SCENIC

JOURNAL

THIRD QUARTER 2013

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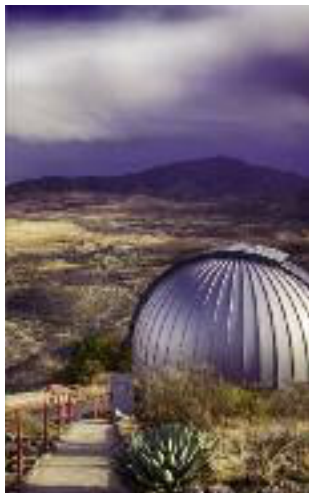
Roping Photo Essay • Big Bend Eats • Fort Stockton Gem • Poetry • The Fabulous Agave



Photos courtesy of Vicki Gibson

Some of the darkest skies in North America are above McDonald Observatory in Fort Davis, where an array of advanced telescopes and research equipment allows astronomers from all over the world to study the heavens. From its founding in the 1930s to the present day, McDonald has been at the forefront of astronomical research. The Observatory is preparing to celebrate its 75th anniversary next May.

MCDONALD OBSERVATORY

by Bob Miles

Next May will mark the 75th anniversary of McDonald Observatory, located some 16 miles north of Fort Davis just off State Highway 118. It is a pleasant drive along cottonwood-lined Limpia Creek, past Davis Mountains State Park and the Prude guest ranch. Then the road begins to climb and twist upward until it reaches the turn-off to the Frank N. Bash Visitors' Center.

The observatory is situated on Mount Locke at an elevation of 6,781 feet, spreading over to Mount Fowlkes. It is one of the stellar (yes, pun intended) attractions of the Davis Mountains/Big Bend area. Operated by the University of Texas at Austin under Dr. David Lambert, director, it offers research facilities for astronomers from all over the world and educational opportunities to the public.

In 1926, a somewhat eccentric North Texas bachelor banker named William Johnson McDonald died, leaving the bulk of his roughly $1.26 million to the University of Texas for an astronomical observatory to be named for him. After several lawsuits by nieces and nephews questioning his competence, the court awarded the University $840,000; however, at that time the University had no astronomers.

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Cenizo Notes

by Carolyn Zniewski, publisher and Danielle Gallo, editor

I love the color pink. It is so cheery. My casita is pink, the new Cenizo Office on the west side of my casita is pink and sometimes the cenizo flower is pink. So I must say I was tickled pink when I got my first letter to the editor. And to make things even pinker, it was from Paris; Paris, France, that is, not Paris, Texas. I'd like to share it with you all:

25 April, 2013
To the Editors:
I enjoy very much reading *Cenizo*, which I receive here in Paris, France.
A note on the meaning of *Cenizo* (Charles Angell's Trans-Pecos Trivia). My European Spanish dictionary (Oceano, Barcelona) gives two definitions:
As an adjective: ash colored (this must be the source of the American Spanish name for the Purple Sage, which has ash colored leaves).
As a noun: jinx (una mala sombra).
Gilbert Shelton
75011 Paris, France

Dear Mr. Shelton,
Thanks for writing. Hope you continue to enjoy the *Cenizo*, and your summer is "In the Pink."
Sincerely,
The *Cenizo Journal*

I'm in my new Pink office in Marathon, TX sometimes and would love to have visitors. Check it out with me by email first. Have an afternoon of sage enjoyment with our journal.

Summer is upon us, my favorite time of year in the Big Bend. The heat is tempered by solstice parties and Fourth of July celebrations, higher elevations are sought and flies fanned lazily on porches, and we remember anew each year why the margarita is the perfect beverage.

When I tell people from elsewhere that I love the Chihuahuan Desert summer they invariably ask about the heat. I once protested to a friend that 115 degrees feels hot of course, but it's a dry heat, and she replied: "Yes, dry like an oven." I've given up struggling to explain that our formidable temperatures enable us to enjoy so many things: siesta, for example. Agua Fria, for sure. Balmorhea, with the sound of splashing children. Sleeping in the hammock, if one can fend off the curiosity of tarantulas.

The garden is producing in a riot of peas and carrots, the radishes have exploded and the corn is straining for the sky. The sparrows have successfully raised a nestful of adolescents and are enjoying some well-earned relaxation. It's time to sit back with a sweating glass, ice cubes clinking merrily, and while away the hot afternoon with the summer edition of *Cenizo*. This issue encompasses some of my favorite warm-weather pastimes: stargazing, plein air painting, rodeo—I hope you enjoy reading it as much as we've enjoyed putting it together!

Coming up in the October Cenizo: The restoration of Santa Inez Church in the Terlingua Ghost Town. First renovated in 1985, more work is needed. Find out about the latest community effort to complete the work this year. You can help. The Terlingua community is asking for help to preserve a vital piece of its history. For information contact Cynta de Narvaez at 432.386.0568. Contributions can be sent to the Terlingua Foundation at PO Box 296, Terlingua, TX 79852.

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SUBMISSION

Deadline for advertising and editorial for the Fourth Quarter 2013 issue: August 15, 2013.
Art, photographic and literary works may be e-mailed to the Editor.
For advertising rates or to place an ad, contact: advertising@cenizojournal.com

Photo by Luc Novovitch

Priscilla Wiggins has been painting plein air in the Big Bend for decades, living out of her small camper and relishing the vast, silent landscapes of far West Texas.

Painting Nature 'til It Sings

by Barbara Novovitch

How can I take this beauty home with me? It's a thought that likely passes through the mind of almost every visitor to the Big Bend of Texas. How can I see again the majesty of the mountains, the sweep and scope of the desert, the ever-changing canopies of clouds, the wildflowers of spring, the summer storms?

Even those visitors who view the scenery through the windshield of a car or a camera lens instead of taking an exhilarating hike into the Big Bend desert are given that opportunity by the "plein air" painters. These artists create their work in the outdoors, setting up easels morning and night to capture the scene, inspired by the palette of the desert, the mountains and the ever-changing light, by the nearby jackrabbit's jumps and jitters as

well as the soar and sweep of hawks and turkey vultures.

Diminutive, blue-eyed Priscilla Wiggins not only paints in nature, she lives in the nature she paints, whether it be in the Big Bend of Texas, a favorite winter location for 30 years, or in a Colorado wilderness where she has painted aspen groves each summer for even longer. Wiggins has stood at an easel almost since she was able to stand. At the age of three her mother, an abstract expressionist, enrolled her in an experimental pre-school run by Columbia University in New York City, where every child was given an easel. Living near the Metropolitan Museum of Art and seeing the masterpieces of Oriental art and French Impressionists as a child "laid the foundation for my delight in painting nature," explains Wiggins. After further art studies at Bennington College in Vermont and in Boston and New York, she moved to the Southwest in 1968, earning her B.A. at the University of New Mexico. By 1977 she had settled into a lifestyle of camping and painting outdoors. Her year-round home is a camper with sleeping space, windows on every side and a propane-powered refrigerator and stove, mounted on a four-wheel-drive pickup.

"I enjoy camping in remote, silent places to paint the beauty of my surroundings undisturbed. The intense vast silence stretching uninterruptedly in every direction, especially in Big Bend, evokes the spirituality that painting satisfies," she said. "I don't really choose my subjects, it's more as if they choose me. Furthermore, realism has never been my intent, but to convey the essence of the dazzling array of light and form around me which constitutes what we call the natural world."

Wiggins' devotion to plein air painting stems partly from her belief that the silence of wilderness is inspiring. A typical day could include strong winds that knock over her easel and force her to hold her shade umbrella with one hand while painting with the other. There may also be encounters with wildlife: minor bear and javelina dust-ups and once "a hummingbird's insistence on probing my hand with its beak" while she was painting.

Her favorite mountain in the Big Bend is Chilicotal Mountain in the heart of the national park—she last climbed it on January 1, 2011. This painting, along with others, is on show at Eve's Garden in Marathon.

Wiggins' paintings are available at Argos Gallery in Santa Fe, N. M. (www.Argos-Gallery.com). She will be at Eve's Garden in Marathon from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Friday, Aug. 2, to meet and talk with visitors who attend a reception honoring the artist. Paintings include "Ghost Mountains" 18 x 24 inches, "Stillwell Blue Bonnets" 18 x 24 inches, "Feather Clouds" 16 x 20 inches, and "Spring Flowers" 11 x 14 inches.

Mary Baxter, earlier of Marathon and now resident in Marfa, is another Big Bend plein air artist. Mary does sketches for many of her paintings en plein air but recently she has begun to create larger paintings at her Marfa studio at 1300 West San Antonio, where she is also casting bronze animal sculptures. She welcomes visitors to the studio, but adds that her hours there are irregular.

A native of Lubbock, Mary moved to the Big Bend area in 1994 after graduating from the University of Texas at San Antonio with a B.S. in business and marketing. She also had taken more than 30 hours in printmaking and painting.

Her first post-college job was taking care of a ranch south of Marfa, where she trained horses and raised yearlings, and the landscape soon enticed her to follow the example of her grandmother, a landscape artist in Sweetwater.

"Everywhere I looked there was something to paint," she said, recalling those years. Even taking a photograph would have required hours of driving to and from Alpine, the closest site to take film for processing, she explained. "This was in the pre-digital age, and so I learned to rely on sketches and notes for reference, a practice I still prefer to use today."

Her aluminum easel can be set up in less than a minute, but she only does paintings smaller than 18 x 18 inches in the field. Mary uses "a mobile studio, a ratty old vintage trailer" for on-site painting, but she seldom stays out overnight -- "I don't like to drive after dark because of the animals."

Her paintings— signed with only her surname 'Baxter'— range in price from "a few hundred to a few thousand," the artist said, and can be seen online at her website (www.baxter-gallery.com), at the William Reaves Art Gallery in Houston and at the Hunt Gallery in San Antonio.

In a telephone interview, Reaves said his gallery "adopted Mary" as part of a Texas regional group of artists from throughout the state.

"She is the only one from the Big Bend. A lot of folks go back and forth to the Big Bend area. I'd been looking at her work for a while, and in Marathon two years ago I stopped by her gallery and was very impressed. We love her style, I think she's an excellent painter, exceptional composition, and we're excited about the potential of her work."

Paintings on view at Mary's studio in Marfa in May included a 30 x 60 inch painting of Devil's Den at the north end of Big Bend National Park, with the mountain in orange with blue brush and prickly pears. A large painting (48 x 52 inches) in dark blues and greens showed the Rio Grande winding through the foreground with lots of lights in the distance—Presidio at night. "I had to camp out for that one," Mary said.

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Illustration by Chris Ruggia

The Other American Pastime

by Danielle Gallo

This time of year in the Big Bend is one of my favorites, for a lot of reasons. I like the heat. I like the quiet. I like the long days and the sound of crickets plotting entry to my bedroom. Most especially, I like the rodeo.

This isn't my first rodeo. My first rodeo was in Clovis, N.M., more years ago now than I care to consider. I remember sitting on the sun-bleached stands with a smattering of ranch folk, all with their jeans pressed and their cleanest straw hats cocked back on their heads—the better to appreciate the warbling of the national anthem by a terrified fourteen-year-old girl while the color guard trotted around the arena, the riders reining in the horses' heads to make them as dignified as ranch horses can be in such a cluster. Various local dignitaries made brief remarks; the Baptist preacher blessed the proceedings. The July sun blazed down on a powder of hay, sawdust and old manure and the rich hot smell of livestock and corndogs hung heavy in the still atmosphere. There was an anticipation of thunderstorms—the air felt pregnant.

Humans domesticated the horse a mere 6,000 years ago, though horses have been thundering across the landscapes of the world for 50 million years. They arose from the New World and migrated across the Bering land bridge to Eurasia, yet had to be imported back to their cradle of existence by the Spanish, having become extinct in North America some 13,000 years ago. It is believed that early North American people hunted them to the brink and disease may have finished them off, as they disappeared around the same time as the wooly mammoth. The conquistadores were given magnificent horses by the King of Spain, yet they traded them for small, hard working Andaluz mustangs. Cortes imported 15 of them to North America in 1519, and within a century and a half there were herds of millions roaming the plains once more, along with herds of millions of cattle. The vaqueros began the quintessential American tradition of cattle ranching, on a scale the world had never seen, on the vast plains and rich valleys of the New World.

At the International Working Ranch Rodeo finals in Amarillo about a decade ago I saw my first wild cow milking. I've always been a little ambivalent about the rodeo: I feel for the animals, especially in working ranch events where the cattle and horses come from ranches and are unused to the noise of a crowd. Though I've always found to my relief that my anticipation of the animals' discomfort is unnecessary, still every time I go to a rodeo I feel a little worried for their sakes. So when the gate was pulled and the massive black cows were released into the arena I was silently rooting for them as they tore toward the other gate, where their calves were lowing for them. One team member managed to

rope the head of the largest cow and the other cowboy leapt from his horse, beer bottle in hand, scrambling desperately at her udders to secure a few drops of milk. She kicked. She bucked. She twisted, trampled and jerked. Not only did she throw the milker clear, she somehow managed to unseat his counterpart from his saddle and thoroughly rout him until he scrambled for the fence. She proceeded to trot proudly around the arena, ignoring the other teams as they struggled with their own cows, glaring fixedly from face to face in the stands as if to ask, "Is this a dignified way to treat a mother?" It took them 15 minutes to catch her, and the crowd gave her the loudest cheer of the evening.

The origins of rodeo are Spanish and date back beyond the conquistadores to bullfighting traditions in Spain. The earliest rodeos were a combination of cattle wrangling and prowess in bull riding, and were an important way not only for early vaqueros to congregate and show off their skills but also for ranches to separate their cattle and horses in the days before fencing. When the range was vast, unpopulated and wide open, cattle and horses from different ranches would mingle and run wild together, and the annual gathering of a rodeo gave a rare opportunity for rancheros to claim their stock and save their investment before the fall roundup. By the 19th century, rodeos had caught on with the rapidly increasing Anglo population in the west. A California law was enacted in 1851 which actually required rodeos: "Every owner of a stock farm shall be obliged to give, yearly, one general Rodeo, within the limits of his farm, from the first day of April until the thirty-first day of July, in the counties of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and San Diego; and in the remaining counties, from the first day of March until the thirty-first day of August...in order that parties interested may meet, for the purpose of separating their respective cattle." The rodeos provided much-needed camaraderie (and not a little competitiveness) for the working hands, as well as entertainment to the community.

The first time I witnessed a mutton busting was in Alpine, at the Big Bend Ranch Rodeo. I'd attended a fair few rodeos by that time but had never even heard of mutton busting and didn't know what to expect. I watched as a ragtag parade of toddlers, some barely big enough to walk unaided, trouped into the arena kicking dust with miniature boots. The boys fiddled with their miniature hats and the girls tugged at the ribbons in their pigtails as a grown man led a big wooly sheep to them. What happened next was the funniest thing I have ever seen—the man helped the children one-by-one to mount the sheep, a signal was given and away they went! Most took a tumble immediately, but one managed to stay on for a few seconds. He was so shocked at his success that he began listing to starboard, his little arm outstretched like the hand of a clock, until he was almost parallel to the ground. When he came off the sheep at last he leapt to his feet, rakishly sweeping his hat off his head in salute to the cheering crowd, and let loose a piercing "YEEEEEE-HAAWWWW!"

Steer wrestling is a direct import from the Spanish, which unlike roping, bronc riding and racing failed to catch on with Anglo rodeos until Bill Pickett popularized it around the turn of the 20th century. Pickett, a black Texas cowboy, would bulldog a steer by biting its lip, grabbing it by the horns and forcing it to the ground. The feat became wildly popular and Pickett became an international sensation. Bulldogging competitions became commonplace at Anglo rodeos, and the first exhibition of female bulldogging was accomplished in 1913 by Tillie Baldwin, though bulldogging never became an official women's event in rodeo. In fact, before World War II women were common competitors in all rodeo events including bull and bronc riding, often competing against men (and often winning). When rodeo cowboys began to get together in the 1920s to lobby for standardized rodeo rules, women's events all but disappeared. Gene Autry himself discontinued women's bronc riding in the Madison Square Garden rodeo, though it was the Square's most popular event. With the consolidation of the cowboys' organizations into the PRCA after World War II, rodeos changed from the local, chaotic, sometimes very dangerous community affairs they had been to the standard, heavily sponsored professional sports they are today, and though female team ropers are growing in number, for the most part women are still relegated to barrel racing.

Whenever I go to the rodeo I'm struck by how small the horseback children are. They ride as though the horses are extensions of themselves, sometimes before they can truly walk, tiny feet in truncated stirrups flopping wildly as they canter around throwing practice loops over roping dummies, and it makes me a little sad to see because I knew even at age 18 that I was too old to learn that graceful fluidity of motion. Now, I can sit a horse; I've even made a living horseback from time to time, but always it was with the knowledge that I was missing the perfect equine rapport with which a ranch child is born. That first rodeo in Clovis was a sweet summer evening; after the events there was a dance, and someone had (mistakenly?) booked a rock 'n roll band. All the teenagers in the county turned out and I stood at the edge of the dance floor, watching gangly youths two-stepping as fast as they could to a George Thorogood cover, all moving in a perfect clockwise circle around the dance floor and leaving the requisite room for the Holy Spirit in the circle of their arms. I thought to myself, even as I was chuckling under my breath, "That's probably how I look on a horse."

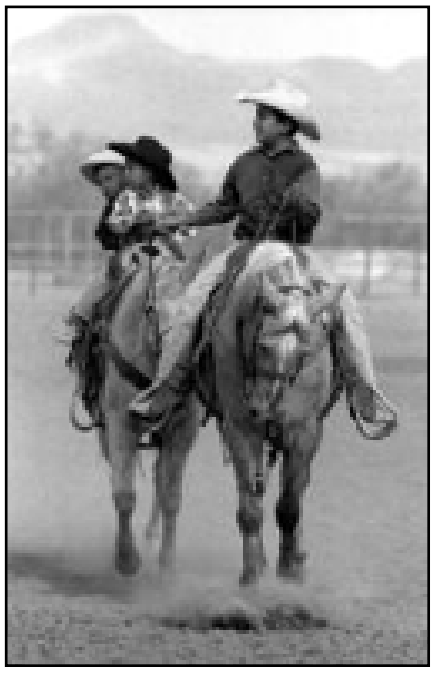
To attempt to define a rodeo is to attempt to define a culture comprised of people so diverse they resemble a spectrum. What they have in common is not race or gender, geographic location or economic status. What they have in common is what they do and how they do it: the original American dream of land, hard work and mastery of the elements; the ethic that spawned our most prized American legends. Rodeo is no mere competition or exposition of skill; it is a direct line to the past and future of traditions that have remained steadfast in a nation of dizzying change. The range may be fenced. The long trails are paved. The conquistadores are dust. But the rodeo lives on.

Photo Essay

Roping

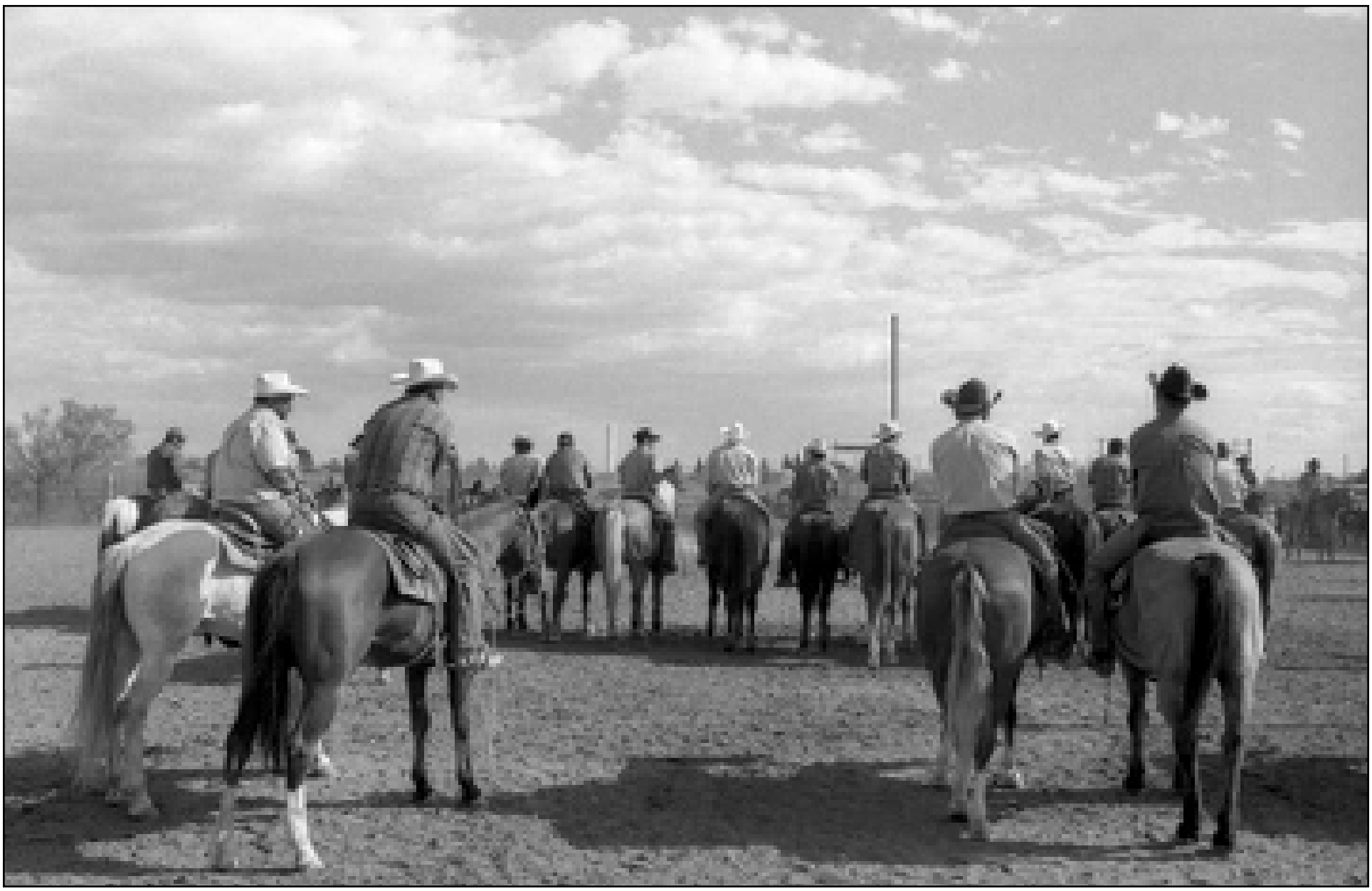
by Luc Novovitch

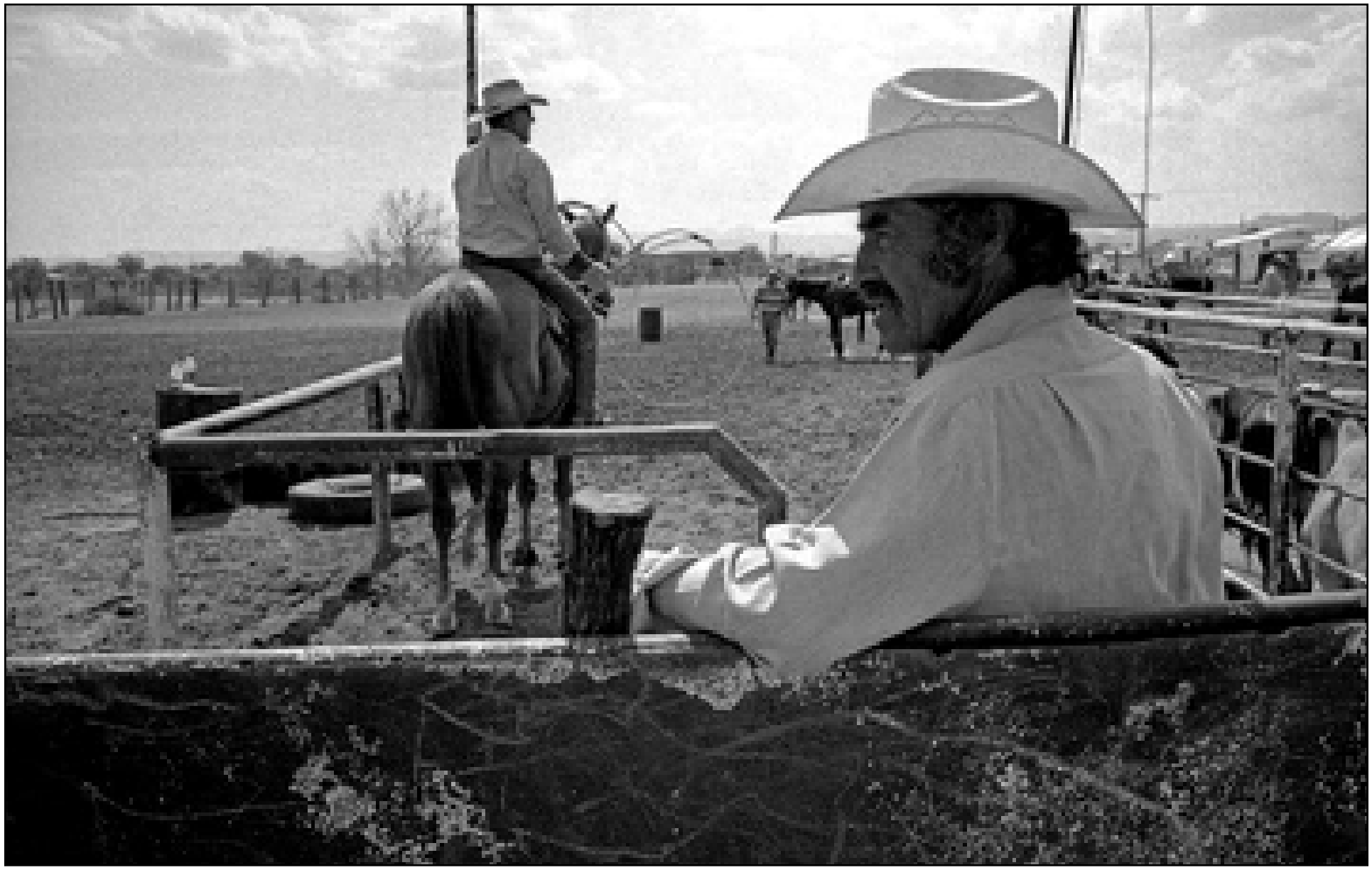
A good horse, a cold beer, a stiff rope and a gaggle of ornery cattle: those long summer evenings at the roping arena are as American as "Howdy, y'all." Photographer Luc Novovitch's Roping Series captures the quintessential West Texas tradition in action. The informality of the gathering juxtaposed with the dignity, grace and skill of its participants creates a visual feast, whether you've been to a thousand ropings or only dreamed of being there in person.



"There never was a horse that couldn't be rode, there never was a cowboy that couldn't be throwed."

~ Will Rogers





Voices of the BIG BEND

Jim Glendinning continues the tradition of his popular radio interviews from "Voices of the Big Bend," an original production of KRTS, Marfa Public Radio. The program continues to be broadcast occasionally throughout the region at 93.5 FM.

Story and photographs by Jim Glendinning

DR. BERONICA X. PEREZ RAMIREZ

Beronica Perez was born on February 3, 1958 in a small village near Puerto Angel on Mexico's Pacific Coast, where her father, Eduardo Perez, was a Mexican Government Customs Inspector. Beronica was the eldest of eight children brought up by their mother, Paula Ramirez.

At age one the family moved when her father was assigned to the port town Topolobampo, which was later followed by a move to Salina Cruz (Oaxaca), another port city. There, at age six, she went to a dentist, Dr. Mjiangos. She loved the idea of a person who removed pain and made people smile. The idea of becoming a dentist herself was born.

In school in Salina Cruz she recalls: "I think I was a good student." This pleased her father, who was very clear in his belief in family, education and hard work. He frequently reminded them of the importance of education. The family later could boast of two dentists, three lawyers, one chemical engineer, one machinery technician and one business person.

Eduardo Perez's job required a change of location every five years, and in the early 1970s the family moved again, to the beautiful seaside resort of La Paz in Baja California. In La Paz, the family got to appreciate the natural wonders of whales and sea lions, and became familiar with more cosmopolitan inhabitants. At school, Beronica's best subjects were science classes.

When Beronica was 14 years old, the family moved to Ojinaga. The remote desert township was chosen by their father because Beronica, as a resident of the State of Chihuahua, could enroll at the University of Chihuahua Medical

DR. BERONICA X. PEREZ RAMIREZ
Presidio/Ojinaga

JIM D. CASE, PHD
Alpine

School and later at the new Dental School. Her free education required a year's work in a hospital in Jimenez, where she enjoyed meeting a wider circle of people than previously and relished her busy work schedule. She then returned to Chihuahua City and obtained her Dental Surgeon's license in 1981.

Getting to Ojinaga in those days took seven to eight hours in a slow train from Chihuahua City, arriving at Ojinaga's small, primitive station. Life in the town was more simple and limited than in previous places. But the boys were delighted at being able to swim and fish in the Rio Bravo and the family found Ojinaga's people were simple and easy to get on with. Beronica grew to love Ojinaga, although she noticed that the town's people, border folk, were closely connected to kin in Texas and had little knowledge of Mexico to the south.

In 1993, looking to learn English, Beronica heard of an American who was coming to Ojinaga to give English lessons. This was Bryant Holman, an oil field geologist, who had temporarily joined Father Mel of the Episcopal Church in Redford working on border projects. Bryant took immediately to the powerful heritage of Ojinaga: the music, the rich history and folklore, such as the curanderos (healers), who still practice there.

Beronica and Bryant married in Marfa in 1995. They lived in Presidio, where Beronica commuted daily to her dental practice, and Bryant resumed working in the Midland-Odessa oil field. In 1998, a son was born and named Bryant. Tragically, her husband Bryant died of complications from diabetes in an Odessa hospital in 2007.

Beronica's office in Ojinaga, where she has practiced for 29 years, is on Juarez Street just along from where Bryant had a Mexican artifacts shop for tourists. Music from a CD by the Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli comforts patients on arrival. Four armchairs and a desk fill the small reception area; immediately behind is the one-chair modern surgery.

Beronica lives in Presidio for her son Bryant's sake. There, aged 14, he attends Presidio High School, which is presently thriving. Beronica says he is a good student, preferring science and history as subjects. She believes Presidio is a good place for him to grow up, although her family would prefer she was living with them in Ojinaga. But she often visits them after her work is finished.

Her work load started to drop five years ago with the start of the global recession and was further reduced by fears of narco violence in the town. Still, 40 percent of her patients are from Texas, and her assessment that Ojinaga is a nice place and Texans should feel safe seems to prove itself correct. Her lovely smile and gentle touch (and low prices) have gone a long way to gaining the trust of Texans who take the day off to cross the border for dental treatment.

JIM D. CASE, PHD

Room 108A in Ferguson Hall on Sul Ross campus seems a modest space for the office of Dr. Jim D. Case, Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences of Sul Ross State University and Professor of Political Science. Books and papers lie scattered around, a crowded corner table displays personal photographs, and a Dutch flag adorns one wall. Behind the well-laden desk sits the affable Jimmy Case, as he is known to

colleagues and friends, a pillar of Sul Ross as the institution goes through testing times.

Jimmy D., as his birth certificate read, was born on January 26, 1948 at Fort Knox, KY, where his father served as sergeant. Jimmy and his mother Darlene soon moved to Sanford in the Texas Panhandle. When Jimmy was in fifth grade he, his mother and sister Debbie relocated to Amarillo, where Jimmy's step-father worked as a truck driver in the oil patch and where his younger sister Diana was born.

Case always enjoyed school, from elementary school at Sanford, to Travis Junior High, to Palo Duro High School near Amarillo, where he graduated in 1966. "I was a well-behaved student," he recalls with a laugh, "probably boringly so!" He enjoyed joining groups, became features editor of the high school newspaper and President of the Future Teachers of America.

Case graduated in 1968 from Amarillo College and moved to Baylor University in Waco, where he gained a B.A. in Political Science and History with a Minor in Education (1970). To Case, studying Political Science was a natural follow-on from History, particularly during the explosive 1960s when movements for social change gained traction. He was fascinated with the idea that students could change history but believed that it should be achievable with the support of the church. He became involved at Amarillo Jr. College in the Baptist Church, and became active in the Baptist Student Union. In Alpine, he joined the First Christian Church.

Upon graduation from Baylor, Case found himself drafted. From 1970-1972, he did administrative work as chaplain's assistant at three different military bases, which he describes as "uneventful." Upon release, he enrolled at Texas Tech in the Political Science graduate program while also working as teacher's assistant. He obtained a PhD in 1984 with a dissertation on government's role in delivering social services. With hindsight, Case believes he was consistently fortunate in his choices of school, subjects and teachers. Now he was set to prove what his education had achieved.

In 1971 Case married Beverly Six, whom he met at Amarillo College. While they divorced in 1995 with no children, both remained collegially connected for years on the SRSU payroll. Beverly, Professor of English, is due to retire this year. As for Case, 32 years after he first arrived in Alpine, he acknowledges that SRSU is the right spot for him, and has no interest in retirement.

He arrived in Alpine in 1981, hired as Assistant Professor of Political Science. Today he spends 20 percent of his time teaching as professor and 80 percent in administrative work as Dean. Over the years he has taken on numerous additional responsibilities, on campus with foreign students and encouraging trips to Mexico when conditions permitted, and in the community most noticeably with the local Hospital District, as well as with the Alpine Humane Society (of which he was a founder member) and the Family Crisis Center. As early as 1994 he earned the Janette Bowyers Volunteer Award, which he describes as "a great honor."

As Dean, Case is well-placed to evaluate today's on-campus morale as well as the future role for SRSU, gained through his previous state-wide teacher involvement. He sees the recent rebranding of SRSU as a positive sign of progress; he finds administration and faculty relations improved, and recruiting stronger under the leadership of President Ricardo Maestas, who was appointed in 2009.

But he also worries that education is not high on the list of Austin legislators. To local residents, SRSU is central and vital to the region. To Austin legislators, SRSU is distant and small. in the present numbers-driven style of thinking which lauds efficiency per se, it risks losing funding for projects and courses which are locally important. One thing that distinguishes Sul Ross is the number of graduates who are the first in their family to achieve a university degree. The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences can relate to this, since he falls into this category himself.

Fort Stockton's Old West Gem

by Jim N. Hammond

Photo by Jim Hammond
Annie Riggs Memorial Museum today.

The town of Fort Stockton is indeed an old west town. The historic downtown area mixes charm and legend with a laidback atmosphere. Many old buildings still stand as a testament to the grit and steadfastness of the pioneers, each with its own unique story to tell. The stories relate to a past that at times was harsh and at other times, rather amusing. And yes there is a Fort here, and its history is just as colorful.

The immediate area around Fort Stockton has been home to native peoples dating back to antiquity. The natural springs, known as Comanche Springs, brought in ancient fauna and men on the hunt followed the game. The centuries that followed brought a curious change to the isolated springs we now call home. Spanish explorers stopped here on their expeditions to take advantage of the abundance of water. Onate and de Sosa both mention stopping in the area in the 1500s. A popular place to stop for those Comanche on the war trail to Mexico, the oasis provided a cool drink, shade and rest. The area became a popular stop on the Salt Trail and then part of the Chihuahua Trail. Eventually people began to settle around the springs. As the population increased, and to uphold an agreement in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, it became necessary to protect those in the area from the marauding Comanche. Fort Stockton was officially established in 1858 and although a few families had already settled the area, the presence of a fort helped to spur population growth. The fort was abandoned in 1886 but by that time the town had already established its roots.

On top of the hill directly north-east of the courthouse in Pecos County sits a century-old Victorian structure, built out of adobe and stucco, decorated in the original gingerbread style. The building, which operated as a frontier hotel in times past, is now a museum. Each room holds a different exhibit telling the story of Fort Stockton's past. As you walk through the rooms you get a sense that you have stepped back in time. You can hear the stories of cowboys and soldiers and begin to understand the rich history the town possesses.

When Pecos County was organized in 1875, Fort Stockton was named the county seat. As population increased the need to establish a hotel became apparent. Around 1898 four businessmen pooled their resources together and created the Fort Stockton Hotel Company. Early the next year construction started on a one-story adobe-walled hotel, consisting of 15 rooms. It took on the moniker of the Koehler Hotel to honor Herman Koehler, businessman and former owner of the property the hotel now occupies. Mrs. Annie Riggs bought the property in 1904 for a grand total of $4,500 and changed the name to the Riggs Hotel.

The ceilings are 14 feet high and advertisements of the day boasted of the coolest rooms in town. Indeed, during the summer the rooms still stay at least 10 degrees cooler than outside. The huge porch that wraps around the hotel invites passersby to stop and take a break. One article from the 1911 Fort Stockton Pioneer reads, "Hot weather will soon be here and a number of the public know of the large, cool rooms and delightful porches. Come where you can enjoy the 'Good Ole Summer Time.'" Coal oil lamps were used for lighting at night and wood stoves in every room kept patrons warm.

Mrs. Riggs served three meals a day at a cost of 35¢ a meal. It is said that many of the local cowboys and ranchers would come in to town and visit the hotel because the food prepared by Mrs. Riggs and her daughters was so good. The cast of characters that flowed through the hotel must have been quite amazing; rowdy cowboys stumbling in from the saloon surely caused Mrs. Riggs a few moments of concern. During the great depression, many bullets were pulled out of the adobe walls on the porch. In one instance a shot was fired from a .45. The bullet missed its target, ricocheted off the kitchen door and lodged in the chimney.

Barney Riggs, Annie's ex-husband, drew his last breath in the old hotel. Buck Chadborn, Annie's son-in-law, acted as the administrator in the divorce settlement. The relationship between Barney and Buck had never been stable. Buck claimed Barney had abused and disrespected him and Annie's family. The tension finally reached its boiling point in April of 1902, when Buck drove his buggy into town to pick Annie and the kids up for a visit to the Chadborn place. He arrived at the home where Annie was staying. This home, known as "The Oldest House," still stands southwest of the courthouse. Barney stumbled out of a nearby saloon on a march to confront Buck. As Barney approached the buggy, cursing and waving his cane, he reached into his coat. Fearing Barney was going for his gun, Buck lunged for his own gun in the buggy, pulled it up and shot Barney near the heart. Barney staggered toward the arroyo behind the school (still standing and known as the "Oldest Schoolhouse") and collapsed. Mrs. Riggs had him taken to the hotel and placed in room number seven, known now as the Archaeology Room. He died a short time later, cussing Buck with his last breath.

Directly across the street from the

entrance of the Museum lies another landmark. The Grey Mule Saloon, now a wine tasting room for Ste. Genevieve, once poured drinks for thirsty cowboys. Constructed in direct competition to the Koehler Saloon, A.J. Royal operated the bar as early as 1894. The Grey Mule has operated as a book store, law office, home, gift shop and Mexican food restaurant.

Photo courtesy of Annie Riggs Memorial Museum
Construction of the hotel on the frontier.

A.J. Royal had been at odds with local officials and businessmen, including Judge O.W. Williams, local entrepreneur Francis Rooney and Herman Koehler, owner of the Koehler Store, almost as soon as he arrived in Fort Stockton. Elected as sheriff in 1892, he was voted out of office after only serving a short time. Numerous complaints rolled in on Royal's mistreatment of local citizens and farm laborers. In one instance he killed a Mexican tenant outside of the Koehler Mercantile. There was no witness so he was not indicted, as he claimed self-defense.

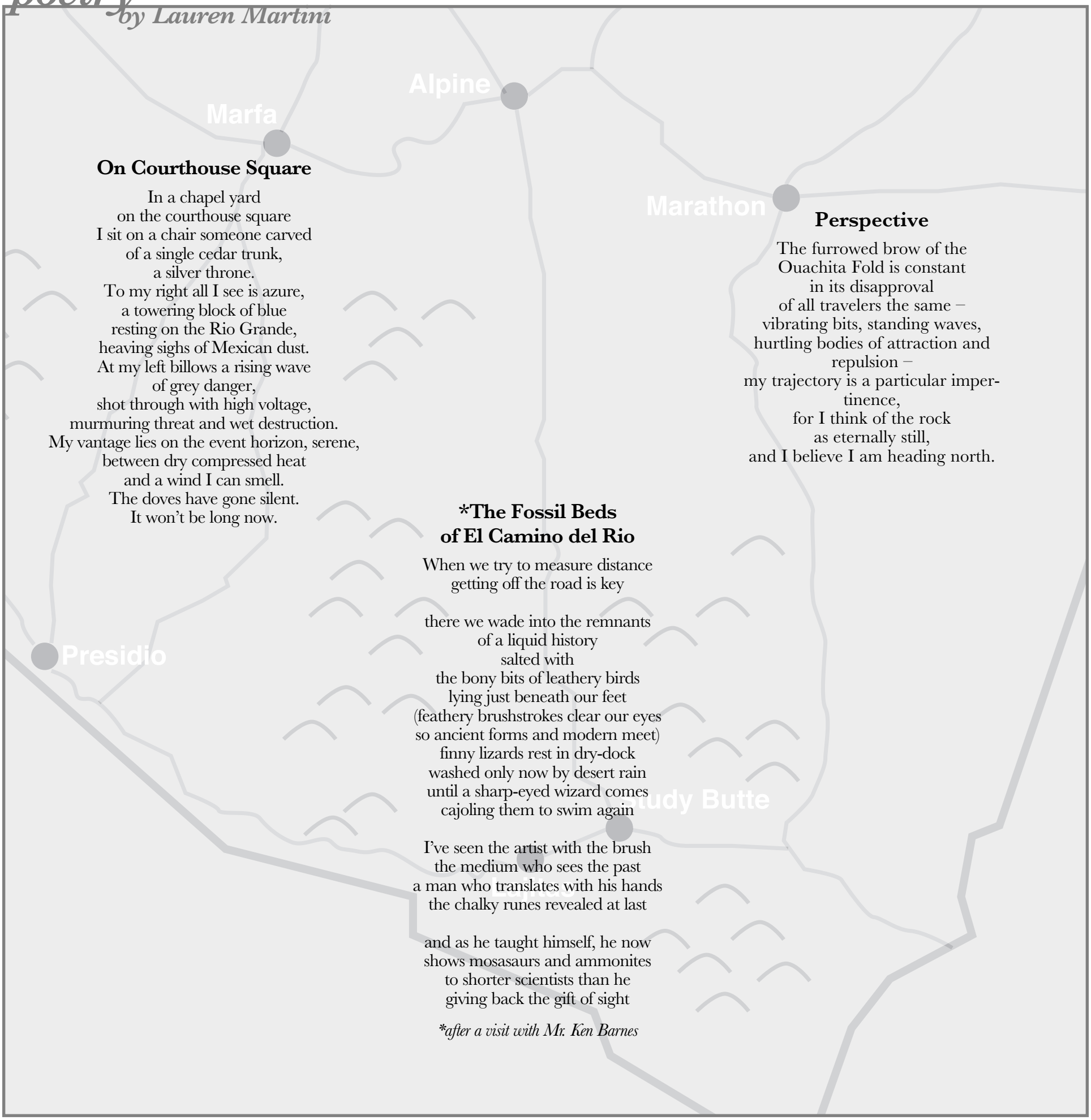
In August of 1894 Royal involved himself in, and perhaps instigated, a shootout at the Koehler Store. Judge Williams sent for reinforcements and the Rangers soon came to town. As the gavel fell to bring court into session on November 21, 1894, Royal found himself on the court docket, the plaintiff in five cases and under indictment in three. When court recessed that afternoon, Royal made his way toward his office. He sat down at his desk and began cleaning out his personal effects. Moments later someone crept toward his office, stuck a shotgun through the door, yelled out "ROYAL!" and squeezed the trigger. Shot from behind, the ex-sheriff was killed instantly. A.J. Royal had been assassinated.

No charges were ever filed in the murder and no one knew who pulled the trigger. Speculation ran wild following the murder, with some claiming that the Rangers, Judge Williams, the Rooney boys and even outsiders were involved. To this day the murder is still unsolved. The desk that Royal was sitting at when he was killed is housed in the Annie Riggs Museum. In the top right drawer the remnants of that fateful day remain.

Mrs. Riggs operated the hotel until her death in 1931. During the great depression the rooms were opened up to allow families to come stay. In 1955, under the direction of Dr. and Mrs. D.J. Sibley, the Fort Stockton Historical Society converted the hotel into the Annie Riggs Memorial Museum. Upon entry, visitors step back in time. The parlor, dining room and kitchen look much like they did at the turn of the 20th century. Many of the artifacts in these rooms are native to the hotel and all artifacts are original to the region and period.

The hotel rooms house different exhibits, each one relating to the town's past. The Pioneer Room, furnished by Fort Stockton's Pioneer Club, houses local turn-of-the-century artifacts. The Archaeology Room contains fossil remains dating back millions of years, as well as projectile points and arrowheads, geological core samples and a 22,000-year-old mammoth tusk. The Hotel Room is set up much like what the actual hotel room looked like, the bed being one ordered by Mrs. Riggs from Sears and Roebuck in 1902. The Cowboy Room is home to saddles, boots and ranching equipment of our past. The Hispanic Heritage Room and Religious Room round out the exhibits.

The Annie Riggs Memorial Museum is open six days a week, Monday through Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Admission is $3.00 a person or $2.50 for seniors. Located at 301 S. Main, the Museum sits adjacent to the county courthouse and the Grey Mule Saloon in downtown Historic Fort Stockton.



On Courthouse Square

In a chapel yard
on the courthouse square
I sit on a chair someone carved
of a single cedar trunk,
a silver throne.
To my right all I see is azure,
a towering block of blue
resting on the Rio Grande,
heaving sighs of Mexican dust.
At my left billows a rising wave
of grey danger,
shot through with high voltage,
murmuring threat and wet destruction.
My vantage lies on the event horizon, serene,
between dry compressed heat
and a wind I can smell.
The doves have gone silent.
It won't be long now.

Perspective

The furrowed brow of the
Ouachita Fold is constant
in its disapproval
of all travelers the same –
vibrating bits, standing waves,
hurtling bodies of attraction and
repulsion –
my trajectory is a particular imper-
tinence,
for I think of the rock
as eternally still,
and I believe I am heading north.

*The Fossil Beds of El Camino del Rio

When we try to measure distance
getting off the road is key

there we wade into the remnants
of a liquid history
salted with
the bony bits of leathery birds
lying just beneath our feet
(feathery brushstrokes clear our eyes
so ancient forms and modern meet)
finny lizards rest in dry-dock
washed only now by desert rain
until a sharp-eyed wizard comes
cajoling them to swim again

I've seen the artist with the brush
the medium who sees the past
a man who translates with his hands
the chalky runes revealed at last

and as he taught himself, he now
shows mosasaurs and ammonites
to shorter scientists than he
giving back the gift of sight

**after a visit with Mr. Ken Barnes*

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A deal was struck in April of 1932 between University of Chicago president Robert M. Hutching and University of Texas at Austin president Harry Y. Benedict for a 30-year collaboration. Texas would put up $375,000 to construct a telescope to be operated temporarily by Chicago, a world renowned center for astronomical research. By providing a new, larger telescope, the arrangement proved beneficial to both parties.

While the search for the ideal location for the observatory was underway, Otto Struve of Chicago's Yerkes Observatory produced a detailed proposal for the telescope design. It was to be a reflector telescope of 80 inches in diameter, twice the size of the Yerkes telescope at that time. The Warner and Swasey Company of Cleveland, Ohio, was selected as the prime contractor.

A suitable site was located in the Davis Mountains. Mrs. Violet Locke McIvor donated 200 acres of land and the mountain was named for her grandfather. Construction of the steel building and the dome to house the telescope was completed by mid-1934, as was the foundation. Many local men worked on the project. Construction of the director's cottage was completed and a resident astronomer, Christian T. Elvey, was appointed in 1935. However, a number of problems arose in completing the optical parts for the telescope. Dr. David S. Evans, associate director of research from 1968 until 1981, told of the problems in an article in the county history *Jeff Davis County, Texas* by Lucy Miller Jacobson and Mildred Bloys Nored:

"An 81-inch diameter disk of Pyrex glass was poured at the Corning glass works...on the last day of 1933. Four months later when it had been slowly cooled and annealed to ensure that there were no internal stresses which might...cause it to split apart, it was found to have a number of edge fissures....Struve...insisted the disk be re-melted, during which procedure the restraint gave way and the disk was enlarged to the present 82-inch diameter. Fortunately the design of the mechanical parts could accommodate the change…The disk now went to Cleveland to be edged, surface ground and polished ready for its front face to be figured into the accurate concave parabolic form required. The accuracy required was of the order of several millionths of an inch and would be achieved by local polishing and sophisticated testing."

Despite months of delays while the exacting process went on, Struve finally accepted the mirror in October of 1938 and it was shipped by rail to Alpine, followed by a two day trip via truck to Mount Locke, arriving on February 2, 1939. At the time it was the second largest telescope in the world. The formal dedication took place in May, 1939. Astronomers and the elite of the scientific community from around the world attended in record numbers, overwhelming the small community of Fort Davis and straining lodging facilities in Alpine and Marfa. In addition to the activities on the mountain, they were treated to a barbecue and rodeo at Prude Ranch.

Harlan J. Smith was named director in 1963. He would serve in that capacity for 25 years. His first objective was to erect a new 107-inch telescope funded by NASA and the National Science Foundation. It was dedicated in November of 1968 during a relentless downpour, which softened the taxiway at the Marfa airport so much that the aircraft bringing a party of VIPs for the dedication bogged down. Equipped with a massive

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Reunion on the Border

Photo by: Anna Oakley

Children frolic in the shallow water while both communities enjoy food, music and each other's company at Lajitas during the Voices from Both Sides reunion.

People not Politics by Cynta de Narvaez

Two wonderful things happened the other day: first, a Border Patrol officer in the Big Bend National Park Port of Entry to Boquillas, Coahuila, Mexico mentioned that he wanted a passport for the first time in his life; he wanted to meet this man, Philippe, whom he had been speaking with across the Rio Grande for some time. "I just want to know who he is, what his house looks like, spend some time with him…" The second, which happened on the same day, came from the Mexican Immigration Officer in the Boquillas Immigration Station. He put his digital visa on the desk and said, "I want to see what is on the other side of this river but I don't have a car. Will you take me?" These are just two examples of the cross-border interest generated by the opening of Boquillas, the small town on the other side of the border on the east end of Big Bend National Park. No one would have expected that federal men in uniform, from either side, would be so personally interested in what could be learned and experienced on the other side of a small river. But this is an amazing place and an amazing time; a time of people, not politics.

The informal border crossings along the Rio Grande in the Big Bend were closed without warning on May 10th, 2002. It was a shock that reverberated on both sides of the river; in this remote and sparsely populated desert, the Rio Grande was not really regarded as a border. Narrow, shallow and even intermittent in some places, to us it was never a dividing line between peoples but a unifying blessing of nature, the thing that allowed us all to live here. The little villages that dotted its banks were almost always built in pairs: Santa Elena and Castolon, Lajitas and Paso Lajitas, La Linda spreading to both banks, Boquillas del Carmen and Boquillas, Texas, then later Rio Grande Village. Families lived on both sides and one's nationality was determined by where one's mother happened to be when she went into labor.

When the U.S. government closed the border, cutting the ties between these villages, it severed families down the middle, destroyed commerce and communication and endangered the survival of multiple Mexican towns. With few unpaved roads and the nearest cities a day's drive or more away, the Mexican villagers were suddenly stranded in the desert without steady access to food, medicine, gasoline or employment. When the government started talking about reopening the Boquillas crossing a few years ago, we held our breath in anticipation—and we waited. And waited. And waited.

In the meantime, Jeff Haislip, a local musician and bartender at the Starlight Theatre in Terlingua, decided he

wanted to record music on both sides of the river. He didn't have a clue where this would lead. He started driving to San Carlos, Mexico, and recording bands, meeting people, getting excited. One thing led to another and he began organizing Voices from Both Sides, which soon turned into a Lajitas/Paso Lajitas Community Reunion. Families started trickling in from Fort Stockton and Odessa to the shindig grounds at the Lajitas Resort Saturday morning, May 10th, with picnic baskets and lawn chairs. It was the 11th anniversary of the day our border was closed. The hugging, laughing and crying started early. It was a time we never could have imagined 11 years ago.

In Paso Lajitas, when the border closed, the community of 90 became a community of two, the village of Santa Elena completely emptied except for occasional visitors on weekends and holidays, and Boquillas del Carmen went from 250 souls to 90 almost overnight. But Mr. Haislip, 11 years later, with no knowledge of the area and no Spanish skills, heard the call and started this particular emotional stampede through music. The album is due out in October, but the reunion will be annual. The event was magical; the people on the Mexican side were astounded by the outpouring of goodwill and appreciation, and the people on the Texas side were impressed by their fantastic music, amazed by their sheer numbers and attuned to their need to be acknowledged. Everyone felt healed. We may not all speak the same language, but the understanding was clear: this was a time for families and community.

Photo by: Trevor Hickle

The Rio Grande is easily bridged by friends at the Voices from Both Sides celebration at Lajitas.

So, back to Boquillas. The "man behind the curtain" who made this border opening happen at last is unknown, but it was done and it is good. Ernesto Hernandez, a local river guide, came back from Vera Cruz, Mexico to help run the project and the townspeople came together to take advantage of this amazing opportunity. And rather than compete with each other, the people of the town of Boquillas decided to form a co-op to support their businesses and help each other rebuild.

Several weeks after the Lajitas reunion there was a gathering in Boquillas to celebrate the border opening with music, real Mexican food, new hotel rooms and even a horse race. People from the U.S. side, passports in hand, came from all over to celebrate. Almost everyone I met at the gathering came to offer their services: "Can I help your co-op get non-taxable status?" "Can I help you start micro-loaning?" "Can I help you put in a solar system?" People came wanting to make their circle larger; not just locals and tourists but federal agents, not just folks from here but people from as far away as Dallas.

So, then, what is this whole border thing about for me? It's about our side winning for once. All of us who resent the fear of difference, who believe that community is powerful, and who think that Pollyanna should be revived as a mentor, even a meme…hooray for all of us! These little gems of events have given many the opportunity to experience life in a different way: family members, friends, neighbors, uniformed federal officers, musicians, park rangers, businesspeople and even a few enlightened politicians have dropped their swords, risen to the occasion and shared quality time with complete strangers who have a different language and culture, and found that they enjoyed themselves.

We are not the clothes on our backs or our bank accounts. We are just people. Lajitas showed us that we can all get along beautifully without even thinking about money or differences, and Boquillas illuminates how people can support complete strangers in lots of ways. Perhaps it's because our towns and villages are so far from major economic centers on our respective sides of the border, and because we live in an environmentally challenging place, that we realize we need to take care of one another. This is the stuff that makes us human, this quality sharing, because you take care of what you love, and all this care makes us greater than the sum of our parts. When we share culture and music and food and space, the glue that binds our community intensifies. We know about community here on the Rio Grande.

The invisible wall that divides our lovely little desert river still stands. But at long last, doors are opening one by one, and light is pouring through. Hallelujah!

The crossing will be open Wednesday through Sunday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Those using the crossing must have a valid passport or passport card. For a little adventure, ride a burro, have lunch and a cold beer on the patio, visit with local folks and take a boat ride back to the park.

A Toast to the Fabulous Agave

by Maya Zniewski

There is little so wonderfully refreshing as a salt-rimed margarita at the end of a hot desert day. Native to the Chihuahuan desert, the agave plant, sometimes called the century plant, is the mother of tequila and has been used in a multitude of ways for thousands of years. In Jalisco, Mexico, the agave is grown like a crop in row after row of large spiky plants. The waste material of the blue agave plant, the only one allowed to be used in the production of tequila, is re-used to create paper.

One of the most recent uses for agave of interest to Cenizo Journal readers is as a source of green energy. Because of its astonishing growth (the flowering head of the plant grows up to a foot a day) the agave is being investigated for use as a bio fuel. Its use could help solve the food versus fuel debate regarding corn as a bio fuel.

Because the fresh sap of the plant causes contact dermatitis (itching and swelling of the skin) and the heart of the agave is poisonous if eaten raw, boiling or roasting the plant is necessary before using it. Agave has been used in the Southwest for more than 4,000 years: the pointed ends of leaves were traditionally used as a sewing needle or leather awl. The fiber of the leaves is fashioned into rope much as the yucca plant is used. The cleaned fibers can be made into cloth. The heart of the plant, much like a giant artichoke, can be cut out, roasted and eaten. It has a rich, mild flavor. Cooking is essential! This is the point at which I ask, "who was the first person to figure out this bit?"

The transformation from agave to tequila begins with its fermentation into a beer-like drink. The fermented liquid is then distilled into tequila.

A boiled preparation of the juice or sap of the fine agave plant is antibacterial, antibiotic, fungicidal and antiviral.

Many people have heard of or use the processed nectar of the agave plant as a sweetener; it is thought of as having a low glycemic index. In actuality, short of pure liquid fructose, processed agave syrup has the single highest amount of fructose possible. The low glycemic index is true of the unprocessed, raw nectar. So skip thinking that agave syrup or nectar is a great alternative to table sugar and learn the other ways that this fabulous plant can be and has been used.

For example, in the evening when the sun is going down use your margarita to toast a wonderful gift from nature.

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Mary Baxter's paintings were also part of the 2010 Contemporary Artists Series at the Midland Museum of the Southwest's Here and Now Gallery.

Wendy Lynn Wright, who lives at Casa Piedra some 45 miles south of Marfa, occasionally does her watercolors en plein air but usually works from photos "to avoid dust and extreme weather."

A native of Syracuse, N. Y., Wendy formerly worked in advertising in Kerrville, and came to Chinati Hot Springs, 54 miles below Marfa, in 2000. There she worked on building up the Hot Springs clientele and then moved to Marfa in 2003, working at the Holiday Capri before it closed and then at the Marfa Studio of Arts.

Now she says her adobe casita and studio at Casa Piedra "is truly home... artesian water, trees, a lawn and garden. The landscape is always fresh and new, the light in fall... April has beautiful light. I love the skies, the clouds, the colors they hold."

The first solo show of her watercolors was at the Hotel Paisano in Marfa in June 2011. To take preparatory photos for the watercolors, she made several trips down FM 2810/Pinto Canyon Road. "I took pictures every three miles, and chose to paint the strongest 14 images. Mile Zero offered one major variation to my work: buildings, not just landscape. This got me thinking about painting simple, lovely casitas."

For her next show, she plans to do a series from Boquillas, just across from Big Bend National Park, an area many tourists are eager to explore again since the Boquillas crossing recently re-opened after a decade when visitors could not cross into Mexico.

"I'm happy because I've found home – light and space feeds an artist's soul," Wendy said. Her watercolors can be seen at her website (www.WendyLynnWright.com

Mimi Litschauer is a name well known to the cognoscenti of plein air painting in the Big Bend. Mimi, a native of Wisconsin, has written about her discovery of art: "I spent all of high school in the art room. I flunked algebra and took a summer drawing workshop. One winter I stood under the white tree holding the screeching owl. And that was it -- I was an outdoor landscape painter."

Mimi also wrote: "I believe everyone needs art in their life -- not because I think so, but because it's what's good for us. And I believe in starting with a strong idea but being open and anxious for 'happy accidents.' I hike the desert and paint its moods in a series of happy accidents." Mimi died earlier this year.

"The biggest joy Mimi ever had was to get outside and paint in nature," said Garland Weeks, a sculptor from Lubbock, TX and a close friend. "Her real job was being out in the elements, rough and rugged. If that's where she saw her painting, she went and stayed as long as it took. She was proud of her self-reliance, she loved going into the Big Bend, she found a niche she really fit into.

"If the weather turned bad, she'd just get in the front seat of her van and paint looking through the window," Garland recalled. "One time she took off to the Four Corners area -- she was gone 21 days and came home with 53 paintings. She was doing what she wanted to do, time and effort meant absolutely nothing.

"She loved going into Big Bend, to the park. The longer she was there, the more people she met; she was able to get on private ranches and paint scenes that no one would know of if you weren't on that ranch.

"She never wanted to impose on anybody, she was truly independent. It was to her own detriment at times, sometimes it's nice to let them help," he added.

Marci Roberts, Mimi's friend, said a new website and online sketching workshop are being planned. Bruce Blakemore and Marshall Miller, Big Bend ranchers and owners of Mimi Litschauer works, have also established an art scholarship in her name. Information about these projects can be obtained by contacting Marci at marciroberts@meodesign.com.

For more information about Plein-Air painting, go to Plein-Air Painters of America at www.p-a-p-a.org

Big Bend Eats

by Carolyn Zniewski

When I was a girl, dates were an exotic import. There were camels and sand dunes on the orange package. Turns out they were grown here in East Texas. The climate is just right. Palentologists have found that when Big Bend was an inland sea, dates palms grew abundantly. They died out with the dinosaurs. The Spanish reintroduced dates to California in the 1500's, spreading to Texas and Florida. This great pie recipe comes from Monica Pope of The Sparrow and Beavers, both restaurants in Houston. She gave a workshop at the Food Fest last April.

Monica's Date Butter Tart

One 9" tart shell or pie crust
Prebake 20 minutes at 425° oven

Filling:
40 whole, pitted dates
1 vanilla bean
9 tablespoons butter
2 large eggs
2/3 cup sugar
1/3 cup flour
¼ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons sugar

Preheat oven to 350°. Lay dates in concentric circles in pie/tart crust. Melt butter in sauce pan, add seeds and pod of vanilla bean. Heat over medium until butter browns and smells nutty. Remove from heat. Discard pod. In a separate bowl, mix eggs and 2/3 cup sugar, stir in butter, add flour and salt. Gently pour mixture over dates. Sprinkle with 2 tablespoons sugar. Bake at 350° for about 20 minutes until filling puffs and browns. Let cool at least 20 minutes before serving. Oh, so very good.

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spectroscope, the telescope continues to contribute to many first class research papers. The most dramatic program of this telescope was in lunar laser ranging to determine the distance to reflectors left on the moon by astronauts to within a few inches.

Over the years, other telescopes and astronomical equipment have been added. Currently, there are four research telescopes: the original 83-inch Otto Struve telescope; the 107-inch Harlan J. Smith telescope added in 1968; a 31-inch telescope formerly used for research now used for visitor programs, as are a number of smaller telescopes, and the 360-inch Hobby-Eberly telescope added on adjacent Mount Fowlkes (6,600 feet elevation) in 1997. This massive telescope, referred to as the HET, is operated jointly by the University of Texas at Austin, Pennsylvania State University, Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich and Georg-August University of Göttingen. It is now tied with the South African Large Telescope as the fourth largest telescope in the world.

Other specialized equipment includes a 47-inch MONET telescope, a member of the planned world-wide Monitoring Network of Telescopes, a companion to one at the South African Astronomical Observatory; the McDonald Laser Ranging System's 30-inch telescope to perform satellite ranging and lunar laser ranging; the 20-inch Ritchey-Chretien reflector owned by Boston University and used for optical aeronomy, the study of the upper region of the atmosphere, and the 16-inch Robotic Optical Transient Search Experiment reflector used to search for the optical signature of gamma-ray bursts.

One recent discovery at McDonald Observatory was made by the Hobby-Eberly Telescope Massive Galaxy Survey of a massive black hole in the small NGC 1277 galaxy some 220 million light years away, in the constellation Perseus. "This is a really odd galaxy," said team member Karl Gebhardt of the University of Texas at Austin. "It's almost all black hole. This could be the first object in a new class of galaxy black hole systems." The massive black hole, as large as 17 billion suns, makes up some 14 percent of the galaxy's mass rather than the usual 0.1 percent.

The observatory also provides housing for certain essential personnel and their families, a dormitory and food service for visiting astronomers, maintenance shops and firefighting equipment. According to Frank Cianciolo, senior program coordinator at the observatory, some 80 people actually live on site, with a staff of some 50 to 60 people.

Festivities for the 75th anniversary are shaping up with a call for artifacts, letters and photographs for a traveling exhibit relating to the observatory's history. A number of free anniversary events to be announced are planned for local residents, beginning in August and running into next year. These events will include special viewing nights on research telescopes in August, September and October and an open house on April 26, 2014.

In addition to the astronomical research functions, McDonald Observatory offers many educational opportunities for the public. The Frank N. Bash Visitors' Center, the observatory's public outreach center, houses a number of displays, several of them hands-on, an indoor theater where one can view live solar activity and other programs, a gift shop, a café and an outdoor telescope park where visitors at the evening star parties can view the heavens under some of the darkest skies in the continental United States. The star parties are offered on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday evenings (reservations required). Drop-in prices will increase June 1. Other activities open to the public include twilight programs, guided tours and special viewing nights for visitors to look through the Smith or 36-inch telescopes. Teacher workshops are offered during the summer months. For reservations, rates and schedules go to mcdonaldobservatory.org. Additional information is available by calling 877-984-7827 or 432-426-3640 or at info@mcdonaldobservatory.org.

TRANS PECOS TRIVIA

by Charles Angell

TRANS-PECOS RODEO

1) Many places claim to have held the first rodeo, but there is a general consensus that the first rodeo to award prizes was held in Pecos, Texas. What year was this?

   a) 1912
   b) 1812
   c) 1883
   d) 1938

2) Sul Ross College held an invitational rodeo with 12 other colleges attending in November 1949. A meeting was proposed and held by Hank Finger during this event with the purpose of forming an organization that established rules, point-systems and structure, to be known as the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association. What was Mr. Fingers' position at Sul Ross College?

   a) student
   b) professor
   c) alumni
   d) Board of Trustees

3) The Marfa Rodeo, which is no longer active, was held annually to coincide with which other annual event?

   a) Cinco de Mayo
   b) July 4th
   c) Cinemarfa
   d) Marfa Lights Festival

4) The Sul Ross Rodeo Team has placed in the top 10 at the College National Finals Rodeo 33 times and has had 8 all-around cowboys and cowgirls. How many national titles have they won?

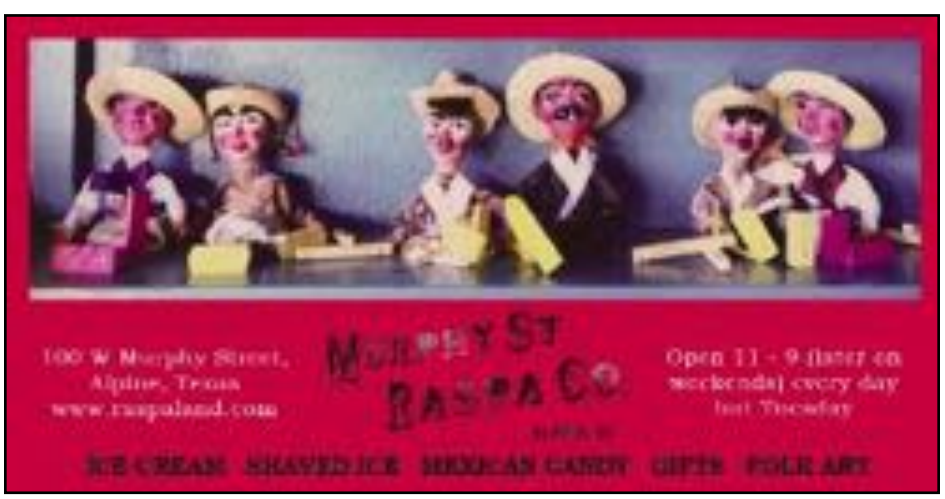
   a) three
   b) five
   c) seven
   d) eight

5) The first all-around champion at the first NIRA event, held in San Francisco in 1949, was Harley May, a cowboy who attended which school?

   a) Oklahoma State
   b) Sul Ross State
   c) Texas A & M
   d) California Polytechnic

Bonus: The annual West of the Pecos Rodeo is held each year at which town mentioned above?

Answers: 1-c 2-a 3-d 4-d 5-b
Bonus: Pecos, TX



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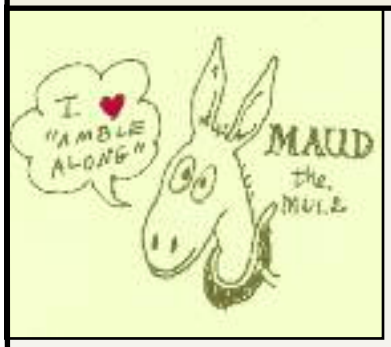

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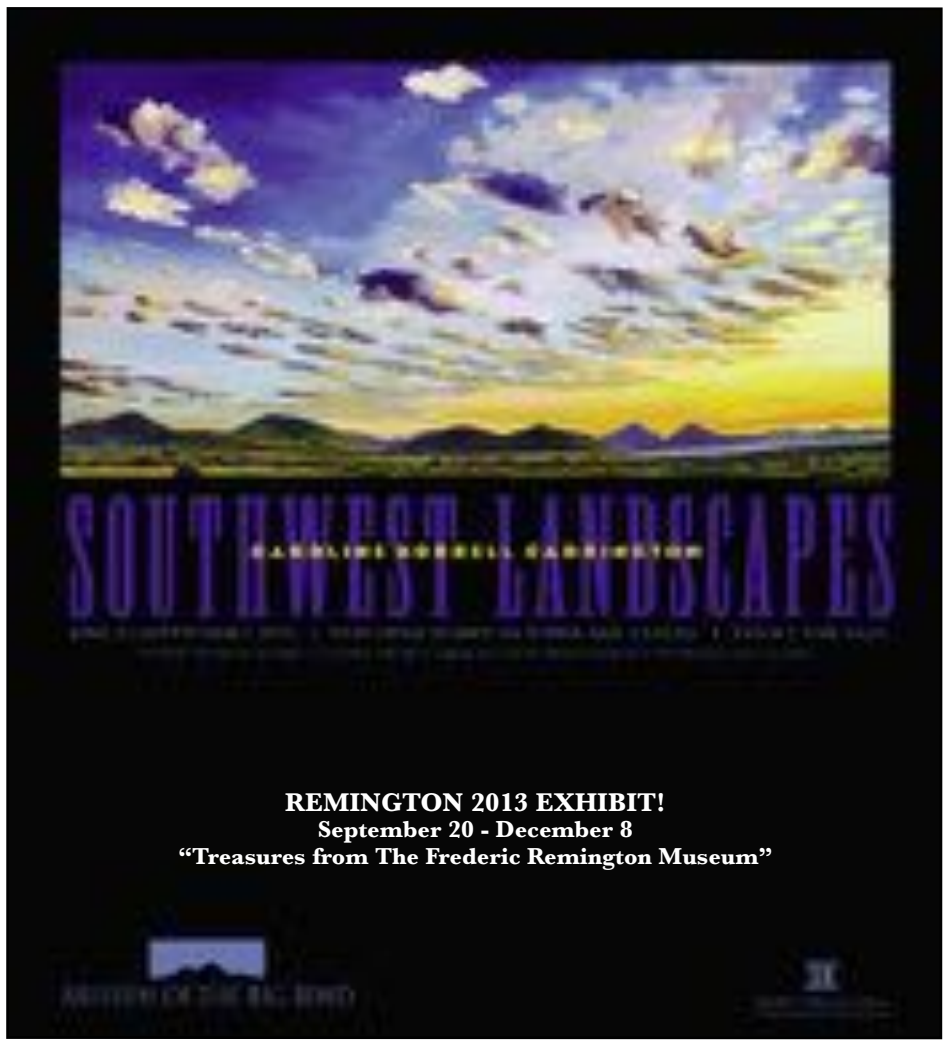

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