CENIZO

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The Best of the Cenizo • Second Quarter 2009 ~ First Quarter 2013

The Train Called the *Sunset Limited*

by Warren Taylor

Photos from the Southern Pacific archive, courtesy of Karen Lanier

Above - The publicity poster touts the glamour and "out of this world" experience of the train. Left - The color scheme on the diesels, the yellow next to red was intentional, to further carry on the theme of the sunset. Also the general logo of the railroad was a circle with railroad tracks running off into a sunset. So the theme prevailed.

Six days a week at midday, the Alpine area has the exciting event of seeing what has become a rarity. It's a passenger train – the train called the Sunset Limited. This famous train is the oldest named train in America and has the distinction of always being numbered train #1 (westward) and # 2 (eastward).

The first run of this train was in 1893, and it opened up service along the route from New Orleans to Los Angeles and originally on to San Francisco. Now the train, under Amtrak, operates westward on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays and eastward on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

This train was operated for 78 years by Southern Pacific. Now the Amtrak train runs on Union Pacific tracks. During its long years of service, the "Sunset," as it is known, has seen its share of ups and downs.

In the beginning, the train was certainly the pride of the Southern Pacific line. It was a first-class train with only small private rooms. A second train served along the same route for many years and offered more economical fares; it was called the Argonaut. This train offered chair-car service and what were commonly called "tourist sleepers," which were the old-fashioned fold-down births with the canvas curtains.

In its early days at the end of the 1800s, the Sunset Limited was not a long train with numerous coaches. The wooden cars were very deluxe. They included smoking rooms for men and parlors for women. The train included a diner with specially prepared food. There was a library at the end of one coach and a writing room in the last car which featured an open outdoor platform "porch." Short as it may have been, the train also featured a barber shop and shower facility. At that time, the Sunset probably did not operate daily except during peak season. The train usually consisted of five or six cars. The head car also featured space for the U.S. Postal mail car.

The original Sunset Limited was steam-powered and required 73 hours to travel between New Orleans and Los Angeles. Many water stops were required for the steam engine and to change the locomotives; a single steamer did not make the complete run. The coaches were wooden and without central heating and certainly without air conditioning. The locomotives were coal-powered, a feature that was soon to change to oil to reduce sparks in the engine smoke that could create grass fires along the right of way.

By 1924, new steel coaches were added, which contributed to a superior, smooth-riding quality for the passengers and eliminated the famous squeaking associated with the older "woodys." Air conditioning was soon to be added, and the train soon saw an increased ridership, while maintaining the deluxe appeal. The train was no longer a "bobcat," to use railroad jargon, but was now handling a total of 10 to 14 passenger cars including eight sleepers, a diner and a lounge-observation car.

Diner specialties were broiled red fish, fried oysters with coleslaw, breaded lamb chops with green peas, veal cutlets and a wide assortment of desserts. Orders for meals were not given verbally but written by the passenger on a small pad. Custom china was made for the Southern Pacific, and the china included the crest of the railroad at the top and was edged with orange blossoms. Silver was specially made by Gorham and Reed & Barton. Dinner in the diner was a wonderfully special event. Napkins had the company crest woven into the starched damask.

The other train to operate on the line was the "work-horse," the Argonaut. This additional train was begun in 1926 and lasted until 1958. It was a slower train and offered cheaper tickets and services. This train hauled more express and mail and made more stops. Yet for the thrifty-minded passenger who was not in a hurry, this was the train to take. The Argonaut was a 50-hour train

continued on page 27

Table of Contents

Editor's Notes

by Dallas Baxter, Carolyn Zniewski and Danielle Gallo

Hello and good-bye. Powerful words both. Each of them begin and end relationships and can be bitter or sweet. And I think I feel both as I write this to the *Cenizo* community. First a huge thank you to readers, writers, artists, poets, photographers, subscribers, advertisers, the *Cenizo* staff and the printer for creating this very special magazine about a place we all love – Trans Pecos Texas. It has been absolute fun and a privilege to work with all of you – it is YOU who make the magazine, I just wave my little stick and make it all happen at the same time.

So there is the good-bye as that little stick gets passed to Carolyn Brown Zniewski, the new publisher, and Danielle Gallo, the new editor of *Cenizo*. And that means hello to a new creative team, but one with a common view of Far West Texas, its history, lore, magic and importance as a place apart and yet an example to the world of honoring the land and its people throughout history and into the present day.

When I began *Cenizo*, I set out to create a magazine that would show the world how unique a place we are and how beloved. I think we've done that, and it's my hope that *Cenizo* will continue with that mission: a quarterly journal dedicated to chronicling the history and people of Far West Texas through the work of writers, artists, poets and photographers.

I just finished looking at the first draft/layout of the April *Cenizo Journal*. Last time I helped publish a magazine was over 40 years ago. We did the layout on my dining room table with scissors and a glue stick. The methods of publication have changed an incredible amount, putting printing in the hands of nearly everyone, the ultimate movable type! One thing stays the same, for me anyway, there is nothing like seeing the magazine, picking it up and feeling the paper and smelling a bit of ink. There is the gentle swish of the turning pages as you flip through to the back, and maybe a sharp slap when you go to swat that fly and you can keep a copy in the car for while you're waiting in the parking lot. Please enjoy. Thanks Dallas for such a great four years.

I've loved the *Cenizo* as I've loved the Big Bend—seeing every new issue is a pleasure like watching the Chisos rising from the desert, an island in an ancient sea, only more personal. I have been honored to be a part of the *Cenizo* family that Dallas Baxter begat, and I'm doubly honored to be stepping into her very big editorial shoes. Without the expertise of our graphics designer Wendy Lynn Wright, our business manager Lou Pauls, our distribution manager Charlie Angell, our fearless leader Carolyn Zniewski, our steadfast advertisers and all of our talented writers, photographers and artists, they are shoes I couldn't hope to fill.

Choosing the selections for this special edition was a Herculean task—how do we choose the best of the *Cenizo* when everything is so good? In the end we put together a sampling from every year of publication, and though we could've easily made the magazine twice as long with our favorites, we think you'll agree that the stories, poems and art herein represent some of the best of the Big Bend. I can't express how I'm looking forward to the future of the *Cenizo Journal*, and I hope you enjoy this reprise of our past.

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For advertising rates or to place an ad, contact: advertising@cenizojournal.com

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Cover: Cenizo, *Leucophyllum frutescens,* is the state native shrub of Texas. It is often seen blooming after the rain. Photo: Crystal Allbright.

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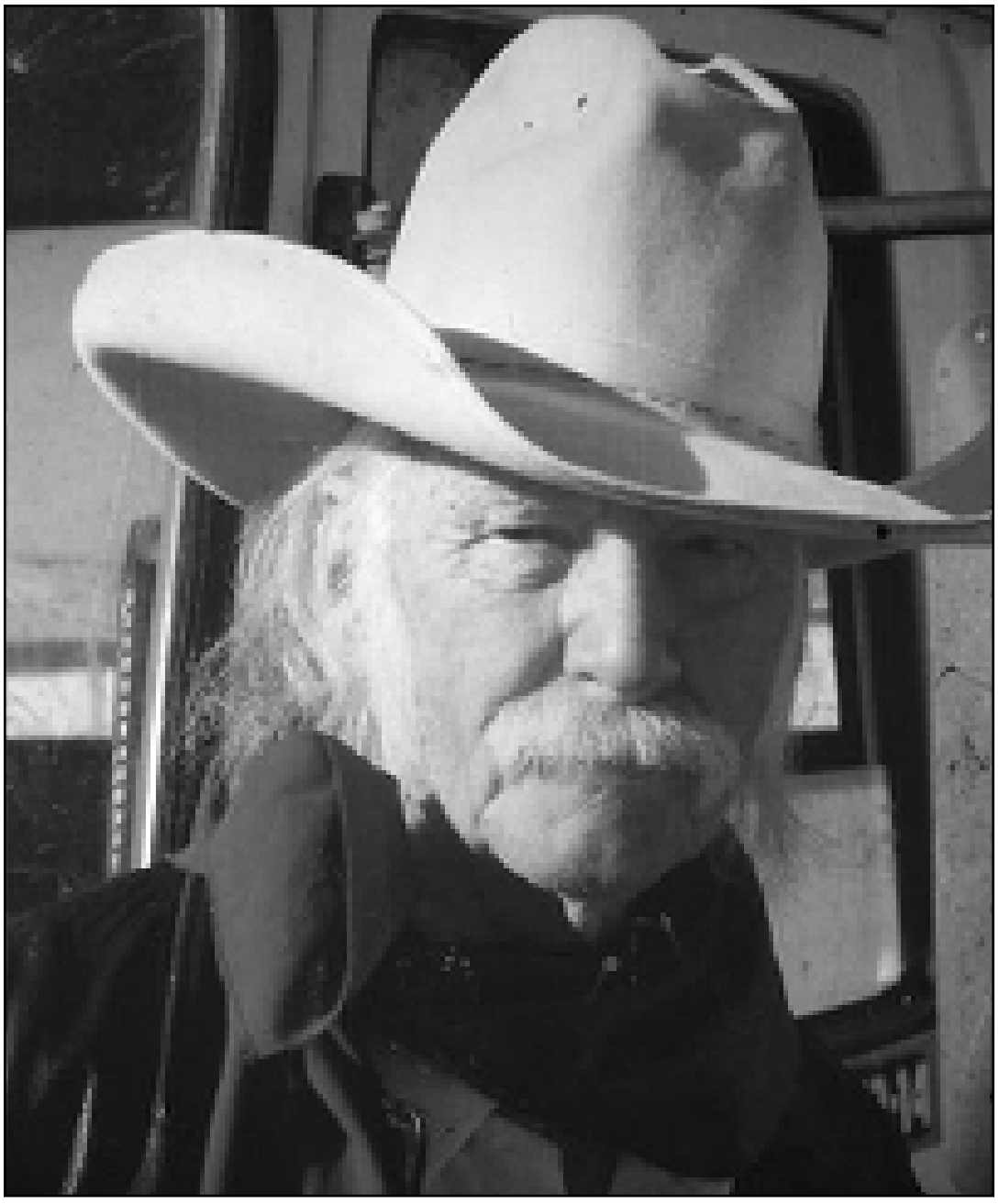


The Passing of A. Kelly Pruitt

by David Crum

This photo of A. Kelly Pruitt was taken by an unknown friend and given to Kelly who kept it in his home. The photo of the photo was taken by David Crum.

A. Kelly Pruitt, renowned Western painter and sculptor, became a cowboy early in his life and by age 12 was catching wild mustangs in the Fresno Canyon area of the Big Bend. He helped bring trail herds from Mexico across the Rio Grande at Presidio and worked on ranches in several states. Kelly's paintings and bronzes are much prized on both sides of the border, and he touched people's lives with his philosophy of living simply, his kindness and unique spirit.

A few weeks before his death, Kelly had begun digging his own grave at the old cemetery located near where he lived with two dogs, a Mexican wolf, two horses, a burro and 35 sheep. Kelly had bought an old school bus, and it was his home at La Junta Farm, owned by the Bishop family of Presidio and Marfa.

This spot near the Rio Grande was important to Kelly. He had returned to live here several years ago, first only during fall and winter but this past spring had chosen to stay all year. As a young boy, he would ride here from Presidio to watch vaqueros work cattle, hoping to learn their trade. Noticing Kelly's interest, the vaqueros taught him their skills, first teaching him how to rope. The history of this spot near La Junta de los Rios, where the Rio Conchos and Rio Grande join, was well known to Kelly, and he talked of how the Spanish had buried Indian slaves in the cemetery facing south instead of east because they were not Christian and of Confederate soldiers killed here.

Kelly missed the large cottonwood trees he had known here as a boy, cut down years ago so airplanes could dust crops, and he was interested in developing uses for the tumbleweeds and salt cedar trees that are invading the no-longer-used farmlands.

Kelly remembered the Rio Grande used to be closer, and he was disappointed that the levee prevented him from riding his horse down to the river and maybe crossing it again.

In February 2009, Kelly invited a group of his friends to camp with him at La Junta Farm to discuss his vision of creating a non-profit organization whose mission would combine art, history, conservation, sustainable building and sustainable agriculture. The first of these friends to arrive found Kelly unable to rise from his outdoor cot near the old school bus.

He told them he was dying. "I was fixing one of Samson's shoes and fell over. Once I got up I could make it only this far. My arm hurts and my heart. There's nothing like dying. I know the Great Spirit has made such a magic world. Little old Pawnee would like to know when I die here, but wait until the dust settles."

Kelly refused to even consider going to see a doctor or of letting one come to him. "I have not been to a doctor since 1947, and if I go now they will want to cut me open. I do not want that."

Kelly asked his long-time friend Terry Bishop to take care of the animals and dispose of his belongings. "I want to be buried here in the old cemetery, in

my canvas bedroll. Please see to it I am not embalmed. There should be an easier way to leave this world. I hope it will be quick, and I will not linger."

Kelly's friends began a vigil and made Kelly as comfortable as he would allow. During the next several days Kelly talked of many things and all of the following quotes are Kelly Pruitt's words, written down as he said them:

"I would like this dying settled without my family. But afterwards someone will need to tell my little daughter Angelique. She is married to a movie producer in Hollywood. She loves me very much and will need to know. My second wife Donna is still in my life. She has an art gallery in Taos and has a large collection of my paintings. I have sons and daughters, and Terry knows how to get in touch with them.

"No, I will not go see a doctor, and I am tired of you mentioning it. I will get up from here and fist fight you if you bring it up again."

During the vigil, many other friends, hearing about Kelly, came to see him. A Presidio County deputy, the justice of the peace and his clerk came. Kelly dictated and signed his will. A nurse stopped by and tried to talk him into going to the doctor. He flirted with her and said no.

"Isn't this wonderful? A great funeral and I am here for it," Kelly declared after most everyone had left.

He finally agreed to drink some water. He had been fasting before his trouble and allowed a little water would not break his fast, but he would not drink from plastic bottles. At sundown, he became cold and decided he could probably make it inside the old school bus where it was warmer.

The next day found Kelly a little stronger. He drank more water but still refused to eat. He took an aspirin that made him sick. From his cot he watched clouds, and from time to time he continued to talk of his life:

"I honor the Great Spirit who creates clouds and transports water to where it is needed. Clouds are a gift. I have kept the commandments as best I could."

"My birthday is not really known. My mother was not sure."

"At one time I was a Mormon and was married in the Temple."

"I was working on a ranch in Colorado. One day an old vaquero got off his horse, sat down, leaned on a big rock and died. That is a good way to go."

"I was a paratrooper in World War II."

"I have always had a strong connection with the spirit world. I need to stay close to the river. I am connected to the Rio Grande."

"The totality of A. Kelly Pruitt is three trillion cells, and when the spirit leaves the body, each cell is an energy that leaves with the spirit."

"We think our children are special, but sometimes enemies from past lives sneak back in their form to torture us."

"I was never a natural parent. We have no guidance. Teach the Warrior's Way."

"I was shoeing my horse when my left arm began hurting. It got so bad I had to lie down in the manure. Laid there for a couple of hours. I thought it a fitting way for an old cowboy to go, wearing my spurs and hat."

"Please notify Pawnee, my ex-wife, after the fact. She also has a collection of my works. She is a warrior woman."

"Somehow the Universe works. It is a marvelous system. Yesterday I was involved in the business of the world. Today I am not."

"A bobcat killed one of the sheep and bit another that won't make it. A man in Redford will come and get the sheep. I wish we had a video of Wolf herding the sheep."

"What a marvelous prayer – Yea though I walk through this valley. Today the world is full of fear."

"It's for the best my horses ran away last night. I can't take care of them anymore."

Kelly appeared to gain strength, and everyone hoped his crisis had passed. He finally ate some food. His friends watched him closely. Too closely sometimes, and Kelly would tell them, "Dying is a private thing. I need you to go away now and just come back every once in a while and check to see if I have passed."

Early Sunday morning, February 15, 2009, Kelly called friends to him. "I have been trying to die all night and just cannot get it done. I am in pain and do not think I can stand it any longer. I guess you should call the ambulance so they can come out here and give me a shot." The Presidio ambulance was on a trip to Alpine, and the Marfa ambulance did not make it in time. Kelly died peacefully, with friends at his side holding his hands.

Kelly's friends finished digging the grave he had started, and he was buried as he wished, in his bedroll, in the old cemetery at the Bishop's La Junta Farm.

Kelly's dogs and the wolf mourned with worried eyes, low moans and howls as Kelly's friends covered his body with shovels full of dirt and gravel. A combination of "Amazing Grace" and "Home on the Range" was sung accompanied by harmonica and guitar.

Kelly's vision of a non-profit as described in the story is being pursued: The recently formed La Junta Heritage Center is an IRS recognized 501c3 non-profit, with a 16-member board of directors. Terry Bishop and his family have given LJHC a 99-year lease on 72 acres of their La Junta Farm for the center. Richard Galle, executive director, can be contacted for more information about the center at 432.684.6827.

TEXAS TACOS

by Denise Chávez

I grew up between El Paso, Marfa, Presidio and Redford, Texas, which in our family was called by its original name, El Polvo, the Dust, and Las Cruces, New Mexico, among women who didn't have time to cook and were constantly on the run between teaching jobs and family chores. My mother and her sisters grazed on food throughout the day as they fulfilled their duties.

These active women were content with an occasional *tortilla de harina o maíz*, either one, either hot or cold, with anything in between—cheese, baloney, beans, potted meat, corned beef hash, green chile, potatoes, egg, you name it. I became accustomed to my mother Delfina's eating habits and eventually, they became my own. A little bit here, a little bit there, the hot tortilla coming off the *comal* to be eaten with butter or the aforementioned fillings, topped off by a dessert taco, little flutes of tortilla filled with jam, *membrillo* or fruit.

My mother's sister, Lucia, known to me as Tía Chita, lived in El Polvo with her husband and three children. Tío Enrique was the owner of the Madrid Grocery Store on county road 170, en route to the Big Bend. The haunting presence of the Río Grande dominated and cut a parallel swath through the landscape. At that time, although I would not have known how to articulate it, the spirits, good and bad, lived alongside us and were kin. The Devil was ensconced in a nearby cave and no one disputed it. Once, on the way to Redford, my mother stopped the car to wake us up so we could see a UFO. A Catholic through and through, there was within my mother and her family enough space for the magical to fully reside. The Marfa lights? No big deal. Elemental hooded creatures that hovered a few feet above the road appearing to move in slow motion and yet had to be moving really fast? Part and parcel of the landscape but just don't stop to share a taco. Our family was attuned to miracle and wonder, and I accepted it as I did the day in and day out of our lives. At that time, my mother's world was another country, wild, untamed and just to my liking, although I would have never admitted it then.

The grocery store loomed large in our lives and was a memorable place full of mystery to me as a young girl. My little sister Margo and I would slip in as quietly as we could through the back door of the store right off Tío Enrique's bedroom, folding ourselves expectantly into the large room that housed everything from Havoline oil to men's pecheras, giant overalls. We looked around in awe at the candy displays and peered into the freezer hoping someone would offer us a red, white and blue bullet popsicle or an orange ice cream in a little white push-up container. We'd just eaten a loosely formed taco in my aunt's kitchen and sweets were always on our mind, especially mine, and especially something from the grocery store. While we waited around for someone to invite us into the store for a treat, we reflected on our state of being.

My mother was a divorced woman who refused to admit it. She lived with the continual expectation that my errant father would return to her neatly rolled trays of tacos, *cara* side in, her special recipe including a binder of peas and cumin, salt, onion and much love. The *cara* or face referred to the side of the tortilla that hit the *comal* twice and was darker than the other, whiter side. Mother made sure we tucked the *cara* inside to make a nicer presentation, a cylinder of ground beef holding court in the oil-softened tortillas.

My father was a New Mexico man and was never to be found in our Texas world. We spent part of every summer, every Christmas and random times of the year with my Tía Chita and her family. Sometimes I would have rather been at home but as children, we had no choice. Everything was different in Texas. We slept outside, we ate at odd hours and had no hard fast rules or schedules and yes, even the tacos were different.

Everyone loved my mother's New Mexico tacos. She prepared them for special occasions, holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, and parties. There was something formal about my mother's crispy oven baked tacos and their hard cheese exteriors. In Texas, we never turned on an oven and I don't remember eating anything with hot cheese. The only thing I recall eating hot was a freshly made tortilla.

I am grateful to my mother for her taco recipe and have continued her taco tradition, but nowadays my tacos have been the more formal kind. When I was younger I'd known the tasty remainders of pot roasts, chicken, chile rellenos, all tucked into a tortilla. Flour or corn, it never mattered. What is different now is the stuffing inside the tortilla. I've become very staid in my fillings.

Tacos in Texas are different. More loosely organized, less weighty to think about. There's something about the tortillas in San Antonio that I love. Mistakenly called tacos, they are really burritos in New Mexico, but who cares, they are so good. The laissez-faire attitude of enjoying a taco on the run in some out-of-the way joint with a good salsa is something I love about my other country, Texas. I am New Mexican part of the time and Texan the other half. I've eaten tacos from Clint to Van Horn, from Marfa to my cousin's restaurant, El Patio, in Presidio. In my growing-up years we ate mostly at various destinations between one family member and another. Máma Toña and her hunchbacked sister, Manina, would be waiting in Marfa, my Aunt Lucy Franco in Presidio, my Tía Chita in Redford. We traveled the Texas Taco Trail, rarely eating out. What was there to eat out in restaurants but more tacos? And why would you pay for a taco when you could eat one at home for almost free?

The tacos I knew best were the ones at my Tía Chita's house, eaten at any time of the day, for people ate when they were hungry, without formal eating hours or a designated eating area. We wandered when we ate and no one cared. My Tío Enrique ate at his prescribed times and then lay down in his dark bedroom to nap. We ate when my mother ate or when we were hungry, which could be anytime of the day or night and in any room of my aunt's rambling house. You would walk into the kitchen and it was likely a helper of my aunt's, maybe Lina or Belsora, was in there in front of the stove making homemade flour tortillas. Right off the stove, *calientitas*, you would wrap one up in a napkin, butter it and take it into the living room or the long bedroom to the side of the kitchen which was our usual place to sleep, or you would sit outside, tortilla in hand hoping to catch a breeze in the hot summer sun.

My relatives ate piece-meal, frijolitos there, cheese here, you want some *chilito*? Have some *fideos*. The vermicelli noodles that I so loved would slide into the taco. So would the *albondigas*, the beloved meatballs, or the beans and rice become one solid entity inside the warm tortilla. I loved to watch my Tía Chita eat, one tiny delicate bite at a time, rolling her tortillas like miniature cigars with meticulous care and grace. My mother ate more loosely and with more gusto. She loved tacos with any kind of well-cooked meat, what would be considered charred by anyone else. Despite our regard and respect for my mother's aunt, Manina, my sister and I tried to avoid watching her eat. She was an old lady with few teeth who liked her wine and chewed heartily with her mouth open. Everyone loved a good hamburger, which is another kind of taco when you think about it. A little Sanka on the side was good, or an orange Fanta or a *limonada*, no, not a lemonade, but a *limonada*, made with lots of limes. Water was fine as well, what my mother called "Good Texas water."

1985. Several years after my mother's death. Tia Chita and I are in the living room of her house in El Polvo. You can't see my face. Es propio. My aunt is a Queen, I, merely a handmaiden. Otra vez, es propio. Usually very shy and self-effacing, she agreed, out of love, to wear a mantilla for the photo. Photo: Daniel Zolinsky

Our meals, as haphazard as they were, were still joyful. No fanfare but important. Really important. A truly spectacular event was the occasional cabrito that my Tío Enrique would roast in a homemade barbeque pit to left side of the store on the road to the Big Bend. You could smell the goat roasting as you sat on your metal cot behind the back of the store near the piled-up Coke bottle boxes eating *sandía* and not worrying about anything except about the watermelon seeds on your clothing or shoes and the juice that trailed down your cool white summer blouse to the ground where a growing formation of ants enjoyed your leftovers.

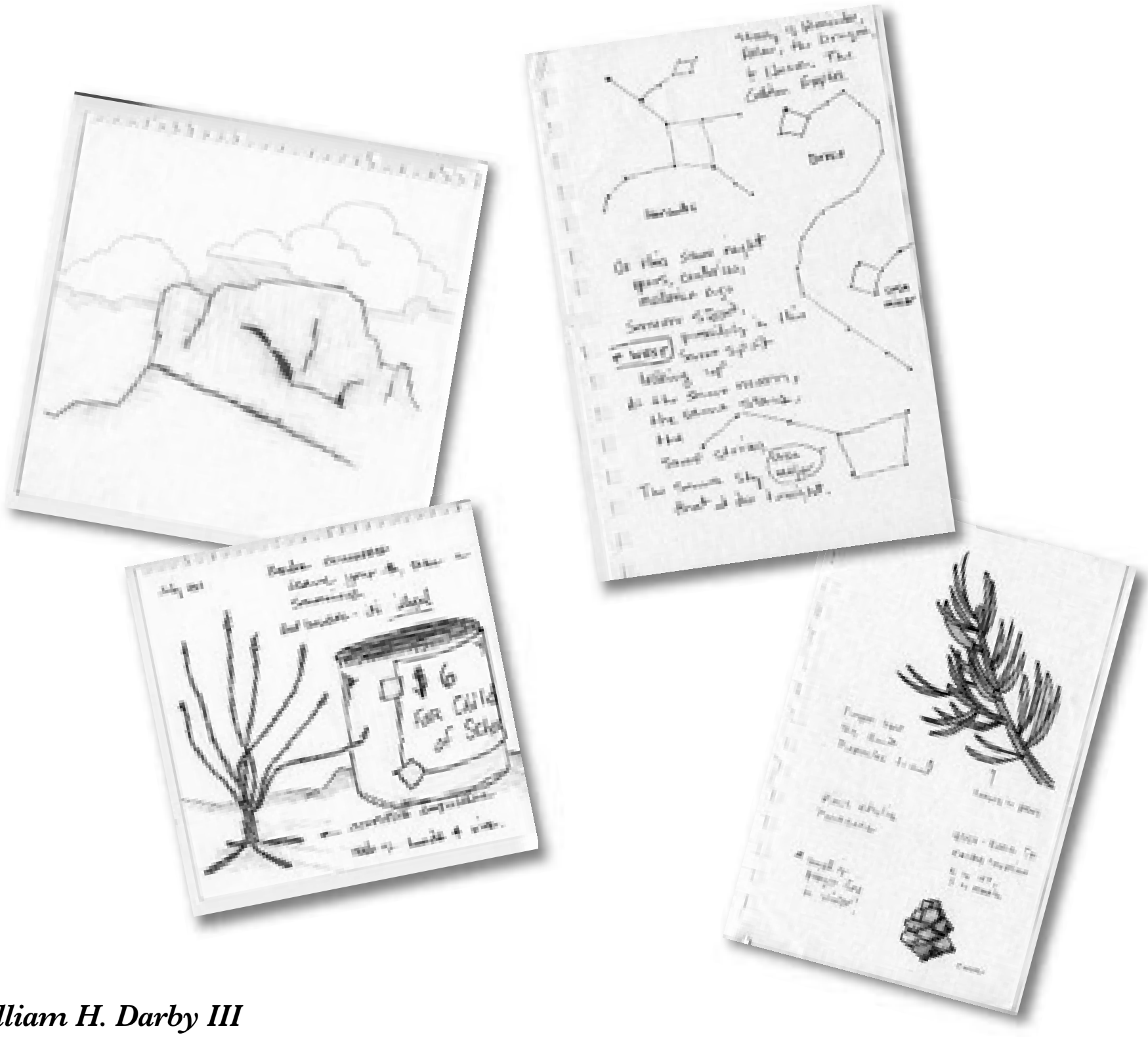
In the hot summer evenings we would curl up with a single cool cotton sheet and look at the enormity of stars out there behind the store, a coyote howling in the distance. There might be a breeze by then and there was a peace and joy in knowing you were safe.

There was never any boredom in this world. We did become restless, but that was another thing altogether. Once this innate state of unconsciousness took its perverse form in cruelty, as one summer, during an infestation of earthworms, my sister Margo and I killed hundreds of earthworms in a myriad of ugly ways—a cruel manifestation of our unrealized connection to all life. I also rue the fact that one day, in an act of sisterly retaliation and rebellion, I placed a still hot flour tortilla on my sleeping sister's face. She jumped up sputtering and crying from Tía Chita's living room couch, full of fear and sudden surprise. What possessed me to place a hot tortilla on her face? I will never know. I am ashamed of this childish prank and don't advise anyone who loves tortillas or their sister to try it.

Inside my aunt's house were many book cases filled with books. The walls were lined with art and the house was full of rock specimens, old *metates*, Mexican folk art and more. You never knew what you were going to find tucked into corners or just laying out there on the living room table, and in what language. Old maps, photography books of the Big Bend, a dried snake skin. Everyone read voraciously and books were sacred and prized in any form.

It was at my Tia Chita's house next to the Madrid Store on that long dusty highway leading into the Big Bend, that remote parallel other country, a Texas that was more than Texas, that I came to value books and the worlds they spoke of, faraway Dostoyevskian Chekhovian Shakespearian worlds, removed from my own small, still unrealized trajectory. The world was simple then: a good freshly made hot tortilla held whatever you wanted and it was good. Inside or out, in the hot sun or in the coolness of the summer night, near that long winding almost endless road that led to my mother's dreams, we knew what nourishment was: family, a good book, a hot tortilla—buttered, salted, cold, hot, jammed, cheesed, frijole'ed or just plain. *¡Ay, esas tortillas! ¡Ay, esos tacos!* Good Texas Tacos.

Exploring with Journaling



by William H. Darby III

I've never kept a journal. That is, a single book of entries that progressively details my experiences with the wider world. That would be impossible, since I seldom operate in a singular or progressive fashion. However, I have been journaling for years. I always grab a random notebook or sketchpad to take along when I travel, and I record random things in random fashion.

Most people are reluctant to begin a journal because they feel that it will be too much of a burden. They worry that they won't add to it regularly enough or that it won't be "good" enough. Most people mislead themselves. Journaling isn't done for others – it's done for oneself. A journal should be as chaotic or crisp, full or sparse, detailed or general, as its keeper. The glorious volume that we all wish we could produce, where every entry is insightful (and quotable) and every sketch is museum-worthy, is unrealistic. Journaling isn't about the final product, it's about the process.

I have a terrible memory, so I rely on journaling primarily to help me remember things I've seen and done. I don't

carry a camera when I travel, so I record sights and thoughts on paper with pen or pencil. Not only does journaling help me to remember what I've seen, it helps me to more fully grasp the present – to participate in it, taking the time to capture it in sketches and words.

Journaling gives me a sense of accomplishment. It's more than just snapping a photo of a landscape or a bug. It allows me to interact with the world in real time, beyond just observing it. It deepens the experience and makes it more personal. And although it's probably not as pretty as a picture, it is more authentic.

Journaling helps me to contemplate and question what I've seen and done. I often return to my journals not just for reference, but to add more facts or thoughts to my notes and details and color to my sketches. Returning to these pages takes me back to places and times of pleasure again and again. My journals are never retired; they remain accessible and are well-used.

Even though you're seeing some of them now, my journal pages are primarily for me. Journaling my experiences helps me to discover and better understand the world – and myself, too. I hope seeing some of my random notes and questionable sketches will inspire curious persons to do some journaling for themselves.

Folkways

Prickly Pear Cactus:

The Genus *Opuntia*

by Marie French

Prickly pear cactus loves the Big Bend – Golden Spined prickly pear, Texas prickly pear, Englemann prickly pear, Cow's Tongue prickly pear, Purple prickly pear, Plains prickly pear, Purple Fruit prickly pear, Spiny Fruit prickly pear, Blind prickly pear – so many prickly pears in the Big Bend of Far West Texas.

Prickly pear is easy to propagate. They drop their pads on our gravelly, clayey soil and root. To propagate these for yourself, all you need to do is pick up a pad, with leather gloves or tongs. Then let it sit out of dirt and callus over for three to five days. Lastly, put it right into the ground. You don't even have to water it; actually it's better if you don't for at least a week. In about three weeks, it will root and start its own family.

Prickly pear has many practical uses. It has been used from time immemorial for medicinal purposes. When the pads are cut open they are a soothing poultice for wounds, burns and bruises. They are being researched for medicine for diabetes as well.

The Navajos dyed their wool in the uncooked juices of the prickly pear fruit for about a week. It would produce a magenta pink color that would fade somewhat in the sun. Nowadays, you can presoak the wool in soda ash or alum to make the color fast.

Prickly pear has also been valued as a windbreak and soil stabilizer.

Many feel that the prickly pear is a weed and must be eradicated. However, it is the weeds that stabilize the soil until the land can repair itself after periods of abuse. Land is not meant to be monocropped. The land will always introduce weeds within the monocrop to stabilize a landscape, in order for it to be productive and supply needed life-sustaining nutrients for wildlife.

If you wonder why the prickly pear seems so prevalent, it's because much of the land has been degraded. The prickly pear offers itself as a quick propagator, soil stabilizer, food for humans and livestock, dyes and fruit, beautiful flowers and as a windbreak that allows other plants to grow around it.

So instead of trying to remove it from the landscape, perhaps it's time we saw the humble prickly pear's important attributes.

There are many delicious ways you can prepare prickly pear. Try these:

Fried Nopalitos

1 cup nopalitios (prickly pear pads, small, with the thorns taken off with a sharp knife)
1/3 cup wheat flour
2/3 cup cornmeal
1 tsp chili powder
Salt and pepper to taste
Vegetable oil

Place flour, cornmeal and seasonings in a plastic bag, shake bag to mix. Drop in nopalitos, and shake until well coated. Heat oil in a skillet and fry until golden brown… Serve with eggs for a yummy Southwestern breakfast.

In the summer, the blooms will produce red to purple fruits (tunas) on the pads. It's time to make prickly pear jelly!

Prickly Pear Jelly

15-30 tunas - skin and take thorns off with stones or a knife. Make sure you don't pick these with bare hands or you'll get a handful of thorns. Make sure you only pick ripe fruits.
Lemon or lime juice
Powdered pectin
Sugar to taste, about a cup and half
Remove spines. Mash the fruits, and follow the directions on the pectin box.

DESCANSOS ~ Roadside Memorials

Story and photos by Bob Miles

Visitors traveling along the roadways of the Big Bend and other areas of the Southwest are often intrigued by the isolated crosses they see beside the roads. These informal roadside memorials are known as *descansos* and usually mark the site where someone has died. They range from simple wooden crosses to more elaborate memorials, often decorated by real or artificial flowers, religious icons, favorite toys of children or other personal mementoes. Sometimes parts of vehicles involved in fatal accidents are incorporated into the markers.

Some of these memorials bear a name, date or other information, but many are just plain crosses placed by family or friends along a fence line or on fences near dangerous curves, intersections or other locations where a fatal accident has occurred. While these *descansos* are most commonly seen in areas with large Hispanic Catholic populations, similar memorials can be found throughout the world to honor the dead.

In older times, *descansos* were resting places where pall bearers could rest along the way to the grave site. They also marked places where some tragedy had happened. For example, the city of Las Cruces, New Mexico, is said to have been named for crosses placed where early travelers had died at the hands of Apaches.

Descansos serve not only as memorials to lost loved ones but help the survivors in the grieving process. In addition, these informal shrines remind us of our own mortality, prompting us to drive more carefully.

Photo Essay

Pickup Dogs

by Jim Work

My heart has always been drawn to both cameras and dogs. My journey has never wandered far from either of these things. They have been a constant in my life.

I am always looking for the perfect photographic project. My problem is actually finding one I'll finish. It took me a while to realize that the only perfect project is the one you're working on right now.

My "Pickup Dog" project has been a work-in-progress since I photographed my first dog while on vacation in Silver City, NM in June of 2005. Over the years I have "shot" 100 or so windblown dogs.

I love to watch them as they surf the wind. Their ability to balance and share their space with tools, tires, groceries and other junk is mind-blowing. Some bark, pace and howl; others ride in quiet contentment. They come in all sizes and breeds, all colors and personalities. Out here in the Southwest the heelers and the shepherds are often seen. I suspect that has to do with cattle work and the fact that the pickup is the preferred commute vehicle for both owner and dog.

Whenever I ask an owner if I may photograph their dog, I almost always get asked "why?" I have a hard time giving an answer other than that I just feel the need.

Hooch was at the vet's at the same time I was taking my dogs there. How could you pass up such a face? He looked at me with a very old soul. As most dogs are, he was very happy in his skin – and he had a lot of skin.

I think the name of the boxer is Roxie. Although that might have been the name of her owner. Either way, she was a great subject and also was very proud of her wrinkles. A lot of love delivered in the form of slobber.

The two howling dogs are named Little Boy and Annabelle. I followed them down Holland Avenue, laughing at their antics. I pulled into the same convenience store with them, and they were like a couple of little kids – just loved to show off for the camera.

The border collie I encountered on a walk in my neighborhood. She was sleeping on top of the cab of the truck when I first saw her. I grabbed a couple of frames, and then she was like a little kid – started posing for the camera with her Frisbee. As I was taking her photo, this West Texas accent yelled out from a window of the house what was I doing? "I'm taking a photo of your dog. What are you doing?" "I'm getting a massage." And he was. We knew the woman who lived there, and she was a medically trained masseuse.

I followed this dog from Holland Avenue, out 118 south and then down Cemetery Road until the driver pulled into a welding shop. I asked the older gentleman if I could make a photo of his dog. He replied "What for? He's just an old pickup dog." "Ah, that's the reason," I replied. He just shook his head at me.

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

CAROLYN ZNIEWSKI

Born in March 1944 in Rochester, MN to Joe and Rebecca Brown, Carolyn Brown enjoyed a comfortable home life in this affluent community that had excellent schools and numerous cultural attractions. Her father, Dr. Joe Robert Brown, was a distinguished and innovative neurologist who worked all his life at the Mayo Clinic. Her mother, known as Becky, was a vigorous community activist, politically, socially and culturally. Carolyn came second in the family between brothers Hugh and Steve.

Carolyn remembers Rochester as "a wonderful place to grow up in." She remembers that the Unitarian Universalist Church was a huge part of her life at that time. She loved working in Community Theater and later started a summer theater group. Her interest was in play directing and she relished the challenge of handling the overview aspect of theater production. She graduated in 1962, the year after the Civil Rights movements heated up.

The family was known for its liberal views, and attracted hostile reactions from local John Birch types. In addition to anonymous phone calls accusing the Browns of being Communists, a cross was burned in their front yard. The FBI was called in, and the incident was not repeated.

In 1962, Carolyn attended Stephens College in Columbia, MO, a small liberal arts college. She took a course in Creative Writing and graduated with an Associate of Arts degree two years later. Ignoring her parents' wishes that she continue her education, she took a number of short-term jobs over the next four years, the most memorable being in a bookstore. She also travelled around the USA. And she continued to be active in the anti-war movement and social concerns.

CAROLYN ZNIEWSKI
Marathon

DANIELLE GALLO
Marathon

By 1970, Carolyn had connected with a group of 12 or so like-minded friends in Minneapolis, where they opened the New Riverside Café. This was more than a coffee house, it was where people went to enjoy stimulating intellectual conversation and argument. It was here in 1971 that she met Zach Zniewski, a self-educated, intelligent 21-year-old from rural Minnesota.

They got married in Rochester and had small reception in Carolyn's family home. In 1972 a daughter, Maya, was born. The Vietnam War ended in 1975 but there were other causes to get involved with: high energy power lines and the appropriation of land; alternative energy projects; and the plight of Native Americans in Minneapolis' inner city. "I never got on the Making-Money Wagon," says Carolyn of those days. "I was part of a large community of social activists." For income she and two friends opened an espresso and sandwich shop.

In the 1980s-1990s Carolyn continued to live in Minneapolis. She decided to go back to college and attended the University of Minnesota for two years studying Housing and Architecture and earning a degree in Urban Studies (1986). During these years she also worked as a realtor, as manager of an apartment building for disabled people and later worked full-time for an office-staffing agency. Finally, in 1999, she retired and worked part-time in a neighborhood used bookstore, The Bookhouse.

In 2001, Zach and Carolyn separated but remain good friends. Zach headed for the Big Bend, where two years later he suggested that Carolyn might like to visit the area.

Her first visit to Marathon was in the spring of 2003. Her first impression was of the quiet, the good weather (compared to Minneapolis), easy-to-meet people and of course the stunning desert and mountain scenery. A few years ago she bought a little pink house in the southwest corner of Marathon. She divides her time between Marathon and Minneapolis, where her daughter Maya, an herbalist by trade, is bringing up her son Ian, who follows in the family's intellectual tradition. She also keeps in touch with her brothers, now retired.

When she heard Cenizo Journal was for sale, she acted. Not normally impulsive, she bought the magazine in 24 hours, first having worked out with Danielle Gallo of Marathon to be editor. She says it felt like a good fit. Asked about the future of Cenizo Journal, Carolyn says "I love it as it is." She adds that there will probably be a focus on alternative food sources, some updating of links, and later she may write herself. She considers editor Danielle Gallo and herself partners and is determined that Cenizo Journal's reputation, achieved under Dallas Baxter, be maintained and built on.

DANIELLE GALLO

As Danielle Gallo, with her six-month-old daughter Daisy in her lap, speaks of her unusual education and work experience, it occurs to me that she has done more varied and successful things in 30 years than many people achieve in a lifetime. She was born on May 29, 1982 in Albuquerque, NM, the younger of two daughters of Daniel and Jayne Gallo, formerly of Manhattan, NY.

In 1990 she enrolled in a private, co-educational Catholic day school in

Goffstown, NH, Villa Augustina. There, on a beautiful campus surrounded by farmland, classes were taught by liberally-minded nuns and lay teachers. English was Danielle's favorite subject but the curriculum also included such hands-on lessons as how to dissect frogs and mice.

She left in 1996 to attend the College Jésus Marie de Sillery in Quebec City, an all-girls' boarding school, on a scholarship. Here she grappled with, and mastered, Quebecois French and gained confidence in a new culture. Two years later, she moved to a large public high school in Shelton, CT where she was copy editor of the school newspaper, and finally in 1999 to Pinkerton Academy in Derry, NH.

Her family was not rich and Danielle had started taking part-time jobs from age 15. Sometimes she took outdoors manual work and later worked in a pharmacy where she learned to be a technician. Now it was time for college, and in 2000 she enrolled in the Great Books curriculum at prestigious St. John's College in Santa Fe, NM, aided by a Pell Grant but also working 30 hours a week.

At St. John's her freshman class contained intellectually smart but practically naïve students, few of whom had much worldly experience. The narrow vision of her peers and the $30,000 annual fees seemed out of sync, so after two semesters she dropped out in September 2000. Seeking a complete change, she hiked and camped with a friend in the nearby Sangre de Cristo Mountains for a month – the start of a new life outdoors.

Her first job, with the US Forest Service, lasted the summer months working on a five- person Trail Crew patrolling 300,000 acres. She switched to the National Park Service in Bandelier National Monument as Back Country Patrolman and got used to hiking 85 miles every 8 days. She also worked for the Mule Packers, who ferried supplies within the park, and lived in a cabin at the bottom of a canyon.

She trained in firefighting and in spring 2002, she got a Firefighters certificate. It was on a fire line that she first met the Diablos, a group of expert firefighters recruited from the Mexican border villages across from Big Bend National Park. She found this team of hardened firefighters worked like clockwork, and the individuals funny and sweet. In spring 2002 Danielle moved to Marathon to continue her career as a firefighter at Big Bend National Park.

In May 2002, following 9/11, the Mexican border was sealed. Two thirds of the population of Boquillas village moved elsewhere to get work, and the rest were reduced to eating tortillas and beans. Danielle decided to go to Boquillas to help, and resigned from the National Park Service in the fall of 2003. She taught English to adults and students and worked with other volunteers to help install miniature windmills and a water pump (the villagers had been hauling water for one mile, by hand) and encouraged the villagers to make souvenirs to sell stateside.

She returned to Marathon in 2005 and began working in the construction industry. In 2007 she built a papercrete house for Marathon hostel owner Guil Jones, mixing the solution by hand. In late 2009 she started as bartender at the Famous Burro restaurant in Marathon, ending as General Manager. In February 2011, seeking a change, she moved to Clint, Texas and took a job as bartender at a nearby sports bar, Mamacitas, while also taking courses at El Paso Community College.

It was in El Paso that she met Robert Trehus, an independent trucking owner/operator. A daughter, Daisy Jayne, was born to the couple on August 1, 2012 in Marathon. Fittingly for a woman whose life followed an adventurous, unorthodox path, Daisy was born at home with a midwife, in the dining room.

Danielle had first gotten involved with Cenizo Journal in 2010, as a contributor and ad salesperson and later copy editor. She had also proofread some local manuscripts including works of Alan Tenant and Edie Elfring. So, when new *Cenizo Journal* owner Carolyn Zniewski needed an editor, she was on the spot and qualified – a happy fit of publisher with editor.

Reverential Art in a Land of Spirits and Panthers

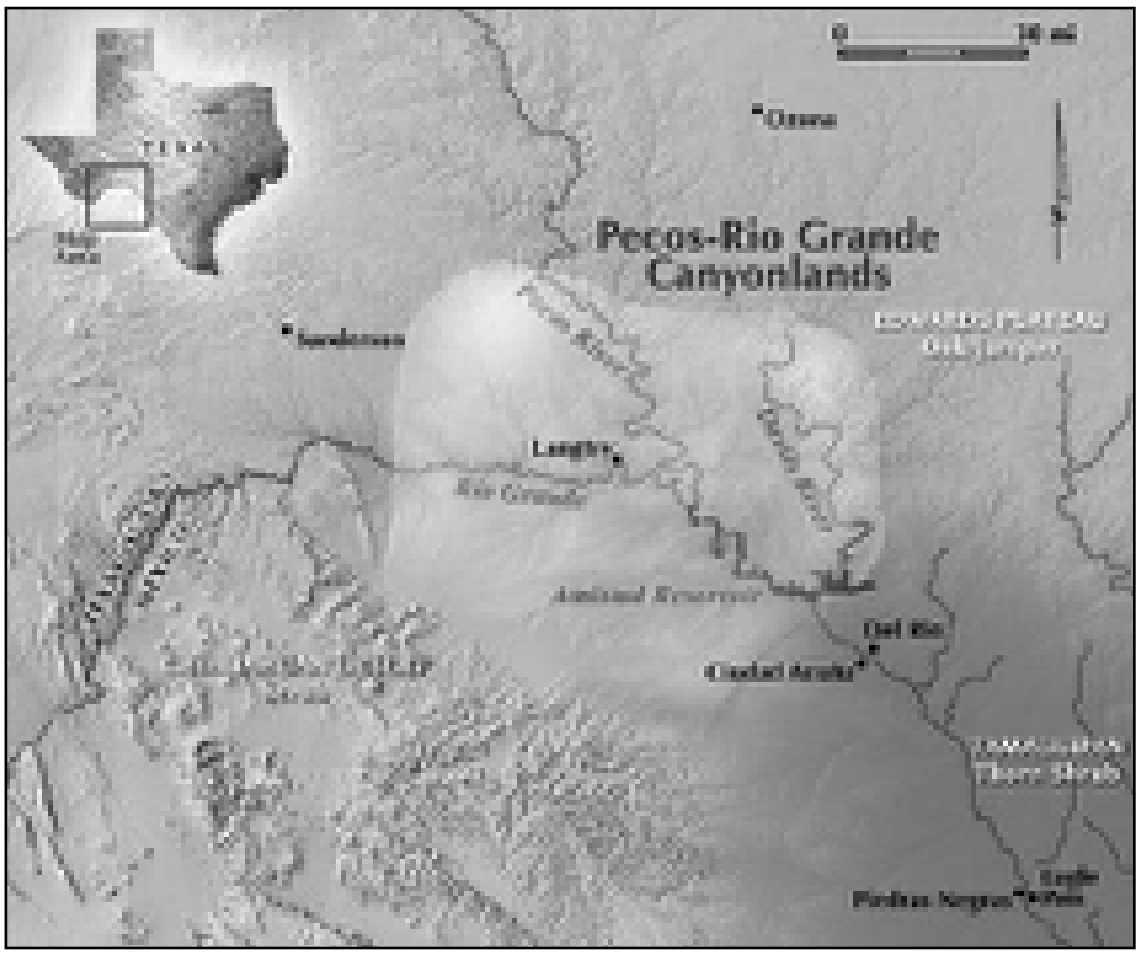
by Bill Sontag

Artistic traditions spanning 1,250 years – all emblazoned on canyon walls of the Rio Grande, Devils and Pecos rivers – give mute voice to Middle and Late Archaic peoples and the silent spirits they worshipped. Equally clear is the reverence held by these prehistoric Trans-Pecos denizens for the flora and fauna of which they were a part in the Lower Pecos canyonlands.

Scattered westerly from the confluence of the three rivers are thousands of colorful figures clustered throughout the region. Several may be seen by those willing and able to make the effort. Not surprisingly, newcomers are cautioned, "You've really got to want to get there to get there." To some sites, journeys are demanding, while at others just seeing the art can raise one's pulse more than the hike back to a parked car or tour bus.

In 250 known Lower Pecos panel sites of pictograph images (painted, rather than pecked or incised, as is the case with petroglyphs), the ancients made significant sacrifices to record … Well, what? "We'll probably never know what these images meant to those who painted them," goes the shelf worn mantra of some archeologists and rock art aficionados of the Lower Pecos cultural region. But that – some say – is changing.

Dr. Carolyn Boyd, founder and executive director of SHUMLA, a renowned center for education and research of ancient Lower Pecos lifeways, believes rock art in this region is supremely functional, not a matter of simple aesthetic reflection. In *Rock Art of the Lower Pecos*, the 2003 published version of her 1998 doctoral dissertation from Texas A&M University, Boyd explores the intensely spiritual purposes of the 4,000-year-old visions committed to limestone.



Map by Kerza Prewitt

> "America's sublime antiquity has the lure of a mystery greater than the ruined cities of the old world."
>
> – Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad booklet, c. 1900

"Images are considered sources of power; they are potent and important. An art object is valued in terms of what it can do, socially and spiritually, rather than what it looks like. The art works – it performs," Boyd declares. She believes early archeologists failed to integrate understanding of the rock art's significance with their disproportionate emphasis on material culture – woven sandals, atlatls, coprolites (feces), earth ovens and lithic tools (knives, scrapers, spear and dart points). This oversight, Boyd explains, was largely attributable to "Western conceptions of art as superfluous, decorative and non-utilitarian."

Surely "Western conceptions" had little to do with designs of the Great Sphinx and the Second Pyramid of Giza, built under the rule of Khafre, fourth pharaoh of Egypt, circa 4568-4542 BP (before present). So, only a paltry few centuries before Archaic nomads here began recording visions of spiritual transformation, gargantuan stone sculptures and tombs of the Near Eastern deserts grandly exhibited functional relationships between art and utility.

Cast-metal cooking pots unearthed from the Bronze Age of China are not judged by contemporary standards of "beauty," but they do represent a level of technology and symmetry when contrasted with art of other civilizations. And the National Gallery of Art's *Golden Age of Chinese Archeology*, edited by Xiaoneng Yang, explains that archeologists assign a graceful, 4,000-year-old, 9-inch painted pottery jar to the Lower Xiajiadan culture, crafted during the earliest stages of Lower Pecos rock art. Both vessels are contemporaneous, on opposite sides of the world, with early Lower Pecos-style rock art.

Though several styles and periods of art are seen in the Lower Pecos, Boyd has focused her energies on the polychromatic (multicolored) panels painted between 4,200 and 2,950 BP across this sprawling region, roughly the size of Connecticut. She is most concerned about erosive influences that threaten the paintings: events such as flood damage in narrow canyons, insect infestations, scouring effects of windborne dust and sand and traffic by livestock seeking cool summer shade and shelter from winter's "blue northers."

Brainless, unreasoned vandalism has taken a toll in some sites, too, though most accessible rock shelters are under the watchful, educated eyes of interpretive guides doubling as resource stewards. Still, neophytes to the rock-art experience – and a few who return after long absences – lament the art's eroded condition. To which, some docents and guides quip, "If you think this is bad, ask your local Sherwin-Williams dealer for house paint guaranteed to last 4,000 years!"

Using chemical analyses and accelerator spectrometry radiocarbon dating, archeologists have determined the age and composition of the

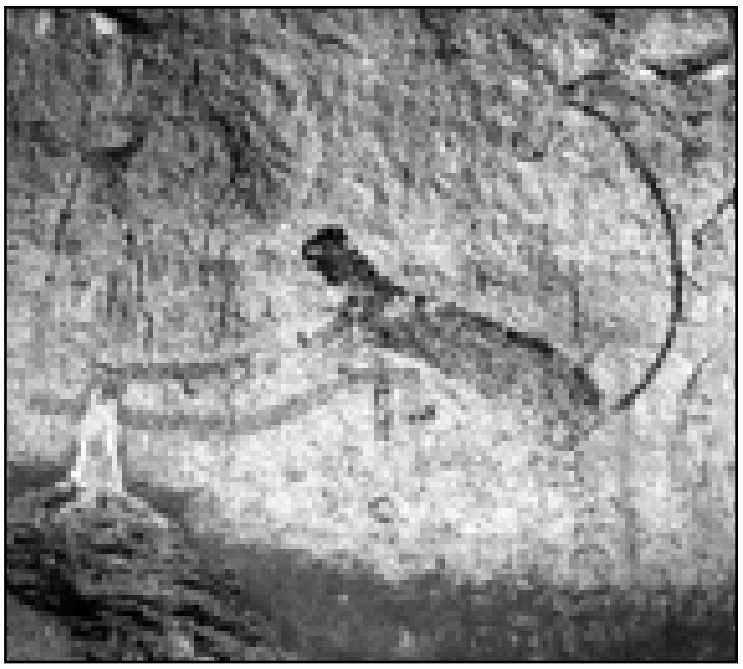


Photo by Bill Sontag

The Panther is one of the iconic images appearing in many Lower Pecos rock shelters. This image is 13 feet long from tail tip around the body axis to the nose.

Archaic-period paint. Mineral pigments such as red and yellow ochre were blended with animal fat (such as deer bone marrow), then emulsified to applicable texture with the soapy root residue of yucca and sotol. Studies of the calorie-meager diets of Archaic peoples further demonstrate the value natives placed on the spiritual importance of the painted images. They literally moved nutrition – in the form of fat – from the "family table" to "paint pots" of the shamans.

Archeologists often quibble over imponderables in their discipline, but one consensus is solid. The first step to the stewardship of antiquities lies in two words: baseline data. In essence, what's the best information obtainable about the current condition of the Lower Pecos rock art? In 2009, SHUMLA researchers initiated high-density laser scans of rock art to secure computer models with accuracy measured in tenths of a millimeter, showing every nook, cranny, crevice and placement of paint in a rock shelter. Draped with current high-resolution photos, the record is complete and useful for comparisons with future digital images and historical prints and slides from the site's photographic heritage.

Photo comparisons have already revealed a crisis of infestations of mud dauber nests at Panther Cave. The nests are believed to rip ancient paint from the walls each time abandoned clay tubes fall. Before construction of Amistad Dam – even before humans first applied paint to the rock shelter walls, four millennia ago – this lithic perch was a mere overlook into the 104-foot abyss of the Rio Grande. But with inundation by Amistad Reservoir to a conservation pool level of 1,117 AMSL (above mean sea level), only 27 feet below Panther Cave, the now-famous rock shelter became riparian habitat, adjacent to and interactive with the swollen river's moisture and biota.

SHUMLA's research efforts are magnified by generous photographers – amateur or professional – or inheritors of photographic collections. Contributions are scanned onto the organization's server at Comstock, and originals are safely returned to owners.

The premise of many modern archeologists – students as well as fledglings and veterans – is Boyd's affirmation of a growing conviction: "Prehistoric art is not beyond explanation. Images from the past contain a vast corpus of data – accessible through proven, scientific methods – that can enrich our understanding of human lifeways in prehistory and, at the same time, expand our appreciation for the work of art in the present and the future."

SHUMLA: *www.shumla.org*

Rock Art Information:
www.nps.gov/amis
www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/seminole_canyon

San Antonio's Rock Art Foundation: *www.rockart.org*

If you have Lower Pecos rock art photographs at least ten years old, become part of the Panther Cave Photo Legacy Project. Contact the author: 830.768.1493.

Counterclockwise from top left: The press room as it would have been in the mining days of Terlingua. Tools of the trade – typographer Lauren Stedman's typefaces wait to go to work.

Menagerie Press: Hot Type in the Terlingua Desert

by Nora Seymour

The fresh, yeasty scent of new ink fills the air inside a small adobe building perched at the top of Terlingua's Ghost Town. At a waist-high red desk in the corner, Menagerie Press owner, designer, typographer, and printer Lauren Stedman carefully fits individual lead blocks into a wooden frame, or "chase," aligning them with breath-taking precision and attention to detail. The letters are locked in with "quoins," small wedges that hold the type in place.

Soon, Stedman will use a painter's palette knife to spread a small amount of green ink onto the flat, circular platen of a letter-press dating from the 1920s. The spinning motion of the platen will spread the pigment evenly in a thin layer.

Amid the whir of the flywheel driving the press, Stedman mounts the type block and sets the process in motion. The press begins to thump rhythmically, a large yet elegant beast awakened from slumber.

With only seconds between impressions, Stedman feeds sheet after sheet of heavy paper stock into the press. As press meets type, type meets ink and ink meets paper, something completely new is born. The resulting printed piece is so sharp it looks embossed. The letters are precise, razor-sharp; a harmonious marriage of age-old technology and modern design esthetic.

Like the desert in which it dwells, Menagerie Press is a study in contrasts. Take the building itself: the formerly abandoned rectory beside the old church in Terlingua now houses an agglomeration of antique presses and old lead type combined with computers, printers and new fonts and faces from custom foundries.

On waist-high wooden counters that line the press room, artisan papers in sumptuous colors are neatly stacked next to test pieces Stedman has accrued in the course of her jobs for a diverse clientele of local businesses and private clients, as well as her own personal projects.

Handmade books featuring flowing calligraphy and elegant colored ink bound with textured art papers and embellished with bead-and-string closures dot the press room, whose walls are decked in printer's "job cases" – compartmented wooden cases, which gave birth to the terms "upper case" and "lower case" – filled with antique type and "dingbats" (printer's ornaments) 50, 75, even 100 years old.

And there is the designer herself. Stedman was born in Fort Davis and spent her childhood as part of an Air Force family who lived around the world, with stints in Germany, France, Italy and the Philippines.

She readily ascribes her design aesthetic to her exposure to European art and architecture, which blended with her innate artistic nature to produce an appreciation of graphic design, typography and ultimately fine-art printing.

She was especially influenced by the clean lines of the Bauhaus style that swept Germany in the 1920s, the Craftsman style of influential 19th Century British designer and typographer William Morris and the return to fine-art printing exemplified by the American Roycroft School.

Stedman pursued an artist's education in California, studying lettering, typography, calligraphy, graphic design and art history. Her fascination with printing and typography dove-tailed with the resurgence of fine-art printing in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

By the 1960's, letter-press printing had been phased out by large-scale linotype operations. While scattered private presses held on to the old ways, newspapers and other commercial printers migrated to linotype – and more recently, to computer-generated typography.

This sea-change had a silver lining: small-scale presses across the country started selling off presses and type, allowing fine-art printers like Stedman to acquire classic equipment for their own use.

"People started using letter-press as an art form," she says, "creating small-edition books with hand-done woodcuts and illustrations."

In 1999, fueled by her dream of making a life in fine-art printing, Stedman founded Menagerie Press (the name refers to the wide array of household pets she grew up with) in Fort Bragg, NC.

Two years ago, Stedman came back to the Big Bend. She brought along her presses – and her dream of creating a studio printing operation that would use classic equipment to create bold new designs.

She gained permission from Ghost Town proprietor Bill Ivey to rent the old adobe rectory next to the church. The abandoned building needed work: there were no floors, and sections of walls had fallen victim to neglect and the harsh environment of the Chihuahuan desert. The building needed a new roof.

But Stedman saw potential in the structure, and proceeded to bring it back from the brink of ruin, transforming it into a snug yet airy home for her presses.

Stedman has collected old presses and lead type for several years. Menagerie Press is currently home to a large 1920s Chandler&Price platen press she found in Ukiah, California , a large-format 1961 Vandercook flatbed press acquired in Hillsboro, New Mexico and a smaller Chandler&Price press, circa 1900.

She put together her type library, which she continues to expand, from letters found on eBay or acquired from letter-press printers going out of business, as well as specially commissioned type from small type foundries across the country.

Stedman's work reflects wide interests and a deep reverence for classic typography and design.

For Marathon artist Mary Baxter, Stedman designed and printed large-format business cards on silver stock, featuring Craftsman-style graphics and elegant copper-plate type in midnight-blue ink. Another iteration of Baxter's card features bright turquoise ink on glossy coated stock in vivid pink.

For the newly opened Famous Burro restaurant in Marathon, she combined different colored stock with hip illustrations – cowboys, burros, and bucking broncs – that tread the fine line of elegance just this side of kitsch, emblazoned with the tongue-in-cheek slogan "a burro is not a horse."

Stedman has a particular interest in creating books – from beginning to end. Her 2008 book project, "*Why Terlingua: Adventure on the Edge of Texas*," combines character sketches of local residents and memoirs of Terlingua old-timers along with travel tips, photos and a guide to the area.

Though the book project was digitally designed, Stedman says the art of good typography is "imperative," whether set by hand in a composing stick or designed on a computer screen.

Stedman has deep roots in the Big Bend region. Her maternal grandfather, Roe Miller, came to Fort Davis at the age of 12, eventually married her grandmother, Pearl, and became a well-known area cattle rancher. An aunt, Gene Miller, still lives in Fort Davis.

In earlier days, Stedman says, the area was remote and insular, with few newcomers to add variety to the firmly entrenched population of ranchers. "Fort Davis was a cow town," she says, and it held little interest for an artistic young girl hungry for inspiration and the chance to express her talents.

Even so, she was always homesick for the wide open spaces of her West Texas childhood, and when it became possible to return to West Texas, Stedman leaped at the chance.

Having come full-circle back to the Big Bend, Stedman reflects on the changes in the area since she knew it as a young child. The main difference she sees is the influx of outsiders, which is adding diversity and opportunity to a county once dominated by ranching.

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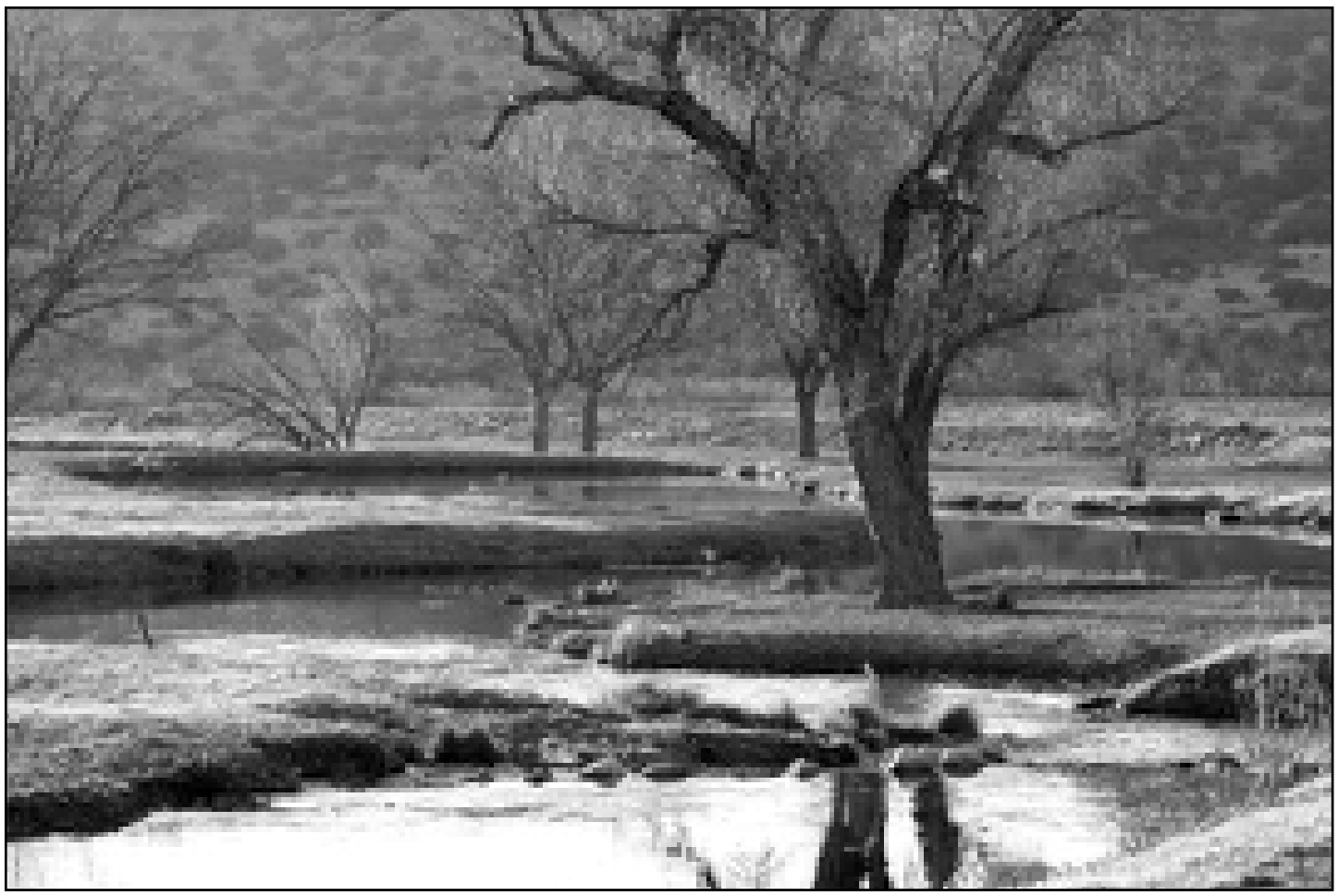


Photo by © TNC/Lynn McBride

Two large ponds, about the size of a couple of football fields, dominate the scene near preserve headquarters

INDEPEDENCE CREEK PRESERVE:
THE HIDDEN OASIS

by Kelly Fenstermaker

After a stop in Balmorhea, a friend and I set out for a drive through some of the most desolate land in West Texas. About three hours later, the last part of which involves missing a turn on a long dirt road, we reach our destination: Independence Creek Preserve, owned and operated by the Texas Nature Conservancy. This 2,000-acre piece of land once belonged to the Oasis and Canyon Ranches and was purchased from them in 2001.

We drive through the gate and surface a hill, and suddenly, on the other side, a lush river bed appears with a creek running through it. Stands of oak shade the banks of this unexpected source of water.

Not too many people have ever heard of Independence Creek, let alone have any idea where it is. One reason is probably its middle-of-nowhere location. The closest towns are Sheffield, 22 miles away, and Dryden, 37 miles, both virtual ghost towns. If you didn't know the creek was there, you'd never guess. The vast landscape of desert scrub and bare earth gives no hint. And who would find reason to go there?

Yet, people have.

This part of the lower Pecos River area was first occupied about 12,000 years ago by Archaic people who depended on its constant supply of fresh water. They left behind artifacts, and along the Pecos River, large concentrations of rock art. Later the Apaches arrived. Eventually, they were displaced in the 19th century by cattle, sheep and goat ranchers who were drawn to the rich grass along the creek's banks.

In the 50s, Charles Chandler opened his ranch, adjacent to the preserve, to guests, offering water sports, hunting, fishing and even a nine-hole golf course. For many years it was one of the most popular recreation areas in southwest Texas, partially due to the fact that it was the only entertainment spot on the Pecos River.

A half mile from the preserve's entrance the road takes us to headquarters, site of the old Oasis Ranch. Two large ponds, about the size of a couple of football fields, dominate the scene. The guest house in which we are staying with friends is right near the bank. The drive to get here had been a long and parched one, but this

delicious sight of water, trees and grass more than makes up for it.

The back of the guest house opens to a rock terrace and beyond that, a lawn sloping down to the water. In warm weather that lovely clear water would invite a plunge. It being winter, I'm not tempted, but I do wish for a canoe. A little stroll around to one end of the first pond takes you to an outdoor entertainment area, referred to as the Pavilion, framed by attractive rock work. It is equipped with a barbecue grill, tables and chairs, and there's enough space for large groups.

Our ranch-style house is attractive and comfortable. The spacious living room is furnished with deep, comfy chairs and couches and has a rock fireplace that covers most of one wall. The kitchen is equipped with everything a cook would need.

Friends who have driven in from San Antonio, Dallas and Austin come wandering in. After a communal lasagna dinner, we all turn in early. Tucked under the folds of a soft quilt, I fall asleep to the sound of absolute quiet.

Next morning, I take a jeep ride with two others to check out the preserve. A prairie dog settlement has established itself on the other side of the pond. Dozens of these curious little creatures pop their heads out of holes and blink at us with large black eyes.

The road follows the creek. Kept full year round by several springs, the creek is one of the few remaining recoverable freshwater tributaries of the lower Pecos River. Caroline Spring, located at the headquarters, produces 3,000 to 5,000 gallons per minute and comprises about 25 percent of the creek's flow. The creek itself increases the Pecos River water volume by 42 percent.

The pristine waters of this desert oasis make a substantial contribution to wildlife downstream of the Pecos River corridor. The creek itself sustains diverse, abundant flora and fauna, including several rare and endangered species.

Although we don't see any fish, they are here. The threatened proserpine shiner makes its home here. Its dwindling numbers are the result of a vanishing spring-fed habitat. Fortunately, they will always have a home here in Independence Creek.

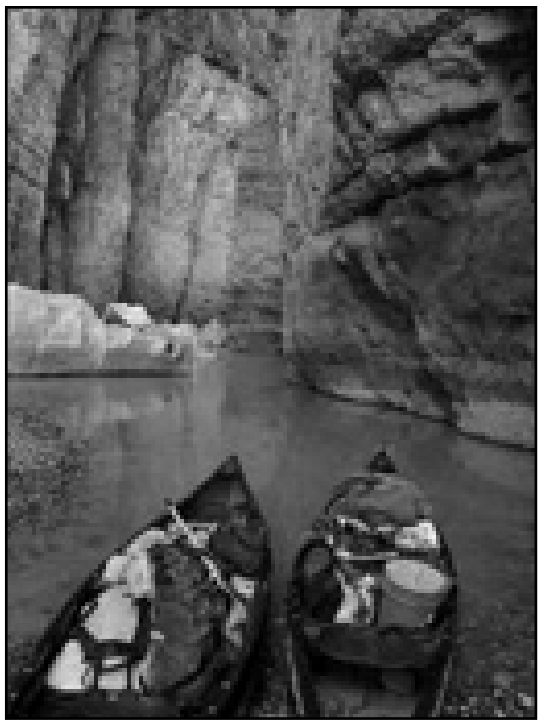
Many species of birds flock to the area. It's an ideal spot for birders or anyone who appreciates birds. Among the species to be seen are vermillion fly catchers, three species of kingfishers, indigo bunting, scissor-tailed flycatchers, prairie falcons, golden eagles, wood ducks, great blue herons, ladder-backed woodpeckers, zone tailed hawks and wood ducks. If you're lucky, you might catch sight of the endangered black-capped vireo.

Independence Creek is in a valley. Its lush plateau makes a dramatic contrast to the surrounding rugged canyon hills, covered with desert scrub and juniper woodlands. Live oaks, remnants of vegetation that once grew here thousands of years ago when the climate was wetter and cooler, grow down by the water. They intermix with a variety of other trees, including little walnuts, Texas persimmons and black willows.

The jeep passes a few other roads marked with faded, unreadable signs. Since it is drawing close to departure time, discovering the mystery of where these signs lead will have to wait until another time.

Noon has passed, and it's time to head back home. The visit has been far too short, but the tranquil beauty of this place has been a wonderful escape from "real" life. To fortify ourselves for the long desert drive back to Fort Davis, we search for a Coke and hope to get one in either Sheffield or Dryden, but both towns are closed up tight. Once you leave the hidden oasis you're on your own for a good many miles.

This summer, I look forward to returning for one of the preserve's open weekends. It will be a chance to refresh the spirit and finally go swimming. The water looks lovely.



River Virgins in Santa Elena

Poem and Photographs by Cindy McIntyre

It finally happened.
My turn on the river,
one of the few here
who has not canoed or rafted or tubed
down the Rio Grande.
    Which is not grande. Not now
    at low water,
    diverted upstream by
    dams and irrigation
to a little creek here
at Lajitas, where we put in.

Me up front in gleaming Number 30,
    also a river virgin,
born in Old Town, Maine.
Bud at stern;
on patrol, John and Elaine
in trusty Number 21.

    November.
No wind, sleeveless,
dipping oars quietly
in the low water
gliding
then "running" the little riffles,
    sometimes hanging on rocks,
    good New Balance shoes (also Maine made)
soaked.
Darning needles and mosquito hawks
in tandem flight
joined tail to head in love,
webbed wings a glistening escort.
    Bobcat ears twitched.
    Mexican horses and cows switched allegiance.

Metates and a coiled fossil
lured us ashore,
    jay-blue sky
rimmed by an ancient white seabed
hugging intrusions from a hidden furnace.

By four-thirty, tents, sleeping pads, the required toilet,
cooler, life jackets, table, chairs, day packs
    and an old tire
found their places ashore
where the river
when swollen and grande,
wipes away the landscape.
    Bud brought little round steaks
    bordered in bacon,
    and vegetables and potatoes
    snuggled in foil.

A little wine (Bud again) and he read
Elaine's favorite poem by
Robinson Jeffers about the vulture
who thought him dead:

That I was sorry to have disappointed him. To be eaten by that beak
    and
    become part of him, to share those wings and those eyes –
What a sublime end of one's body…

Bud asked, "What makes empires collapse?"
I didn't have an intelligent answer,
    though I thought I should have.
The incurious stars, the extravagant ribbon of
Milky Way
burn over all empires past and future. Later,

Orion's Belt peeked through the tent at several
awakenings,
    panning across my reluctant vision.
Apprehensions about Rock Slide
drove my car into a flash flood
but I found an air bubble and
escaped in my dream
so I was not haunted come morning
when life jackets were zipped.

I was on the Penobscot once, in Maine,
rafting with my son and nephew
and two fat ladies,
    oars frantically
    rowing air
    as we sailed over treachery.

But with Bud, who knew what to do,
I think woo-hoo
that was easy,
past Rock Slide and Fern Canyon,
    darting black phoebes, sandpipers rocking,
past a watching hawk, a bufflehead
    and Smuggler's Cave
    onto a shallow reflecting pool,
waving to hikers
at the mouth with Chisos teeth
to the takeout.

We stopped at Castolon
for a V8 and Klondike bar,
a final ritual
and tribute
to the long-awaited seduction.

continued from page 4

between east and west terminals, and the Sunset was by then 42 hours. But even this slower train offered sleeping-car arrangements and a full diner. The Argonaut made a flag stop in Marathon and a regular stop in Alpine and Marfa.

The Sunset survived the Depression and World Wars I and II. During the second war, the famous train was permanently forced to add chair cars to its consist. After World War II, the train was completely modernized again with the glamorous newly styled stainless steel coaches. Diners and lounges became stylish and gave the train once again an image of grandness. The steam locomotives where replaced starting in 1953. With the new power, diesels were changed only twice during the entire route.

The Sunset now was the picture of streamlined beauty, and thus it became a true streamliner. One of the diners was named the "Audubon Diner," a lounge car was named "The French Quarter" and a coffee lounge was "The Pride of Texas." The 1950s proved to be the high point of this train and the pride of the company. The Sunset Limited at this time could easily have four power diesels, a baggage car and as many as 15 passenger cars. In stainless steel, it was a glistering and stunning sight, peaking 90 miles per hour in flat, straight terrain.

But times were to change. Along came the jet airliners and the interstate highway system, and in the late 50s and early 60s passenger headcount began to drop. At mid-point in the 60s, railroads were discontinuing trains regularly. The Southern Pacific was losing money on the once "crack" train. They tried to discontinue the train and were not allowed to do so by the Texas Railroad Commission. This marked the lowest point in the train's history, as the Southern Pacific deliberately tried to discourage ridership. The diner was taken off as well as the sleeping cars, and by 1970 the train was no longer daily. Now the train was down to an engine and three cars: a car featuring vending machines with junk food and two chair cars. Public outrage forced the rail line to bring back the sleepers and diner.

By 1970, the American passenger train had all but disappeared. Gone were such great trains as the Santa Fe Chief, the California Zephyr and the Golden State Limited. The Texas & Pacific saw its last Texas Eagle in 1967. The few trains left were not operated with pride but with an eye to getting rid of passenger service in favor of freight service. The answer to the problem came with Amtrak, created by a bill signed by Richard Nixon on May 1, 1971. And at last the Southern Pacific gladly gave away its famous but tattered train.

Amtrak's first need was to establish the routes for its trains. The Sunset Route was needed to connect New Orleans and Houston with the West Coast, and that meant that the Sunset would be kept. The second need was for equipment to run the trains. Amtrak bought the best of the old equipment and started service. This meant all the passenger trains had a menagerie of cars of differing colors. Popular among Amtrak's purchases were the double-level chair cars built by the Santa Fe for the famous El Capitan train which operated between Chicago and Los Angeles. So, these double levels now appeared as the chair cars on the Sunset. These cars, called "Viewliners," proved to be so popular and efficient that they became the standard for what Amtrak built for its long distance trains. Ultimately, the entire train became double-level.

In 1993, Amtrak experimented making Miami the eastern terminus of the train. This simply did not work, due to the train having to yield constantly to freight trains, which made the train ridiculously late at times. Hurricane Katrina ended the Miami route by destroying a tremendous amount of track east of New Orleans. Now the train operates as far as New Orleans with a connection in San Antonio with the Texas Eagle, which runs north to Chicago.

Amtrak wants to make the train, or sections of the route, a daily operation. However, the "cooperating" Union Pacific has put a steep price tag on that notion: no less than $750 million! Amtrak has always been at the mercy of "cooperating" railroads, which still do not want the passenger train(s) on their tracks.

Currently the train averages about 300 passengers per run. The complete run from New Orleans to Los Angeles requires 48 hours if it's on time. Last year the train carried over 90,000 passengers total. This train usually consists of the locomotive, a baggage car, two or three chair cars, a diner, a lounge car and two sleeping cars.

The Sunset Limited has had its share of ups and downs, but the public can still hope that the existing service will become more dependable and that someday it can be a daily train.

continued from page 23

Stedman's outlook for the art and craft of letter-press printing is sunny: in the past five years or so, she says, art schools and universities have taken up the gauntlet, teaching typography and printing as a legitimate and valued part of an art education.

Her own future is equally exciting. She's putting down roots; building a house in Terlingua and looking to expand her clientele to cover Fort Davis and Alpine and planning collaborative projects with local artists and writers.

She hopes to expand her work into posters, broadsides, chapbooks, and larger print jobs. Like a hardy desert bloom, Menagerie Press adds color and texture to the perennially fascinating palette of the Big Bend.

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Trans-Pecos TRIVIA

by Charles Angell

CENIZO JOURNAL TRIVIA

1) The Cenizo Journal has entertained and informed readers for several years now, featuring the artwork, photography and writing of West Texans. When did the first issue debut?
   a) April 2009
   b) July 2008
   c) January 2010
   d) October 2011

2) The name Cenizo is the Spanish name for what?
   a) a blessing, or gesundheit
   b) swamp, marshy area
   c) ghost
   d) Purple Sage

3) The Journal's first issue cover was a photograph of its namesake; this photo was taken by which frequent contributor?
   a) James H. Evans
   b) David Shane Duke
   c) Crystal Allbright
   d) Matthew Brady

4) Before settling on the Journal's current name, which of the following titles was considered for the magazine?
   a) Alpine Quarterly
   b) WestPress Digest
   c) La Frontera
   d) all of the above

5) The Cenizo Journal has a circulation of approximately 11,000 and is distributed in eight counties, as far away as Laredo and Austin; without the support of its readers and contributors it would not exist. What is the sole source of funding that makes this possible?
   a) Literary grants
   b) Advertisers
   c) Hotel-Motel Taxes
   d) Lottery ticket sales

Bonus: What can readers do to contribute to the future and growth of Cenizo Journal?

Answers: 1) A 2) D 3) C 4) C 5) B
Bonus: Advertise

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