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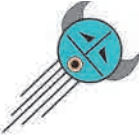
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Photo by Wyman Meinzer

Clouds and striated sand near Dell City, Texas.

Sublime Safari: Shooting West Texas

by William H. Darby III

“How do you kill an ugly midday sun when you don’t have any chance to shoot the images at any other time of the day? Use a flash gelled with a 3/4 CTO and underexpose the ambient light by a stop.”

2011 Shooting West Texas Photo Symposium presenter Russell Graves, from a blog on his Web site titled “Shooting Sports,” dated March 26, 2011.

They say it’s the light. And the scenery. The solitude, too. They rise before sun-up and head out again at sunset, the best hours to practice their sport. They crouch quietly behind precise, automated equipment and wait patiently for a prize pick.

Suddenly, after they have begun to doubt, it does arrive, like a hungry deer to an automated feeder. They

stare for a moment, amazed. They can’t help it. They’re overtaken by what’s seen through their high-powered lenses. They take a breath...and shoot.

“Click.” Before it’s even fully processed, they’re picturing a trophy on the wall.

Photographers come from far and wide to “shoot” West Texas, and they’re all looking for their best take yet. But that’s not the only reason they come. They, like hunters of other things, also do it for the solitude, the scenery and the light. Even the locals agree. Alpine photographer Rachel Waller says, “Being a photographer in the Big Bend region offers me flawless light and beauty I find nowhere else.”

It’s images of that beauty, in that flawless light, that

amateur and professional photographers return to West Texas to capture. Then they haul them off, like game trophies, to parts unknown. They brag about them and proudly show them off – rightfully so. The images they take, and the real things they represent, tend to draw people to the Big Bend.

And they should, according to official Texas State Photographer Wyman Meinzer. “The Big Bend has historically been a region of intrigue and drama. Although many visitors to our state think that Big Bend National Park represents West Texas in its entirety,

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The Chinati Foundation is a contemporary art museum founded by the artist Donald Judd, presenting permanent, large-scale installations by a limited number of artists and hosting special exhibitions and programs each year.

The collection is accessible by guided tour Wednesday through Sunday. Tour size is limited; please reserve in advance at www.chinati.org or 432 729 4362.

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Editor's Notes



I'm not sure there's anything to say about this past spring in the Big Bend except that we all got through it! And as I write this, the forecast is beginning to mention a "chance" of rain. Can it be that help is on the way? My hat is off to our advertisers

who, once again, have made another issue of *Cenizo* possible through their advertising dollars. Please give them your business and help keep our local economy growing and going.

This issue, we are all over the map – literally. Starting with the Shooting West Texas Photography Symposium coming up in September at Sul Ross in Alpine. Here's a chance to meet some of the best photographers around, learn how they do what they do and have photos you've already taken evaluated. William Darby explains the ins and outs.

You've danced to Craig Carter's music, but do you know what else he does – just to keep on living in the Big Bend? Marathon writer Barbara Novovitch tells all.

The perfectly round tortilla has more than gustatory implications – it's also a physics problem. Follow Alyce Santoro's revelation of Enrique Madrid's theories.

Down in Big Bend National Park are the remnants of one of the ranches that became the park – Sam and Nena Nail's place. Most of the ranch is gone, but the windmill still pumps water for the local wildlife, making it a place to sit and watch the creatures that come to drink. Ron Payne shares his experience.

There's something new at Fort Leaton. Erin Caro Aguayo and Avram Dumitrescu show and tell.

And Bob Miles reveals the true story of another Big Bend denizen – Milton Faver.

Three lively women from Alpine, Marathon and Terlingua tell Jim Glendinning how they have come to steward the quality of living in this part of Texas.

Phyllis Dunham has a trace of Comanche blood, and in this issue she shows us why the People, as her ancestors called themselves, came to own vast stretches of the Great Plains and to terrorize the people of Northern Mexico and anyone else who got in their way.

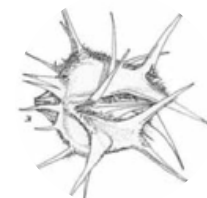
Three Shooting West Texas photographers, Russell Graves, Laren Bridges and Adam Jahiel, share their photos in the Photo Essay.

Long and short poems from Cynthia McKaughan, K.B. Whitley and Mary Locke Crofts bring moments down south, on the highway and in Langtry to life.

You may have heard of Carolyn Ohl's incredible feat of building an oasis in the Christmas Mountains. In this issue, her friend Bill Lindemann explains how that happened and then describes how one visitor to the oasis, the Lucifer hummingbird, courts his mate.

Get out your binoculars and see if you can answer Charlie Angell's trivia quiz on birds!

Hope you enjoy this issue and that we'll have a summer that finally breaks the drought! Here's to that!



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Art, photographic and literary works may be e-mailed to the Editor.

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Cenizo Journal

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Cover: Anne Eckley ~ Detail of *Clouds over Dillon*, thread on canvas, 7 by 9 inches.

Occasional Art: Patty Manning ~ Seed pods and grasses of the Chihuahuan Desert, pencil or pen and ink on paper.

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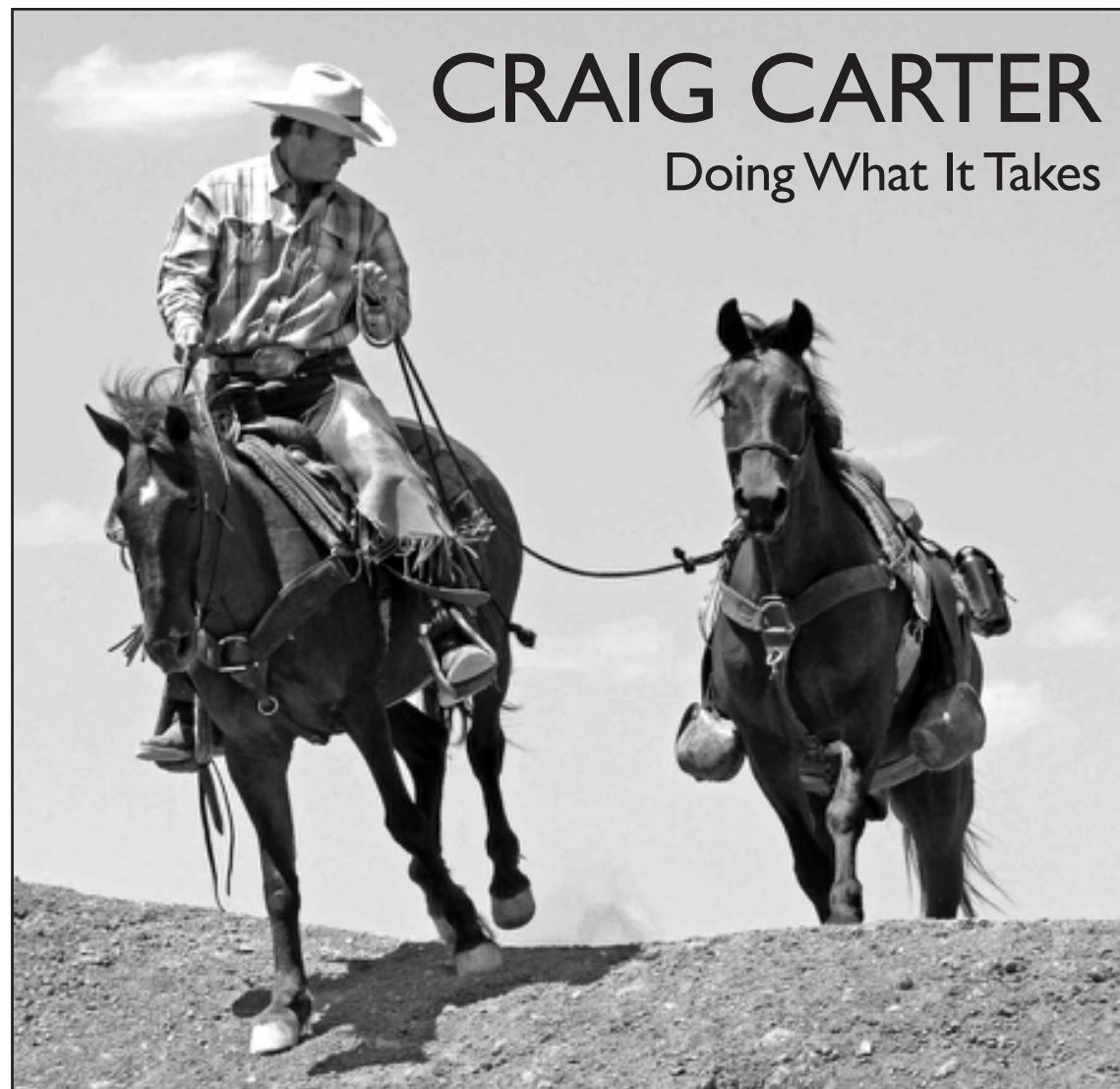


Photo by Luc Novovitch

Craig Carter at Spring Creek Ranch.

by *Barbara Novovitch*

Wrangler/stuntman/actor for more than 20 Hollywood films and TV productions, impresario for European TV reality shows, European and U.S. commercials – Craig Carter says “that’s what it takes to make a living in the Big Bend.” Then the blue-eyed singer-songwriter grins and rephrases his statement: “No, that’s what it takes to *keep* living out here.”

Although he’s traveled throughout Europe and the United States, Carter can’t imagine living anywhere other than the Big Bend. His home now is a trailer, porches added, on Spring Creek Ranch midway between Marathon and Big Bend National Park. He spent his teenage years in the park and was largely home-schooled after attending grades one through five in Marathon. “I never liked school,” he admits. “I’d rather get a book and find it out for myself.”

Teaching himself to play guitar at age 17, he started writing songs. Those musical talents led eventually to film connections, where he put his horsemanship and knowledge of livestock to

work in all the work of a film wrangler. He had the best teacher close at hand during his early years – his dad Lynn owned the Chisos Remuda horse concession in the national park for 22 years and offered horseback tours at Spring Creek Ranch when the family moved there in 1993.

Lynn Carter died suddenly in 1998. Craig had migrated to Nashville, Tenn. a few years before, seeking singer-songwriter connections. He bought a faltering tape supply delivery company and turned it into a \$3-4 million-per-year business. “I’m the first recording artist you’ve met to go platinum on blank tape,” he jokes.

Craig’s first film work was in 1997 as stuntman/actor in director Steven Frears’ *The Hi-Lo Country*, and Craig and his father both appeared in *Dancer, Texas Pop. 81*, shot in Fort Davis and directed by Tim McCanlies. Shortly after Lynn’s death, Craig sold the Nashville tape supply. Then he got a call from fellow Texan McCanlies to work for him again – as stuntman/horse wrangler for his *Secondhand Lions*, which starred Robert Duvall and Michael Caine.

“Then I did the remake of *The Alamo* – wrangling and stunts. That took care of 10 months or so. With my dad passing – I still miss him every day – I was ready to get back anyway,” said Carter. “I wasn’t geared to live in Nashville. I had a couple of offers from labels, but I was too independent – too West Texas, I guess.”

Now 47, Carter is slim, 6-foot-2 and perennially jeans-and-boot-clad. He spends his time maintaining water levels for the Spring Creek wildlife, caring for the livestock, working with his wife Shannon on film projects and “being a father.”

Craig and Shannon met while both were working on the PBS reality series “Texas Ranch House,” shot south of Alpine. “She was the art director; I was the wrangler/safety. She knocked me down like I was a 10-year-old kid. I fell in love with her...and I still am.” Although brought up in Los Angeles, Shannon’s grandfather was a rodeo competitor, and she knew horses and wrangling. Craig flew several times to L.A. to woo her, and the two were married; she joined him at Spring Creek Ranch in 2007.

They named their daughter Sadie Phlynn (born Aug. 5, 2008) after both their fathers – Ph for Shannon’s father Philip and Lynn after Craig’s father. She’s the subject of a song Craig performs with his Spur of the Moment Band: “Sucking Down a Bottle of Leche.”

“I’ve played it a couple of times, and the crowd thought it was pretty funny.”

Craig, who speaks fluent Spanish, has written about 100 songs. His “Mamacita” was recently recorded by country star Trent Wilmon. Craig’s own recordings (“Lorena” and “Hecho in Mexico” are among his most popular songs) are available at record stores in Alpine (Johnson’s and Bill Ivey).

Craig’s Spur of the Moment Band (Zack Casey of Odessa, lead guitar; Charlie Thomas of Alpine, drums; Chuck Jividen of Alpine, guitar; and Jim Hall of Fort Davis, bass) play frequent private parties and benefits in the Big Bend area. “In Alpine in February, we played for Texas Parks and Wildlife and the local ranchers who were losing antelope. We play for the Marathon clinic every year – we gave the clinic a check for \$15,000 the first year.”

But his local band members have regular jobs, so Craig plays his European gigs alone or with pickup backup. His European tours – 55 already, to virtually all of Europe – were often arranged

through George Hug, a Swiss CW singer. “He heard my stuff when he was here on tour, and we became friends. He’s like the George Strait of Switzerland,”

Carter expects to return to Europe this fall to host another season of a Western-themed reality show called “Zulu Cattle Race,” which is owned by Eyeworks of Denmark, with affiliates in 16 countries.

Craig says he’s heard rumors from his contacts that Texas is not getting as much film work lately. He fears that Louisiana and New Mexico are cutting into Texas’ traditional lure of commanding vistas of hill country, urban areas, coastline, mountains and desert.

Evan Fitzmaurice, head of the Texas Film Commission, said it’s true Louisiana has a strong incentive program. But he noted the Texas incentives had been ramped up in 2009 so that film, TV or video-game companies shooting in Texas receive a percentage return on their spending. “The challenge we have every couple of years is to get re-appropriated,” he said. With Texas vistas and the capable production crews available here, he said, “we’re competitive.”

“One of Texas’ strongest assets” is crew depth, the film commission Web site says. “These are not trainees but experienced professionals who get it right the first time.”

Craig Carter is one of those. He got early training in the 90s, and the film connections and later TV links came through his playing at the Ben Johnson celebrity rodeo (Johnson had won a best supporting actor Academy award for *The Last Picture Show* in 1971. He is the only man to have won an Oscar and a rodeo world championship).

“It was a benefit for cystic fibrosis in Houston in the late 80s – and I was hired as entertainment. I met lots of film people, and Adam Taylor (son of Buck Taylor of “Gunsmoke”) and I became like brothers. He was on his way to becoming a director – I would stay weeks or months in Los Angeles with him. He was working on little movies – you learn how to do it. One day I’d be driving a stunt car, the next day lighting a shot.

“Adam was getting assistant directing jobs – I probably worked on 15 films. Or else I’d be security, spend the night on a set, act bit parts, be an extra. We were on our way to a lifelong partnership when he was killed in a motorcycle accident. He was the assistant director on Tombstone when he died.”

Craig was interviewed in director Ron Stone’s *Eyes of Texas*. For Tommy Lee Jones’ *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*, Carter was gang boss/wrangler and stuntman. He was head wrangler for Ethan and Joel Coen’s *No Country for Old Men*, largely filmed near Sanderson. He also worked on their *True Grit*, a remake of the John Wayne classic. Last year, Carter served as head wrangler/stuntman for young Texas director Tanner Beard, whose *The Legend of Hell’s Gate* is being shown at film festivals.

“As wrangler, you supply gentle, safe animals to work with – you teach actors to look right and be safe. You supply whatever it calls for – I don’t keep a tiger or wolf or rattler, but I know where to get them,” Carter said.

Earlier, Craig was head wrangler/safety on four CMT reality series, and he was the host/coordinator for an Italian reality series called “Arizona Cowboy.” His commercial gigs for U.S. audiences have included Dr. Pepper, U.S. Air and Budweiser; for European audiences he promoted Winston and Marlboro cigarettes.

But all the demands of the jobs have left him with a permanent sore back – “horse wrecks,” he explained. “I’m still active, but I have more reasons to stay

home. It’s not the years, it’s the mileage... I always said I wanna ride horses, play music and make movies. And it all came together.

“Now, being married and having a baby girl, I’m not interested in being gone 150 days a year.”

Then he added, “I’ve spent 25 years busting my butt not to have a real job – a real job takes all the creativity away. I’m not worried about the star aspect of it. You hit a lick on the right show, you can make a coupla months’ salary in a week. I want to continue to write, continue to sing, continue to live in the Big Bend.”



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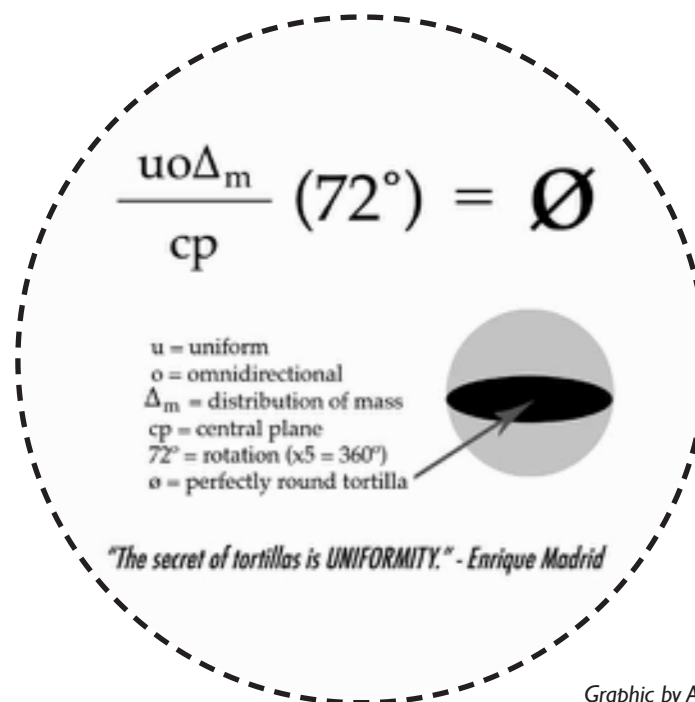
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Board Certified OB/Gyn

Dr. Sohl is an Honors graduate from the University of Texas San Antonio. She earned her undergraduate degree from University of Texas at Austin. She is an Alpine native and has special interests in menopause, pelvic floor surgeries and women's health issues. To make an appointment with Dr. Sohl, please call 432-837-0430.



Graphic by Alyce Santoro

THE SOCIAL & SCIENTIFIC IMPLICATIONS of the PERFECTLY ROUND TORTILLA

by *Alyce Santoro*

When I first set out to make art about science I imagined making technical renderings of specimens in black ink for textbooks. While enrolled in school for scientific illustration, however, I found that sound, sculpture, weaving, writing, gardening and cooking are also media that can be used to explore and express particular aspects of the wonders of our world. As years have passed, I've become increasingly concerned with humanity's impact on nature and our inherent interconnectedness with it and with one another. I'm not exactly illustrating science anymore as much as I'm attempting to express – in lots of different ways – a sense of awe at it.

"The things to do are: the things that need doing that you see need to be done, and that no one else seems to see need to be done," R. Buckminster Fuller said. "Then you will conceive your own way of doing that which needs to be done, that no one else has told you to do or how to do it. This will bring out the real you that often gets buried inside a character that has acquired a superficial array of behaviors induced or imposed by others on the individual."

I learned about Enrique Madrid

shortly after moving to Texas from Brooklyn in 2006. I was in the midst of a lengthy discussion with a new friend on the possible social impact of discoveries in quantum physics when he mentioned a local scholar and native of the Texas/Mexico border who had developed a formula that related Big Bang Theory to the making of a perfectly round tortilla. In that moment I knew that a meeting with this man was inevitable. I'd already created a piece titled "The Universal Raisin Cake Theory" based on an actual metaphor that astrophysicists use to describe the way the universe is expanding. Clearly this connection between physics and food would require further exploration.

In 2007, the Buckminster Fuller Institute began offering an annual prize to the individual or team that could present the most universally accessible and implementable strategy with the potential to positively impact the greatest number of people in the shortest possible time frame using the smallest number of resources. Bucky called this kind of solution a "trimtab," named for the tiny rudder on an enormous ship that performs the critical job of steering.

I had a hunch that the trimtab the

institute was looking for was going to be something tangible – like bringing solar power, sustainable agriculture or water catchment to a remote village or designing a way to supply the entire planet with wireless Internet. I was pretty certain that the winning strategy would not be a method of pointing out all the unique, individual, creative ways in which each of us – with a little encouragement – are capable of becoming trimtabs.

But to me it seems that the most efficient, affordable, accessible means of changing the world for the better is likely to come in the form of a collective mental shift. What if enough of us simply decide it is possible to contribute in positive ways to our families, communities, societies – and just do as much as we can with whatever means we have available to help make it happen?

"All of humanity now has the option to 'make it' successfully and sustainably," R. Buckminster Fuller said, "by virtue of our having minds, discovering principles and being able to employ these principles to do more with less."

My mind kept working on the riddle of the trimtab, but I didn't submit a formal entry to the competition until 2011. I titled my proposal "the Instant &

Efficient Comprehensive & Synergetic Omni-Solution, a Customizable, Interdisciplinary, Collaborative, Philosophical Approach to Social Change." The SOS project would be a call to action, a compendium of possible strategies and a means of describing, documenting and contributing to do-it-ourselves revolutions currently underway around the world.

Just as I was about to submit my application to the BFI, I was asked by Ballroom Marfa to represent them in the 2011 Texas Biennial, a statewide showcase of galleries, museums and artists. The beautiful old Masonic Hall building in downtown Marfa was offered as a place to present my project during the last weekend in April. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to launch the Synergetic Omni-Solution so close to home and wanted to include local visionaries – people who seemed to be engaged already in Synergetic Omni-Solutions of their own. I knew immediately that Enrique Madrid and his tortilla formula would be a perfect fit.

To many, the profound power and meaning contained in the everyday act of tortilla-making may not be so obvious.

In late March, after trying to make a

date to visit the Madrids for several years, the moment had at last arrived to spend a day with Enrique and Ruby at their home in Redford learning, cooking and eating.

From the moment I walked through the door, I was immersed in the sights, sounds, aromas and tastes of border culture. (Part of Enrique's mission is to "preserve endangered flavors.") Over Ruby's superb cappuccino we discussed philosophy, politics and methods of non-violent activism. Enrique read from passages he'd carefully highlighted, underlined and earmarked in his vast collection of books. The day began with a reading from *Morality* by Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: "To determine what is morally right, we should ask who gets harmed, how and how much. The debate should be about how to avoid and prevent harm."

We discussed ways in which feeding people is a radical act – to keep people hungry is to oppress them. To teach someone to cook wholesome, tasty food is to provide them with the wisdom to feed themselves, their families and their communities in body and spirit.

Then we moved on to tortillas and to the research behind the discovery of Enrique's famous formula. While travel-

ing extensively in Mexico, Ruby and Enrique noticed that nearly every tortilla is perfectly round. Ruby and Enrique concluded that the making of a round tortilla is a right of passage – if a person can make a perfect tortilla, it not only means that the person is a meticulous cook, it also implies that they are capable of growing corn, harvesting it, grinding it, making the masa and feeding a family.

It turns out that the universe at the moment of the Big Bang and a testal – a ball of masa about to become a perfect tortilla – obey the same simple principle: uniformity. The early universe expanded out uniformly in all directions to create a sphere. The central plane of that sphere is a flat, perfectly round disk – exactly like a well-made tortilla.

The tortilla formula is best demonstrated using wheat flour dough. The basic idea is to begin with a round ball of dough about the size of an egg. Place your dough ball on a floured board, then use a rolling pin to apply 14 pounds per square inch of pressure. Roll up 1 inch and down 1 inch to create a groove. Rotate the dough 72 degrees. Now roll again – this time up 2 inches, down 2 inches, with the same amount of pressure, to create a wider groove. Rotate 72 degrees again. Repeat this process,

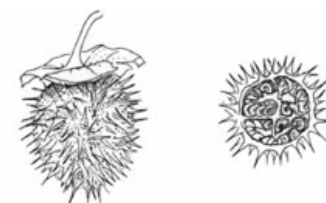
rolling out further on every rotation, until you have turned the dough five times. (Five times 72 equals a full rotation of 360 degrees.) For a more detailed lesson featuring Enrique himself, please see "The Social and Scientific Implications of the Perfectly Round Tortilla," a short video on my YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/alyceobvious.

I refer to many of my own works of art as "philosoprops," objects that can be used to start a conversation about philosophical or scientific concepts (there are many examples on my Web site at www.alycesantoro.com). During the course of the three-day Synergetic Omni-Solution launch event I served loaves of Universal Raisin Cake baked in a solar oven, we ate Buckyballs made of ice-cream cones, I demonstrated how a Ruben's Tube makes sound waveforms visible in flames, and I taught a group of desert-dwellers how to harness the wind and use it to sail around downtown Marfa. As far as I'm concerned, however, the quantum tortillas that Enrique taught a hungry crowd to make at the Masonic Hall were some of the most effective and tasty philosoprops ever.

If Buckminster Fuller were around today, I like to imagine he'd agree that trimtabs come in many forms and that

the more of them we have at our disposal, the better off we'll be. Perhaps some of the most efficient trimtabs may be found in things so obvious we tend to overlook them – ancient techniques and cultural traditions passed down from generation to generation, for example. It's even possible that there are tens of thousands of trimtabs being rolled out in households throughout Mexico, on the Texas/Mexico border and around the world right this very moment...

For more information, please visit Synergetic-Omni-Solution.com, AlyceSantoro.com and BallroomMarfa.org. The author would like to thank Ballroom Marfa, Toni and Jeff Beauchamp, the Texas Biennial, the Texas Commission on the Arts, Jeff Fort, Rob Crowley, Ruby and Enrique Madrid and all the members of the community (especially Marfa High School art students and Marfa Elementary second graders) who offered the support, skills, expertise and enthusiasm that made – and continue to make – the Synergetic Omni-Solution possible.



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Photo courtesy Archives of the Big Bend, Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas
The Nail Ranch inside what is now Big Bend National Park.

Sam and Nena Nail's Place

by Ron Payne

A word or two about the Sam Nail Ranch. Sam Nail brought his bride to this desolation to run sheep and goats on about 18,000 acres of land that, by the time Sam got here in the early 1920s, had been so overgrazed that it will probably be another 200 years before it can be grazed to any productive effect again. For Nena, and the daughter the couple would soon have, Sam built an adobe house, about 20-by-12, on a flat spot just up a low-grade slope from the well he dug not far from Cottonwood Creek. They planted two pecan trees and one fig tree in what would be their front yard to supplement the garden vegetables, chicken, eggs, mutton and goat meat they could raise on their own.

The park literature does not say, but I'd guess that Sam and Nena were only too happy to sell their land to the state of Texas in 1944 when the state was accumulating sufficient Big Bend desert-and-mountain country to be able to deed it to the federal government for a national park. No doubt they missed their pecan and fig trees, to say nothing of the stunning views that greeted them no matter which way they looked morning, noon or evening, but living in any town had to be a whole lot easier than scratching out a living on this ranch.

Only two terribly eroded adobe walls remain

to invite the visitor into the Nails' living room, and the mesquite and cacti have grown so thick in what was once their home that you can only step through the "door" and use your imagination to see them at the end of a hard-scrabble day. The two pecan trees and the fig are still there, and as we sat on the bench beneath one of the pecans, the green-hulled nuts played an occasional percussive note on the hard-beaten javelina path that has been widened to accommodate visitors like us.

The nuts had to drop close by to attract our attention, because Sam's old windmill still catches the wind, probably because someone has kept it in repair to pump Sam's well to a small "tank" or pool at its base to serve as a water source for wildlife that now call this their ranch. The rotary motion of the windmill is transferred to reciprocal motion by the gearbox, which now makes a very arthritic continuing groan as the vane turns the blades to catch even whispers of breeze. The thumpa-pa-thumpa-pa of the pump plunger sounds like a heartbeat as it draws the lifeblood of the desert from this rocky slope to make of this scrub-grown, abandoned front yard a shaded oasis.

Before we got back to sit down on the bench, I noticed what I thought was a carelessly tossed-

aside piece of scrap paper. Probably a pink candy wrapper, I thought, as I turned to step off the trail onto the yellow leaf-litter recently shed by the spindly saplings of Mexican buckeyes and willows. The pink that caught my eye raised its head about 3 inches off the golden background and surveyed the threat I presented.

The shade of coral-pink of the coloration of the western coachwhip snake can look at first glance like a piece of cellophane in Brewster County, Texas. This one was the length of several dozen candy-bar wrappers, probably about 5 feet long. Although the coachwhip was absolutely no danger to me or to anything other than the kangaroo rats or a small lizard or two it would seek out, there is something about happening upon a serpent that, I suspect, invariably causes a quick intake of breath.

When the creature raised its head to look in my direction, I was Rikki-Tikki-Tavi confronting Nag and Nagaina, and Jane was little Teddy in that garden in the Sugauli Cantonment of Bihar State in Kipling's India. Like Rikki, I gave no ground. I did not attack like Rikki to kill Karait. I watched with my mongoose-like eyes, and the nearly 2 meters of coral slid away and soon could no longer be distinguished from the red rocks beyond the deciduous blanket that had made it so paisley-plain.

We were soon out of Kipling territory, because the first bird we saw as we sat down on the bench was not Rikki's friend the Tailor Bird; instead it was a white-winged dove. Nearly a quarter larger than the mourning dove that we are accustomed to seeing back in Ohio, the white-winged dove looks a lot like its smaller cousin, except of course for the leading-edge white feathers on its wings.

The dove was indifferent to our presence on the bench. We ate the sandwiches and fruit Jane had packed for the lunch on our intended hike up the dry Cottonwood. About 30 feet in front of us amidst a tangle of brush stood a large century

plant, an agave with very large, sharply pointed succulent leaves that can spend years, five to perhaps 20 but seldom a hundred years, taking in sufficient nutrient to cause it to flower. Then it shoots up a branched stalk of blooms nearly overnight, extending its fragrant blossoms for a particular species of bat to satisfy its palate with nectar and to pollinate the seeds for the next generation. Century plants die as soon as the flower stalk has matured, and their remains take many more years to decay in this desiccated graveyard of dead plants.

With the wind whistling its midday melody, we listened to the life-giving thumpa-pa of the pump plunger and did not hear the fox. It was the movement of rust and gray in the underbrush that caught Jane's attention. My fascination followed her silent touch on my right arm.

Like the coachwhip snake, we had first caught sight of the stately gray fox when we were but a week's residents of the park. This one, however, did not strut its haute couture out in the open like the one we first watched. Shy and with frequent glances in alert surveillance, it poked its cat-like nose this way and that, sniffing for a bite of grasshopper, and then disappeared.

We could not see the pool of fresh water being thumpa-pumped at the base of the windmill just to the right of the century plant, but the constant traffic of a variety of birds kept each of us in a birder's rapture. In the order in which I wrote them in the field notebook that we carry in our birding vest, as we sat there in our solitary pew for a three-hour Sunday service of wonder and praise, we saw the white-winged dove, ruby-crowned kinglet, northern mockingbird, northern cardinal, hermit thrush, ladder-back woodpecker, verdin, white-crowned sparrow, black-tailed gnatcatcher, house wren, pyrrhoulaxia, spotted towhee, white-throated sparrow, greater roadrunner, common raven and cordilleran flycatcher. This

last in the list, the cordilleran or western flycatcher was a "lifer" for us, meaning this was our first sighting of this species in our lifetime. This brought to nearly 400 the species on our "life list." Since there are over 900 kinds of birds in the United States, we have a lot of birding left to do before we follow Sam and Nena.

Seldom have we been so fortunate as to be so intimate in attendance with the comings and goings of such a variety of West of the Pecos wildlife. During that afternoon of worship, three times the fox reappeared usher-like to see if there was yet an offering to be received. At the end, a coyote in shaggy vestment, by crossing the trail about 20 yards to our left, announced, "The Mass is ended. Go in Peace."

Almost immediately another birder, alone, appeared for the next service, and we lingered only long enough to share with her what she was likely to encounter. But the truth is that we probably wasted our breath in giving her our "heads up." It is the unforeseen encounters that make a day worshipful. The Wonder that fulfills our lives cannot be plotted. Neither technology nor sophistication is necessary for an encounter with the Mystery. The legacy of those who've been here before, digging wells and planting trees, is more than a helpful coincidence. With all that preparation, all the Mystery asks of us is time, attention and patience.



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NOW SHOWING AT FORT LEATON: The Really Wild West!

by *Erin Caro Aguayo*

The picture-perfect scenery and lazy waves of summer heat near Presidio and Big Bend Ranch State Park belie a past steeped in violence, secrets and treachery. And throughout the last 160 years of that past has stood the building originally called El Fortín, then El Fortín de Burgess and finally El Fortín de Leaton, Fort Leaton.

This fort was never a military fort but one built by the trader, mercenary, land grabber and shady dealer Ben Leaton to protect his merchandise, horses, men and family from Indian raids and theft.

Throughout its history, the fort has been a crossroads for freighters and travelers coming from Chihuahua through La Junta de los Rios/Presidio and on into Texas and beyond.

It was a residence until the 1920s and then had the good luck to be the focus of the preservation movement that began in the 1930s and continued through the 1960s. When it came into the hands of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) in the 1970s, it opened as a state historic site, telling the story of the region and its people.

With an average yearly visitation of 6,500 people, the fort has been a popular stop along the River Road since then. But with parks and wildlife's increased focus on Big Bend Ranch State Park, the fort, which is a natural jumping off place for park visitors, deserved some sprucing up.

These days, the heavy and low-lit exhibits from the 70s are being updated and freshened by exhibit and curatorial staff, headed by Dana Younger and Joanne Avant and assisted by Linda Hedges, Nola Davis and Tim Roberts.

The "new" fort will be partially furnished with period pieces, and the original look of the fort will be further demonstrated in sketches of the rooms as they might have looked.

Throughout the life of the fort historic site there has been a video about the fort's history. Tony Manriquez, the site superintendent, wanted also to replace the video that introduces visitors to Fort Leaton. He wanted to cover two big pieces of fort history that had not been well addressed – Ben Leaton's story and how parks and wildlife went about preserving the site of the fort in the 1970s.

These two parts of the story seemed a natural for the new video, and so the work began.

Angela Reed and Cindy Brandimarte from TPWD's Austin headquarters wrote the script and produced the film, and Alpine artist Avram Dumitrescu provided watercolor illustrations.

Tackling a video story for which there was no photographic record was a challenge, but the writers were unfazed.

"We turned to Fort Davis resident and historian Lonn Taylor to come up with a story line," Brandimarte said. "Angela and I worked on a script, and we ran into a big problem: How do you tell that story? Photography had just been invented."

"We didn't have historic photos of that site and certainly not of Ben Leaton," Reed said, "nor of any of the wild and dramatic events that are part of the story."

They needed pictures, but where would they come from?

"Lonn Taylor suggested Alpine illustrator Avram Dumitrescu to create watercolor drawings; so we contacted him," Reed said.

"We found one image from the Marfa Public Library titled 'Ben Leaton,' but we think that the photo postdates Leaton's death," Reed said.

"There were no known photographers in Texas until the 1840s, typically in cities; the earliest known photographer in San Antonio was 1850, and Leaton died in 1851. So, it is possible but not likely that it's Leaton, in our opinion," Brandimarte said.

"Without the face of Ben Leaton or of any of the people we were talking about, we didn't know how to depict him," Reed said. "We asked that when Avram drew him that it was never a straight-on image of his face because we don't know what he looked like."

"I did each illustration in pencil," explained Dumitrescu, "and some of them came together pretty quickly, but others I'd send a sketch, and they'd make suggestions, and I'd make changes and send it back. I could go into Photoshop and move things, combine various sketches and so on. I was using technology to make it easier. If I hadn't had e-mail, I couldn't have done it."

continued on page 27





Milton Faver

The earliest large-scale cattleman to settle in the Big Bend, Milton (Don Melton) Faver prospered against seemingly impossible odds to become the first cattle baron west of the Pecos. While operating a freighting business on the Chihuahua Trail, he moved his family to Presidio del Norte and opened a general store about 1855. After accumulating a large herd of cattle in Mexico he moved his family and vaqueros to the mountain country north of Presidio and made his headquarters on Cibolo Creek in 1857. He established two other ranches at nearby La Cienega and La Morita. Springs flowed abundantly on all three ranches, providing water for livestock and agriculture. In the fertile fields surrounding the ranches, Faver devised and installed irrigation systems that supplied water for vegetables, grain, and large peach orchards. El Fortin del Cibolo, ranch headquarters, served as a supply station for the U. S. Army quarter-master division at Ft. Davis. Troops used the ranch as a point of departure for forays into Indian occupied regions to the west and north. Celebrated for his hospitality, Faver was known as a gentleman of means who lived in style. He died in December 1889 and was buried on his ranch at Cibolo.

Texas Historical Commission 1992

Photo courtesy Archives of the Big Bend, Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas

Milton Faver

by Bob Miles

This lengthy marker would seem to tell the whole story of this frontier rancher, but for a man like "Don Melton" Faver, it only touches the highlights. Like many of the first Anglo settlers in the Big Bend Country, his early life is somewhat of a mystery. He was born around 1821, and he claimed he was born in Missouri in one census and Virginia in another. The most colorful tale of how he came to the Southwest claims he and another man got in a fight in Missouri. Thinking he had killed the other, Faver headed west ahead of the law. Years later, the story goes, he learned the other man had lived and that he was not a fugitive.

Somehow he found himself in Meoque, Chihuahua, where he worked at a flour mill. There he met and married Francisca Ramirez. He operated a freighting business for a time. Faver and his bride then moved to Presidio del Norte (present-day Ojinaga) and opened a general store. Around 1857, he crossed the river and established his three ranches next to dependable springs near today's Shafter, in country that was still largely controlled by the Apaches.

His adobe headquarters at Cibolo were apparently built like the old Spanish presidios, heavily fortified with towers in opposite corners of the rectangular walled compound. La Cienega was

less of a fortress, but with thick adobe walls and gun ports. The third ranch, La Morita, was apparently the least fortified.

Those were the days of open range, and Faver's Mexican longhorns ran wild and multiplied. It was said he did not know how many head of cattle he owned, as many were unbranded and ran wild in the rugged country. He also raised sheep and goats, primarily at La Morita. Orchards and vegetable gardens were watered from the springs that still flow today.

As many as 85 Mexican vaqueros and workers made their homes on Faver's ranches, receiving two bits (12 and a half cents) a day, plus food, shelter, clothing and medical attention. Operating like a medieval feudal lord, Faver prospered in spite of frequent Apache raids, which were launched even on the fortified buildings. Most of his herds were taken at least twice, and during a raid on La Morita Faver's foreman was killed and the foreman's wife and two sons taken captive.

Favor sold cattle and other goods to Fort Davis, and Cibolo served for a time as a sub-post and supply depot for Army patrols.

continued on page 27

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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.

by Jim Glendinning

FRAN SAGE

"I didn't know we were poor, everyone was the same," explains Fran Sage when talking about her upbringing in Belvedere, Ill., 50 miles northwest of Chicago. Born Frances Kellogg on Jan. 16, 1932, the second of three girls, her lasting early memories are of her mother, Esther, whom she describes as a life-long influence on her education. Her father, Jack Kellogg, an electrician, struggled to find work during the Depression, and the family moved several times to California and later Montana. Finally starting a promising business of his own, Jack died tragically during a botched operation in Missoula, Mont. in 1945.

Fran enjoyed school, studied hard and did well. At home, she studied the Greek philosophers and taught herself French. She lived in Montana from 1943 to 1966 and graduated in 1950 from Billings Senior High School, salutatorian in a class of 300, with history and political science her major interests. She had met Jim Sage, a cousin of a close friend, in 1948, and the couple married in June 1950. A daughter, Sandy, was born a year later, and a son, Steve, followed.

She joined the League of Women Voters around that time, a move which "saved my life," she says. The 25 members of the local group met regularly and discussed issues of national interest. In 1961, dropping out of the league, which had changed its focus, she enrolled at the University of Montana at Missoula, graduating four years later with a B.A. in English. Jim, who worked in Billings for a paper company, joined the family in Missoula at weekends.

Fran next was awarded a fellowship



Photo by Jim Glendinning

FRAN SAGE Calamity Creek

from the University of Texas at Austin for a National Defense Education Act Ph.D. program. The family moved to Austin in 1966. Jim earned a B.A. in Spanish and later an M.S. in foreign language education while Fran completed her Ph.D. on the poet Robert Bly. She later taught in the English department on a second fellowship until 1974 and subsequently at St. Edwards College. In the 1980s she moved out of teaching into education administration, working in Austin for the American Association of University Professors and later the Texas Faculty Association.

In addition to office work, she traveled, lobbied the Texas legislature, put out a newsletter and arranged conferences. She retired in 1994.

Seeking to retire in mountain terrain



Photo by Jim Glendinning

KATE THAYER Marathon

that reminded them of Montana, but without the cold, Jim and Fran immediately took to the Big Bend region, building a house in South Double Diamond south of Alpine in 1995. Looking to the south one morning she was appalled to see a cloud of pollution obscuring the view. She called the Sierra Club and got involved.

Fran Sage became a steadfast activist voice on environmental matters, writing regularly for the local media as well as building the local Sierra Club chapter to 110 members. She counts as victories the Entrada al Pacifico movement and the bentonite crushing plant east of Alpine, both blocked. But the environmental fight never ends, she believes, and the "Water Wars" are now on, she warns.



Photo by Jim Glendinning

ZOEY SEXTON Terlingua

KATE THAYER

It comes as a surprise to find out that the person responsible for the most beautiful table arrangement and healthiest breakfast in the Big Bend region used to work in a Houston steel mill. But as Kate Thayer, co-owner of Eve's Garden Bed & Breakfast in Marathon, describes her life, this fact emerges. And in addition to her fine baking and cooking skills, she does beautiful flower arrangements.

Kate Thayer was born in Houston on June 27, 1946, the fourth of seven children and the first born in Texas. Both parents came from the East Coast, and both were painters. She remembers childhood as outdoors, up in trees and in the woods of East Houston, where her

family lived. The family later moved to the Southside Place, a small community within the Loop, and Kate began high school at Lamar High School but later transferred to San Jacinto High School downtown. She was smart enough to get by, she says, but quit in 1964.

She first met Mel Baker in a bowling alley in 1965, and they married a year later. They lived above a shop in Westbury Square, then a global-village shopping center. Mel worked with computers. Their son Noble was born in 1969. Kate worked in an art-photography studio and helped start a recycling center and build a downtown park for Earth Day. Mel got a better job in Livermore, Calif., and they lived there for five years. The marriage ended in divorce in 1972, and Kate and Noble returned to Houston.

Working as a sales clerk at Foley's was boring and poorly paid, Kate says, but communal living in the Montrose district from 1973 to 1977 kept down living costs. Kate worked for seven years, from 1979 to 1986, at the Baytown Steel Mill — work that was much better paid but demanding. Hard manual work in the summer heat of Houston was one thing, but the level of sexual harassment was worse. Notwithstanding, she survived and took a buy out in 1986.

Remarried in Houston in 1987, Kate had a comfortable life in the Houston suburbs and learned to cook, took art classes and traveled. She was unhappy in the marriage, however, and it ended in divorce 12 years later. For 10 years, she had been visiting Big Bend, where her brother Ted resided, so she now took the opportunity to move there. In 1999, she bought a small 1905 house in Marathon.

Clyde Curry was building a straw-bale house in Marathon and had had bed and breakfast experience previously. The couple decided to start a new bed and breakfast, called Eve's Garden, which opened in 2001. Kate and Clyde married

a year later. The building, still being worked on, combines art, architecture and ecology. Few who enter for the first time are not impressed by the vibrant colors in the domed bedrooms, the wild garden which supplies vegetables for meals, the pool and the artworks hanging in the main house. And when the breakfast arrives with an edible nasturtium petal, the experience is complete.

ZOEY SEXTON

A transition from the Canadian border to the border with Mexico is about as far as one can travel domestically. In the case of Zoey Sexton, it has been a long trip but a successful one. She was born, the third of four children, on April 21, 1950 to Sid and Charlotte Nelson in Bemidji, Minn., 100 miles from the Canadian border. Childhood was a happy memory of outdoor life on the 200 acres her dad farmed. "It was a rich life," Zoey recalls, "not monetarily, but the family never lacked."

She was a shy country youngster and moving from nearby Carlake grade school (14 kids total) to Bemidji High School in 1968 (class of 250) was difficult, and she didn't easily fit in. Her interest was in English, and a teacher introduced her to *Beowulf* and Shakespeare. "A great basic education," she recalls.

At Bemidji High she met Kevin Sexton, through a cousin, and they fell in love. They were married in 1971, and their son Chad Mathew was born in December of that year. They moved to St. Paul, where Kevin became a systems analyst for a software company and in 1991 started his own business. Zoe worked for Security Life Insurance Company for 16 years, rising to assistant vice president (technology).

In 1995 she fell ill, with Lyme disease. With hindsight, she now sees this as a blessing in disguise. Zoey and Kevin quit business life, sold their house and bought a truck, with few plans except to head south.

They had heard about the Big Bend area of Texas and, when they arrived, fell in love with it. A chance meeting with Angie Dean, proprietor of the Starlight Theater in Terlingua Ghost Town, led to a job offer. This was fun, and she worked there from 1997 to 1999 and subsequently at Lajitas Stables. Kevin meanwhile worked for Far Flung Adventures as a river guide.

Zoe was kicked by a horse in 2004 and took almost three years to heal, but redirected her thoughts to a different lifestyle. After living in an RV, Kevin announced he wanted to build. They bought land in a valley on Terlingua Ranch and with little experience started to build. The result was a rock house with porches all round, a pitched roof and tile floor. Huge rainwater tanks and stabling for their horses are adjacent. They are close to nature. A Scott's oriole sang a sweet song just outside the house as we spoke.

"We destroy the earth that feeds us; we must learn to take care of ourselves ecologically," Zoe believes. In 2008 she got involved in the Terlingua Community Garden and then attached to it a farmers' market which grew. Next came the "Terlingua Green Scene," an event now in its third year, which she organizes with Shannon Carter. The Green Scene features a demonstration of building techniques and water conservation, sales of produce, ever-present music and in the evening theater and film events — a timely and popular event for today's Terlingua.



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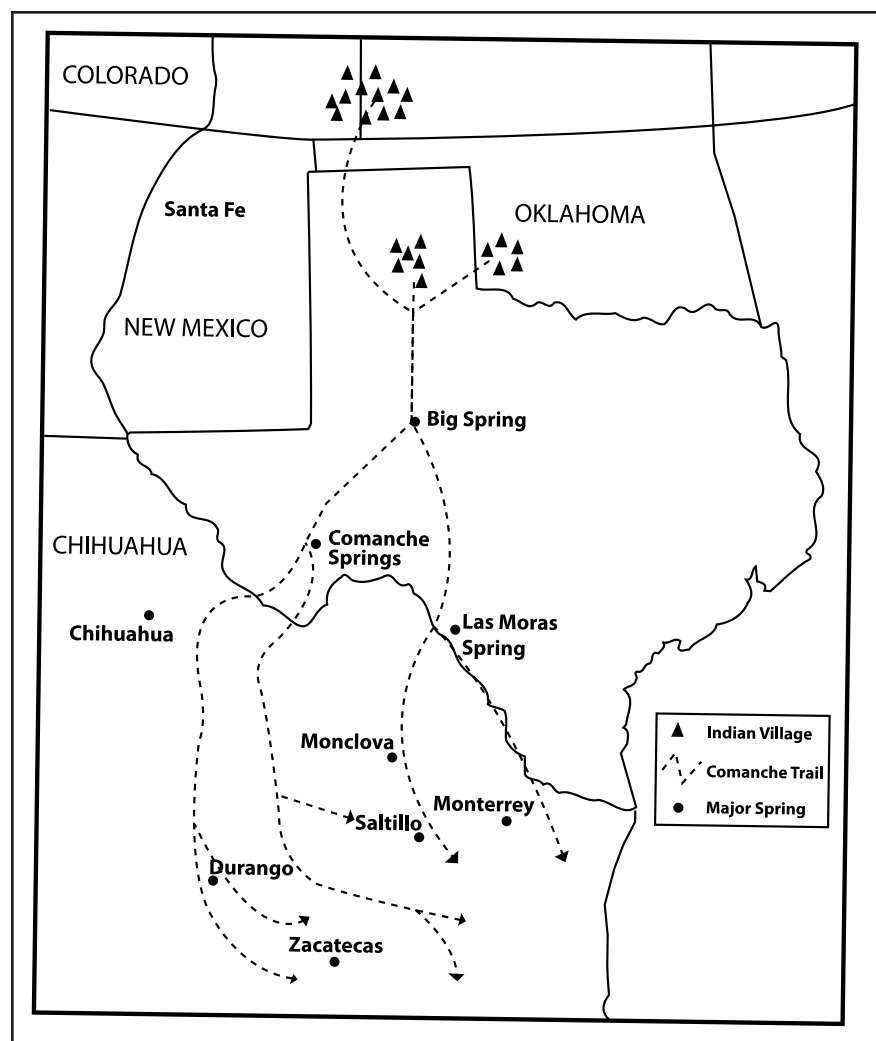
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Map courtesy Phyllis Dunham and Joe Esparza

The Comanche Trail from the Great Plains to Northern Mexico.

Obscured by time and nature, the Comanche Trail that once cut through West Texas is now more a legend than a fact, but its traces can be found on old maps, in history books and novels and, in a few places, still engraved into the desert soil. According to Big Bend National Park archeologist Tom Alex, the remains of the trail's networks in the park are readily apparent only from an aerial perspective these days, but it is still quite visible on the ground near Fort Stockton.

What was the Comanche Trail? What was it used for? How was it forged?

These questions can only be answered by first understanding the revolutionary encounter of the nomadic, buffalo-hunting Comanches with the horse. Before that fateful meeting, Comanches, a branch of Shoshones from what is now Wyoming, had been considered a backward people by other Plains Indians. They neither wove nor made pots. Their society was flat and simple with neither religious nor military chiefs beyond the leaders of small hunt-

ing bands. They had been kicked around and pushed hither and yon by other nations. Until, that is, they mounted horses. Then everything changed – irrevocably.

The Comanches' astonishing horseback rise to dominance of much of the Great Plains of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado and Kansas was based on their unparalleled proficiency in all things equine. Unlike most other Indians, they selectively bred their own horses and even gelded them for battle, and they disdained the Apache practice of eating horseflesh.

While the Apache, Kiowa, Sioux, Cheyenne, Blackfoot, Crow and others certainly prospered utilizing horses, none approached the expertise of the Comanches, who, within a few generations, so mastered horsemanship that Col. Richard Dodge, one of the first American military commanders to observe their skill, called them the "finest light cavalry in the world."

What is astounding is that this revolution occurred largely beyond the knowledge and reach of the Europeans and

Americans who had unwittingly provided the stray horses upon which the Comanches built their realm.

By the time the American settlers and military were aware that they even existed, the People, as they called themselves, had fought for and won vast stretches of the Great Plains' buffalo-hunting grounds from other nations. Their empire encompassed 240,000 square miles of what historian T. S. Fehrenbach refers to as the "richest portions of the North American bison plains, the southern stretches below the Arkansas."

The profound bond between warrior and horse began early in life. Comanche children the age of modern day-schoolers played games on horseback to learn skills that would serve them in future battles and raids. Games included picking up objects from the ground while riding at full gallop, practice for rescuing fallen battlefield comrades.

Contrary to the depictions in John Ford Westerns, it was Comanches, rather than Apaches, who originated the tactic of surrounding their prey in concentric, opposite-turning wheel forma-

tions. And it was Comanches who devised the art of sliding to the side of the horse in order to shoot from under its neck. In this fashion, according to *Empire of the Summer Moon* by S. C. Gwynne, a warrior could "loose twenty arrows in the time it took a soldier to load and fire one round from his musket." Also according to Gwynne, "It was not uncommon for a Comanche warrior to have one hundred to two hundred mounts, or for a chief to have fifteen hundred."

The Comanche story is rife with superlatives. They were arguably the most powerful group of Indians in North America. They couldn't be out-riden. They couldn't be outshot. They controlled more territory and owned more horses than anyone else – which brings us back to the creation of the Comanche Trail. If Willie Sutton robbed banks because that's where the money was, by the early 19th century Comanches raided Mexico because that's where the horses were. Lots of horses. Relatively unguarded horses.

The Spanish presidios along the

TRAIL OF FEARS:

The Comanche Trail in West Texas

by Phyllis Dunham

northeastern edge of Mexico were widely scattered, and the settlements between and beyond them were, therefore, insufficiently protected. Like a magnet over iron filings, their vulnerability and rich pickings annually enticed Comanche raiding parties across the West Texas desert during the summer and early fall. The raids, often occurring by the light of the full moon, inspired the term Comanche Moon – a time of sleepless fear for the Comanches' targets.

By this time Comanches were also lured by the goodies and skills that European-based cultures offered. The People were now well-seasoned traders as well as warriors. They raided and traded not only for horses, cattle and mules, but also human captives, who could be traded as slaves for additional loot. They also took lead from mines for ammunition, silver for decorating horses, rifles for warfare and even Mexican blacksmiths who could turn shoddy, broken firearms and pilfered metals into tools. Among the artifacts that local archeologist Richard Walter has seen are arrowheads stamped from a flattened gun barrel and from stolen silverware.

Walter says that the raids were so profitable that some Comanches could actually hire Navajos to make trappings for their horses. For such a resourceful and practical people the Comanches were curiously fond of decorations and would trade cattle and horses for what Walter calls "pretty stuff," such as cheap carnival jewelry with which they could ornament themselves and their horses. Comanche embellishments included not only bright and shiny trade objects but also scalps, animal skins and horns, cavalry jackets, bits of mirror on their shields and strips of fabric trailing from horses' manes and tails and warriors' braids, all of it fluttering in the desert wind.

Perhaps intentionally, the incongruous, and often outrageous, combinations of adornments were perplexing and terrifying to the so-called civilized.

Whatever the purpose, whether it was to indicate status or inspire fear, ornamentation was important to the Comanches, who spent so much time in the acquisition and application thereof that Walter refers to them as the "low riders" of the Indian world.

There is no doubt, however, about the purpose of the Comanche Trail. David Keller, an archeologist with the Center for Big Bend Studies, calls it the Comanches' "interstate" for reaching Mexico and driving their loot back northward. The sheer numbers – hundreds and thousands – of captured beasts and humans pushed back through West Texas toward Comanche territory on the Great Plains etched the various branches of the trail into the desert floor. It is a system rather than a single thread. From Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos River near present day Girvin, the trail leads southward to Comanche Springs in what is now Fort Stockton, before subdividing into the veins that cross the Big Bend and the capillaries beyond the Rio Grande.

Although the system is dotted with watering holes along the way (it included a stop at the springs just south of Marathon at what is now known as Post Park), many of the captives and livestock did not survive the brutal southernmost portions. The trail, over a mile wide in some segments, was littered with their bleached bones. Witnesses who reported seeing the extraordinary convoys of livestock and Comanche raiders in their dusty procession northward near modern Fort Stockton could not have imagined the magnitude of the devastation left behind in Mexico. For although Comanches were known to be kind to certain captives (so much so that many, including the famous Cynthia Ann Parker, chose to remain with them), the raids were ruthless, cutting swaths of blood and destruction across Mexico's northeastern provinces.

By the time that most famous Comanche leader of

all, Quanah Parker, the half-Comanche son of Cynthia Ann, made his first raid into Mexico and back long the trail in 1868, Fort Stockton had been built and the adjacent Comanche Springs were no longer available to the Comanches. When they reached Mexico, the 20-year-old Quanah and his fellow raiders found few horses, and even those were closely guarded. He returned home on foot. The mission was a disaster. His future battles would be with the soldiers and settlers on this side of the Mexico-Texas border.

The days of the Comanche Trail were over except in memory.

But it lives on in one of the most blood-chilling passages of American literature. Cormac McCarthy includes, in his novel *Blood Meridian*, an unforgettable visualization of the Comanche Trail in use. Terrifyingly painted and festooned with the gee-gaws of trade and plunder, both warriors and their mounts present a horrific sight. Like something from a Mad Max movie, they drive horses, mules and cattle northward, billowing dust and terror; "clad in costumes attic or biblical or wardrobed out of a fevered dream with the skins of animals and silk finery and pieces of uniforms still tracked with the blood of previous owners...one in a stovepipe hat and one with an umbrella and one in white stockings and a bloodstained wedding veil... one in a pigeontailed coat worn backwards...with their braids spliced up with the hair of other beasts until they trailed upon the ground."

No wonder so few could sleep under the light of the Comanche Moon.



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Photo Essay

The fun part of putting on the Shooting West Texas Photography Symposium is choosing which photographers to invite from year to year, so that task is shared among a great committee. Our goals are always to include variety, top photographers and people who will be of interest to photographers photographing West Texas.

Some of our audience members are interested in photographing wildlife, some in photographing grandchildren and some in West Texas culture. The three photographers represented here

are a small sample of the breadth and depth of our 2011 program.

Adam Jahiel is one of the nation's top fine-art photographers. His haunting black and white photographs of what he calls "The Last Cowboy" appear in numerous galleries worldwide. Adam uses a wide-angle lens to emphasize wide open skies and Western space. The lens also allows him to work in tight spaces, such as a corral, and still conjure space.

Laren Bridges is a jill of all trades who will talk about making a business of photography. Her work ranges from beautiful

wedding shots to senior portraits to hard-hitting sports. As a former field editor for the *American Quarter Horse Journal*, she also brings to the symposium an editor's perspective of how to shoot horses for ads, action and articles.

Russell Graves is the author and photographer of the *Kodak Most Basic Guide of Digital Nature Photography* (2008) and an award-winning teacher. So he will be an excellent "how-to" speaker on photographing wildlife, hunting, hunting dogs, fishing and the list goes on. He is the outdoor photography editor for *Texas Fish & Game* magazine.

The rest of the program includes equally talented, equally famous and equally exciting photographers. We think this event has the potential to grow into something like the Texas Cowboy Poetry Gathering. Tickets are on sale at our Web site: shootingwesttexas.org.

Members of the Shooting West Texas Photography Symposium committee are Barbara Richerson, Cesario Valenzuela, David Cockrum, Don Coers, Jim Bob Salazar, Judith Parsons, Lauren Mendias, Letitia Wetterauer, Tim Parsons and Barney Nelson.

— Barney Nelson



Russell Graves

I took this photo in the canyonlands along the Caprock Escarpment in Hall County, Texas. I was with my friend Bryan Burson on a ranch that lies along the Little Red River. Bryan's son, Dusty, is the consummate Texas cowboy – friendly, respectful and generous. On this day, he was gathering up a few horses on the ranch, and since he was a senior in high school, I told his dad that I'd shoot a few pictures of him before he went off to college. So with my camera in tow, I snapped shots of Dusty moving horses and roping horses and just documented him going about his chores. Around sunset, he was doing rope tricks while he talked to his dad and me. Seeing the potential for a great shot I crouched at a low angle and photographed him against a dark blue sky.



Laren Bridges

When you take time to look at a seemingly average gate, such as this one, there are many details that can pique your interest. I appreciate the sign, because my father, a rancher in Andrews and Nolan counties, has been a member for years. I don't think much about my composition; I shoot what is pleasing to me. It never seems to be level, centered or straight, but that's what I prefer. This was February 2007. It was raining.



Adam Jahiel

This image was made in a cow camp in northern Nevada. I have always been obsessed with light and form. I find that it is always a challenge to make photographs of horses, or anything else for that manner; that are unique and that tell a story or ask a question and give the viewer room to play. Most of my images are gut reactions; I often shoot first and ask questions later.

“Not Yet”

“Not Yet.”

I breathed out
as I panted and pedaled my way up
the rise in the “all-weather” gravel road,
that connects me with my fellow humans
living in the desert.

The Turkey Vulture’s gaze moved on to the next earthly bound creature,
as it continued
its heavenly patrol of the living and the dead.

“Later you can have me.
Then, I want to soar with you.”

I want to spend my nights where the earth reaches for the sky;
and spend my days in the heavens
Riding the winds
be they still or strong.

Exquisite master of the thermal
Daily rising from the heated earth below.
Magnificent wings,
Spread to expert advantage
of the Laws of Lift.

Soaring up beyond my view
or running your course so close to the ground
that looking up
I meet your gaze looking down.

Breathe in
Breathe out
Breathe in.

Cynthia McKaughan

Hwy 67 South

If you just
went to walkin’
out there It’s
no telling what
you’d come up
on It’s to hell
and gone from
here to there
Plum up to
them big hills
Nothing but
some scrub
and a yucca
ever now and
then A trail of
dust following
an old Ranch
truck Must be
some cows out
there And must
be a draw ’bout
half way You
can see a string
a green across
there Must be
cottonwoods
A single row
of telephone
poles running
straight in Far
as you can see
Might be some
one living back
in there Why
else would they
be Them poles.

K.B. Whitley



All Fall Down

When I first saw the old store,
the roof had fallen but not
all the way down. The rafters slanted
from the top of the high adobe
walls to the dirt floor – at midmorning
drawing a maze of shadows over
etchings made by spiders
lizards and snakes.
Yet the front of the building stood tall,
J. P. TORRES, DRY GOODS &
GROCERY fading above the old door
permanently ajar.

The Torres Store was built in late
eighteen hundreds on Torres Street,
the main street of Langtry, Texas,
which sits on a northern hump of the Rio Grande
west of Del Rio.

Termed “ghost town” in most books,
Langtry is in fact home for
about twenty people – though numbers
matter not at all to its essence.
The Torres Store is one of about
a dozen old buildings – some
inhabited, some uninhabitable,
most somewhere in between,
empty but not gone.

Early on, the Torres men had bargained
with the Galveston, Harrisburg and
San Antonio Railway to make a
loop through town (mirroring
the Rio Grande’s loop north), in trade
for water pumped far up from Osman
Canyon, ever after, in these parts,
called “Pump Canyon.”

Still standing are two of the Torres
sheep pens – one a roofless
labyrinthine rock shelter and, even more
impressive, massive rock fences built in
a cut into Eagle Nest Canyon,
testimony to the labors of
Cesario, Bernardo and Juan,
and their mother and wives
unnamed.

The front of the old store was merchandise,
the back was home.
Built of large adobe bricks
on this arid edge of the Chihuahuan Desert,
it seemed indestructible.

But in July of 2010
over fifteen inches of rain fell
in Langtry, rains that
had all the folks of town scurrying
for pans and buckets to catch drips
from holes that may
have been there for decades –
who would have known?

And on Torres Street, what might
have lasted for centuries more,
did not last the week.
One resident heard a big
boom and rushed outside
to see what had happened.
expecting a car smash-up,
rare but not unheard of on the three
streets of Langtry.
She saw nothing. Later she learned
the startling sound had been the back room
of the Torres House crashing down.
Long hidden by mesquite
and cacti, the room could not have been
seen accidentally and now
not even by intention.

A few days later,
soundlessly, the front wall and its proud
J. P. TORRES fell across
Torres Street. Adobe returning to dust,
taking with it the Texas Historical Marker,
leaving its old door poking out
from the top of the heap like parts of skeleton,
which it was.
Langtry men cleared the rubble off the street
and rescued the sign for repair –
repair and perhaps rewording:
“here stands” becomes “here once stood,”
like the Hall House across the street,
the Ice House down the block,
the cemetery, the barber shop,
the old Cantu place.

Things fall, we all know that,
they wear away, they break down.
In the abstract, “things change”
seems obvious, trite.

We are told that the Appalachian
mountains were once as tall
as the Alps. In Monument Valley,
thin red towers show the cores of
mountains. Floods create new
riverbeds and rivers dry up to become
rocky bush-filled arroyos.
We muse about time and finitude.

But in the concrete, in the adobe,
in Langtry, the falling of the Torres House
breaks our hearts.

Here of all places. Here where we have
found ten-thousand-year-old mammoth bones,
can still see on shelter walls
four-thousand-year-old paintings,
trip over stone tools and fires
of ancient hunter-gatherers.
Here we know nothing if we
do not know time and change.
Yet the fall of the Torres Store is
hard to take.

Old as it was, we took it for granted,
monument to our history,
declaring who we have been
and who we are –
and, oh, so much more –
communal and intensely personal.

We grieve as we grieve
for ourselves, our families and the
artifacts that hold our story:
here we lived, worked, raised families,
suffered our daily vicissitudes,
here we prayed, watched for rain,
looked out for each other.

These things matter, are of essence.
Though they do not last, they count.
Vitality gone to dust,
breath gone to wind,
that’s what makes our hearts ache.

But we are not inconsolable,
our pain strangely enlivening.
Our bodies and souls are
at peace with
here and gone,
time and beyond time.

Mary Locke Crofts



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Photo by Carolyn Ohl

The oasis amidst desert scrub.

Building an Oasis in the Desert

by Bill Lindemann

Tucked away in the Christmas Mountains north of Big Bend National Park is an unusual grove of native trees located in the harsh thornbush scrub of the Chihuahuan Desert. There are no springs to support these trees in a rocky landscape that originated some 40 million years ago when the Trans-Pecos region of Texas was an active volcanic field featuring fiery vents spewing out lava flows and hot ash falls. The rocks have cooled, but the area is still considered inhospitable, with less than 10 inches of annual rainfall and temperatures that reach triple digits for more than half the year.

This grove of cottonwoods, willows and mulberry trees forms a habitat that could be called an oasis. Normally, we think of an oasis as a grove of date palm trees in a sandy desert where nomads find water and rest. Replace the sand with thorny brush, the date palms with cottonwoods and the weary nomadic travelers with birds, and you have a Christmas Mountains oasis. This oasis is special because it was built by a middle-aged,

hard-working woman with no past engineering experience. Carolyn Ohl Johnson purchased a section of land and moved to the Christmas Mountains from San Antonio in the late 1970s.

Carolyn's first engineering experience came by blasting out a hole in a small hillside on her ranch and building a house in the hole. When the house was completed, she back-filled around it with dirt up to a foot below the second story roof and built a beautiful courtyard in the front yard. She married a retired heavy-machinery contractor named Sherwood Kolb, who was also an avid gardener. Both enjoyed gardening, but it was difficult having sufficient water to maintain the garden, especially after the supporting well went dry.

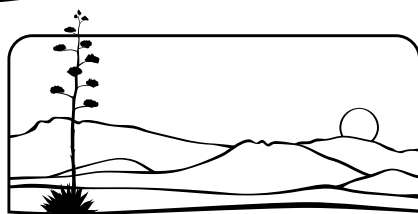
Carolyn thought of building a pond to trap and store the water that came down the dry arroyo during rainstorms. Sherwood applied his dirt-moving skills to building a concreted pond to hold the water. Carolyn began planting native trees in the mid 1990s, while Sherwood planted his garden. It quickly became apparent

that the trees alone would need much more water, so they increased their water capacity to a half million gallons by building an additional concreted pond and downsized the garden. By placing small dams, or weirs, in the arroyo, they could divert enough water to fill their storage tanks from a thunderstorm flash flood bringing an inch of rain.

Carolyn's sister-in-law, Dale Ohl, moved to Alpine in the mid 1990s and invited her to go birding; it took only a few trips for Carolyn to get "hooked." Carolyn's first exposure to birding came from an uncle while growing up in Iowa; however, she dismissed birding as a "kids' game," got married and raised her family. The second exposure to birding stuck with her, providing her an avocation that would impact her life. When Sherwood suddenly died in 2003, Carolyn decided to abandon the garden and concentrate on her oasis for birds.

She came to realize that planting trees was the easy part; keeping them alive was much

continued on page 27



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Hummingbird Display Flights

by *Bill Lindemann*

It is that time of the year when love is in the air, and all birds are preparing for the breeding season. The survival of each species depends on the success of males and females in pairing off and raising one or more families. And when it comes to hummingbirds, "love is in the air" takes on a special meaning. The courtship ritual of the male hummingbird creates an extraordinary display of aeronautical skills, as he tries to convince the female that he is the best suited to be the father of her young.

I was out in the Big Bend area over the weekend visiting one of my favorite oases in the Chihuahuan Desert. My friend, Carolyn Ohl, started 15 years ago with a dream to transform a little piece of thorn scrub into a lush oasis for wildlife, particularly birds. After much blood, sweat and tears, her oasis is functioning well, and Lucifer hummingbirds have moved in to nest in the area around the oasis. Lucifer hummingbirds are the only species with a de-curved bill and a spectacular lavender-purple gorget.

Carolyn was excited that the male Lucifers were courting the females around her oasis. She noted that about 7:30 p.m. the female would take up station in a yucca plant adjacent to her hummingbird feeders. The male would make a grand appearance out of nowhere with wings creating a buzzing sound as he zigzagged his way towards her position on a yucca leaf. When he got within a foot of her and his zigzags had narrowed to only a few inches in breadth, he suddenly turned on his afterburners and shot straight up to a height of 100 feet.

At this height, he turned into a dive straight at her. His dive speed was incredible. He became a blur and very hard to follow as he transformed into a bullet. Once he passed her position, he disappeared, presumably flying low in the brush away from her. Five to 10 minutes passed – and no sight of the male. The female appeared to become very impatient when he did not return. Every two to three minutes she would fly out from the yucca a few feet and return to her perch. About 10 minutes later, Mr. Lucifer would make another grand appearance and repeat the ritual.



Photo by Carolyn Ohl

A pair of Lucifer hummingbirds courting in the yucca.

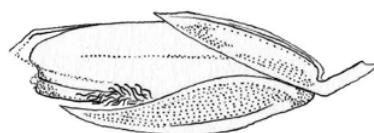
Carolyn was of the opinion that while he was away he was courting another female on the other side of her oasis. He made three dives, and the show was over that night. Why the courtship occurred late in the evening before sunset is not known, but it started happening several days before I arrived, so it is not a onetime event. As the male was zigging and zagging in front of the female he was flashing his beautiful gorget to increase her attention. The birds fly so fast that it is hard to keep track of them to be sure whether one or

more individuals are involved in this courtship.

I have witnessed several other hummingbird aerial displays before, and each male has his preferred flight pattern. Our black-chinned hummingbird makes a "U" flight above his intended partner. The ruby-throated hummingbird males make shallow dives back and forth in front of the female. Several males, including the western Anna's hummingbird, make flight patterns in the form of a "J." I have not seen but read that Rufus hummingbird males fly in vertical circle patterns in front of the females. All open their gorgets to flash their family color as they pass near a female.

Regardless of the pattern they choose to fly to impress the female, the message is the same: "Hey, hey, look at me and what I can do." In the bird world there are hundreds, possibly thousands, of courting rituals performed every breeding season to pair up the mates. Some males use songs, others do dances, while still others use an extraordinary array of colors in their plumage to convince their mates that they are the best suitors. In rare occasions, among some species like the Wilson's phalarope, the female has the colors and does the rituals to attract the male.

It is the time of the year to be aware of the sideshows that may be taking place in your backyard. Be aware that interesting events may be happening all around you when love is in the air.



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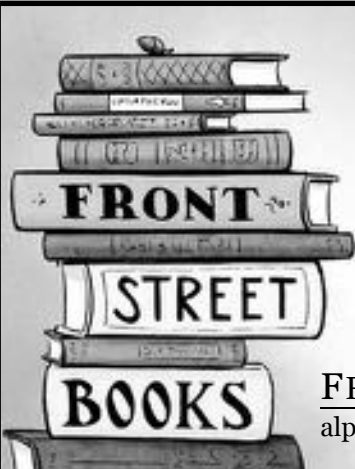
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Shooting, cont'd from page 4

photographers frequenting the region as a whole have the opportunity, if not an obligation, to educate all prospective travelers from across the continent that there are many faces to this great region. The Chihuahuan Desert is a diverse and dynamic ecosystem and offers all comers an exciting view into an unforgetting, but also mystical, land."

Meinzer will be a speaker at the 2011 Shooting West Texas Photography Symposium in Alpine, now in its third year. Serious, and even curious, photographers will take him at his word and return to the Big Bend for the symposium and some photos.

This year's event will be held Sept. 15-18 at Sul Ross State University. Speakers in addition to Meinzer include, to name only a few, T.J. Tucker, creative director for *Texas Monthly*; Robb Kendrick, *National Geographic* and tintype photographer; Russell Graves, outdoor photography editor for *Texas Fish & Game Magazine*; Adam Jahiel, whose haunting cowboy photographs have appeared in *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *New York Times*, *National Geographic Society* and worldwide; Wayne Baize, of Cowboy Artists of America; and local artists Rachael Waller and Crystal Allbright. For the full lineup and tickets, see the Web site: shootingwesttexas.org.

These presenters come from diverse backgrounds and places and employ very different methods of photographing and choosing their subjects. The attendees at the Shooting West Texas Photography Symposium are equally diverse and, on the surface, wouldn't seem to have much reason to meet.

They're young and old, urban, suburban and rural. They prefer different types of equipment – fancy digital contraptions or "point and shoot" cameras inherited from grandma. They attempt to contain sprawling landscapes with panoramic lenses or capture tiny bugs and flower buds with microscopic precision. Most

swear by the light of sunrise and sunset, but a few bravely venture out in the heat of day when subject-enhancing shadows are scarce. But they all agree on one thing: West Texas is a pretty special place to practice their art.

And they agree that the Shooting West Texas Photography Symposium is something, like sunset from the porch in Terlingua or a dip in the San Solomon Springs, that can't be experienced enough. Past participants have come from far and wide, and many of them have made the symposium an annual event for photographic fellowship, an opportunity to share pointers and pictures and another reason to get back to the Big Bend.

As presenter Crystal Allbright says, "From the panoramic expanses to the tiniest flower stems, this region heralds a diversity of terrain and occupants to photograph." And that's why people love to "shoot" our terrain.

Allbright describes her own and others' diverse interests within the field of photography and our region when she describes her method. "Reminiscent of Monet and the Rouen Cathedral Series, I watch the changes in light from day to day, season to season, and don't let 'bad light' hinder a shutter click. The scientist in me documents the area for environmental posterity with the artist's hope of achieving some aesthetic value."

Shooting West Texas attendees always make sure to take plenty of photos while here (and lots of memories, when they leave), but symposium organizer Dr. Barney Nelson hopes they'll leave something behind, too – nothing tangible, necessarily, but a legacy. She sees Shooting West Texas as "a way for photographers to give a little back to this beautiful place that makes them all look so good."

"Leave nothing but footprints and take nothing but pictures (lots of pictures)," Nelson seems to say. And then share them, because they really do make you look good. And they make us look good – no, they prove how good we look – too.

As a professor of English at

Sul Ross, Nelson can't help but add, "Maybe (experienced photographers) can also give a little educational boost to those who are trying to follow in their footsteps." And that's the point of her panoramic vision. Shooting West Texas isn't just for showing off, or taking, good photos; it's about teaching, learning and sharing.

The symposium features talks on topics such as technique, style, camera tricks and tips and favored photogenic locales, all accompanied with stunning visual presentations that keep the audience "ooohing" and "aaahing" as each new image is shown. Off-site workshops to treasured local ranches, parks and preserves are offered, and attendees are invited to bring their own work for a photo competition and portfolio reviews by professionals.

Tickets to the symposium are \$100 and include all speaker presentations, entry of one photo in the photo competition, portfolio reviews and access to information and vendor booths. Additional fees are required for off-site workshops at diverse locations. Check the Shooting West Texas Photography Symposium Web site for the latest updates.

Plan to attend the symposium to see one more reason why people continue to return to the Big Bend for more than sightseeing. The region, with its scenery, its solitude and its light, offers a world of images for photographers from far and wide to "shoot" – and capture – a trophy-class picture.



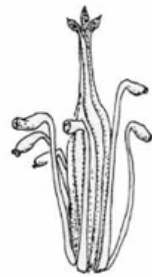
Faver, cont'd from page 15

Faver was a small man and said to be a good and generous host to visitors. He was a cultured man, most agreed, speaking several languages and wearing the latest fashions tailored for him in Chihuahua City. He insisted on payment in gold or silver and was rumored to bury his money somewhere on his land. Most visitors spoke of the peach brandy he distilled himself from his numerous peach trees.

Time and approaching civilization brought an end to "Don Meliton's" empire. The Apache menace effectively ended in 1880, the railroad came to Alpine and Marfa, and more and more cattlemen began moving into the Big Bend area. Many of Faver's unbranded cattle were branded by others as mavericks, and the days of the open range drew to a close.

Faver had sold his stock by 1889, and he died on Dec. 23 of that year. He was buried according to his wish on a rugged hill near his headquarters at Cibolo. His widow inherited Cibolo, and the couple's only child, Juan, inherited La Cienega. La Morita had been given to a cousin of Mrs. Faver. Thus ended the tale of the "Lord of Three Manors," as one author called Milton Faver, pioneer cattleman of the Big Bend.

All three of Faver's ranch homes have been restored and are available to guests as Cibolo Creek Ranch.



Leaton, cont'd from page 14

"There was a lot of back and forth," Reed said. "You say you want a wagon. What size should the wheels be? What should the wagon look like?"

It was tricky making the unknown as historically accurate as possible.

"We had to run the imagery by our natural resource people," explained Reed. "And they would say 'No, there were no cows like you have here. They were skinny and underfed. If you had one, it was a random milking cow.'"

"I'm not a history buff," Dumitrescu said, "and I didn't know the period."

"We had all kinds of people looking at Avram's images to make sure they were accurate, not only for the history, but for the topography and the climate.

The going back and forth on our part was probably hard for Avram, because we'd have to come back with these tiny details," Reed said.

Portraying Ben Leaton and the fort presented challenges for the artist.

"I don't typically do a lot of figurative work, and it's a lot of figures," Dumitrescu said. "The trick for me was finding good photo references. Mary Bones at the Museum of the Big Bend invited me to look at the Smithers Photographic Collection. I went through hundreds and hundreds of photographs from around that time to find good sources of historical material, in addition to those provided by parks and wildlife."

"We would love to have had Avram do a million pictures," Reed said, "but then there's the budget."

The video is the icing on the

cake for the new exhibits at Fort Leaton. It stands out not just for the story, but for the incredible investment of energy and enthusiasm of the many people involved in its creation.

"We hope that it will present Ben Leaton's story in a way that modern Texans can appreciate and find entertaining," Brandimarte said. "Most of all, we hope that the film will bring a long-lost character of West Texas history back to life in visitors' imaginations."

Many of the new exhibits are already in place, with completion of the entire project, including the video, scheduled for the end of the summer 2011.



Oasis, cont'd from page 24

harder and involved much time-consuming work. Her hard work has paid off, as those saplings she planted in the mid-1990s are now nearly 30 feet tall and the fruit trees regularly produce ample berries for her hungry bird friends. Now she has all three elements needed to sustain wildlife: food, water and shelter.

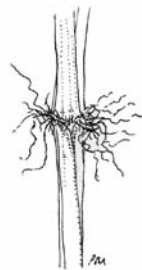
She can supplement her natural food sources with seeds and other bird food, but water will always be a challenge, especially in periods of drought.

We all know the phrase, "if you build it, they will come." Come they have – first the birds and then the birders. Carolyn has recorded over 230 species of birds at her stopover for thirsty and hungry migrants winging their way between their summer and winter homes. During the peak of migration season, it is not uncommon to see 60 species per day, including warblers,

vireos, sparrows and even a Sora rail. Not only do the traveling birds take advantage of Carolyn's hospitality, a number of species have moved in to breed in the vicinity of her oasis, including Lucifer's hummingbirds, yellow-breasted chats, elf owls and varied buntings.

Word of Carolyn's oasis has spread among birders and ornithologists around the nation and world. Birders from as far away as Africa have visited and enjoyed Carolyn's oasis. She enjoys sharing her oasis with people who appreciate birds as much as she does.

Carolyn's resolve is summed up in a quote she has kept on her refrigerator, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."



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Trans-Pecos Trivia by Charles Angell

For the Birds

- 1) Mexican folk healers, also known as curanderos, have prescribed for some ailments the catching, cooking and eating an entire roadrunner. What is the most common modern method for capture of these birds utilized by biologists/ornithologists?
 - a) curare-tipped blowgun dart
 - b) remote controlled bownet
 - c) tranquilizer gun
 - d) ACME rocket skates
- 2) The peregrine falcon inhabits the canyons and peaks of our region, dive-bombing other birds in midair to take as prey. They are known as the fastest animal on the planet, attaining speeds of
 - a) 90 mph
 - b) 120 mph
 - c) 170 mph
 - d) 200+ mph
- 3) Called a bullbat by many, this nocturnal bird is often seen around light sources feeding on insects, competing with bats.
 - a) horned owl
 - b) whitewing dove
 - c) nighthawk
 - d) Chihuahuan goa
- 4) A member of the Cardinalidae family, this bird resembles the northern cardinal but is slightly smaller, less colorful, and has a habitat range that is primarily the Chihuahuan Desert.
 - a) pyrrhuloxia
 - b) dusky capped flycatcher
 - c) varied thrush
 - d) bushtit
- 5) Seen along the Rio Grande roosting in river cane, this wading bird rarely extends its neck, keeping a stocky appearance.
 - a) woodstork
 - b) black-crowned night-heron
 - c) glossy ibis
 - d) blue-footed booby

Bonus: Which one of the above mentioned birds is also known as a goatsucker (not to be confused with the chupacabra).

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



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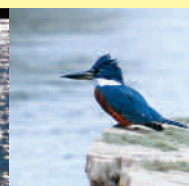
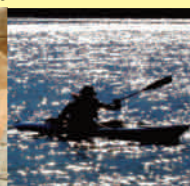
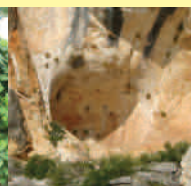
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