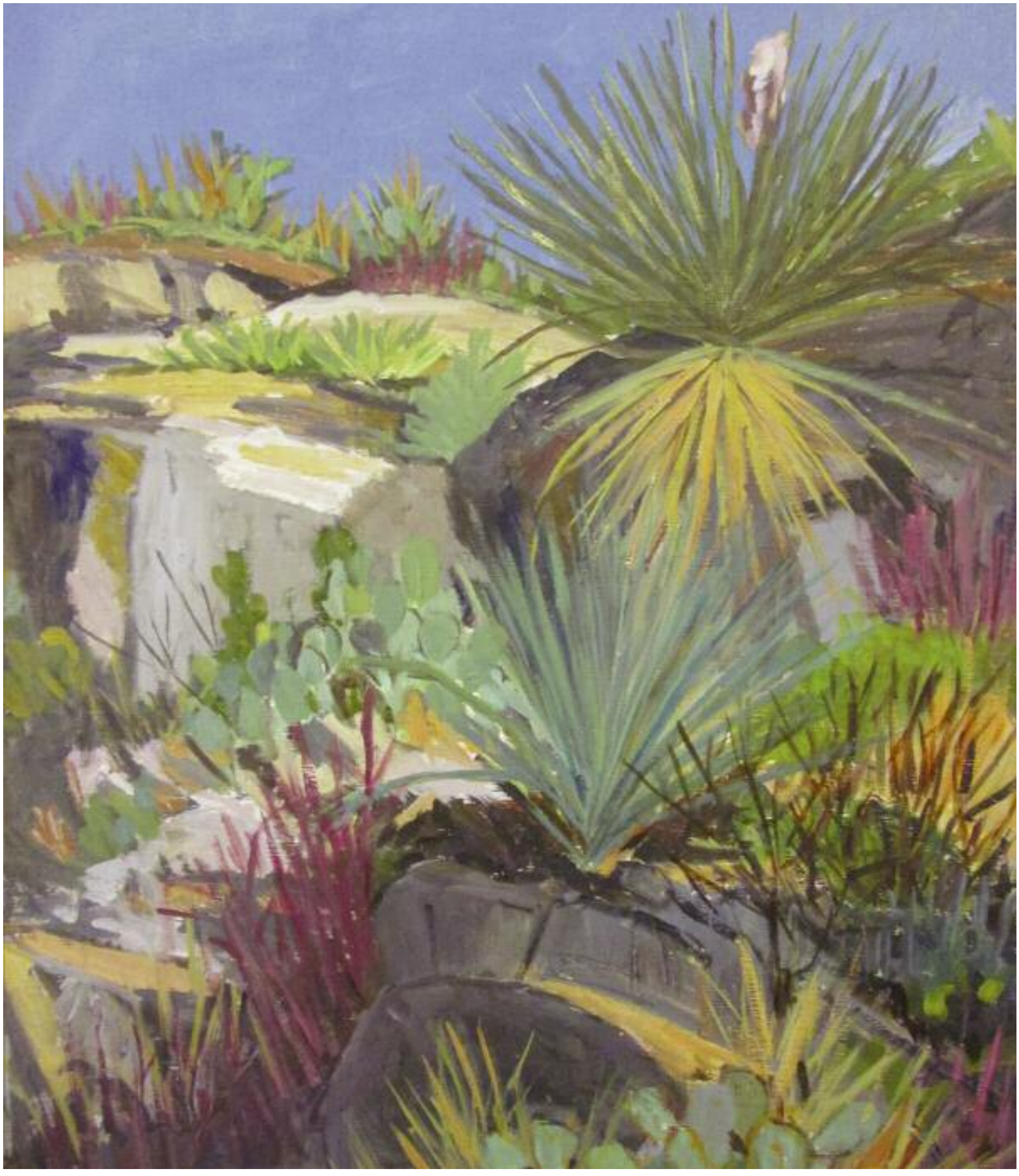
SCENIC BIG BEND



JOURNAL

FIRST QUARTER 2016

FREE

"We are stardust, we are golden, and we've got to get ourselves back to the garden." *Joni Mitchell*

Tamale Pete • River of Mysteries • Photo Essay • Voices of the Big Bend • Folkways
Ghost Town Resurrected • Dust Devil Comics • Big Bend Eats • Slow Move To Marathon • Poetry • Trivia

Directions

By Rachel Manera

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Volume 8 Number 1

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Art, photographic and literary works may be e-mailed to the Editor.
For advertising rates or to place an ad, contact: advertising@cenizojournal.com

Cenizo Notes

by Carolyn Brown Zniewski, publisher and Danielle Gallo, editor

It's January and a new year has begun. I've been looking forward to this new beginning. Some years seem to need a reboot more than others, and it seems to me that last year could really use a new start. There is an old Chinese curse, "May you live in interesting times." I think last year qualified as interesting! I am hoping this coming year is a little less "interesting" myself.

After the busy schedule of the holidays and the horn-blowing and toasting that accompanies the New Year, we have a chance for some quiet time to rediscover ourselves, gather and renew our energy, pay off a few bills and snuggle up with a friend or two, perhaps knit some slippers. It is a time for getting ready for things to come and taking a peek back at where one has been. Sorting through old photos, cleaning out the junk drawer and packing up out-of-date clothing to send to the second-hand store always helps me put life in perspective. Mending a broken chair rung or replacing a stained, tattered kitchen towel gives satisfaction, too.

There is nothing quite like icy wind and a winter storm to make you appreciate an afghan, a cat on your lap, a dog at your feet and a favorite novel. Those dishes can wait until morning. It's time to gather your wits for a new beginning. Mother nature is quietly preparing for the great blooming to come. So can we all. I am so very glad you have included the *Cenizo* on your reading list. Enjoy!

The harshness of winter is twofold: first, the short days and bitter winds chase us inside to pace the walls of small adobe houses, so many of us wishing our predecessors had engineered better plans for our heating. Then, both more subtle and more poignant, the winter months showcase a harsh reality as every year passes—they pass faster and faster. It just turned spring, we groan. How can it be January already? It seems the months cascade and tumble through the mild and the hot desert days, rushing over each other to land with a flat, grey note squarely in the doldrums of February.

In honor of winter, this issue of *Cenizo* means to showcase new beginnings. We look on ancient Rio Grande history, then ponder the recent startling changes in the Trans-Pecos. Here are stories of pioneers and stories of newcomers.

In the season of contemplation, we often look to make big changes in our lives: location, vocation, resolution. Here we showcase migrations big and small, voyagers who left their marks in stone and the hopes of newlyweds (much the same over acentury ago as they are today).

I believe the winter houses the biggest holidays to help us through the cold and dark with reminders of all the things we love the most: family, friends, food. But it's a long stretch from the New Year to the first apricot blossom, so enjoy the *Cenizo* by a drafty mesquite fire and know that another hurried warm year is just around the corner.

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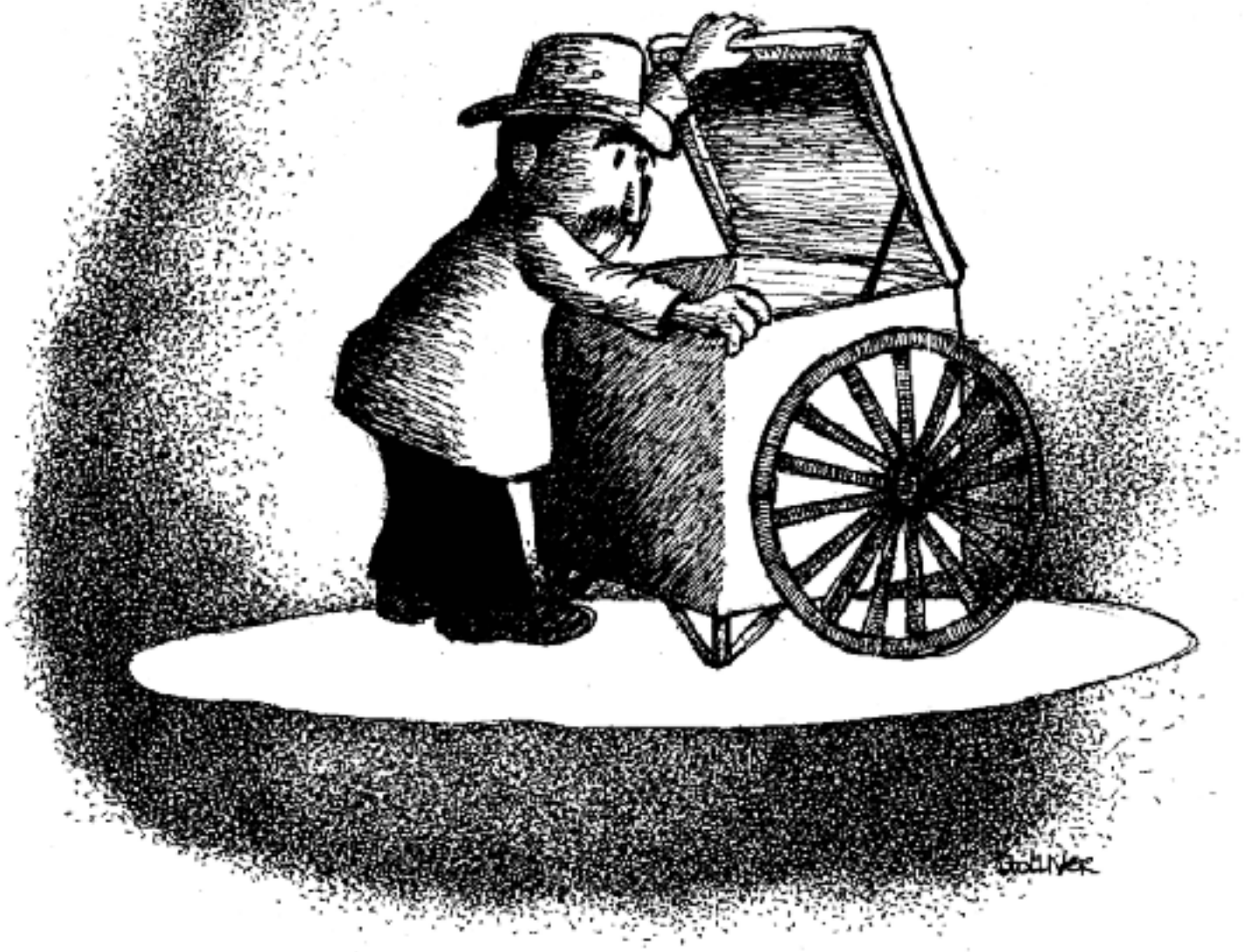
Tamale Pete

by C. W. (Bill) Smith.
Illustration by Gary Oliver.



Pedro Castillo would be a hero in any world. Disabled at an early age, his was a life of pain and hard work. With his deformed spine, he could have begged on the streets of Sanderson or sought a handout from the county. The county judges in the early days of Terrell County often wrote a check on county funds and quietly presented it to poor folks truly in need.

Pedro Castillo would have none of that. Instead, he chose the hard road of self-reliance and entrepreneurship to make his way in the world. In the process he became a shining icon and an example of perseverance. Actually the word...disabled...did not fit him at all.

Pedro Castillo y Olivares was born at La Hacienda Santa Rita, a working ranch in San Luis Potosí, México, on January 31, 1879.

Injured in a fall from a horse at age seven, he spent two years on crutches and suffered throughout his life from a severely deformed back. His disability prevented him from doing regular cowboy work so he could not follow in his father's and brothers' footsteps. There was not much he could do on a ranch in the way of labor and there was no one to show him anything else.

In 1894, at age 15, he entered the U.S. at Eagle Pass, Texas, and made his way to Del Rio where he spent two years working on the street selling bread.

In 1896 God smiled on young Pedro when Sanderson rancher Charles Downie crossed his path. A self-made man himself, Downie looked with sympathy on the tiny, hunch-backed teenager who was hawking his large load of bread around the streets of Del Rio. Downie offered Pedro a job at his ranch at Sanderson, a three-month try-out to see what he could do. Downie even paid Pedro's train fare from Del Rio to Sanderson. He would work for three months as a household domestic for $12 per month.

In those three months, the family quickly came to love Pedro's personality, sense of humor and his soft-spoken demeanor. As a result his stay was extended for 14 years. He became a valued and beloved employee at the Downie Ranch headquarters.

In those years, Mrs. Downie taught Pedro to cook, a fateful event that enabled him to support himself and his family through the years. He never sought, nor was he ever forced by circumstance, to take public assistance at any point in his life.

As majordomo for the Downies, he not only did the cooking and cleaning for the family, more importantly, he learned to keep the ranch commissary supplied for its large staff of sheepherders and cowboys. Overseeing the logistics of supply and demand in an enterprise that employed a large crew and ran thousands of head of sheep was no mean feat.

It was a happy arrangement until 1913, when Cupid shot Castillo with his amorous arrow and he fell in love

with a young lady named Concepción. When they married he decided they needed to live in town. He left the ranch and moved to Sanderson. With the cooking skills he had learned at the Downies, he and Concepción eventually operated three restaurants together over the course of the years. In the interim he also worked as a cook at other restaurants and hotels.

About 1920, Castillo began a push-cart tamale operation in Sanderson. Of course, he made the tamales himself and sold them on the streets and at the train depot. He sold two dozen tamales for 25¢; hungry train passengers made it a land office business. That allowed Pedro to open a restaurant while continuing to sell tamales.

The June 2, 1923, edition of the *Sanderson Times* featured an ad on the front page for The San Pedro Café, listing Pedro Castillo as the owner and featuring Mexican and American dishes, short orders, ice cream, and soda water. "Everything clean and sanitary."

Dining cars were not instituted on the Sunset Lines until the latter '20s and if passengers wanted to eat, they had to leave the train and go into the depot cafe, The Beanery, and risk missing their connection. Tamales were an exotic finger food that could be paid for and passed up through the open train window, the diner never having to leave the train.

With the addition of dining service to the trains, Castillo's business at the depot began to slow. By the late 1930s he was selling on Oak Street and at the local cafes, running his operation from a small white pushcart and wearing a crisp, white waiter's jacket. It was in this format that Pedro Castillo became an iconic fixture in Sanderson. He acquired the name "Tamale Pete," probably because of a Western Swing tune popular at the time, "Hot Tamale Pete," that was sweeping the nation:

If you wanna get something good to eat,
served with a great big smile,
Two blocks down and turn to the right at
Hot Tamale Pete's.
(Bob Skyles and His Skyrockets, 1936)

The song accurately sums up Pedro's operation and his personality through the years.

It was also in the 1920s that Castillo applied for U.S. citizenship, but, sadly, he never finished the paperwork. It was always a great regret of his, as he loved and appreciated the United States and the opportunities he had here, but it did not stop him from being successful.

In 1933, tragedy struck the little man whose life had always been hard. His beloved Concepción died, leaving no children to comfort and console him. The next 14 years were lonely for Pedro as he adjusted to life without Concepción.

However, in 1947, at the age of 68, he met Maria Aguilar, a woman from Mexico, and found love once again. They were married and he spent the remainder of his life with her. Together they adopted two small children, her relatives from Mexico, and he now had the family he had always wanted.

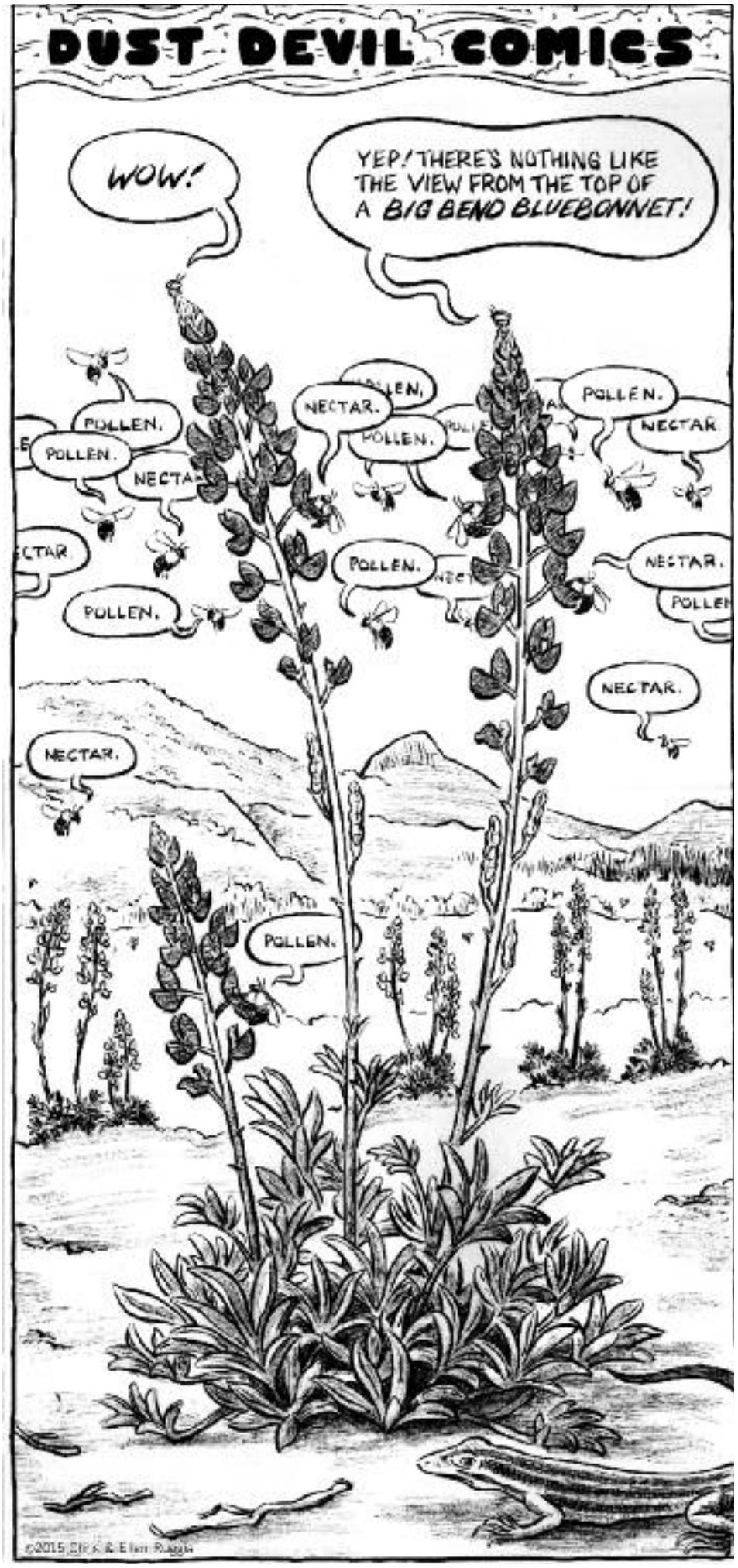
By 1952 Castillo's tamale operation had slowed down. He sold only three days a week to local housewives and cafes. The rising cost of ingredients forced him to raise his price to 35¢ per dozen, but the townsfolk agreed it was still a bargain.

To augment his income, he also distributed *La Prensa*, a Spanish-language daily newspaper from San Antonio. He would meet the train every day to pick up his papers, distributing them on the way home. He continued this until his last few years.

In November of 1959, at the age of 80 and with some health issues, Castillo went by himself to the doctor in Del Rio for medical attention. Early on the morning of Nov. 3, 1959, his body was discovered in a drainage ditch. He had drowned in less than six inches of standing water.

At the coroner's inquest the Justice of the Peace noted that there was no sign of foul play. He theorized that Castillo had accidently stumbled into the ditch and was knocked unconscious by the fall. Not able to raise his head above the water, he drowned. It was a cruel fate for a man who always held his head high.

By physical aspect, Pedro Castillo y Olivares was a small man, bent by disability, yet modest and unassuming. He certainly would not have stood out in a crowd. But by his actions and his spirit, he was a giant. Unafraid of work, faithful supporter of his church, proud owner of his own home and loving family man, he never sought assistance because of his handicap or used it as an excuse to gain sympathy. Totally self-reliant, he took care of his family to the best of his ability. His least effort was greater than many men's best. It is safe to say that we need more men and women like "Tamale Pete."



Ghost Town Resurrected

by Kleo Maxwell

Photo courtesy of Cassandra Perez

If you hit the blinking light at Holland and 5th in Alpine at 5 p.m. on a weekday, you may experience the only traffic jam in Big Bend, unless you happen to be behind a vehicle that stops in the middle of the road for a roadrunner or javelina. Vistors and residents agree that the lack of traffic is very attractive.

Much of the land in Big Bend is comprised of private ranch land. Rene Ybarra, a hunting guide since 2004, reports that about 70 per cent of private ranch land is used for hunting, 30 per cent for ranching and that approximately 85 per cent of ranches allow commercial hunting packages. With more than 200 private ranches in the area, none are smaller than a couple thousand acres, most are larger. Mule deer, pronghorn antelope, and big horn sheep are all found in Big Bend. Aoudad, a non-native sheep, is open season and draws many hunters to the region. Texas Parks and Wildlife works with 40 ranches in Brewster County alone, in a managed Lands Deer Program, which allows an extended hunting season with proper resource management.

The McDonald Observatory hosts thousands of visitors every year. Lack of light pollution in Big Bend lends to a brilliant viewing of the night sky. At night, the ribbon of the Milky Way and falling stars are commonly sighted.

During the day it is not uncommon to watch thunderstorms 50 miles away or the sunset on the distant mountains of Mexico, from the porch in the Ghost town. Many visitors remark on the "clear skies" of Big Bend.

Since the early days of Big Bend National Park, there has been talk of an international park, encompassing wilderness areas on both sides of the river. Though the recent political climate indicates the improbability of such an endeavor, the hope and belief of those who experience life on the Rio Grande is that one day communication and cooperation will return. Bill Ivy, who grew up on a homestead near the old Lajitas crossing, remembers, "Living on the river we considered ourselves neighbors, not foreigners."

People come to visit Big Bend for many reasons. Fort Davis has its mountain beauty, Alpine its tiny cosmopolitan charms, Marfa its arts, Marathon its gateway. But Terlingua is unique even among the quirky hamlets of Big Bend: it has the river, the Park, and the ghost town.

A 1965 column in the *San Angelo Standard Times*, "Water and Tourism Benefit This Area," states: "The tourist trade is now considered Texas' most promising growth industry." The 39th Governor of Texas, John Connally (1963-1969), was a big proponent of tourism development in Texas. In his 1969 dedication of the Texas Mountain Trail he praised tourism as "a big business." He called the 1963 move by the legislature to draw tourists "a move into great dimensions." During Connolly's term in office visitors to Big Bend National Park doubled, reaching almost 200,000 in 1969.

It wasn't until the mid-60s that Glen Pepper opened up the Villa De La Mina to tourists, on the top of the world between Terlingua and Lajitas. Before then the only places for visitors to stay were the cabins in the Chisos Basin or a piece of desert amidst stars and silhouettes.

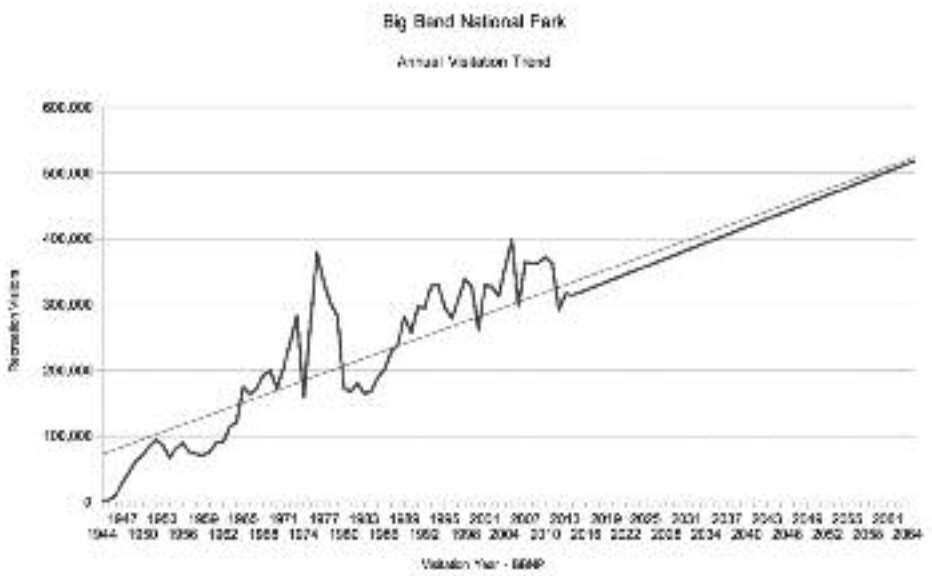
Pepper came to Terlingua in 1962 prospecting for mercury. He and Gil Felts, both from Sabinal, Texas, bought a cluster of abandoned mercury mines and revitalized the operations back to production. The price of mercury was up, but not for long. Gil Felts went on to build La Kiva, the legendary bar on Terlingua Creek. Pepper restored the rock houses of the mine which is now known as Villa De La Mina, and rented rooms to tourists.

After Park rangers floated Lady Bird Johnson down the Rio Grande, tourists were showing up looking for river trips. Pepper purchased rubber rafts, and commercial boating on the lower Rio Grande was born.

"Two stewardesses showed up looking for a free river trip in exchange for publicity in their airline magazine," says Glen. "We got more river trips from that magazine than anything else." The Villa De La Mina offered ten rooms, a swimming pool, a cantina, and when the candelilla wax factory was in operation with a work force of 45 men, a company store. The Villa was sold in the early 90s and has been returning to the desert ever since. An occasional squatter and hundreds of visitors return to inspect the mine shafts and sink hole, and wander among the sprawling wind-blown ruins.

Thus was formed the foundation of an up-and-coming tourism industry in Big Bend. Why do people like Glen Pepper carve out an existence in what seems like a harsh and unrelenting landscape? Why do people drive from whatever corner of the earth they come from to find themselves roaming over land that has been compared to the surface of Mars?

The land is indescribably beautiful, vast, drastic, surreal–any number of words that don't do it justice. The people of Big Bend are intricately etched on the landscape, made of the same grit, character, depth–and equally enigmatic in nature. It is the combination of the immense character of a land and its people which makes Big Bend unlike any place on Earth. The value of an experience in Big Bend has no equation, it can't be reproduced in another location. It is the result of many generations of people loving where they live, and through whatever setbacks, hardships, or doing "without," living the way they love.



Graphic courtesy of Coyne Gibson

Visitors to the region have opportunity to sleep in unique dwellings handcrafted by locals. In the last two years the availability of overnight rentals, through online sites like Airbnb, has skyrocketed. Even with the explosion of options for tourists, all sources report that business is booming. In fact, hotel receipts, according to tax records in Brewster County, excluding Alpine, went from $4 million in 1999 to $12 million in 2014. Many in the hospitality and guiding business report a 15 per cent to 25 per cent increase in business every year since 2012. People go on river trips, hunting expeditions, mountain bike trails, jeep and hiking excursions in increasing numbers every year.

In the ghost town in Terlingua, for decades, boatmen and locals of every diverse nature paid a very low monthly rate to live in a rock ruin with no indoor plumbing and often no electricity. Recently the trend has been for property owners to add modern amenities to these historic rock houses and invite travelers to share in the beauty of homes they carved over time with love and patience. Cynta de Narvaez bought her rock ruin on the edge of the ghost town in 1996: five small rock rooms, with two outdoor patios and a goat pen. "I said no to beer and a social life for the next 16 years and I built it back," says Narvaez. She began renting her castle-esque stone house nightly in 2012.

Teepees, restored airstream trailers, domes, high-end tents, adobe houses, historic hotels and ranches, among other endless unique and artful accommodations, are available to the traveler visiting all areas of Big Bend.

As more tourists make the pilgrimage to the Big Bend, there builds a greater understanding of the value of wilderness areas and the subtle needs nature satisfies in modern man. Tourism promises a stable economic future for Big Bend, as beauty, character, and wildness become valuable commodities.

Voices of the BIG BEND

Jim Glendinning The Galloping Scot, Author, World Traveler and sometime tour operator.

Story and photographs by Jim Glendinning

ROBERT HALPERN
Marfa

CHRIS LACY
Alpine

ROBERT HALPERN

Robert Halpern was born on October 8, 1954 in Alpine, where his parents lived. His father, Albert Vernon Halpern, known as Bob, and his mother Florence, "Flo," had a second son, Daniel, a few years later. Danny flew with the USAF for 30 years, and now flies with Delta Airlines. Robert went into journalism and, with his wife Rosario, became joint owners of the pre-eminent regional newspaper, *The Big Bend Sentinel*.

Halpern's schooling was in Alpine, from elementary school through high school, graduating in 1973. Elementary school was in "The Castle," a gothic building, since demolished, on the site of today's elementary school. At high school he was a B+ student, and remembers with affection his teachers Phyllis Connor, Thomas Patti, Carol Lewis and Faye Davis. Alpine was "an idyllic place to grow up," he recalls.

Flo was the sister of Paul Forchheimer, and the whole family worked at Forchheimer's, long the most important general store in the Big Bend region. Halpern took lunch at Highland Drug, where an attractive young woman called Rosario Salgado from Presidio worked the till. They married in 1978 and had three children, Miriam, Alberto and Diego. Rosario is Halpern's feisty and vital partner in *The Big Bend Sentinel* and its sister newspaper, *The Presidio International*.

After high school he enrolled at SRSU for two years, where he learned the basics. In 1976, Forchheimer's was sold, so there was no longer a responsibility to work there. Halpern, who had played drums since grade school, took a year off, moved to Luling, Texas, and joined Joe Bob's Bar and Grill Band, touring the area and having a blast.

In 1978, Halpern enrolled at the University of Texas at El Paso and two years later graduated with a BA in Journalism. Almost immediately he was hired at the *Odessa American*, and for five years learned the reporter's trade ("the best journalism education there could be,"), ending up as city editor. He moved in 1985 to the *El Paso Times*, where he became assistant city editor. Here he learned editing and news management for three years.

In 1993 Halpern and Rosario made a bold decision and bought *The Big Bend Sentinel*. The Marfa economy was moribund. But diligent and professional nurturing of the paper, with the later acquisition of the Presidio part-Spanish language newspaper, *The Presidio International*, paid off.

Big Bend Sentinel coups include the revelation that the county's chief law enforcement officer, Sheriff Rick Thompson, was engaged in smuggling cocaine (1992). More recently, stories about the shooting of burros in Big Bend Ranch State Park and the Rio Nuevo water scandal were reported first by *The Sentinel*.

With a growing reputation and numerous journalism awards, *The Big Bend Sentinel* has attracted young writers who later went on to greater things. These include Jake Silverstein, who edits *The New York Times Magazine*; Daphne Beal, who segued into successful novel writing; and Dan Keane, who moved on to Associated Press, reporting from Bolivia. Also, still living in Marfa, is Sterry Butcher, who won a journalism fellowship at Stanford University and now has a column in *Texas Monthly*.

Sitting in his handsome Marfa home and relishing breathtaking views across range land to the Davis Mountains, Halpern ruminates on the importance to him of the land and the sense of community in the Big Bend region. He believes in the importance of the Fourth Estate's (print media's) role as the watchdog of government. He takes a measured view regarding the influx of newcomers into the region, and local reaction.

Notwithstanding the continuing demands of putting out a weekly newspaper, for which Halpern doubly credits Rosario for her part in its success, he takes time to read *Texas Monthly* and *The New York Times*, and to read books, with a current interest in biographies of musicians. The musician in him is gratified when he plays drums with the local band the Doodlin' Hogwallops.

Beyond the success of the paper, what Halpern is proudest of are the three children he and Rosario have brought up. Miriam (35) lives in Girona, Catalunya, Spain, works as a translator and is married to a Catalan teacher. Alberto (27) is the senior administrative assistant to El Paso County Commissioner David Stout. Diego (23), who is fluent in Japanese, is a social worker in Washington, DC. The family keeps in touch through Skype once a week, across four time zones, a detail which particularly pleases Halpern, an editor in this age of instant communication.

CHRIS LACY

There is no more famous ranch in West Texas than the storied 06 Ranch, whose land stretches from Alpine across the Davis Mountains to the Balmorhea highway, and which has been owned and managed by the Kokernot family for more than a century.

The story starts around 1837, when David L. Kokernot, landowner and scout for Sam Houston during the Battle of San Jacinto, acquired the 06

brand. In 1912, Herbert L. Kokernot purchased land and established the Kokernot 06 Ranch, grazing top quality Hereford cattle on the strong grama grass of the Davis Mountains.

Herbert L. Kokernot, Jr. continued running the ranch and also started the Alpine Cowboys semi-pro baseball team. In addition to serving as Jeff Davis County Commissioner for 65 years, "Mr. Herbert" gave five water wells to Alpine, and endowed many scholarships to SRSU. Chris Lacy, grandson of Herbert L. Kokernot, Jr., now manages the 06 Ranch and is part-owner with his sisters, Elizabeth Winn, Ann Brown and Golda Brown, representing six generations in the ranching business.

Chris Lacy was born in Waco on August 10, 1948, the son of Lawrence Lacy and Mary Ann Kokernot, known as "Koko." Schooling was in Waco, and he graduated from high school in 1967. He continued to Texas Christian University, "Not a good student," he recalls, but a useful linebacker. He graduated with a BA in Ranch Management, and continued for another year on a business course, finishing in 1971.

That same year he married Diane Masters in San Antonio. Their two children were home schooled through 12th grade. Kristin (born 1973) is today the owner of Ellyson Abstract in Alpine, and Lance (born 1974) handles the hunting side of the 06 ranch and works in investments in Boerne, Texas. Diane, a talented photographer of ranch life and particularly of quarter horses, has won many awards for her pictures and also gained a reputation as a movie scout.

As a city boy, Lacy faced problems of being accepted by the 06 cowboys when his grandfather made him ranch manager in 1973. He had to earn their respect, and he did so the hard way – in the saddle working the cattle and doing routine cowboy chores. His grandfather was "always there for him," he says. Later, with his three sisters, he became joint owner.

Forty years on, the 06 Ranch is preeminent in the region, raising and selling cattle, offering trophy hunting to serious hunters, and working quarter horses. Lacy and Diane divorced, and in 2010 he married Dawn Gill, of dairy farming stock in Wisconsin. They live on Limpia Creek near Wild Rose Pass.

In a modest way and with a ready smile, Lacy reflects on what is needed today to be a successful rancher. "You can make a living, but watch what you spend. Fencing costs $20,000 a mile. The market fluctuates, but you can make it. Rain is vital." 2011 was a disastrous year: two-thirds of the 06 stock had to be sold. Normally, the 06 Ranch, with the advantage of size, has more options for moving cattle around to best advantage. This year, beef prices are up. "All I do is to better the place," Lacy adds.

Like his grandfather before him, Lacy has numerous professional and local responsibilities: director of beef industry associations and, previously, Jeff Davis County Commissioner. There is not much time left for time in the saddle, perhaps one day a week. Running a ranch is like running any large business with multiple complexities, but more complicated due to the weather factor. "You need to anticipate problems," Lacy says, "and watch out for the government."

Lacy, relaxed and courteous in manner, continues with reflections on ranching life. "Cowboying is still a living. I let my cowboys do the job their way. Only a horse will get you to the beef. Don't stress the cows." There are no helicopters during round ups. Instead, the 06 does the twice-yearly roundups, for branding and for selling, the traditional way: 15 to 17 cowboys sleep in teepees and eat off the chuck wagon for up to a month, with a remuda of 100 horses.

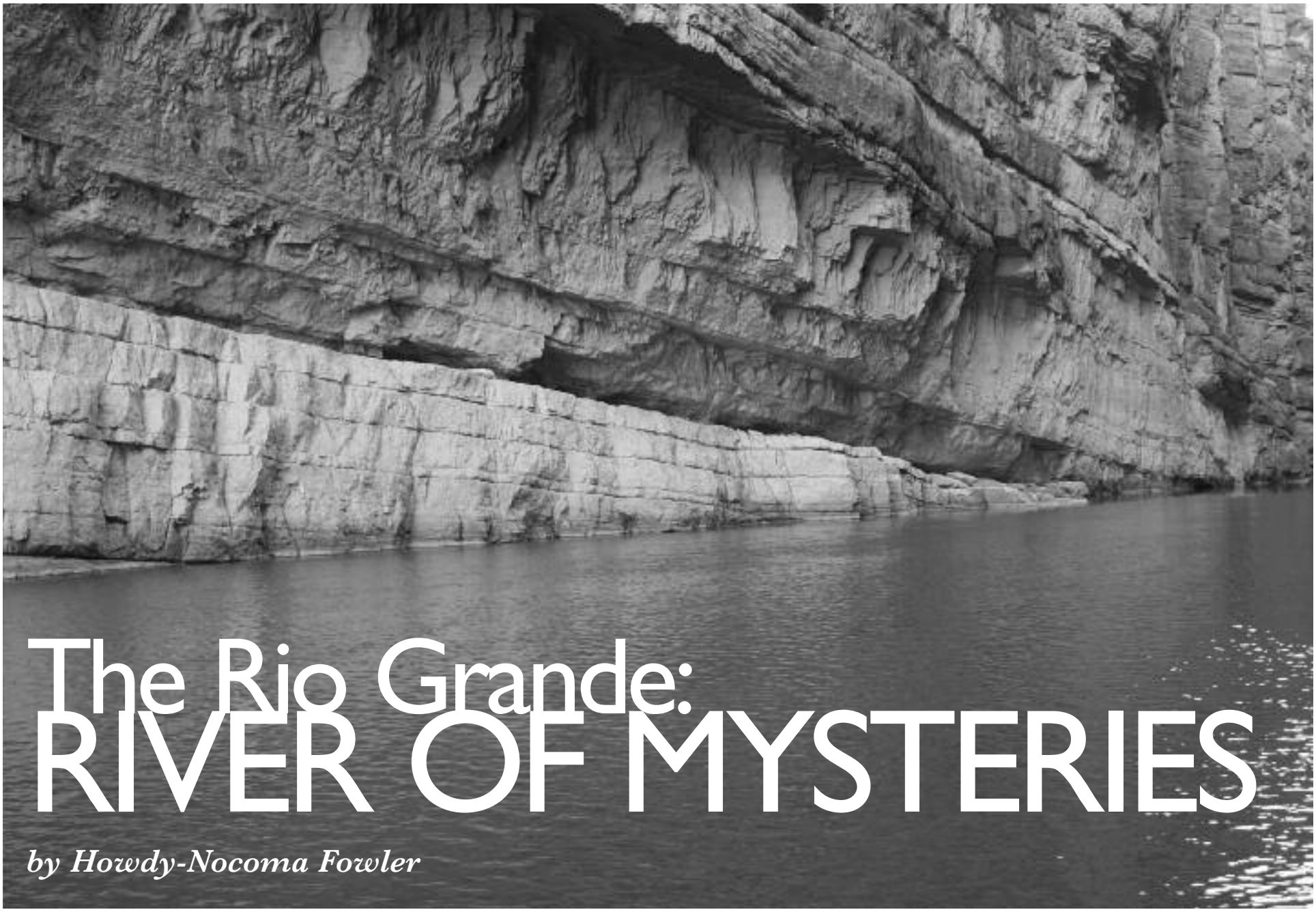
With excellent Hereford cows, many acres of good grass and working cowboys who can't wait to be picked for round up, the 06 Ranch is in competent hands. His Kokernot ancestors would approve of Chris Lacy. Joel Nelson, local ranch partner, cowboy and cowboy poet, who first worked for the 06 Ranch in 1970, says: "I have never worked for a better man."

Photo Essay

by Taj Lewis

Cowboy Blessing

May your stomach never grumble;
May your heart never ache;
May your horse never stumble;
May your cinch never break.



The Rio Grande: RIVER OF MYSTERIES

by Howdy-Nocoma Fowler

Rio Grande at Santa Elena Canyon

The mighty Rio Grande flows 1,896 miles from its headwaters in Colorado down through New Mexico, across the rugged lower portion of Far West Texas, and then continues along the border of Northern Mexico before it empties into the Gulf of Mexico. For thousands of years, Natives, Spanish, Mexicans and Gringos have depended on this river's life-giving waters. Even today, farmers, ranchers and tourists are all still connected to this awesome river.

The Rio Grande has helped support the crops, game and livestock of countless cultures. Some people stayed and prospered, rising to prominence and then fading into history. Others just passed through the territory. If the Rio Grande could talk, what stories it would reveal! But the Rio Grande continues to flow as it has for thousands of years, silently protecting its secrets. Every so often it offers up a clue, but with no explanation—letting us know that even with the latest technology, we don't have all the answers.

Long before Columbus sailed, Natives have had oral histories of being visited by bearded white men, known among different tribes as 'Hair-Faces.' Some tribes have even portrayed these encounters in cave paintings and rock carvings, featuring then-unknown animals that are not found in North America. These have been documented; for example, the giraffe carved on a large boulder at the base of Bob Cat Mesa in New Mexico, or the painting of a llama found under a rock overhang between Comstock and Langtry, Texas. Then there is the big boulder in the Organ Mountains in New Mexico that has a large stickman and an arrow pointing east with the date 1534 carved on it. Who carved it?

Along the Rio Grande there is a whole trail of evidence indicating that Natives and hippies have not been the only ones skinny dipping in the cooling waters of the Rio Grande. One of these mysteries, according to Elton Miles, was discovered in 1962 near Boquillas, in the Big Bend country of Texas.

A young man, Donald Uzzell, was free climbing the face of a small cliff when he found a number of small clay tablets. The tablets were inscribed in a very old style of Iberian text which predated any known white or Spanish explorers in the Americas. The tablets were a prayer to a Sun God called Mithras who was worshiped by followers of certain teachings known as Zoroastrians. Photos of the clay tablets still exist and are widely published. These rare antiques, the original Big Bend Tablets, unfortunately disintegrated. Information about them can be found in Elton Miles's book Stray Tales of the Big Bend. A scholarly paper on Texas exploration through the

University of Texas San Antonio by John L. Davis of the Institute of Texas Cultures writes of the tablets:

"Quite a way downriver, within the present boundaries of Big Bend National Park, a perhaps related find was made. In January of 1962 Charles and Bernice Nickles and Reva and Donald Uzzell, related families, were vacationing together. Their tour took them to the Hot Springs area of the park at the junction of Tornillo Creek and the Rio Grande just above Boquillas. For an alleged transcription, see Perkins, passim, who maintains the writer was Greek… Uzzell climbed the cliffs on the side of Tornillo Creek across from the old settlement. Some thirty feet above the creek bed, he found a fragmented clay tablet protected in a small niche. The pieces were neatly stacked and bore strange, incised characters. Scrambling down the cliff, he reassembled the tablet, and Charles Nickles took photographs of the curious writing.

"Unable to decipher the markings, the group took the artifact to park headquarters and left it with a ranger for safekeeping and further study. The families were curious about the strange writing, however, and offered photographs to several authorities including Dr. Cyclone Covey of Wake Forest University and Dr. Cyrus Gordon of Brandeis University. At first no one could decipher the markings, although the most favorable opinions classified it as a phonetic language, at least related to early Greek, written in a blend of Judean Hebrew and Sidonian Phoenician alphabets. Such strange combinations are found in Europe but are not exactly common in Texas. The least complimentary comments called the markings those of a Mexican goatherd. Yet the marks do include Phoenician characters that such a person would probably not have known nor have made up by chance.

"One theory suggested by Covey, that a party of Phoenicians might have descended the Rio Grande (leaving the New Mexico and Texas inscriptions near the waterway), is, in the face of a lack of further evidence, hard to believe. In any case, Phoenicians would not have been confined to the waterway since they were also experienced overland navigators; but the route would have been a logical one to or from the sea. It provides a supply of water and is beautiful. So far only one scholar has offered a complete transcription of the tablet: Dr. Barry Fell claims that the script and language are very grammatical, centuries-old Iberian, not Phoenician, and that the message is a supplication to Ahura-Mazda to protect a small group of lberian Zoroastrians during a plague. Such opinions are questioned- or ignored- by most scholars. In any case, the motive for a hoax seems thin indeed because the Tornillo cliff at the Rio Grande is an unlikely place for someone to hide something that was intended to be found, particularly on the wrong side of a former spa. And the recent finders had no apparent motive for a hoax.

"A clay tablet, or even a mud tablet, could last for centuries, and the lack of agreement concerning the script may not be evidence that it is a fake. In fact, if it were a hoax, it would be more likely that the script could be more easily read. The original tablet is no longer in existence. The ranger, to whom the find was first presented, later said–in contrast to other observers–that the inscription was not on clay or rock but appeared to be on recent mud such as that which forms along Tornillo Creek after every heavy rain. He and other park personnel agreed that the tablet showed no signs of age, again, unlike other opinions. It was carefully kept, however, until it disintegrated. So the story goes." The full story can be read at digital.utsa.edu

David Childress tells us that further north on the Rio Grande near Los Lunas, New Mexico, in 1871, local Natives guided a rancher to a large rock with strange figures carved on it. Knowing white men could read and write they thought the rancher could tell them what the writing said. The rancher was as puzzled as they were; he couldn't make heads or tails of the carvings. The big rock was at one time the face of a bluff which had broken off and fallen, turning the slab upside down. The inscriptions had been carved before the large slab had fallen to its present day position. It is no wonder the New Mexican rancher couldn't read it to his Native amigos. It was not only upside down but was in an ancient language that is written from right to left. Turns out the text was Paleo-Hebrew dating from around 100 AD. The Los Lunas Rock inscription featured an ancient form of the Ten Commandments called the Decalogue and can still be viewed to this day. Photos are available at www.ancient-hebrew.org/15_loslunas.html

Further north near the headwaters of the Rio Grande is an ancient headstone, written in Coptic Greek. It is near Cripple Creek, Colorado. The headstone commemorates the life and service of Palladis. Odd to find a headstone in present day Colorado written in a 14th century alphabet, used by a people who supposedly had never known the Americas even existed.

These and other mysteries abound all along both sides of the Rio Grande, such as Ogam writings found in conjunction with prehistoric cave drawings and paintings. The Ogam form of writing was widely used around 700 AD and it is suggested that this form of writing originated much earlier in North Africa. Benedictine Monks adopted and used Ogam. Just North of Terlingua, Texas I recently noticed Ogam amongst some prehistoric Native cave paintings, while resting in the shade of a cave. Only a few years ago, while looking at Native figures on a cliff painting deep in a Texas canyon, I also noticed Ogam markings preserved right along with the Native art. The dictionary defines Ogam as an alphabetical script used originally for inscriptions in an archaic form of Irish, from about the fifth to the 10th centuries.

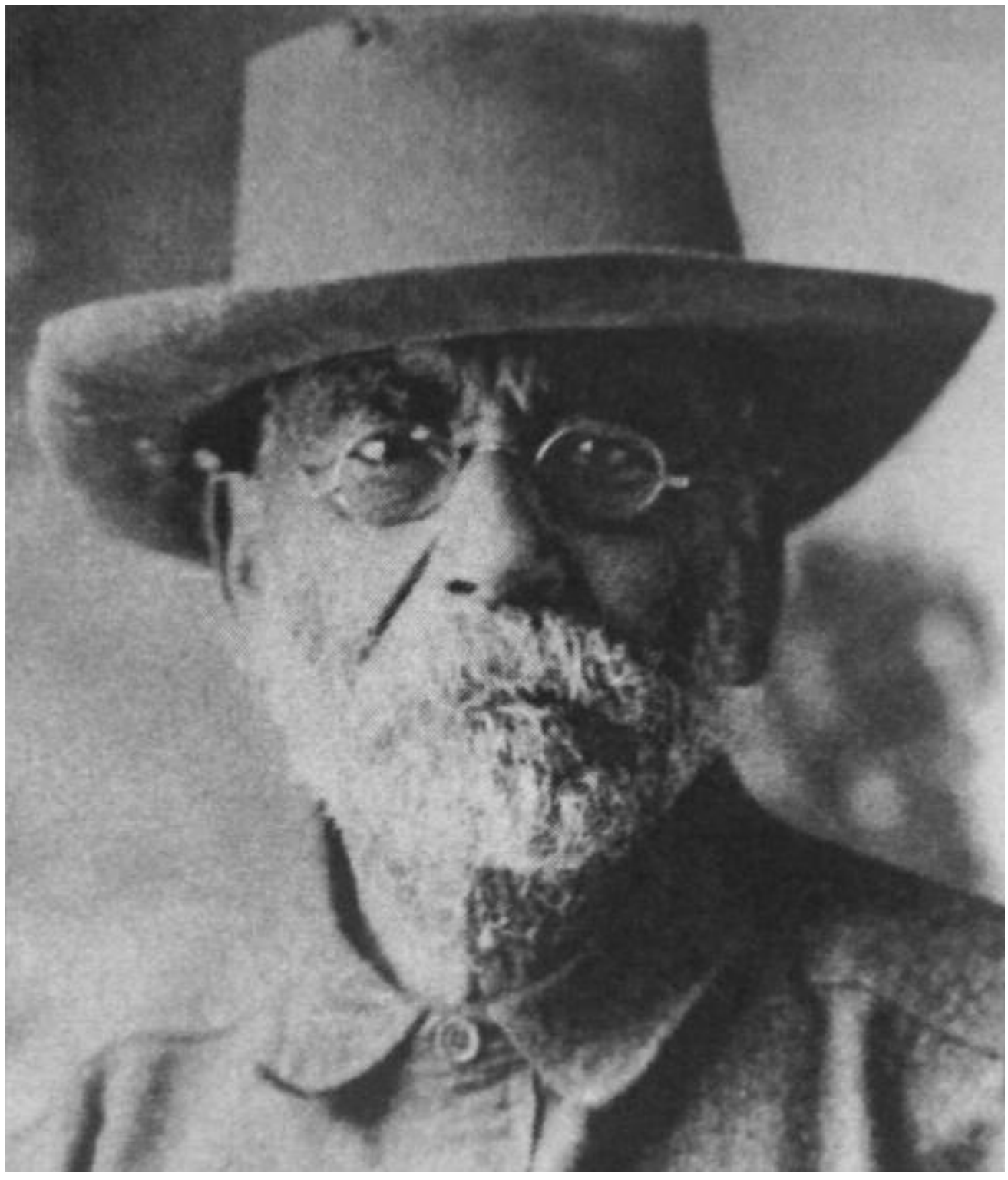
Had Irish Benedictine Monks or North Africans traversed North America long before the Spanish Jesuits arrived? Could they have sailed into the Gulf of Mexico and up the Rio Grande in a hide boat, much like Tim Severin did in the Saint Brendan voyage which sailed from Ireland to Canada in 1976?

We know that a man known as 'St. Brendan the Navigator' made the same trip centuries before Columbus. Was the Rio Grande easier to navigate by boat when these early explorers arrived? How many explorations have come and gone on our mighty river?

Hard evidence indicates some of these explorers may have come as early as 3,000 years before the birth of Christ. Why didn't they stay? Who were these people and where did they come from? Like I said in the beginning of this article, the Rio Grande guards its secrets closely. Maybe it is our job to figure these things out.

Eagle of the Big Bend

by Danielle Gallo



Tomas Aguilar

When Tomas Aguilar was born in 1856 in Satepollawa, Chihuahua, Mexico, it was a turning point in the history of his country and its former territory to the north. Thirteen years prior, James K. Polk had annexed Texas and declared the U.S.-Mexico border to be the Rio Grande. Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor to position troops along the north bank of the river, an action Mexico viewed as an overt act of aggression. Tensions escalated, culminating in the Battle of Palo Alto on May 8, 1846. Congress declared war on Mexico six days later.

The war lasted until the fall of 1847, after which time the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo ceded roughly half of Mexico's northern territories to the United States, including Texas, New Mexico and Alta California. The border at the Rio Grande was agreed upon.

In 1854, with the overthrow of Santa Ana, The Liberal Reform began in Mexico. The Mexican Constitution of 1857 codified the principles of separation of church and state and equality before the law, including stripping corporate entities of special status. The Reform sparked a civil war between liberals defending the constitution and conservatives, who opposed it. The War of the Reform saw the defeat of the conservatives on the battlefield, but conservatives remained strong and took the opportunity to invite foreign intervention against the liberals in order to forward their own cause. In 1861, the French invaded Mexico at the invitation of Mexican conservatives and installed Maximillian I as emperor. He remained on the throne until the U.S. intervened after the Civil War; his

monarchy collapsed and he was executed in 1867.

This is the world into which Tomas Aguilar was born. Tomas's mother died in 1859, when he was three years old. His father was in the Mexican Army during a time of international upheaval, unable to care for the boy. He was sent to live with his mother's sister and her husband.

Tomas's aunt and uncle brought him along when they crossed into the United States at Presidio in 1864. They moved to Camp Stockton, established the year Tomas's mother died. The fort was commissioned to protect migrating settlers and the overland mail, which passed by the abundant Comanche Springs. Long an important water source on the Comanche Trail, the springs were a point of contention between settlers and Natives.

By the age of 14, as Ulysses S Grant was finally readmitting Texas to the Union after the Civil War, Tomas was working as a farrier for the U.S. government, shoeing horses and mules for the wagon teams. As he grew and worked in the tiny town he learned all the trades a young man needed to get by on the frontier: carpentry, cultivation, and especially blacksmithing. He met Felipa Sosa and married her in Fort Stockton in 1876, as the Comanches, Cheyenne and Kiowa were losing the Red River War and being moved to reservations in Oklahoma, leaving Texas wide open for the long trail drives of cattle.

In the mid-1880s, the cattle industry was weathering blow after blow. Fort Davis was decommissioned as there were fewer and fewer conflicts with the Natives. Barbed wire had patchworked the West since the end of the Fence Cutting War in 1883, when ranchers were required to install gates in their fenced range every three miles to allow access to water for landless ranchers. The Great Die-Up of 1886, when two years of devastating blizzards wreaked havoc on grazing cattle who could not escape the cold due to the new barbed-wire fencing, prompted changes in the economy of West Texas. Tomas took his young family south to Terlingua and the booming quicksilver mines, where they remained until 1896.

That was the year the Aguilars moved to Marathon. When they arrived, there was little more than railroad section housing, according to AnneJo P. Wedin's *The Magnificent Marathon Basin*.The Aguilars arrived just ten years after Otto Peterles and Frank Aston surveyed and platted the town, and the first lot, where the Gage Hotel now stands, was sold.

Tomas Aguilar's legacy today.

Upon their arrival in Marathon, Tomas and Felipa set themselves up in the shade of a spreading tree. They pitched a tent for their home, and Tomas plied his trade as a blacksmith out in the open air. According to Wedin, he also made mesquite charcoal in a kiln and lime by calcining limestone from the nearby hills.

Slowly and steadily, Tomas built his business and his reputation as a blacksmith. When their home was built, it was one of the first non-railroad residences in Marathon. Their family settled in as the century ticked over; they worked hard as a gusher in Beaumont called Spindletop changed the world and ushered in a Black Gold rush in 1901; they struggled as the first military air flight happened in San Antonio, in 1910; the family grew as President Taft sent 20,000 troops to the border to quell raids in 1911, as the Mexican Revolution raged just to the south, in Tomas's birthplace; and by 1919, Tomas was buying one of the first automobiles in Marathon: a Model T Ford.

He ran his blacksmith shop, a large adobe building whose dirt floor was covered by the tools of his trade, until the early 1930s. Apart from forging metal and repairing wagons, Tomas was called upon to make caskets whenever the need arose in the little town. His were not the only blacksmithing services in Marathon. John Marshall, J.T. Hill, O.W. Bennett and William Rogers were others who provided the same services. But Tomas's shop was the first and lasted longest. Out in the flats of Beakley draw, known to locals as "the village green," it stood for a time adjacent to Marshall's. One of Marathon's periodic floods wiped out most of the buildings in Beakley draw, including Marshall's shop, but Tomas's was able to be repaired.

When he retired, in his seventies, it was the depths of the Great Depression. He lived another ten years, surrounded by children and grandchildren, watching his family multiply. His name was a pioneer name in the tiny town on the northern reaches of the desert.

In Marathon today, and all throughout the Big Bend, the Aguilar family tree continues to flourish, its roots reaching down to the very beginning of settlement in this region, its branches continuing to spread. Tomas Aguilar died on January 29, 1944, at the age of 88. He is buried in the Marathon Cemetery. His great-great grandchildren are parents, business owners, churchgoers, and pillars of the Big Bend community.

FOXY GRANDPA

by Rani Birchfield

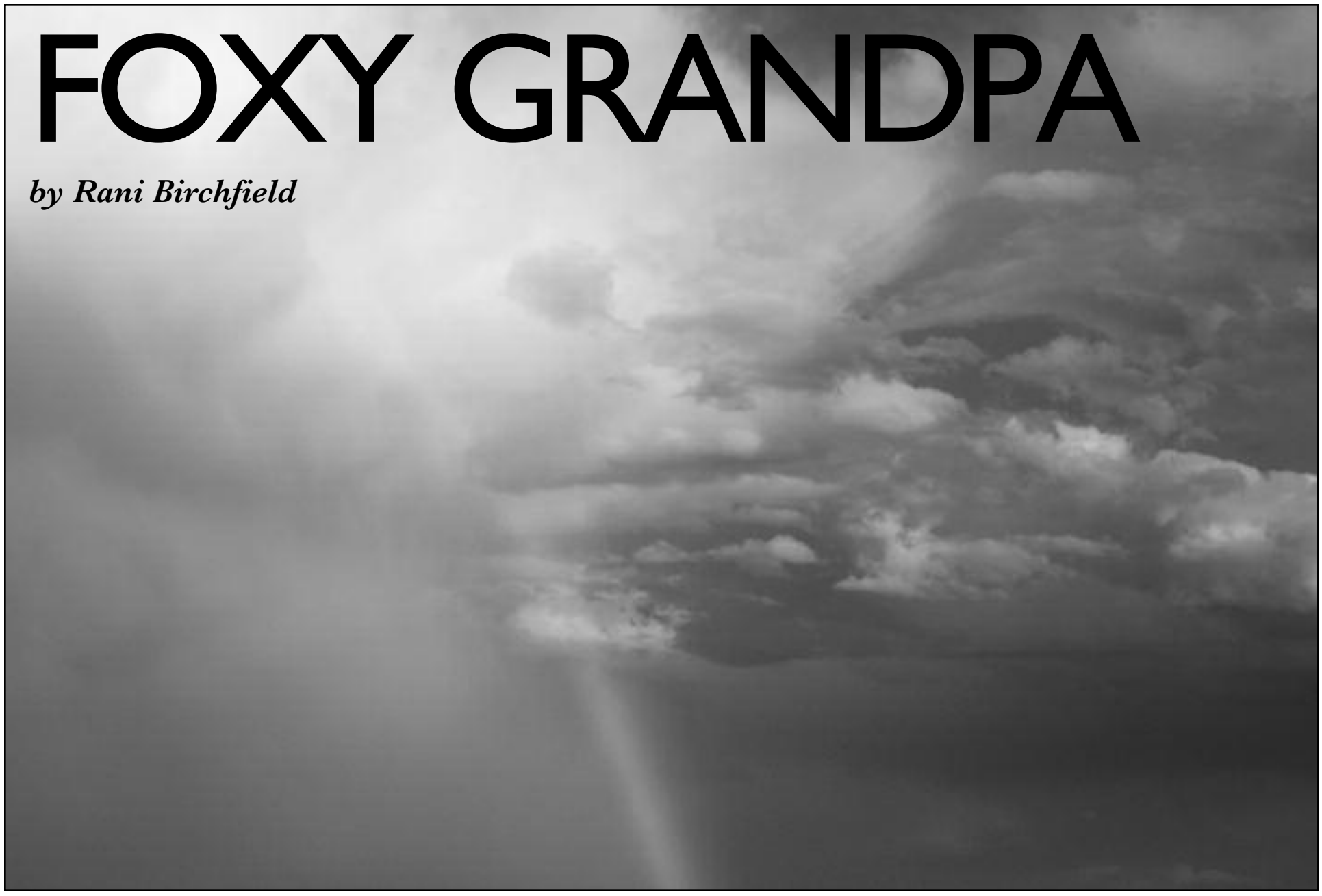


Photo courtesy of Wendy Lynn Wright

The year is 1910. Fewer than 50 per cent of Americans have electricity and fewer than 25 per cent have telephones. Music and entertainment are provided by pianos, organs and other electricity-free musical instruments. The average life expectancy in America is 47 years and the average wage is 22 cents per hour.

Less than one per cent of American households have cars. Sul Ross State University doesn't exist; Alpine isn't the entrance to Big Bend National Park; and there are no paved roads in Alpine. (There are only approximately 144 miles of road that are paved in the whole of the United States.) Across the Rio Grande, revolution is ready to explode in Mexico.

Despite its remoteness, Alpine is on the verge of immense transition along with the rest of the country. There are thriving businesses on both sides of the tracks. Murphy Street is the main street of commerce on the south side, boasting several businesses – a photography studio, an ice plant, a bottling works and an electric light plant, along with a blacksmith shop and a furniture store to name a few. Holland Avenue is the main street on the north side of the tracks. There is the original Holland Hotel—built in 1908, it is the center of the business district. There is the post office, a general store, a saloon – naturally – a law office and several small shops and businesses. *The Alpine Avalanche* had already been in publication, serving Big Bend and the Davis Mountains for 19 years.

The following story was published in the *Avalanche* in July of 1910. That was over 100 years ago, and yet the story it tells is much like moving to Alpine today. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Foxy Grandpa.

HE DOES THE HANDSOME THING BY THE NEWLY WEDDED PAIR

They Come to Alpine and fit Themselves out for Housekeeping –

Grandpa Gives Them the benefit of His Experience and Foots the Bills.

"Miss Sommers, Polly, I – er – dare – I –" but the speaker took a header over bashfulness, only to hear a sweet: "Yes, Charley."

"Can I aspire to – er – that is –" Again a lapse into silence followed by an encouraging: "Yes, Charley." "Oh, if I might only hope to – er – to –" Another failure of language. It was seemingly a hopeless case, and it might have been, only for a demure: "Charley, I have said "yes" twice. If you mean it, I mean it too, and –" And to this day that young man insists that he popped the question.

All this happened away down East. Before long there was a wedding, with a nice list of presents, but heading the list, in their estimation was a letter from Polly's Foxy Grandpa, out West

Texas wedding, 1911

in Brewster County, Texas.

He wrote delightedly of what he called her "grit," said she was a chip off the old block, and proposed that if the young people would locate in Alpine he would start them in life with a lot and house built to suit themselves and furnished to their own taste and he would foot all bills.

His description of Alpine, in climate, location, pretty homes and beautiful scenery captivated Polly, while her young husband was impressed by the account of its live business men; their progressive up-to-date methods and the consequent rapid growth of a town where not only the necessities but also the comforts and even the luxuries of life were stock in hand.

They accepted Foxy Grandpa's generous offer and bade adieu to their friends in the East.

A few weeks subsequent to the above a travel-stained party arrived at Alpine and our friend, Foxy Grandpa, met them and took charge. He led them straightaway to the Garnett Hotel.

"We will go there," he said, "because that is a popular place and strictly first class. I have known Mr. Garnett, the proprietor, for years. He used to own another hotel here which was burnt down in the big fire three years ago, and he then built that fine, large building you see ahead of you."

"Oh, isn't it pretty," exclaimed Polly, "and see, Charley, it has great wide galleries all around up stairs and down. There must be a lovely view up there, and it looks so cool and clean and nice, I am sure any one could sleep well there."

"Yes, and eat well too," chuckled Grandpa, "for Ed knows how hungry this mountain air makes folks and he sees to it that you get plenty of the best there is in the market. He has been in the hotel business here long enough to find out just how to build a hotel that would attract people and make them so comfortable they would want to come again, and he has lived here so long that he knows just what his guests will need and he sees that they get it, too."

When they had been shown to their rooms Grandpa said: "Well, you both must be tired, so I'll say goodnight and you can rest."

"Why no, Grandpa," said Polly, "we're not tired a bit; we came over the S.P. Route, you know, and the cars were very comfortable, and when we got tired sitting in one place we went into the observation car, and that was delightful; you could write or read, or simply sit and watch the scenery. Why the views were wonderful – those great bluffs along the Rio Grande, and high bridges and canyons we crossed were perfect pictures that alone was worth more than the trip cost us. The chairs were so comfortable and the car ran so smoothly there was no jar at all to tire one."

"Yes," Charley broke in, "I was surprised to see so fine a roadbed and

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Slow Move To Marathon

by Jayne Gallo

Photo courtesy of Danielle Gallo

My first visit to the Big Bend was in September, 2005. I had just moved to the Raleigh, North Carolina area to be near my older daughter Tara and her family – granddaughter Cassie was seven and Jimmy 18 months old – because I wanted to be part of their lives as they grew. But before beginning my new job, it was time to visit what had been my younger daughter Danielle's home for about three years: Marathon, Texas.

Marathon was quite different from anywhere I had lived, or visited! Growing up in New York City where the nearest tree was in the park six blocks away, living for nearly six years in Albuquerque, New Mexico in the big city desert, then in rural New Hampshire for 21 years – nothing prepared me for Marathon. But, I quickly understood why she had chosen to relocate there: the dry and moderate climate was wonderful and the scenery stunning, the quiet and peaceful way of life so appealing. And I found that the most important aspect, the feature I found most attractive, was the people.

Over the past 10 years I've usually visited several times a year, enjoying the mild temperatures, the low humidity and the sunshine. Living in small towns in New Hampshire was nothing like Marathon with its 400 or so residents and a span that I could walk from one end to the other. New York, New Mexico, New Hampshire and North Carolina are all beautiful states, but my first trip to Big Bend National Park a few years ago took my breath away! Sitting with a friend who had traveled with me, as we had lunch at the Lodge in the Basin, we were awestruck at the magnificent views before us.

As I've spent time in Marathon, wherever we went people were welcoming and friendly. At Shirley's Burnt Biscuit my favorite fried pie was available and brought with a smile, and at Johnny B's or the Marathon Coffee Shop my hot tea and biscuits cheerfully served as the staff came by to see my granddaughters. At St. Mary Catholic Mission Church I felt part of the congregation gathered to worship each Sunday, as I was greeted by the others present. Events like last year's Easter egg helicopter drop for the town's children was so well planned and executed, and such a fun time for all – children and adults alike. As I've gotten to know people the character of the community has revealed itself as caring, committed, and welcoming. There's a warmth in the people here that speaks to me of the values they hold dear, and that is very attractive to me.

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In All Its Array of Colors

Often, when I'm seated on our balcony
and gaze out toward the mountains to our north,
I think of Balmorhea Lake forty-five miles
(as the proverbial crow flies) distant.
I wait for the memory I know will visit,
constant as morning coffee with my wife.
Today, it's the ten-pound Largemouth Bass,

a pound for each year of my age at the time,
I muscled ashore while fishing with Dad and Sam.
I thought my rod would break, bowed as it was
with the big fish lodging its body beneath rocks
on the lake bottom, thrashing for its life.
I dug my heels deep into the muddy shoreline,
took a deep breath, and reeled in but an inch of line,

it seemed, every five minutes. Exhausted,
I got it ashore and Dad netted it, so proud of me
it hurt us both. We cleaned, filleted, and fried
the thing for supper. Its smell filled our travel trailer
for days, oozing from our pores like fresh garlic.
Even the aluminum Airstream Dad, Mom, Sam and I
tried to fall asleep in, gleamed in the moonglow,

luminous as the scales of a bass.

by Larry D. Thomas

Thundering

(bronze by Frederic Remington, The Stampede)

It's a bed
of tossing horn tips
the cow herd offers
above relentless hooves
and weathered flanks.
A sharp bed
of stampeding death
this wiry cowboy
and his horse
hope they won't lie in
this rainy, moonless night.

by Sarah Cortez

Folkways

by Maya Brown Zniewski

CHAPARRAL – DESERT RAIN

Chaparral is also known as creosote bush, greasewood or desert rain bush. Its Latin or botanical name is *Larrea tridentate*. It is among my favorite plants for the scent, for its usefulness and for its ability to survive. To say it smells like the desert after the rain is the perfect description.

Creosote is native to much of the Southwest United States and Northern Mexico. A similarly-used species of this plant lives in Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina. There is an example of chaparral that has been radiocarbon dated at 11,700 years old, making it one of oldest living organisms on earth. Can you imagine what the "King Clone" creosote bush has experienced?

One of the reasons creosote lives so long is that it is amazingly drought tolerant; if you feel the leaves they feel like leather. This, and an unusual root system that is both a tap root and a spread of wider roots, allows creosote to live for a long time. Although recently much creosote was killed by the fires in West Texas and California, it is still a highly available plant. You might consider using it for a salve, as did the Ancient Peoples.

If you've read the *Cenizo Journal* previously you may know how to make a salve. For those who don't, here is a refresher: 1.) To make a salve first make an infused oil; 2.) Heat the oil slightly on the stove; 3.) Add beeswax or candelilla wax - about 4 parts oil to one part beeswax or if using candelilla wax about 8 parts oil to one part wax; 4.) Pour into a wide mouth jar and let cool.

An infused oil is also very simple to make. The folk way is to stuff a jar, loosely, with creosote leaves (no need to remove every little twig) and cover with oil. Put a lid on the jar and let sit about six weeks in the cupboard. Then strain off the oil. Follow salve making instructions or use as an oil only. You can also infuse oil in a crock-pot on low for a day or two. Experiment and see what works best for you.

Generally creosote oil or salve is used for an anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-inflammatory and/or anti-parasitic application. It makes an excellent sunblock and is often applied to scrapes, bites and wounds. Traditionally it was used in various forms for colds, chest infections, lung congestion, gas, arthritis, T.B., nausea, poisons, body odor, and many other ailments. It was an indigenous medicine chest.

The F.D.A. does not recommend its use internally and Health Canada (the Canadian F.D.A.) bans the use of creosote internally, so skip the tea blends. If you do an internet search for creosote bush you'll see it listed as an anti-cancer plant. Yes, it is in the investigative stage of anti-cancer treatments, but please do not treat cancer with creosote bush. One should see a qualified health care practitioner for cancer treatment. Chaparral is a bitter tasting plant; if you crush chaparral leaves and smell them I bet you can get a feel for how bitter they might be in a tea or tincture (an herbal plant extracted in alcohol used for medicinal purposes.)

Go out and see chaparral/creosote bush for yourselves! It grows all across Big Bend and smells like desert rain.

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such heavy steel, and all in A1 order too. Good road and first-class service make traveling a pleasure."

Early next morning when Grandpa Foxy walked in on his friends at breakfast he was greeted with a cry of delight from the fair young bride as she jumped up and ran to kiss him.

"Foxy Grandpa, you dear old thing; this place is just perfectly lovely, we were looking at it from the gallery just now. But sit down and join us, and do tell me where they get such nice steak, so juicy and tender."

"Why it grows right 'round here on these hills, Polly."

"Oh, I mean where can I get meat like it, for I am to be a housekeeper, you know," looking at Charley with the sweetest little blush.

"I see," said Foxy Grandpa. "You can get it from Measday, child; he is the butcher. I don't know how he does it but he always has good meat. He knows what to buy and how to kill and cut his meat, and all you have to do is to phone him what you want and in 15 minutes you will get just what you ordered, cut just as you asked for it. But you must go round to his shop and see for yourself how clean it is – no smell, no flies, the meat cool and firm. But if he has any barbecue meat cooking I'll bet if you get a "whiff" of it you won't leave without buying some, for he gets a flavor on it somehow that beats the band. Barbecue meat saves cooking too this hot weather, and that means saving the roses on your cheeks little housekeeper, so" – turning to Charley – "don't you forget Measday Bros. when you get your cook-stove going Charley.

"Well, we've got a busy day before us, so I'll call up Cas Edwards at the Alpine Auto Company and have him bring his car around for the day."

"Why, do you have automobiles out here too, Grandpa?"

"Yes, indeed, and you can hardly get along without one. The distances are so great in this big country that it is too far to drive a team, there is only one passenger train each way, so that you can't well get about or do much business without an auto. You had better see Flow & Edwards, Charley, proprietors of the Alpine Auto Company and talk with them about it. They have some nice Buicks on hand and they think it is the best machine for this country. It is simple, strong, always under control – a child can run one. They carry also a full line of parts and repair material and have an expert at their garage who, if you have trouble with your car, can find it and fix it. Here's the car and we'll have to hustle for we have lots to buy."

"Well, let's buy lots first," chimed in Charley without turning a hair.

"It's a go," said Foxy Grandpa, "and we'll go right now and see Mr. A. McCallum. Mac has been here a long time; he knows everybody and everybody knows him, and you can rely absolutely on anything he tells you. He knows every foot of land around here. He was here when it never rained and he was here when it poured a flood and he knows what this country can do. He has a lot of property on his list over town, some business lots, some in the old town, some in the recent additions and then he has ten-acre lots just west of town, of the richest kind of orchard and truck land, and not very deep to water.

"Then when you have bought your land Mac will sell you trees to plant on it. And when you have built your house he will sell you fire wood to keep it warm or to cook with – good sound mesquite that he ships in by the carload to his wood yard. He sells it cheap and will send a man along to cut it up for you any size you want it. Now you run along and talk to McCallum, pick out your lot and in the mean time Polly and I will go shopping. We will meet you at the Garnett Hotel for dinner." {End of copy.}

A new beginning for a newlywed couple, now long gone. A century later, give or take, Alpine is a bustling community with electricity (most days) and things never imagined a century ago. Most people have automobiles. There are telephones that double as computers and fit in people's pockets. Entertainment comes in hundreds of forms. The Garnett Hotel burned down years ago, a second, bigger Holland hotel was built, and remodeled twice, and motels line the highway on both ends of town. Murphy Street fell into decline and is coming back, growing business anew.

What would Charley and Polly think if they knew that future plans today would include a large truck that cooked food or that labeling food as "healthy" would make it something special? Would they be able to imagine outdoor movies when motion pictures hadn't been invented yet? These are pieces of the vision for Murphy Street that is on the upswing once more, reinvigorated with love from local residents.

Although Charley and Polly are long gone (their existence perhaps questionable to begin with), some patterns remain as history is like a snake curling around on itself. One still needs a car to traverse the vast land; floods and droughts still take turns being the king; the Rio Grande is still breathtaking; and new beginnings come to stay for only a little while and then they go.

Big Bend Eats

by Carolyn Brown Zniewski

The kolacy or kolache is a circular bread or roll whose origin is the Baltic countries. Kolache is an Anglicized version of the name, which originally meant wheel in its home languages in the Ukraine, Serbia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and throughout the entire region. Originally it was a single round loaf about 10 inches in diameter, baked in celebration of Epiphany and continuing until the first day of Lent.

It shows up in many places as King Cake for Mardi Gras.

Sometime after the 15th Century housewives started making small round cakes we call sweet rolls as gifts to be shared during the season of Epiphany. They were filled with a sweet fruit filling, made from dried stewed fruit, clabbered milk (cottage cheese) or poppy seeds. Some grandmas even today save seeds from last year's crop of poppies to grow the right kind of seeds for the filling – traditionally opium poppies. If you want a poppy seed filling for your rolls I suggest you buy them by the jarful at the super market. Kolache coffee cakes and rolls were traditionally baked in the winter when the stove was stoked all day and fresh fruit was not available.

Until immigrants from the Balkans brought them to the United States about 1840, kolaches were sweet and used only four different fillings: prune, apricot, poppy seed and cheese. In Texas, kolaches got their first sausage filling. When Bohemians settled here they started making the Old World favorite with Texas style. Voila! the sausage kolache, the perfect meal on horseback. For many years Texas was the only place that had a sausage filling, but in the last 10 years the habit has spread throughout the Midwest, where Bohemians also settled. Sausage kolaches can be found as far north as Minneapolis, Minnesota, where they are sold at Kramarczuk Sausage Co. But the Sausage Kolache Capital of the World is right here in Caldwell, Texas.

Kolacy or Kolache

1 pkg dry yeast
½ cup warm water
1 teaspoon sugar
¾ cup evaporated milk or cream
6 Tablespoons sugar
¼ cup melted butter
¼ cup melted shortening
3 egg yolks
½ teaspoon salt
4 ½ cups flour

Stir yeast, water and sugar together and set aside until it starts to bubble (about 15 minutes). Mix together all but the flour, then add to yeast mixture. Slowly stir in flour. It will be a soft dough.

Knead it on a floured board until smooth, about 5 minutes. Shape into a ball.

Put it in an oiled bowl, turn to oil all sides, cover. Set in a warm spot until it is doubled in bulk, about 1 hour.

Stir down. Divide in half. Each half should make about 24 rolls. You can braid half the dough and bake it as a single loaf. It will make a nice challa loaf. Put the braid in a 9" cake pan, cover and let rise until double in size. Brush with a little beaten egg white and sprinkle with green, yellow and purple sugar to celebrate Mardi Gras or sprinkle with plain sugar for anytime. Sprinkle about ½ the posepka (see below) evenly over the bread. Bake at 375' for 45 – 60 minutes until nicely brown.

For the kolaches, divide half the dough into 24 parts. Shape into balls and flatten to a 4" in diameter circle. Put the rolls on large cookie sheets. Cover and let rise until doubled in size (40 minutes to an hour.) Make a depression in the center of each roll. Fill with one Tablespoon filling. Brush with beaten egg white, sprinkle with posepka and bake at 375' for 15 – 20 minutes.

Posepka

For top of rolls
Mix together until crumbly:
6 Tablespoons flour
6 Tablespoons sugar
2 Tablespoons soft butter

In Grandma's recipe the fruit fillings were made by stewing dried fruit. I suggest you use an all fruit spread.

For poppy seed filling, combine ½ cup evaporated milk or cream, ½ cup sugar and 1 cup poppy seeds. Cook over low heat to thicken.

For cheese filling, combine ¼ cup flour and 1/3 cup sugar with 12 oz. cottage cheese, 1 egg yolk, 1 Tablespoon butter and a pinch of salt. Cook over low heat to thicken.

For traditional Texas fare, roll a link sausage in the dough.

This takes several hours, but much of the time is waiting for the dough to rise. Give these delicious Boho treats a try. Perfect for a day at home. This recipe came from Greg Curtiss, given to him by his co-worker Julia Apodaca. They work at The Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living in Austin. It is Julia's mother's original recipe.

Making these rolls will make you feel like an accomplished baker.

continued from page 22

Going about town, we always encountered others who seemed genuinely happy to see us, and who, as I visited more frequently, welcomed me back as if I was part of the community. I was here for Daisy's birth in 2012, and was so happy to meet Danielle and Bob's friends who came to see their new baby and share their joy. I missed Bobbie's birth because she decided to be born early, in February this year instead of March. Friends rallied around the family since her early arrival meant that my son-in-law Bob wasn't present either. It was heartwarming to know Danielle and the girls were cared for and looked after.

Over the past year as I've thought of selling my house in North Carolina to downsize and eliminate the challenges of caring for a large piece of property, I've considered a number of places where I might relocate. It became an easy decision to come to Marathon: the appealing small-town life here, the great climate, the warmth of the community, and of course, my family.

So now I've moved again, this time to be near Danielle, Bob, and grandchildren – Daisy Jayne is three and Bobbie June is eleven months old – and I'm delighted to have moved to a place that already feels like home. I'm excited to be in a community where people care for and help one another, and come together during activities and events for children and families. And, I will be looking for ways to use some of my leisure time in retirement to serve my Church and the community if there is a need that I can fill. I also look forward to further exploration of Big Bend National Park, which contains some of the most beautiful vistas I've seen in my years of travel across both the US and Europe.

Moving to Marathon took me 10 years – and the adventure has just begun!

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TRANS PECOS TRIVIA

by Charles Angell

CHRISTMAS IN THE BIG BEND

1) The Christmas cactus, also known as Tasajillo, is in the Cylindropuntia family, also known more commonly by what family name?

a) Addams
b) Ocotillo
c) Maxwell
d) Cholla

2) Young Bill traveled from Presidio to Ft. Davis to avenge his stepfather's death; he shot and killed John Burgess at a saloon there in 1875. What was Bill's last name?

a) Spencer
b) Leaton
c) O'Reilly
d) Faver

3) The tradition of Santa Claus crosses over into many cultures. What is one of the names given to him by some Spanish-speaking people?

a) Papa Noel
b) Maestro de Venado
c) Gordo Gringo
d) Senor Estreno

4) The mountain range known as the Christmas Mountains, located north of Study Butte, allegedly derived its name from what legend?

a) an antique sleigh found in a cave
b) a rock formation resembling Santa
c) a family camped there in summer and returned
d) it was surveyed on Dec. 25

5) According to most historians, the first Christmas mass was held in the Big Bend by Father Lopez near Presidio in what year?

a) 1592
b) 1683
c) 1776
d) 1812

Answers 1-D 2-A 3-C 4-B 5-A

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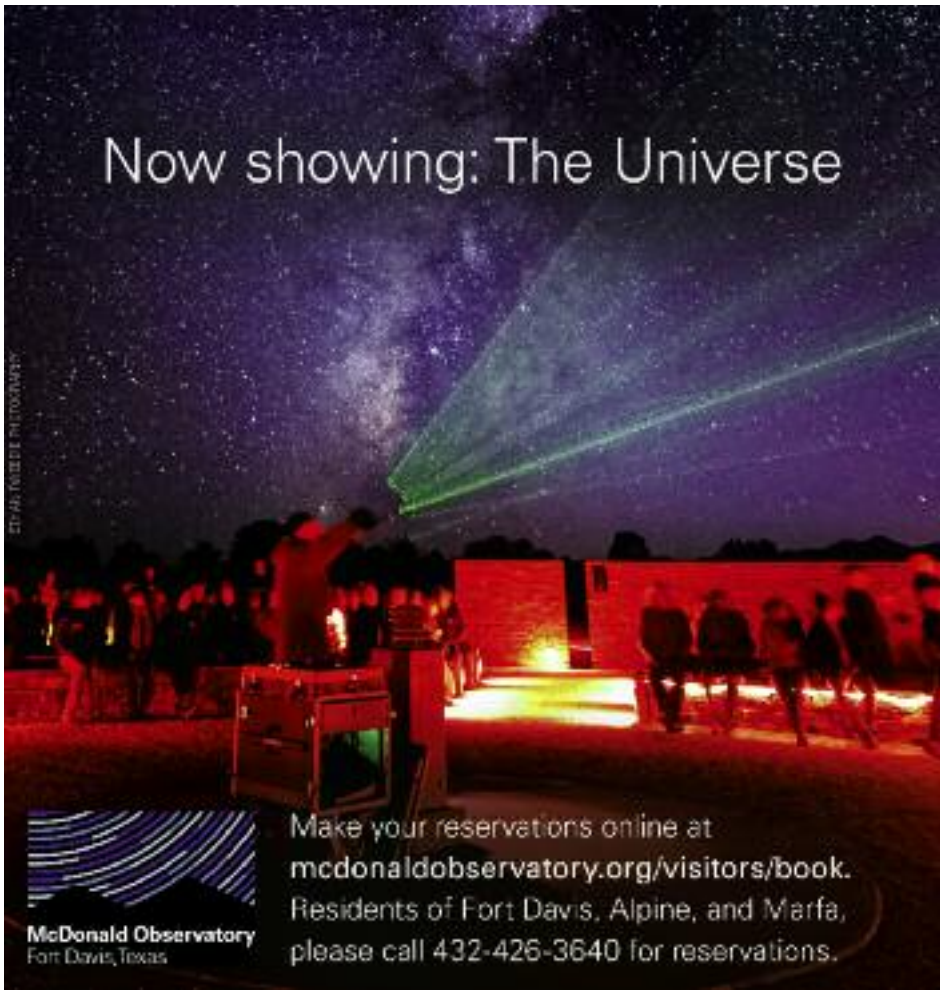

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