hour gig. One afternoon he handed me Teddy Blue Abbott's book, *We Pointed Them North*, and said:

*photo by Jay Dusard*

Jay Dusard photographed Ian Tyson for the cover of *And Stood There Amazed*.

> *Here. Try this. There's got to be a song in here about a kid on a long trail drive. Riding toward the Musselshell River up North. See if you can suss one out. That's your assignment.*

I read the book that night, drank the red wine, and found inspiration for a bundle of odd lines to show Ian. I learned a hell of a lot about the Teddy Blue Abbot's West that night, and where Larry McMurtrey got many of his ideas for *Lonesome Dove*. Tyson added more lyrical elements which later became "The Banks of the Musselshell."

Songwriting school. You couldn't beat it.

In the early years I was the gunsel who jumped out of the truck to open the gates. He called me *the king of the whore and knife ballads.* I called him *El Viejo*, the *old one*. As friends we've had our ups and downs. Battles on the road. Minor stuff arguing about sound and song. The backside of the music world. I'll toss out a quote from Dr. Hunter Thompson on the foibles of the music biz:

*The music business is a cruel and shallow money trench, a long plastic hallway where thieves and pimps run free, and good men die like dogs. There's also a negative side.*

It all worked out. I ended up getting married to a lovely Swiss gal. The ceremony took place in Elko, at *The Happily Ever After Wedding Chapel,* and Ian Tyson was our best man. Ramblin Jack Elliot sang "The Rake and Rambling Boy." I was in the presence of my heroes.

It felt like I'd graduated from song school.

**VI When the Wolves No Longer Sing/Full Circle**

*The old songs are forgotten*
*Gone with the raven on the wing*
*And love no longer matters*
*And the wolves no longer sing*

Ian Tyson and Tom Russell
"When the Wolves No Longer Sing"

Seven years ago, in the midst of his vocal and romance troubles, Tyson was in El Paso and we were going head to head on a song idea. I studied his face. We were both hung over and edgy. Acrawl with nerves. He was hurting.

Tyson grabbed his guitar, went out and sat under an Elm tree and strummed away for an hour, searching for an idea and a melody. Singing to the doves, high up in rotten limbs. I watched and listened through the window. He summoned up the old ballad, "Lord Lovel." Beautiful and weird. Singing away his pain and searching back through *the code* and the magic, and a new way out of the darkness.

*Lord Lovel stood at his castle gate*
*combing his milk white steed...*
*"On where are you going Lord Lovel?" she said*
*"Oh where are you going?" said she.*
*"I'm going, my dear Lady Nancy Bell*
*"Strange countries for to see."*

Tyson returned spouting about *strange countries* and *milk white steeds*. From the shadows of that Elm tree he'd arrived a modern variation on "Lord Lovel." It concerned our friend Ross Knox, the muleteer, being fired from his pack train job with the Arizona Park Service for refusing to wear a crash helmet instead of a cowboy hat.

We repaired to the main house, where Ian's old bottle of Grey Goose vodka sat in the freezer. It's been there for six years and gone through two refrigerators. We'll move it up to Santa Fe and make it available when we've both got another song idea.

Enough. *Don't always try to be Tolstoy, Russell*...Ian yelled at me once. Everything isn't a whore and knife ballad. You have to cough up a little tenderness.

*photo by Jay Dusard*

Ian Tyson and his daughter Adelita during the photoshoot for *And Stood There Amazed* released in 1991.

A week ago, as I write this, Ian sent me a dub of his fine new record: *Carnero Vaquero.* The record takes Tyson full circle – starting with the traditional "Doney Gal," then a nod to Ian and Sylvia ("Darcy Farrow"), an older Tyson classic ("Will James"), and a co-write with myself: "When the Wolves No Longer Sing." Plus new Tyson gems.

The strongest might be "The Flood" – true tale of the Alberta flood, which wiped out far more than the landscape. Acts of God and shattered marriages. The album is a keeper and a fitting addition to the Tyson canon.

Okay, Tolstoy, sum up the re-invention angle. If we were to consider the top Western songs of all time they would fall into loose categories: the traditional classics, the poems turned into song, the gunfighter ballads, the film songs, the tin pan alley gems, and modern country and pop takes on The West.

What does Tyson bring to the table? A link to the past. An eye on the future. A love of history and literature. An articulate outlook on the West, coupled with a deep honesty about the personal life of a cowboy who's lived with love, and then alone the past years. A re-invention without the clichés. But there's more.

Tyson re-emerged in 1983 with cowboy material. Starting over with traditional songs. But he'd been there before. (He sometimes forgets this). Twenty years earlier, in 1963, he'd written one of the biggest cowboy songs of all time: "Someday Soon." A Western standard.

Ian and Sylvia had written and recorded: "Someday Soon," "Four Rode By," "Short Grass," "Barney," "Lonely Girls," "The Renegade," "Wild Geese," "Old Cheyenne" (the original) and others. Their first albums covered traditional gems "Rambler Gambler," "Spanish is the Loving Tongue," and "Old Blue." They'd digested of *the code* Dylan mentions.

The bars and coffee houses in early 60s Greenwich Village (and the world) rang with the songs of a few cowboys and Indians – Ian Tyson, Ramblin Jack Elliott, Harry Jackson (later a renowned Western sculptor), Derroll Adams, and Peter La Farge ("The Ballad of Ira Hayes"). The cowboy song has been with us over one hundred years.

Ian Tyson's artistic endurance, deep catalogue, and continual re-invention of Cowboy song entitle Ian to a statue outside The Cowboy Hall of Fame – much the same as Casey Tibbs' on that bronze bronc in front of The Rodeo Hall of Fame.

These are people Oliver LaFarge called *Seldom Men,* men the likes of whom we may never encounter again.

*But our good times are all gone*
*and I'm bound for movin' on*
*I'll look for you if I'm ever back this way...*

Ian Tyson
"Four Strong Winds"

Ian Tyson Tells The Story Behind "Four Strong Winds"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJdvv7jB0Tc



Tom Russell's "Ballad of the West," *The Rose of Roscrae*, is now available from fronterarecords.com and Amazon. His tour dates, books, art, and records are accessed from www.tomrussell.com

# Local Knowledge

## For three decades, a Montana travel business has offered clients uniquely tailored experiences.

By Melissa Mylchreest

Traveling to a new place is always fun – new vistas, new experiences, new flavors and cultures. But sometimes it's frustrating to feel, well, like such a *tourist*. As an outsider, it's tricky to find your way to the heart of a place, whether it's the hidden-away cafe with amazing food, the secret fishing spot, or the perfect place to stay. When venturing into unknown lands, it's ideal to have a friend on the ground, a guide who knows the ins-and-outs, who knows your likes and dislikes, and can point you in the right direction to ensure you make the most of your visit.

*photo courtesy The Ranch at Rock Creek*

Off the Beaten Path offers travel experiences around the world, but has its roots in the Northern Rockies.

If you're lucky, you may have a network of friends spanning the globe, ready to welcome you to their respective stomping grounds with words of wisdom and insider's advice. However, not all of us are so rich in friends. Happily, not all is lost.

"When we started the business, we decided we wanted to be the friend you wish you had in this part of the world," says Bill Bryan, when asked about the driving motivation behind the venture he launched nearly 30 years ago.

In the mid 1980s, Bryan and his wife, Pam, found themselves at a crossroads: They had been living for 10 years in Montana, a place with which they had fallen thoroughly in love. But the national scope of the work they were doing in the environmental and nonprofit arenas necessitated a great deal of travel, and it seemed inevitable they'd soon be forced to uproot and move to one of the big cities they so often frequented. That is, unless they quit their jobs and tried something new.

So they did.

"We made a decision to stay in the Northern Rockies because we loved it," Bryan says. "And, we wanted to share our passion for this land and its people with others. So we decided to start up an organization that does that." What began as a wild idea soon took shape, and with the help of investors and advisors, the

Bryans' business, Off the Beaten Path, was born in 1987.

Off the Beaten Path is a boutique travel company specializing in highly personalized itineraries. The company's literature reflects on the name, stating that it is "a destination, travel vision, and style of experience" all in one. And in many was, the name represents the trajectory the Bryans took, as well.

"We started in a fairly naive way," Bryan says with a chuckle, "even though we had done a lot of market research. We were not necessarily people who knew how to run a business, and at times our naivete got the best of us." But the two persevered, and now, nearly three decades later, the business is as successful as it has ever been, and has expanded around the globe.

What sets Off the Beaten Path (or OBP, as it's more commonly known) apart from other travel companies isn't quantity – they operate in only a handful of countries – but quality. When the Bryans, who retired two years ago, launched the company, they were committed to creating personalized travel experiences that were tailored specifically to each client. To accomplish this, they needed to get to know the people and places they specialized in – which meant spending lots of time on the ground.

They began in their own backyard, as it were. Having lived and worked in Montana, Wyoming and Idaho, the Bryans were familiar with the Northern Rockies and all it had to offer. Still, they had to spend time figuring out which fishing guides were the best, which dude ranches were better for families and which were better for couples. They drove the highways and back roads, sampled the fare at out-of-the-way restaurants, and amassed a collection of background information and trivia on the region. And, as they worked with clients, they made it a point to listen.

"That was our job," says Bryan. "We're going to listen to you, and we're going to help you plan a trip based on your needs, your interests and your budget. To this day, if you ask me which is the best dude ranch for you and your family, I would really have to talk with you and get to know you and your situation before I offered suggestions."

The Bryans successfully passed on that passion for close listening to the sizeable OBP staff before they retired. "With every new client we get, the process starts with a consultation," says Julianne Mohr, an OBP custom travel planner who focuses on Alaska, the Northern Rockies, the Pacific Northwest, and the South Pacific. "We find out what they want to do, and how active they are. Are they really interested in geology, or do they want to see some big animals? Or maybe their kids are really interested in dinosaur digs. Whatever it may be, we take all of those things and customize an itinerary for them."

This client-centric, highly customized, locally focused approach has remained OBP's guiding principle as they've expanded throughout the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, the South Pacific and Morocco. Over the years they've added additional programs – small, guided group trips, themed "Pathfinder" experiences, and partnerships with an Airstream-rental company and the National Parks Conservation Association – but they've remained dedicated to the one-on-one service that clients (affectionately referred to as "OBP-ers") have come to expect.

And it seems to be an approach that works. Roughly 70 percent of OBP's clients are repeat customers, or have arrived at OBP through word-of-mouth recommendations. Even now in the age of the Internet, when travel advice is plentiful and free, OBP remains busy.

"There are people that say they can find all of this stuff online, and ask why they would go through us and pay for the service. Which is so true," Mohr says. "A lot of those experiences people *can* find online. But not all

*Limited Edition*

# The Life & Times of a Western Artist

## J.N. Swanson

(1927 - 2014)

*Mission Cattle, 30 x 40, oil* — *J.N. Swanson*


Legendary western artist Jack Swanson's limited-edition, autobiography.
One of the early members of the Cowboy Artists of America, Swanson is considered
the premier artist of the California Vaquero and the horse & cow culture of the Pacific Slope
region of the West. The book is lavishly illustrated with Swanson's artwork -
over 100 paintings, drawings and bronzes along with stories and personal photographs.
His is a captivating story of a western original,
a man who would rather be horseback than anything else.

Available at www.jnswanson.com

photo by Susan Wells

Tapping into local knowledge collected through on-the-ground research, OBP travel planners build itineraries that match clients' individual interests.

of them." She cites a favorite example of highly local knowledge that only comes from a boots-on-the-ground approach to planning: "We work with a guide in West Yellowstone who is a total mountain man – huge, bushy beard, dresses in old leather clothes that his wife made – and he's been guiding in Yellowstone for 40 years. He certainly doesn't have a Web site, doesn't do email. If you call him, you might luck out and get him and *then* you can book him."

In a world rapidly running to canned experiences, impersonal customer service, and fast-paced, digital everything, it seems the days of the travel agent may be numbered. And yet, it's those contemporary trends that create a market niche for companies like OBP.

"There are so many travel companies out there these days, offering trips everywhere," says Mohr. "People are really interested in travel. But that's also why we've haven't expanded more than we have, because we don't necessarily want to plan trips everywhere in the world. We want to plan trips where we know we can do it competently, with great local connections, and in an authentic way."

So, as you look toward your next vacation, you may be lamenting your shortage of far-flung friends scattered throughout the world, waiting with open arms for you to visit them on their working ranch in the Rockies, or on the beach in Australia, or at Machu Picchu, or in the rainforest of Ecuador, or on one of New Zealand's best trout streams. But with personalized guide books, eager travel planners, and insider knowledge, Off the Beaten Path just might be the best friend you could find.

**Melissa Mylchreest is a writer living in Montana.**

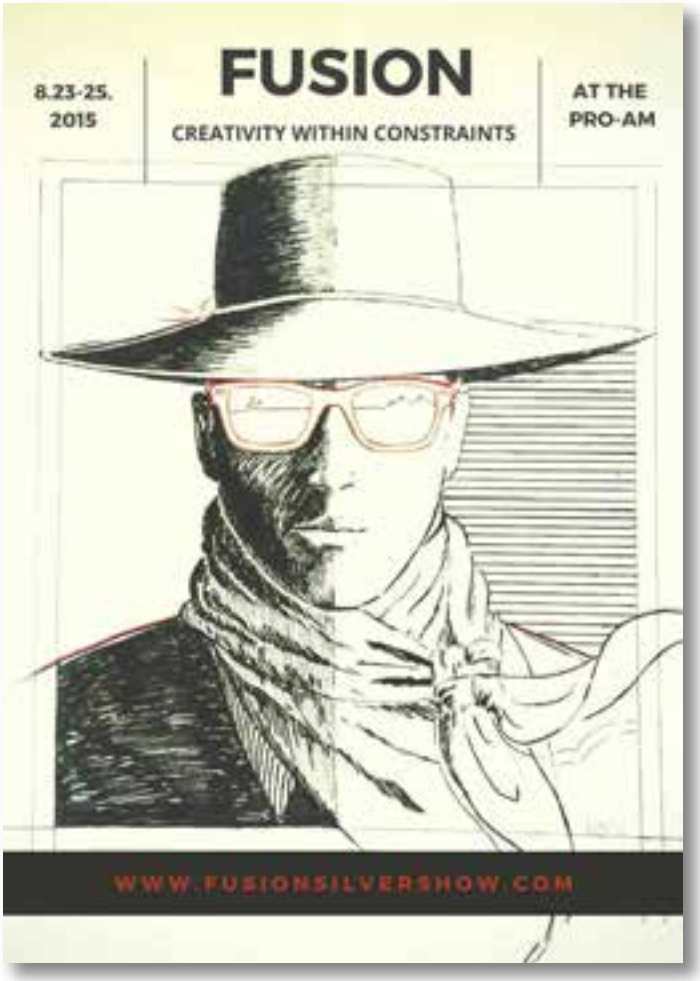
Silver and Accoutrements in the California Tradition.



# 2015 Pro-Am Vaquero Roping

By the time you read this, entries will have opened for this fall's Pro-Am Vaquero Roping in Santa Ynez, California, October 23, 24 and 25. This event has become the richest ranch roping of this style in the country and this year's roping will be no exception. We will have, once again, some of the finest horsemen and women as Pros, roping with the 100 teams who enter. Each Pro will rope with five, randomly picked teams. For all the details please visit our new website at www.proamroping.com. We are pleased to have so many of the fine sponsors who have supported the first two ropings returning with their support.

In addition we will be featuring some of the west's best gear, art, apparel and accessories in our vendor building and tent. Great food, music, and this year a very special addition – a very unique silver show that is focused on pushing the boundaries of the art of bridle silver. This is the brainchild of Nevada Watt, Hannah Ballantyne and my daughter Reata – you may know them as "The Hens" from their stories here in *Ranch & Reata*, so I'll let Nevada tell you about the show in her own words:



BRANNAMAN

# PRO-AM VAQUERO ROPING

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OCTOBER

23-25, 2015

SANTA YNEZ

PROAMROPING.COM

"Oh my I am so EXCITED to announce we will be putting on what we call the "Fusion Silver Show" at the Pro-Am Vaquero Roping! This show will focus on *Creativity Within Constraints* – all the participants will be making silver for a headstall and the only requirement is it has to be functional and fit on either a ⅜" split ear (or sliding ear) or ¾" brow band, dark brown, stitched leather headstall. The only requirement is that the headstall must be fully functional and ready to use, so get creative with the design and engraving! All the headstalls will be complete, ready to use, and will be for sale the very first day of the show, October 23, at both the show and on the website fusionsilvershow.com! Deadline for entry is July 1, 2015 so enter today! Stay tuned for PLENTY more info and pictures, on the website and I will post a list of who will be coming. Thank you all for your continued support of our roping and I CANNOT wait to see what the artists come up with! If you have any questions please email me at nevadawatt@gmail.com or call me at (559) 630-2530."

So even with all the roping excitement and the vendors, we continue to add little surprises each year. I do hope to see you at this year's event. I can pretty much guarantee you will enjoy the weekend.

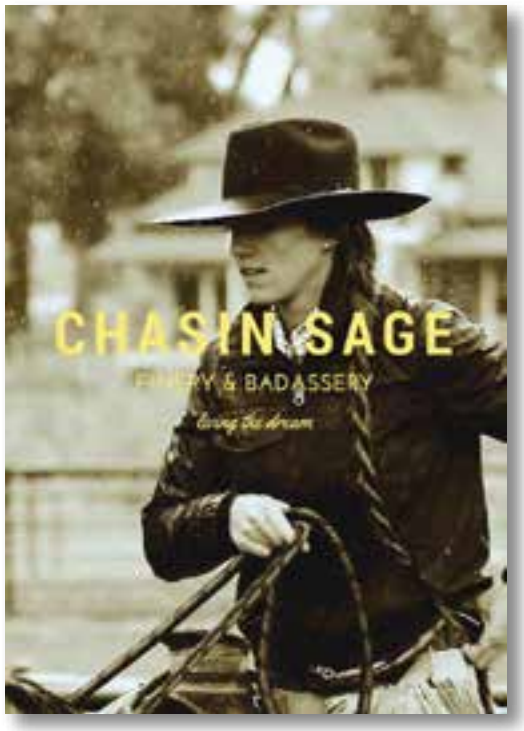



# Wall Hangers

By Hannah Ballantyne, Reata Brannaman and Nevada Watt

We've all seen the inspirational posters that are covering the walls of dentist offices, schools, Facebook and instagram. Lets face it, most of them don't necessarily appeal to people like us – or people like you, dear reader. So we decided to throw our hat in the poster ring and create some of our own wall accessories. There are a lot of aspects of our way of life that inspire us to not only do better but just keep on chuggin' through our daily doings and make the best of the hand that life's dealt you. At the risk of sounding cheesy – keep on keepin' on and enjoy everyday like it's your last, and enjoy this awesome life that you are blessed with. If you like anything you see, contact us on Facebook!

~The Hens




Introducing
ON
THE JOB
ACROBATICS


RIDE IT LIKE YOU
STOLE IT


BUFFALO
GAL
WONT
YOU
COME
OUT
TONIGHT

# A Vast and Varied Land

## A portfolio from the dry side of the Cascades

Essay and Photography by Scott Ripley

My first stop was Bonneville Dam, east of Portland, on the Columbia River. Salmon and steelhead were ascending the fish ladder by the thousands and passing the viewing windows, as they headed upriver to Eastern Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Then I was on to Hood River and south along 11,240-foot Mt. Hood's east flank to the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. Forest gave way to an open expanse with snowcapped peaks to the south. The arrow-straight highway turned to curves, descending into a canyon and the town of Warm Springs, through which flowed the Deschutes River. It was August and it was hot; a 100-degree slap in the face. Such was my introduction to Eastern Oregon. I had come to live, work and fish, not necessarily in that order.

The vast and varied land east of Oregon's Cascade Range is bordered by Nevada, Idaho, Washington and a bit of California. Rivers and lakes, forests, deserts, wildlife, ranches, small towns, all with a western flavor – a photographer's paradise. You need not worry about people interrupting a photo session – unless they are integral to the image. Deschutes County is the most densely populated county in Eastern Oregon, with its 3,000 square miles inhabited by 51.6 folks per square mile. If you truly crave solitude, Harney County, with the Steens Mountain Wilderness and Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, is the place to go, with 10,133 square miles and 0.7 people per square mile.*



Photographic locations vary with the topography. The Deschutes has long been one of my favorite destinations – a river for all seasons, originating in Deschutes County and slicing its way north through Jefferson, Wasco and Sherman counties before emptying into the Columbia. A few years ago I had the opportunity to photograph the Oregon Statehood Wagon Train on one leg of a month-long journey through Eastern Oregon with reenactors in character as 1850s pioneers. Go to Pendleton, The Dalles, La Grande and Burns if you want people and history. The small towns, Fossil, Echo, Jordan Valley, Frenchglen, Enterprise, Dufur, to name a few, are magical places where, in some instances, it seems time has stood still. If you want National Forests visit the Ochoco, Deschutes, Umatilla, Fremont, Malheur, Winema or Wallowa-Whitman.

The panoramic vistas of Eastern Oregon's high deserts can leave you breathless, with an endless horizon and the aroma of juniper and sage. Moonless nights in the high desert are awe-inspiring with the Milky Way punctuating the star-filled sky. How can you not like some of the names – Hell's Canyon, the Donner und Blitzen (thunder and lightning) River, the Boardman Bombing Range, Wagontire. You will find those along with fossil beds, painted hills, remnants of a volcanic past, an antelope refuge and the historic gold mining town, Sumpter, in the Elkhorn Mountains.

An aging barn serves as a horse shelter in Echo, Oregon.



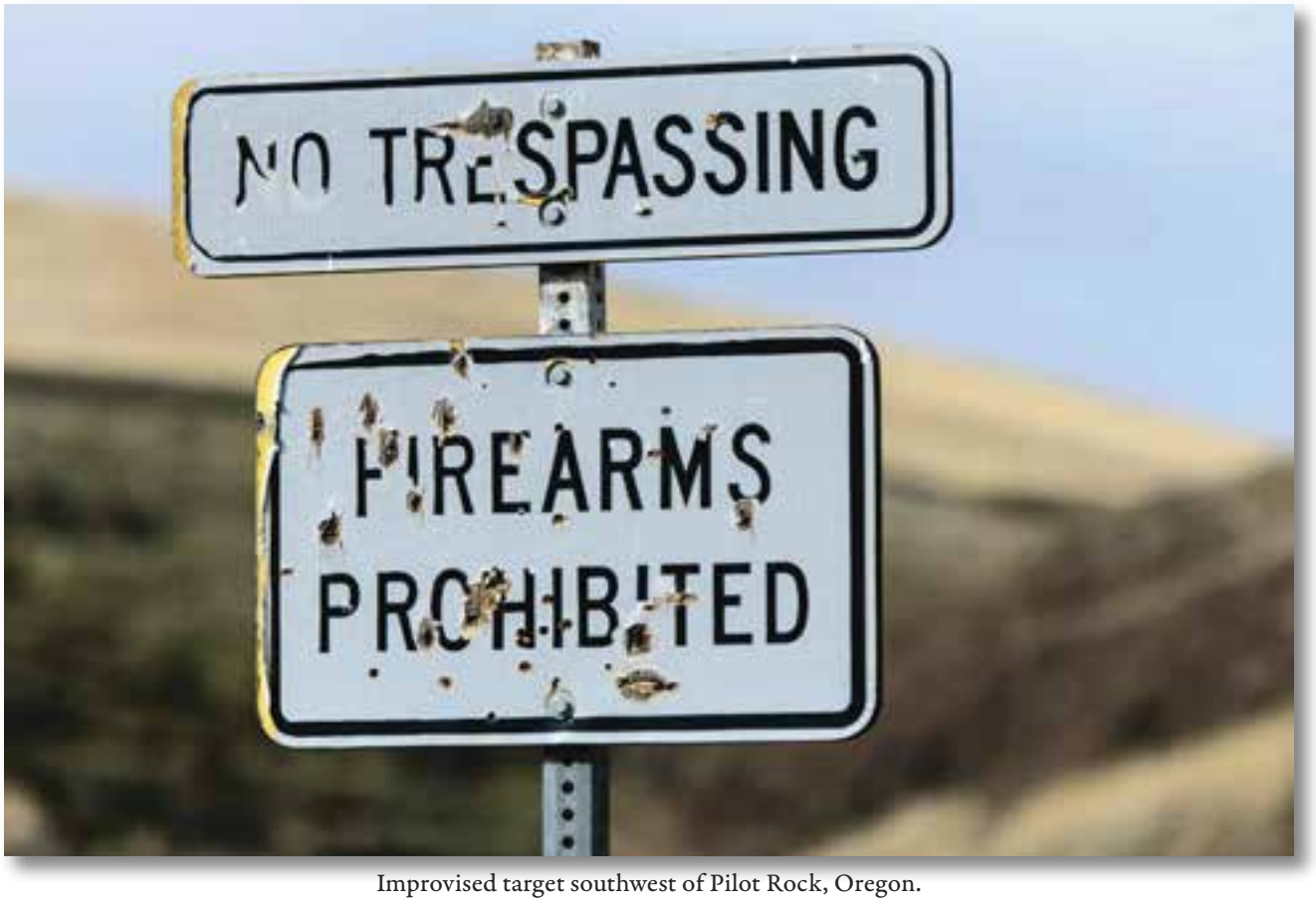
Native American heritage, culture and history are well documented throughout the region, with museums and ceremonial events.

If I have overlooked towns, locations, features or phenomenon, I apologize. There are just too many. The American West is alive and well in Eastern Oregon and my quest for documentation will continue with wide-angle or telephoto – whatever it takes. The possibilities are endless.

*Population and county square mile data from the latest U.S. Census.

A limit of hatchery summer steelhead from Oregon's Deschutes River. The fish were taken in a two-hour period, midday with air temp at 90 degrees. The fish I'm holding is a three-foot B-run. The fish with a red stripe (also a B-run) is 32 inches. A great last day of the season on the lower Deschutes.

Coyote skins adorn a fence post east of Pendleton, Oregon.




Improvised target southwest of Pilot Rock, Oregon.



A Pacific gopher snake coils in defense. A large hawk was about to carry off this specimen when I executed a "photo interruptus."

Fire burns on August 29, 2011, on the Washington side of the Columbia River between Wishram and Maryhill. HDR time exposure created light streaks on Interstate 84 along the river. Wind turbines are visible on the right.

No. 929 is oblivious to the fire burning across the Columbia River near Wishram, Washington, on August 29, 2011. 929 was grazing along Old Moody Road in Wasco County, Oregon.

Bill Vixie at the reins of the mail coach in a wagon train commemorating Oregon's 150th year of statehood.

Mobile dining from a past era on display at the Dufur Historical Society Living History Museum in Dufur, Oregon.

Waiting for their owners' return across the street from Kramers Market in Dufur, Oregon.

The antlers and mounted heads are just the beginning of Bill Neary's collection in the old bank building on Main Street in Dufur, Oregon.


A multicolored, renovated school bus peddles "fresh" fish on the west side of The Dalles, Oregon.

A horse poses near Emigrant Road,
east of Pendleton, Oregon.

Restoration underway inside the Locust Grove Church on the Wasco-Celilo Highway in Locust Grove, Sherman County, Oregon. The project has been plagued by vandalism.

Wind farm near Wasco, Oregon, in Sherman County.

Deschutes River railroad.

Horses near Wasco, Oregon, in Sherman County.

A young mule deer bounds along a rise on Gordon Ridge Road near Biggs, Oregon. The wind turbines are on the north side of the Columbia River, near Maryhill,


Shaniko Wedding Chapel in Shaniko, Oregon.

# What Happened to the Little Blue Roan?

## Progression in cowboy folk art has produced opportunities and casualties.

By Hal Cannon

In the early 1980s, when I was traveling around looking for cowboys who recited poetry, one of the most common recitations I collected was Bruce Kiskaddon's "Little Blue Roan." Cowboys loved to recite the story of a cowboy out in remote country who comes upon a cow and her calf. The mama is branded, but her calf is not. The cowboy starts a fire and pulls out his running iron. He's about to brand the calf with his mark when he notices his horse, the blue roan, making a movement of warning. The cowboy looks around and can see nothing amiss, but trusting his horse, he decides to brand the calf with the same markings as its mother. Just then two cowmen emerge from the woods and ride up to the cowboy.

*They both turned to the critter and got a good look*
*While I wrote the brand down in my old tally book*
*There was nothing to do so they rode up and spoke*
*And we all three set down fer a sociable smoke.*
*The one owned the critter I'd happened to brand,*
*He thanked me of course and we grinned and shook hands,*
*Which he mightn't have done if he only had known*
*The warnin' I got from that little blue roan.*

At the first cowboy poetry gatherings in Elko you'd hear this poem scattered throughout the program. Gradually, however, the poem started being recited less and less. Music and poetry go in cycles. I've played old-time fiddle music for years. One year everyone will play a certain tune, then two years later you rarely hear that same song. It may be related to the tides, or the phases of the moon, but with "Little Blue Roan," something else was at work, something that, in retrospect, caused me to turn my attentions from being a festival organizer to producing radio stories.

When I was a kid, I had a small short-wave radio in my bedroom. Copper wire was strung on rafters in the unfinished basement where my bedroom was. I lay in bed in the darkness late into the night searching for far off stations. I loved the romance of picking up a soccer game from New Zealand or a news report from the BBC. I heard exotic music and languages. The static and faint signals added to the intrigue of all those miles between me and the tall broadcast antennae.

Later, a cousin played me Folkways records of field recordings, fiddlers from the mountains of Tennessee. In those scratchy recordings I could hear the tapping of

photo by A.J. Mangam

A scene evocative of the song "Little Blue Roan."



feet on a cabin floor and was captivated with the same romance I got from the short-wave radio broadcasts.

Through those recordings, I became hooked on folk music, music from the heart, made for reasons other than money and notoriety. Utah, where I grew up, had a lively folk scene and as a teen I was introduced to the tradition of folklore study. My education took me to the complementary fields of journalism and filmmaking, but the subject matter, always dear to my heart, was folk art.

When I first started interviewing people, recording their songs and stories, photographing and filming their art, I could not believe I was being paid for doing this work. When I first heard a cowboy reciting poetry, I had that same feeling as when I'd heard that old fiddle music. I felt I was tapping into something true and essential to the human spirit.

As founding director of the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, I put my full attention into the first 15 years of the event. When I stepped away, people asked me why. At the time, I told them it was because I'd run out of creative ideas for the event, but that is not altogether true. To be frank, I had become jaded by the quality of performances. It's not what you

think. Cowboys were becoming much better performers. They had learned how to work a crowd. They knew how to speak and relate to the 20th row in an auditorium. Their knees had stopped shaking and the quiver had gone out of their voices. And, frankly, I missed what had come before.

Don't get me wrong. The cowboy poetry and music revival has been incredibly important. Not only has it been great entertainment, but it has created a forum for ranchers to articulate their lives. When I started with all this, people did not believe cowboys had much to say. It's been a critical time for people from the land to be part of the dialogue on the future of our shared environment.

But, in the end, I handed in my job title as director of the Gathering and demoted myself to start a radio series based on field work, interviewing ordinary people about their lives, and recording their stories, poems and songs all in the settings of their homes or work. It was a different kind of performance – performance with a small p rather than a capital P. Twenty years later, I've interviewed hundreds of people, mostly ordinary people in the American West who have a story or some wisdom to impart.

People talk into a microphone in a kitchen differently than they do in an auditorium. When I interview people, they allow me to enter their worlds. Most people are generous and want to be heard, to tell their stories. Over and over, I am honored to be trusted to record and archive the traditional voices of the American West.

For 14 years, I worked with my producing partner, Taki Telonidis, to produce over 100 features for National Public Radio. We not only told stories about ranching, but interviewed Navajo weavers, songwriters, tin workers and Jewish scribes. I traveled the world over, recording horsemen and herding people. The archive of recordings, mostly transcribed and catalogued, remains a great treasure of the Western Folklife Center and all those radio programs can be heard on the Folklife Center's website.

Nearing the end of my career with the Folklife Center, I began to notice NPR was becoming less interested in cultural stories and more dedicated to hard news. The time they would give us to tell a story got shorter and shorter until I got tired of rushing through stories. It was at this point I decided to retire and go out on my own.

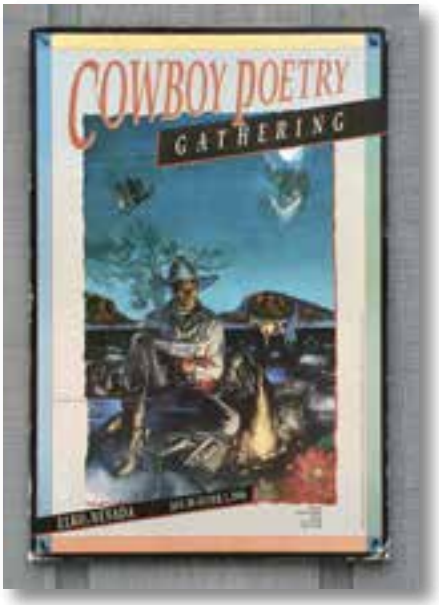
These past three years, I have built a new relationship with Radio National in Australia. The Australians love American culture and nurture sound-rich radio documentaries. At this point I have the great honor to work with a world-class Sydney-based sound artist, Sherre DeLys. We've produced five half-hour- to hour-long radio documentaries. I miss not being able to hear them on the radio in the United States, but it's also a different age than the one I grew up in, in which the world was barely connected by transoceanic cables and high-powered transmitters. You can now go on your computer or smart phone, Google Radio National, search my name, and download shows I've produced. There's one on the early cowboy song collecting of John Lomax, another on the traditions of Mayan music in Mexico, and a series of three recent shows on Texas cowboy music and poetry. I'm particularly proud of these recent works.

I've heard Baxter Black categorize his poems in two ways – generic or cowboy. In other words, poems for a general audience, or poems for insiders. He used to say that coming to Elko, he could unleash his more serious poems, his poems about the real life of ranching. He could talk about encountering scours as a vet and people would know what he was talking about.

I love the fact cowboys became good performers, that they learned to speak beyond the insider's life of ranching, but some things were lost, including "Little Blue Roan." The poem was too subtle. It spoke of cowboy concerns rather than broader subjects to which anyone could relate. It took too much explanation.

There are parts of the world that seem fully contained in their isolation. In these places you feel you are part of a singular tradition that has little to do with the mob of humanity. Increasingly we are all so connected, so observed, so intermingled, I sometimes wonder if cowboys, some of the most isolated workers in America, have maintained their separateness.

We all live in multiple worlds – worlds of work, family, faith, community and yes, Facebook – yet how many of us live in a world that has its own uniform, its own songs and lingo, its own ancient traditions? The cowboy is known for all these things, but now that the satellite dish and Internet have reached even the most remote parts of the West, has that changed? I hope it hasn't. I yearn for the static on the radio as those sound waves travel over hundreds of miles of open range and from a world that is timeless.



Poster for 1986 Cowboy Poetry Gathering

Hal Cannon is a journalist and folklorist living in Utah.

# Road Trip List

## McMahan, McCaslin and Dwight Yoakam

**Mary McCaslin**
*The Best Of Mary McCaslin*
Philo

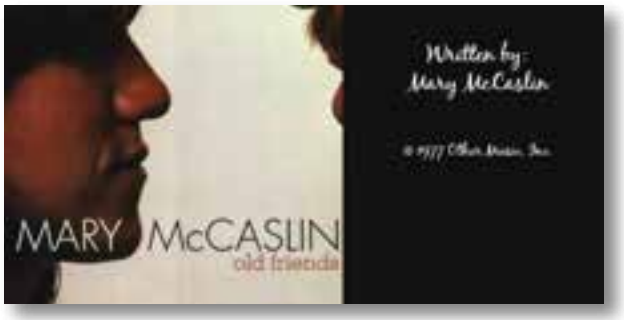
One of the grand singer/songwriters of the late 1960s and beyond, McCaslin represents an unbroken link between traditional folksingers and today's "new folk" singer/songwriters. Her music ranges from ballads of the old west to her own songs of the new west and modern times. She is regarded as a pioneer of open guitar tunings and known for her distinctive vocal style. Her influences can be heard in many younger folk performers today.


She is known for her renditions of pop standards and rock classics, such as "Ghost Riders In The Sky," "The Wayward Wind," the Beatles' "Things We Said Today," and the Supremes' "My World Is Empty." Her versions of the Beatles' "Blackbird" and the Who's "Pinball Wizard" are noted for her clawhammer banjo accompaniment. But certainly her most popular folk songs are "Prairie in the Sky," "Way Out West" and "Old Friends" – especially "Old Friends" – a song that has probably been played at more "life celebrations" than any other folk song. This album contains her finest works through the 1980s and we include the lyrics here of "Old Friends." *(See more in Issue 3.1)*

**OLD FRIENDS**
by Mary McCaslin ©1977

I saw an old friend the other day
In San Francisco by the Bay
Took me back to only yesterday
The years somehow that slip away
We laughed and talked about the days gone by
Brushed a tear away by the side

We promised not to let it be this long
Like the old refrain from the old old song
Remember old friends we made along the way
The gifts they gave us stay with us every day
Looking back it makes me wonder
Where we're going how long we'll stay
I know the road brings rain and thunder
But for the journey what will we pay
I often think the times get crazier
As this whole world goes round and round
Just the memory makes it easier
As the highway goes up and down
Remember old friends we've made along the way
The gifts they've given stay with us every day
Lately words been coming back to me
There's a few I will no longer see
Faces will we see no more along the road
There'll be a few less hands to hold
But for the ones whose journey's is ended
Though they started so much the same
In the hearts of those befriended
Burns a candle with a silver flame
Remember old friends we've made along the way
The gifts they've given stay with us every day
Remember old friends we've made along the way
The gifts they've given stay with us every day




See the video of "Old Friends"
https://youtu.be/UzvXByWOfXo

**Dwight Yoakam**
*Second Hand Heart*
Warner Bros

When Dwight Yoakam came on the country scene, it was the early 1980s and his *Guitars, Cadillacs* and *Hillbilly Deluxe* fit like a glove with the new *Urban Cowboy* craze. But the old Dwightster had staying power and carved out a niche for himself pioneering his unique style of honk-tonk country. He recorded over 21 albums and has sold over 25 million records. Writing all his own songs, and continuing to perform mostly outside traditional country music channels, Yoakam did many shows in rock and punk rock clubs around Los Angeles, playing with roots rock or punk rock acts like The Blasters (Yoakam scored a small video hit with his version of their song "Long White Cadillac"), Los Lobos, and X. This helped him diversify his audience beyond the typical country music fans, and his authentic, groundbreaking music is often credited with rock audiences accepting country music. Yoakam branched out into television and films and received the Grammy for Best Country Vocal – Male in 1994 – along with seventeen Grammy nominations.


*Second Hand Heart* is a welcome return of the Yoakam approach to his early performances in small

clubs and "dives." The album sounds like an album of a great bar band and that is just what it is – Yoakam at his most accessible. They say life operates in circles and that sooner or later everything returns to the starting point. Dwight Yoakam has had an incredible career and *Second Hand Heart* is a testament to his fans who can't let go of Dwight Yoakam – up close and personal. Yoakam has had many successful lives but this album sounds as fresh as anything he has ever recorded. Roll down the pick-up windows and turn it up.

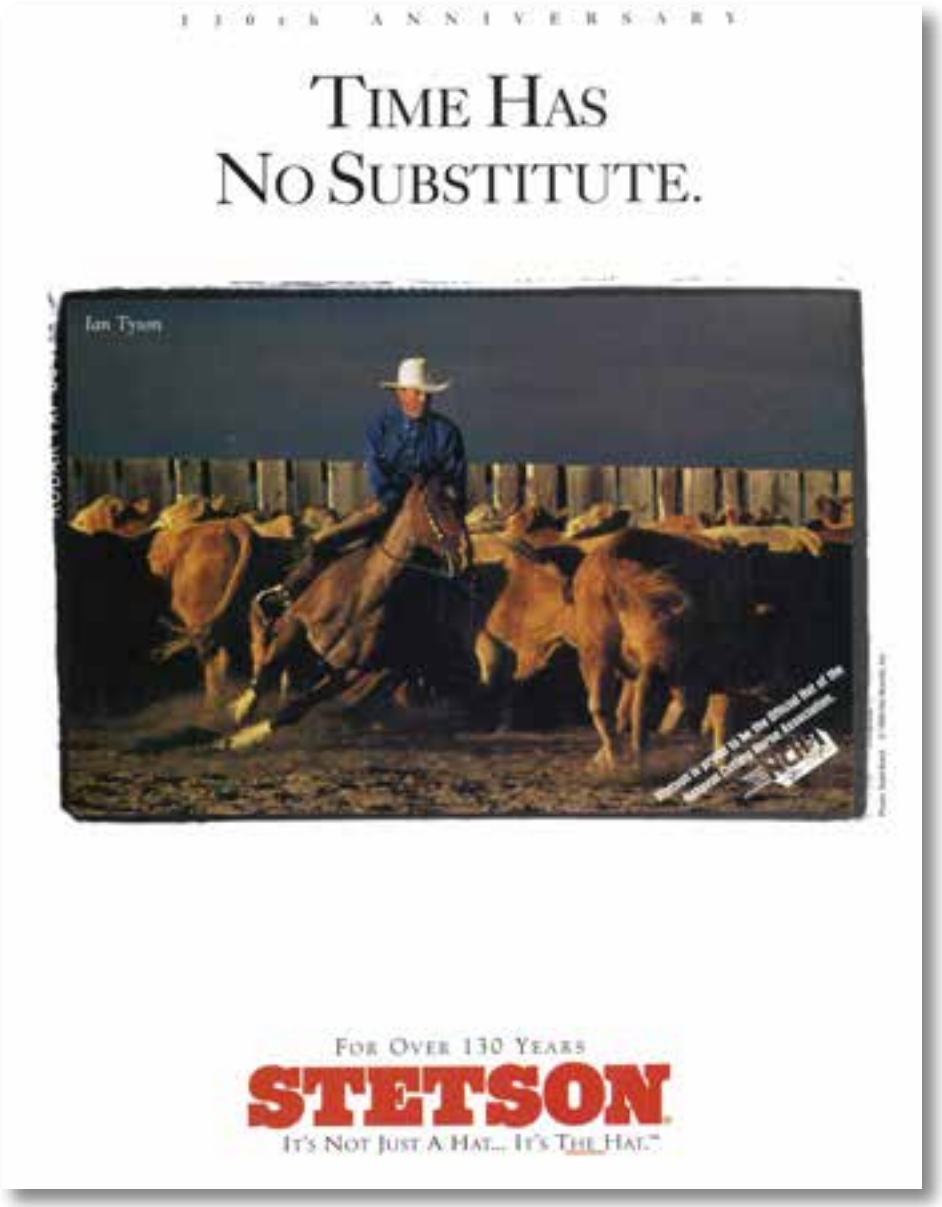
See Dwight premier the title track at the Lincoln Theatre in Washington D.C. in October of last year.
https://youtu.be/astOvzJ5OuM

**Gary McMahan**
*Saddle 'Em Up and Go!*
Horse Apple Records

This one was under the passenger seat but it always brings a smile whenever it plays. Gary McMahan has been around a while and would probably be most remembered as the songwriter of the classic "The Old Double Diamond" that everyone in the West is required to know by heart. Gary is known too as a superb cowboy yoddler – a long under rated capability. In the last issue of *R&R* we showed a picture of Gary mounted on Jim McGuire's trusty Aussie, "Shorty" and we got so much mail about that it was time to remind folks of Gary's great writing and singing. This album features many of his classics – including the aforementioned "The Old Double Diamond" along with "Socco's Saturday Night" and the ode to a little dude horse, "Skeeter." Gary drives a team in the winter and his ode "Pet and Pat" – is a lovely testament to his love for a couple of big 'ol draft horses – "just a shade light than a ginger ale." This is really a timeless album and Gary would wince if that was said to him but he has assembled some of the West's most memorable tunes in this fine record. A CD that is more than worthy of a spot near the cup holder in the pick-up.


Here is Gary performing "The Old Double Diamond" at the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada.
https://youtu.be/dOUPXgtwuwk

# A Western Moment




This year marks the 150th Anniversary of Stetson Hats – an auspicious occasion for any brand. Some twenty-years ago, Ian Tyson appeared in a Stetson ad marking their 130th Anniversary. Ian was very involved – passionately involved – in the world of cutting horses, a condition he described in his song, "The Steeldust Line" from the album, *I Outgrew The Wagon* as "a disease for which there is no cure."

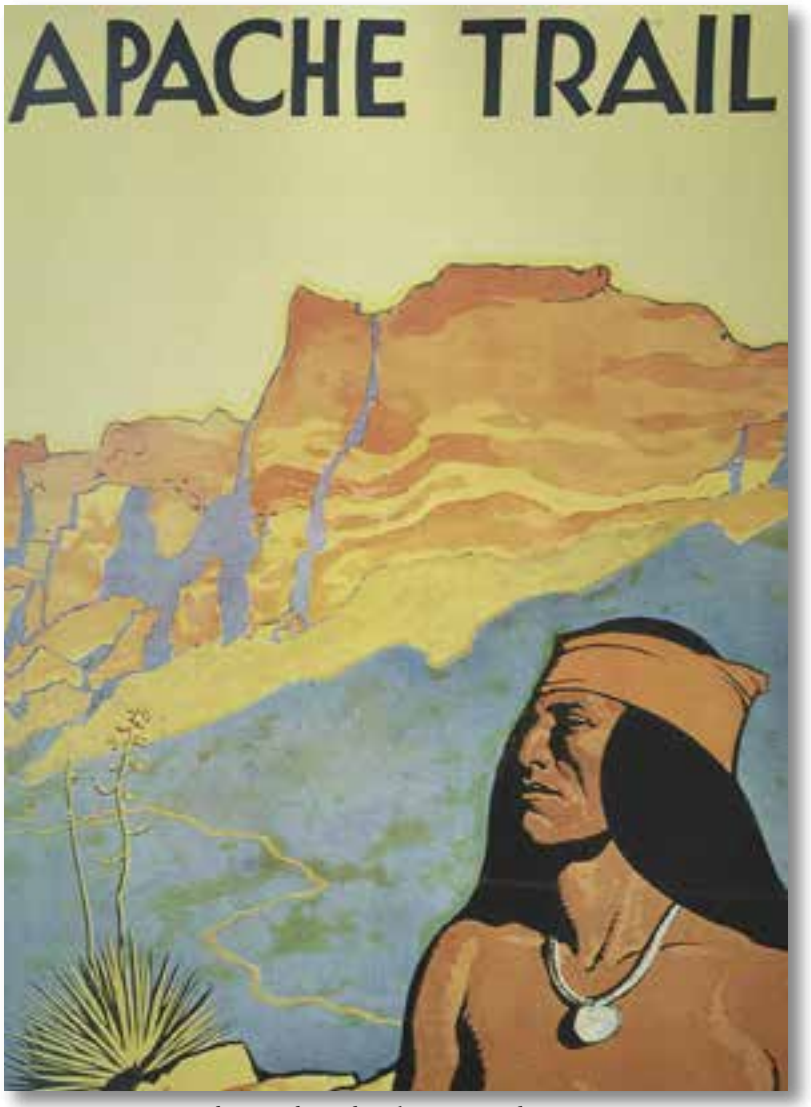


# All That We Have

We have a great deal of very fine art in this issue depicting many aspects of the West – literally and conceptually. Western art is way more varied than it may be perceived, but lately I have been seeing creative work that seems to be spreading its wings on a broader stage, facing a more diverse audience. It may be simply that artists are looking to broaden their market but I believe it is more a conscious reaching out to share the West's attraction and unique, root-based culture and to be more invitational and inclusive. To simply celebrate the West, frankly while we can enjoy it. That sounds ominous I know but I am writing this after reviewing Wendell Berry's new book (see Page 52 in this issue) and reading David Gessner's new book, *All The Wild That Remains* about the late activists/writers Edward Abbey and Wallace Stegner – both activists in their own, different approaches, outlooks and perspectives but lovers of the land and of the West itself. Author Gessner describes Abbey as the "archetypical wild man" and Stegner as "proper and dedicated" but both left their marks on the literary landscape of the West and helped to shape not only opinions and perceptions but also action and ultimately legislative decisions that would help the region from literally being "loved to death."

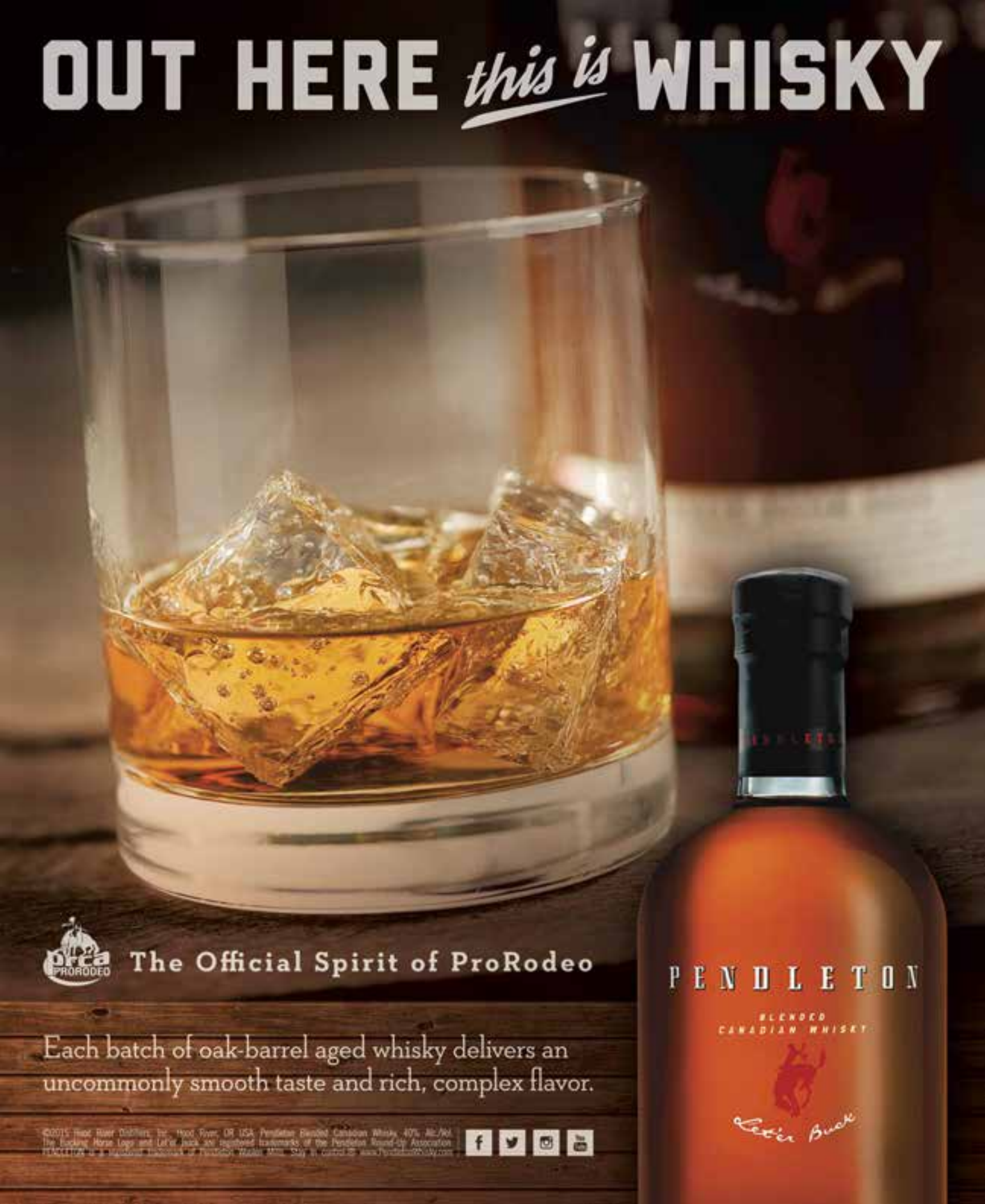
Great art inspires and uplifts – no matter the genre – and in the case of western art can support the kind of action Gessner illustrates that was at the heart of the purpose of Abbey and Stegner's literary journeys throughout the region. The unique imagery of western art – usually – depicts personal effort – people on horseback involved with stock. Or it depicts discovery. Or family. Or solitude. But always beauty that is unique to the region in some form that reflects a sense of place. And this has continued since artists first started representing what they experienced in this vast region during the birth of America's story. It is represented in one of our other "Books To Find" in this issue, *Poster For The People: Art of the WPA*. Pride of place was one of the central themes of many of the posters and artworks created during the rebuilding of our culture during the 1930s. It wasn't until America entered the Second World War in December of 1941 that both the WPA and Roosevelt's New Deal came to an end. The result was the creation of a huge amount of remarkable art from a wide spectrum of artists – including western

artists like Maynard Dixon. The government support of artistic efforts would be absent from the American scene until the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965. This, one year after the founding of Cowboy Artists of America by artists Charlie Dye, Joe Beeler and John Hampton while visiting the Douglas Ranch in the arid, high country between Nogales and Magdalena in Sonora, Mexico.




*The Apache Indian* by Maynard Dixon

Passion for their subject was the driving force and continues to be for CAA artists and others who hold a deep love of the region and what it represents. And some fifty-one years later; there seems to no shortage of the "newly passionate" who depict the West in their vision, a vision that reflects today illustrating there are some finite issues that effect the West – water, land stewardship and quality of life for all living things. The West is a big place on a planet that seems to get smaller all the time. But the dreams are still big and the canvas of the mind can celebrate the reality of the West, even with the care that it must be showed so we don't simply, "love it to death." It is our West and I say that collectively, that it belongs to everyone as does the freedom, adventure and opportunity for self sacrifice and reliance that it represents and has represented for so long. It belongs to all of us, and of it we must take care – as it truly is all that we have. BR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