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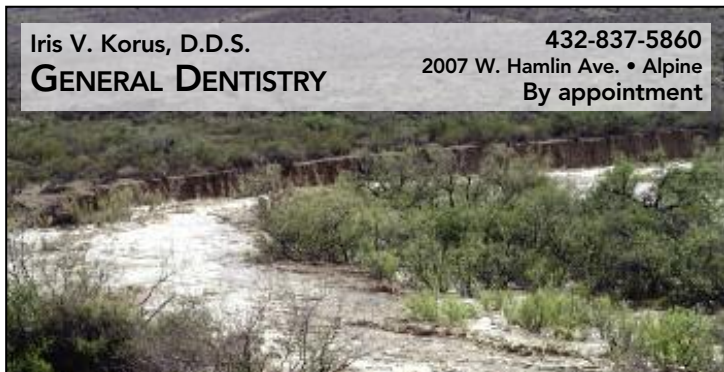
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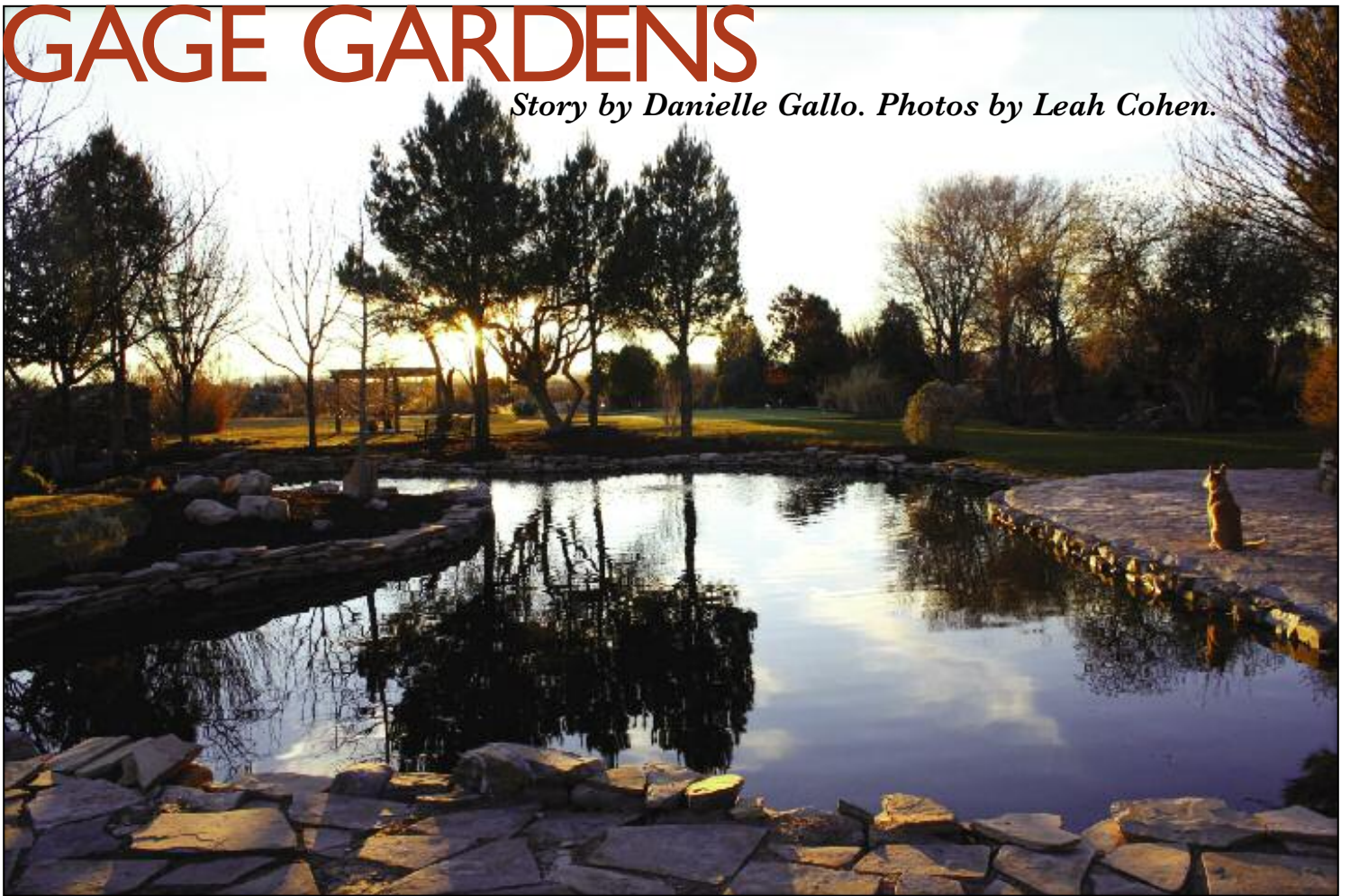
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GAGE GARDENS

Story by Danielle Gallo. Photos by Leah Cohen.



The desert landscape is one of striking beauty. Looking out over the plains to where the mountains rise in the distance, it's easy to imagine the Big Bend as it once was, the floor of the vast inland Permian Sea. Fossilized clam beds and aquatic plant life scattered on the caliche, and the ocotillo stirring in the breeze like anemones, make it seem as though the water has only drawn back for a moment and can return at any time.

For those of us who live here, the absence of trees and water can have a strange effect. When I travel east I sometimes feel claustrophobic when the walls of greenery cut my view. Being accustomed to seeing for miles in

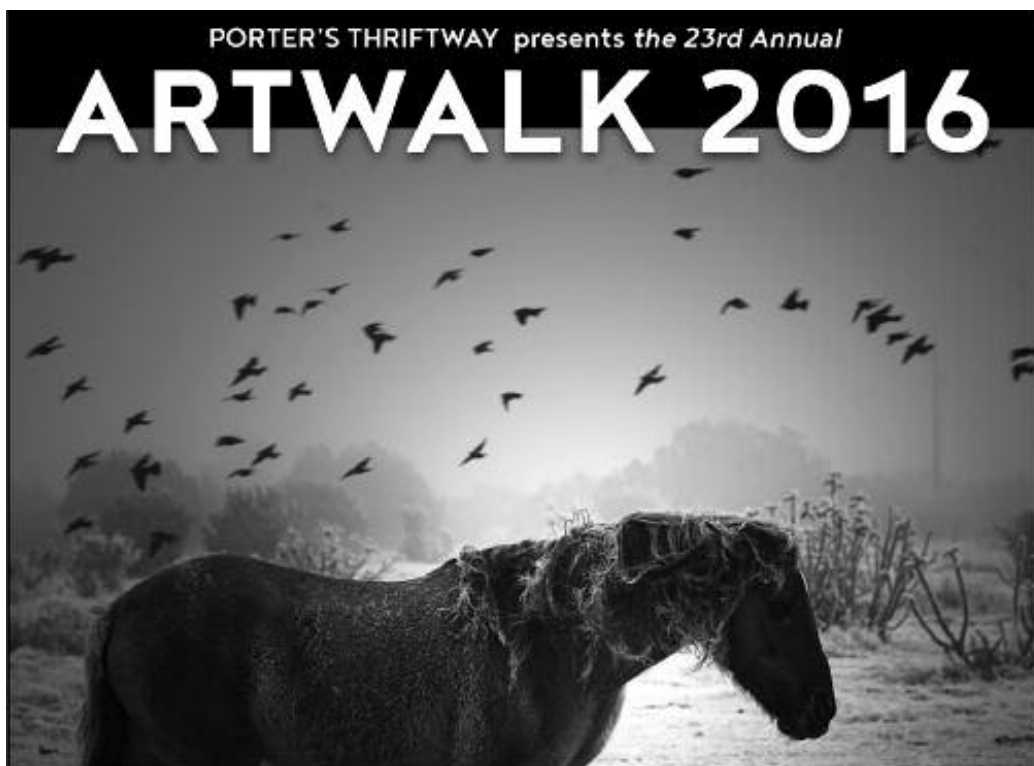
any direction, always knowing which way is north, and the subtle desert palette of browns and reds and muted greens have made my eyes focus on the long distances for many years. When the horizon is hidden, I feel as though I'm caught in a maze, and it sometimes makes me dizzy.

That being said, there is something so refreshing about the few oases of green out here in the ancient sea. Stepping into one of the scattered parks in the Big Bend feels like a cool trickle of spring water in my soul, a sense of quietude that runs under

continued on page 25

Table of Contents

6	4	Danielle Gallo	Gage Gardens	16	Jim Glendinning	Voices of the Big Bend
		Carolyn Brown Zniwski Danielle Gallo	Cenizo Notes	18	Howdy-Nocona Fowler	Rare Gems
	8	Karl Peterson	A Tale of Two Species	21	Tiffany Harelik	Big Bend Eats
	10	Rani Birchfield	Desert Heat: how Terlingua became a Mecca for chili lovers	22	Stephen Stainkamp	That Dog Will Hunt!
13		Patricia Runyan Gilbert Olivarez	Poetry	24	Maya Brown Zniwski	Folkways
	14	Rachael Waller	Photo Essay	26	Big Bend Youth	Budding Photographers
				28	Carolyn Brown Zniwski	Trans-Pecos Trivia



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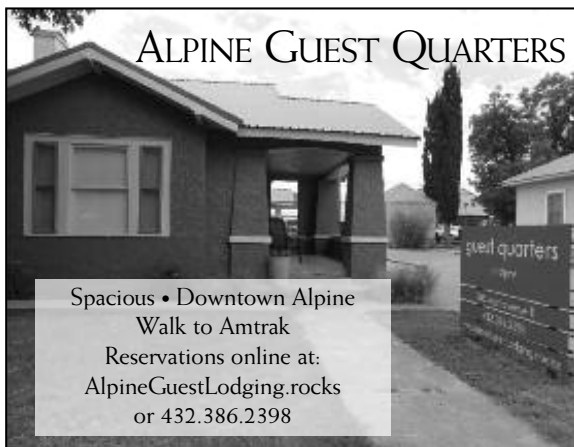
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Volume 8 Number 4

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SUBMISSION

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Cenizo Notes

by Carolyn Brown Zniwski, publisher and Danielle Gallo, editor



It is the fall season and the start of all the holidays. Autumn is my favorite time of year, starting with Halloween and Day of the Dead right on through to January 1st. There are parties, events, games and adventures weekly.

The brisk autumn weather seems to be the beginning of the most creative and interesting time of the year. I always get busy in the kitchen.

Now that the weather is cooling, baking coffee cakes and breads in the morning warms both the house and the heart. Late afternoon is a good time to start a venison roast to serve with garden squash and a pint of local beer. While that roast is in the oven on a rainy afternoon, it is the perfect time to sort out your closet and gather a box of clothing and oddments to donate to the thrift store. It can be so satisfying to take the time to put things back in order after summer's fast pace, and to get the house ready for the influx of people and parties that fill so much of this season.

As the days get shorter and the evenings cool, Mother Nature is very apt to bring big storms, ice, hail and snow. We might find ourselves without both electricity and the internet. Lucky for us the *Cenizo* is old school and can keep you cozy and entertained with an afghan and a flashlight. Enjoy.



Every few years, the El Nino cycle coincides with whatever mysterious machinations occur in the Great Basin to cause the monsoons to swing right through the Big Bend. Some butterfly somewhere flutters its wings and it rains...and rains...and rains. Most folks in the Trans-Pecos rejoice (especially the gardeners and the ranchers), but to confess a little secret, I'm not a fan. I've never truly understood why desert dwellers love the rain so much—I live here because I don't!

I love the dry, the hot, the dusty. I love the crackly brown, the searing blue sky, the tightening skin on my forehead. This constant spatter of afternoon rain, the deafening orgies of spadefoot toads outside my bedroom window, the humidity and the DAMN MOSQUITOES are things I moved here to avoid. So please forgive me if I'm not out splashing in the puddles.

That isn't to say that I don't enjoy the occasional evening thunderstorm, for the smell of it and the romanticism. But I'll take one of those per month please, and make it apocalyptic. Wondering if the end is near makes me feel alive. I have heavy curtains in case the hail breaks a window.

Since this is one of those years, though, we might as well curl up inside with the *Cenizo* and enjoy a few stories: snakes and hunting dogs and oases in the desert (for the times when the desert isn't flooded), chili and spurs and budding photographers. Stay dry, and I'll see you when the relative humidity is back in the teens.

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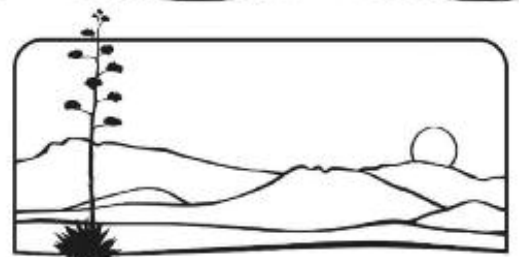
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Fourth Quarter 2016

7

A Tale of Two Species

by *Karl Peterson*

The Big Bend region has six rattlesnake species living within its confines. The two most widely distributed and commonly-seen species are the western diamondback and Mojave rattlesnake. I have seen neonate (baby) and adult western diamondbacks dead on the road (DOR) within the city limits of Alpine on many occasions. Last year I saw and was seen by a nervous, aggravated, rattling, roughly-four-foot western diamondback under my trailer. I know several people who live near me who have seen a range of age classes. Just a few weeks ago we found an adult female Mojave DOR on Hwy 90 next to the Oriental Express restaurant. The fact that large, three- to four-foot long, potentially dangerous rattlesnakes are common in the Alpine area but are rarely seen and even more rarely bite anybody is a testament to their generally reclusive nature.

The western diamondback and Mojave rattlesnakes are very similar in appearance, and the only practical way to safely differentiate between them is to look at the bands on the tail. The western diamondback's tail has black and white bands of roughly equal width; the Mojave rattlesnake has white bands that are roughly twice the width of the black bands.

I do not like to categorically state anything about "reliable" characteristics that can absolutely be used to identify any given snake species, because snake patterns can vary hugely. When I was at the Houston Zoo, we had to be very careful when identifying local snakes over the phone. The local copperhead population had extremely variable patterns. If a phone description left too much uncertainty, we were allowed time to travel to the location to make a positive identification.

As for the two species under discussion, there are also differences in scale number, size and arrangement on both the heads and bodies of the two as well as subtle differences in the head patterns of each. If you are looking at

any of these characteristics to differentiate between the two, you are way too close! Many field guides go into detail discussing these characteristics in their discussion of the two species. I have always found that rather amusing. To use these you must have caught and safely restrained the snake (always an exciting endeavor, even if one has done this many times), or you will have had to kill the snake. There are many case histories of bites inflicted by a snake someone was trying to kill or by a snake that appeared dead until it bit someone. Thus, ignore every "aid" to identification except the difference in the bands on the tail. You can see that from a safe distance. If you are looking at one of the two out in the wilds of the Big Bend region, be happy you got to see a rattlesnake, then go your separate ways.

If there is one in your backyard, you may be skeptical of the reclusive, non-aggressive nature of these species—you may want it GONE. Either try to safely kill it or call the Sheriff's Department or Animal Control. I hate to tell anyone to kill a rattlesnake, but I am a realist. Study after study on relocated rattlesnakes (and much wildlife in general) shows the same thing: a specimen released within a certain distance from its home, your yard, invariably returns home. One taken well beyond that distance (for most rattlesnakes over a mile) will almost invariably die because they are not familiar with the new area. I am a great fan of rattlesnakes but any parent would view one as a potentially very serious, if not fatal, threat to a child. I also don't like the idea of one slowly withering away, horribly stressed and utterly lost, in a strange area.

The venoms of the two species have evolutionary, taxonomically, and medically significant differences. Very simply stated, the venom of western diamondbacks destroys tissue and can have an anti-coagulant effect, and rarely, systemic effects like shock that may be life threatening in children.

Depending on the amount of venom injected, bite symptoms may range from very mild swelling and pain to massive swelling, severe tissue damage and massively severe pain. In contrast, Mojave venom is primarily a neurotoxin (affecting the nervous system). It depresses respiration and consciousness. The amount of swelling and pain involved in a Mojave bite is normally much less. In some areas, Mojave rattlesnakes lack the dangerous neurotoxic element, like in south-central Arizona. The Mojaves in Big Bend actually are on record as having the most toxic venom of any U.S. population. All things considered, a bite by a Mojave rattlesnake is the more serious of the two. Western diamondback bites are rarely fatal to livestock (a nose bite can cause suffocation). Livestock is killed by the bite of Mojave rattlesnakes. I know this from both literature reports and discussions with ranchers in Mexico.

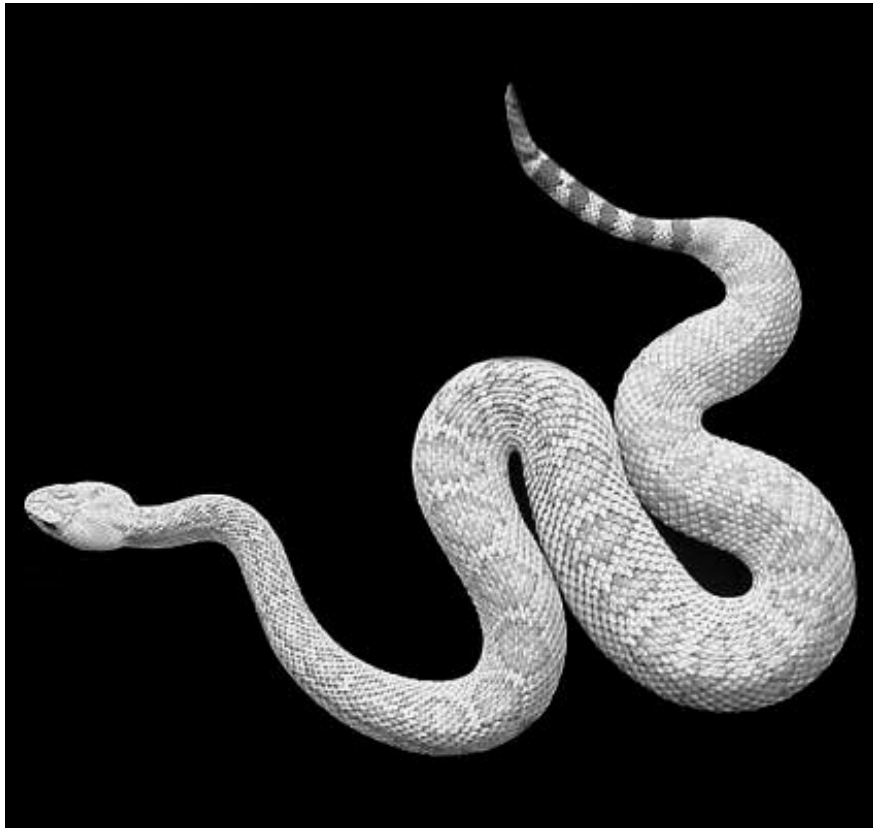
Given all this potential biochemical mayhem, I think it is important to remember how rare deaths from rattlesnake bites are in the United States: generally less than about 20 deaths per year. The statistical chance of dying while taking a bath or a shower is much higher than it is from dying as a result of a rattlesnake bite.

Venom is a crucial resource for obtaining prey as well as self-defense; the amount of venom injected at any given time is actually determined by the snake. Studies have shown that generally, a defensive bite involves less venom than a prey-obtaining bite. Reptiles and amphibians are more than automatons, reacting to external stimulus in a somewhat unsophisticated manner. Using their voluntary venom metering as an example shows a rattlesnake must weigh different factors very quickly; food or predator, relative size or mass, to determine the amount of venom used. In the case of a hopping type of prey animal, like a kangaroo rat, rattlesnakes sometimes must do vector analysis to bite the

prey mid-hop, which is no small feat. Lower vertebrates are actually much more intelligent than generally perceived, as recent research has shown. Years ago all the books on reptiles I read held a common belief, the idea that baby rattlesnakes were more venomous than the adults was nothing more than a myth. In the 1980s, venom researchers began to find that in some rattlesnake species, including the western diamondback, this is actually true. I often listen to "myths" because on rare occasions there can be a kernel of truth at their foundation. I also listen to what kids have to say; they are often sophisticated observers of objective reality, even when they are unaware of it.

There is an interesting belief about both the western diamondback and Mojave rattlesnake that I have only seen published once – not in a book about reptiles – and heard it on two occasions. It is believed that when a western diamondback and Mojave rattlesnake hybridize the resultant offspring is identical in appearance to the Sonoran gopher snake, aka bull snake, another fairly common snake in our area. The hybrid offspring is believed to be far more venomous than either parental species, is even said to be lacking a rattle at the end of its tail, although it rapidly vibrates the tail anyway. Sonoran gopher snakes do have a blotched pattern like both rattlesnake species. Like most non-venomous snake species they do vibrate their tails against the substrate when threatened. This leads to the suggestion that they are mimicking the rattling of the rattlesnake tail. Vibrating the tail is a common defensive behavior of many snake species across the globe, including areas where there are not and have never been any rattlesnake species. *

Western diamondback and Mojave rattlesnakes have very rarely been recorded as hybridizing in the wild, and interestingly, there is one reference that conveys an air of perhaps



Albino diamondback rattlesnake. L. A. Dawson

being more common in our area. In his excellent field guide: *Venomous Snakes of Texas: A Field Guide* (University of Texas Press), Andy Price stated, "Hybridization between the two species does occur in the Big Bend, and the hybrid individuals may exhibit one or more characteristics that are intermediate between the two." Andy was an academician and employee of Texas Parks and Wildlife, a good biologist and a good person. We will miss him. In a past discussion I read years ago questioning why these two species did not hybridize more commonly (they are found in the same places all through their extensive range, from here to the Mojave desert in southern California and down into central Mexico), the authors concluded they did not hybridize

because in spite of seeming to be "sympatric" – occurring next to one another – they are actually "allopatric" – separated in time and space – and reproductively isolated from one another by a subtle difference in the preferred "micro-fiche" between the two. Thus, while a general look at their distribution may have made them look sympatric, a much closer and more careful look showed they were allopatric based on fine-scale habitat preference such as soil type and plant type. This is not at all rare in nature. Small and seemingly inconsequential differences in nature can have grave consequences in wild populations. While I cannot discount what the authors reported in their study concerning the reason hybridization between western diamondback and Mojave

rattlesnakes is so rare or even nonexistent in the populations they studied, I have found ongoing (i.e. across years) hybridization in the two rattlesnake species here in the Big Bend.

There is a special location here in Presidio County where I like to go look for snakes. I enjoy the beauty of the area and the presence of the snake species sought by so many visitors who come to our area to find them. Whether you are hiking, cutting across a field or in your own garden, if you see a rattlesnake slide and glide across the path, step back and enjoy a special moment. It will, in all likelihood, go it's own way.

**For more information, google Karl Peterson's article at: [www.chicagoherp.org/bulletin/46\(3\).pdf](http://www.chicagoherp.org/bulletin/46(3).pdf)*

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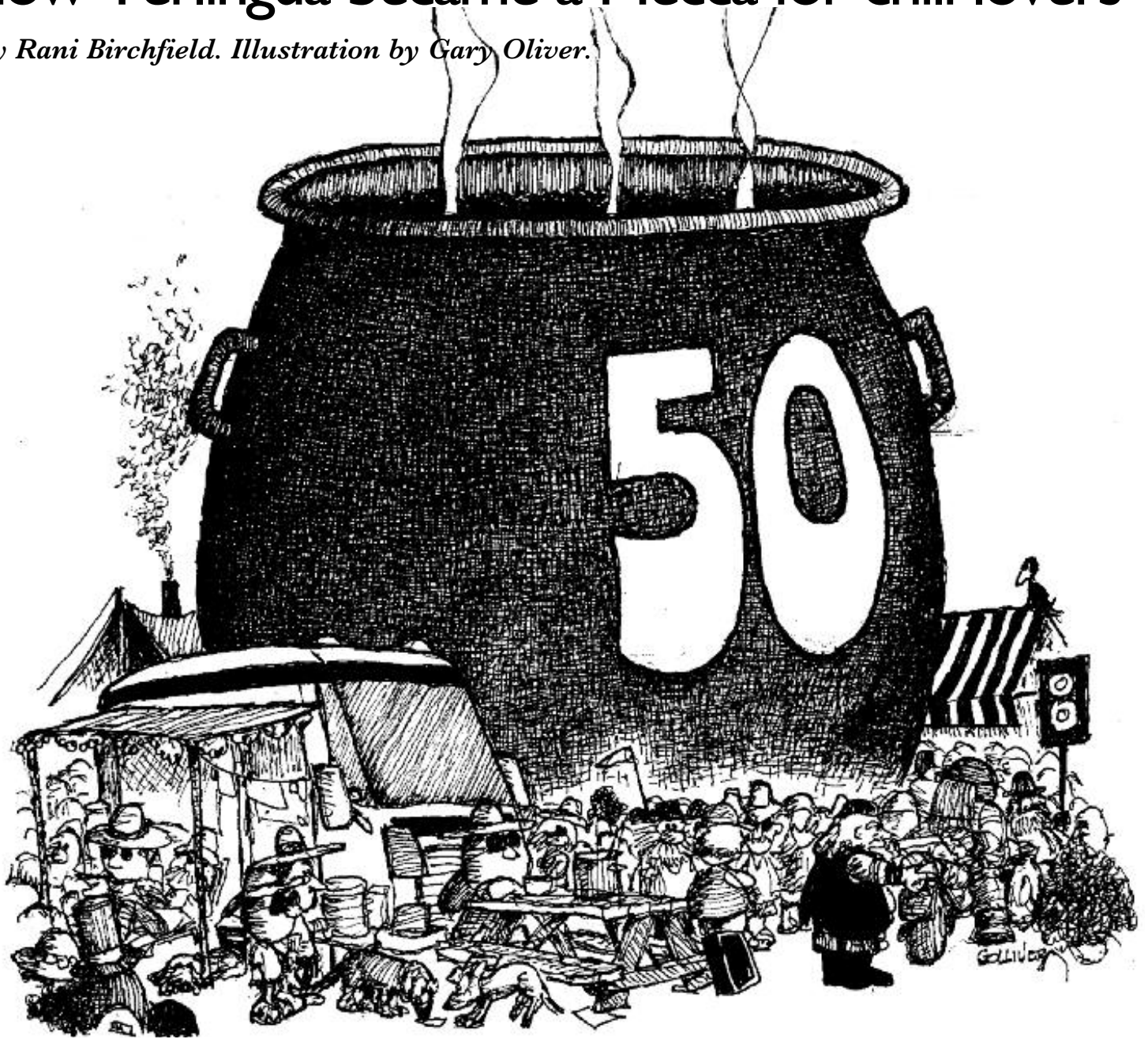
Fourth Quarter 2016

9

DESERT HEAT:

how Terlingua became a Mecca for chili lovers

By Rani Birchfield. Illustration by Gary Oliver.



Every November, in a town next to Nowhere, thousands of people converge for not one, but two Championship Chili Cook-offs. Otherwise known as “a bowl of red,” the saying goes that chili is only real if it’s prepared by a Texan. Fifty years ago, two gentlemen, one a Texan and one from New York, decided to take this statement to the dusty streets of Terlingua, Texas, and settle it once and for all.

H. Allen Smith was a columnist for *Holiday*, a midcentury magazine that, in its prime, brought glamorous locales to the readers across post-war America when the days of glorious travel were in their infancy. The magazine spared no expense and boasted such writers as Jack Kerouac, Ian Fleming, Truman Capote, Joan Didion and Arthur C. Clarke, as well as Faulkner, Steinbeck and Hemingway, not to mention stunning photography and art.

In 1967, Smith wrote an essay in *Holiday* entitled “Nobody Knows More About Chili Than I Do.” Frank X. Tolbert, a columnist for *The Dallas Morning News* and author of *A Bowl of Red* and his columnist buddy, Wick Fowler, read the article. Possibly in a smoky bar over a longneck or a Manhattan. (The two gentlemen and a group of their friends – who were the original founders of the Chili Appreciation Society – considered Fowler’s chili to be one of the best around.) A portion of the verbose catalyst by Smith read:

“Let it be understood that I am well disposed toward Texans and enjoy visiting their state; I’m tolerant of all their idiotic posturing, of every one of their failings, save only this arrant acclaim of superiority in the composing of chili. Mr. Tolbert of Dallas ... declares that acceptable chili should contain no tomatoes, no onions, and no beans. This is a thing that passeth all understanding going full speed. It offends my sensibility and violates my mind. Mr. Tolbert criticizes Lyndon Johnson’s chili recipe because it leaves out beef suet and includes tomatoes and onions. Yet the President’s chili contains no beans. To create chili without beans, either added to the pot or served on the side, is to flout one of the basic laws of nature. I’ve been told that when I was a baby and it came time to wean me, I was fed Eagle Brand Milk with navy beans frapped into it.”

In Wild West form, Tolbert challenged Smith to a chili duel against Fowler later that month. (Note: Smith was second choice as a duelist – their first choice became ill – but he was a

natural one due to his inciting words.)

They chose Terlingua, Texas as the location because their friend Carroll Shelby (of Shelby Mustang fame) and a Dallas attorney, Dave Witts, had property there which they were trying to sell. They made a side bet to see if they could draw a crowd in the double-digit town. It may have also been mentioned that if the event were to be a screw-up and a mess, no one would notice – all of Terlingua was a mess anyway, so they thought.

There were no actual winners of the cook-off the first two years. The first year was declared a draw between Smith and Fowler. The second year, legend has it that a masked bandit with a rifle grabbed the ballot box and threw it down a mineshaft.

The cook-off gained popularity due to the many articles written about it in high-profile magazines as well as its infamy in regards to the amount of alcohol consumed and the antics of showmanship present.

The seventies marked a turning point for the cook-off. Although the first few years were “Men Only,” in 1974 a woman became the World’s Champion for the first time. That was the last year that the cook-off, under the International Chili Society banner, was held in Terlingua. (Tolbert, Shelby and C.V. Wood organized the ICS in 1970.) In 1974, Frank X. Tolbert resigned from the ICS board. Carroll Shelby took the ICS designation to California, leaving the Terlingua event under the Chili Appreciation Society International, or CASI, umbrella. In 1977, chili became the official dish of Texas as per the Texas Legislature (although it’s unclear if that’s with beans or without).

Charles Maxwell, a local Alpine resident, was farming in Redford in the beginning years of the cook-off and attended a couple times when it was held at the Terlingua Ghost Town. “It wasn’t my total cup of tea,” he said. Later, however, the cook-off moved to the property of Glen Pepper, at an old mining project he bought and named “Villa de la Mina.” There were a few structures in place at the Villa when Pepper purchased the property and Maxwell started caretaking the Villa. He expanded the space for RVs and built on to the music stage and concession area, clearing and leveling out old goat pens. Pepper brought in rocks and dirt to terrace the arroyo so there would be a level area for RVs to park.

In Terlingua, on the first weekend in November, there’s an equal chance of the weather being hot or cold, wet or dry. One year five inches of rain fell in a short time, as sometimes happens in the volatile desert. The voluminous rain caused the RVs to sink into the freshly cleared slop... “Down, down, down into the goat shit. We laughed and laughed,” Maxwell remembers.

The cook-off continued to grow because chili eating and beer drinking go together like peas and carrots. Beer trucks came and parked to serve the thousands of people who heartily drank beer for days. “The paving on the dance floor was hundreds of smashed beer cans,” Maxwell recalled.

Different classes of people drink differently, and according to Maxwell, “The best drinkers are the motorcyclists. They’re used to drinking and have been in trouble enough to know how to stay out of it. Then you have the chili cooks who sometimes get pissy and obnoxious. They’re ‘king of the hill’ at the cook-offs, and sometimes this notoriety heats up their heads. The worst drinkers are the college students; inexperienced and irresponsible, they’re the ones who need the most coddling.”

At the front gate where the money is taken, three or four people always worked as money takers to accommodate the lines of motorcycles, cars, and RVs waiting to get into the cook-off. One year back in the day, Maxwell said, a drunken college guy decided to play cowboy and proceeded to practice his tie-down roping on one of the money takers. As Joe College started dragging the money taker with his rope, the son of the money taker jumped to the rescue. The son threw Joe College onto the hood of the next car in line where two older ladies waited to pay. As he pounded the face of Joe College, the son smiled at the ladies inside the car and said in that friendly Texas way, “That will be ten dollars apiece, please.”

The eighties marked another change, when CASI split off from the original Tolbert-Fowler group, taking the rights to the CASI name with the help of a water-pistol toting judge.

Kathleen Tolbert, the daughter of founder Frank Tolbert, has served as director of the Official Terlingua International Championship Chili Cook-off, the OTICCC, for the last 12 years. (This cook-off is also known as the “Behind the Store” cook-off.) Now

in her sixties, Kathleen used to be known as the baby of the event, although she didn’t start attending until she was 18 years old.

Tolbert doesn’t like to revisit the viciousness of the split from CASI, but for almost three decades there have been two cook-offs on the same weekend. “This makes it harder to do because CASI is bigger,” Tolbert said, “but we do have help from the ALS Association (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis), which is our designated charity.”

Both cook-offs raise money for their designated charities as well as for Terlingua schools. “I just like to think now that my dad helped start the first cook-off ever. It all goes to help the community of Terlingua,” Tolbert said.

Hallie Stillwell – one of the original judges and a local legend – was always the Chili Queen. Tolbert’s brother made Stillwell’s crown every year. She was like a grandmother to all the youngsters. Stillwell would get up on stage and wish everyone good luck until she was well into her nineties.

Sometimes things get a little too crazy (even for people who like crazy), especially in Krazy Flats on the CASI side. The Chili weekend’s rowdy reputation causes many local Terlingua residents to cut out of town beforehand. Wet T-shirt contests, reports of things burning that shouldn’t be on fire, and other spring break-like events don’t appeal to everyone; many long-time residents of the tri-county area have never even been to a cook-off.

“CASI has a wild aspect,” Tolbert said. “We don’t have that. It’s more of a family thing.” They only hire one off-duty sheriff, Tolbert said, where the CASI one needs multiple sheriffs and a jail.

Sometimes the biggest dangers to the participants are themselves. One year, someone ran up to Maxwell and his gang yelling, “Someone’s fallen in the mine shaft!” Although the shafts were fenced off to keep goats from falling in, an unfortunate, crooked soul wandered over the fence. Everyone sprinted to the pit prepared for the worst. A voice drifted up from the darkness ... “Help – I’ve fallen and I can’t reach my beer.” He’d landed on old mattresses that were discarded in

continued on page 12



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continued from page 11

the hole during the pre-cook-off cleanup.

If you don't eat chili and you eschew questionable moral hijinks inspired by profuse quantities of alcohol, there are other options. Brisket, chicken, salsa, beans, and margarita contests are held on Friday. There are also more adventures to be found, at least at the Behind the Store cook-off. This year will be the third year of an art festival, and the second year for an author tent within the Tolbert-Fowler portion of the cook-off on Saturday, the day the chili champion is crowned.

Mary Diesel is a Terlingua artist who helps let the world know about the festival where sixteen to eighteen artists will show this year. They call for

local artists first, then branch out to long-time participants of the cook-off. "It's fun," Diesel said. "We'll have four or five different media: ceramics, glassworks, some stippling art, and local photography as well as some stunning landscape artists. It's funky Terlingua art thematic to the Big Bend." The authors include names like Beth Garcia, Carlton Leatherwood, Tom Alex and Richard Willis, as well as Tiffany Harelik premiering her new chili cookbook.

After a half-century, Texans are still posturing, and people are still arguing over beans or no beans. Perhaps the aim is to expand the cook-off into a more "cultural" event with the addition of art and artists. However, American pop culture is comprised of myriad entities, many of which turn 50 this

year: Batman, Star Trek, and The Monkees, to name a few. This year the Chili Cook-Offs take their place in the birthday line-up of West Texas pop culture, shenanigans and all, bound together by the Fates and a passion for chili.

"We're all excited to reach the 50-year mark, and I'm just happy to be here," Tolbert said. "Years ago we thought, 'can we even make it?'"

Author's note: There are many more stories from the cook-offs, hundreds if not thousands. Some were told to me, many funny, a few scary. Glen Pepper has a wealth of positive stories about friendships formed and an ambulance acquired; perhaps someday they will be told in another place. Some of the "facts" may be a little sketchy, but Pepper said he always loved what Blair Pittman, photographer and local author, said, "Never let the facts get in the way of a good story."



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And then you toss me upon the earth, the yard, our
yard,
And my pain shines brightly in the light.
In the light that I feel
how I see that my bones are the dust.

The dust settled down the morning she was born.
It laid down against the rock and the weed and it was
quiet.

She grew tall in the dust.
And when she moved through it,
She knew she was home.
And there were times
when it made her quiet.
And there were times
When she danced with the sunlight, in the yard,
At home in the dust.

by Patricia Runyan

Desert morning galleons

dark shadows
like black
billowing
canvas sails
gently move
along the mountain side
as clouds above
float
across the sky.

4.8.16
Marathon Texas.

by Gilbert Olivarez

Photo Essay

Sitting with Malpais by Rachael Waller: 2016 Artwalk Honored Artist



With the creek running with great force, I go to check on the resting place of my old friend Malpais, the greatest wild stallion I have ever photographed. I journey up the mountain creek enjoying the rare roar of water down the mountain and smile at my finds along the way. As I sit in the tall grass with my old friend once again, I remember his bravery, the smell of sage and how he greeted me with kindness every year when I would find him in the wild. "Move gracefully, my old friend; you will always be a part of me."





Voices of the BIG BEND

Jim Glendinning: The Galloping Scot, Author, World Traveler and tour operator to Copper Canyon, Mexico.

Story and photographs by Jim Glendinning

ALAN VANNOY

Alan Sheldon Vannoy grew up in the Midwest. Born in Champaign, IL in 1964, followed by seven years in Oxford, OH, his teen years were spent in Liberty, IN and his first college was in Cincinnati. His father, Joe, a dyed-in-the-wool liberal, taught psychology at Miami University in Oxford, OH and later became an antiques dealer. His mother Evelyn, and his sister Anne, completed the family.

His parents loved country living and bought a small farm near Liberty in 1974. The family traveled regularly on vacation around the U.S. Vannoy attended Union County High School, where he developed an interest in art and learned to play trumpet. Following graduation in 1982, he drove with a friend to the West Coast, camping along the way.

Following a brief stint at Columbus College of Art and Design, Vannoy enrolled in the Art Academy of Cincinnati, a Museum School, where he found his niche and spent eight years. He studied print-making under April Foster, whom he calls a "brilliant teacher and major influence." He also worked as a reference librarian, which was a great learning experience to the wide world of art. He graduated in 1987.

In 1985, through a personal contact, he learned commercial house painting. He was quick and methodical, and could paint a house in two days. His reputation spread, and he painted houses around the U.S. for over 20 years.

Vannoy next enrolled at the University of Georgia in Athens, graduating in 1991 with an MA (Print Making & Book Arts). But disillusionment with the teaching process caused him to leave academia. He applied for teaching jobs, and landed a job in 1994 as curator of the SRSU Museum of the Big Bend, responsible for exhibit scheduling. At odds with the leadership due to his fundamental beliefs about the



ALAN VANNOY
Alpine

nature of a museum, he quit after one year.

Next followed a café venture in Alpine, called Kate Café, with Brenda Cook, but it did not last. Vannoy considered leaving Alpine, but persevered in house painting for 10 years, also working on his print-making. Meanwhile, jogging one day in 1997 on the half-mile Kokernot Park track, he spotted another jogger, Kelly dePrado. They stopped, they talked and they hit it off. Since then they have lived as partners, in life and in business.

While painting a house in Marfa in 2008, he had an epiphany and decided to give up the trade. Marfa had pioneered the southwest food truck movement in the area, Vannoy had previous restaurant experience, and a new idea was born.

Cowdog opened in 2009 and was Alpine's first food truck. Vannoy's policy was to provide a populist meal or snack which was tasty, big enough for Texans and a good value. It continues to prosper. Vannoy prepares the sauces, and cooks the hot dogs from an



DONA ROMAN
Alpine

exceptional menu. He cares that the customer enjoys the food. Kelly is the personable upfront order taker. Vannoy also continues with his print-making, which he calls "subversive art." He takes occasional breaks with Kelly, although leaving a job that gives him pure joy is difficult.

DONA ROMAN

Dona Wheeler was born in Oklahoma City in 1956 to Evelyn and James Wheeler, an attorney. Her older brother, Jim Jr., went on to become a CPA, but succumbed to cancer in 2007. The family moved to Tulsa, which Roman fondly remembers.

At Edison High School, she studied English and theatre and was "a good student," graduating in 1974. Her theatre teacher, Ms. Barbara Burkett, recognized her talent and encouraged her to apply to Northeast Oklahoma A&M College, known for its theatre department. She graduated from NEO in 1976 with an Associate Degree in theatre. She then moved on to the University of Oklahoma, graduating in



BOB MILES
Fort Davis

1979 with a BFA in acting and directing.

After a stint with an eight-man acting troupe, she moved to Dallas. There she stayed more than five years, working for a theatre agency, teaching theatre and working as an extra. In 1986, she returned briefly to the University of Oklahoma. It was here, working as a bartender at Dutch's, that she met Brian Roman, chef at the same restaurant. They moved to Los Angeles in 1987 and married in San Diego in 1989.

Brian started a BA course in space studies at UCLA, graduating with a Bachelor's in astro physics, and later a Master's of Science. He then joined the Jet Propulsion Lab as administrative assistant to the Director. Roman found Los Angeles too tough a place to live and work and gave up pursuing a career in acting. At age 30, she wanted to have children.

The couple moved to Austin in 1989. Roman, who had a knack with computers, landed a job with Apple Computers as sales manager of the

education division, a job that lasted over five years. Eric Dale Roman, now in the restaurant business in McKinney, TX was born in 1991. Jason Roman, now studying theatre at SRSU, was born in 1995.

Now there was a new change and challenge. Brian heard about the new Hobby-Eberly Telescope at McDonald Observatory and he joined the team as Telescope Operator. He was subsequently promoted to Resident Astronomer. Roman discovered Sul Ross State University and its Theatre Department. They moved in 1998. She took a job as "Visiting Lecturer in Communications" that led in 2004 to a position as head of the department.

In 12 years as Professor of Theatre, Roman has achieved considerable positive changes: a bilingual theatre program was launched; the budget has increased fourfold, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree has been established.

Roman saw the development of the summer Theatre of the Big Bend, performing for over 50 years, as the biggest opportunity. *Annie Get Your Gun* (2014) was ambitious and successful; the bilingual production of *Aye, No* (2010), by SRSU playwright Liz Castillo, attracted many Hispanic residents of Alpine.

Roman believes that all theatre is political. Of the 30 plays she has directed, she is proudest of *Spring Awakening*, the Sondheim musical of the trials and tribulations of growing up. With a theatre professor like this, Alpine can expect more exciting plays in the future.

BOB MILES

The Miles family arrived in the area in 1898, and his mother's side (Sprouls) came from Oklahoma to Balmorhea in 1912. Robert William Miles was born in 1940 in Fort D.A. Russell hospital in Marfa, the only child of W. Otis and Evelyn Goss Miles of Fort Davis.

He started school in Fort Davis, but the family moved to El Paso after fourth grade when his dad, a mechanic, got a better job. Graduating from Ysleta High School in 1958, Miles joined the US Air Force. He was posted to Vandenberg Missile Base in California and performed security and policing duties.

Finished with the U.S. Air Force, he enrolled at the University of Texas at El Paso in journalism, graduating in 1968. He worked for the *El Paso Times* and loved it, but it paid very little. Off work late at night, he and friends would

take off to Juarez, where a shot of tequila cost a nickel.

During that time he also worked as a teacher's assistant at UTEP, and enrolled in a Master's course in western history, which he enjoyed. On graduation, he started writing for the in-house magazine of the El Paso Natural Gas Co.

It was his degree in history which got Miles his first job with Texas Parks and Wildlife in 1976, a career which would last 21 years. He became the first Superintendent of the MaGoffin Homestead in El Paso, a 19-room adobe structure, built in 1875.

In 1979, he transferred to Balmorhea State Park. Two years later he moved to Hueco Tanks State Park. The park was popular with rock climbers, who could be a problem. Vandalism of the rock paintings, which are the park's highlight, was also a problem.

Miles married Sharon Lauritsen in 1969, who bore a son, Joe, and a daughter, Laura. They were divorced in 1992. In 1994, he married Edith Owen, whom he had known since high school. Today they live in Fort Davis.

Over the years, Miles has been involved in a variety of local projects,

such as the fire department and the Fort Davis museum. He was chairman of the Fort Davis Sesquicentennial Committee, which successful work later got him named Citizen of the Year. He is a member of the Western Writers of America.

He wrote regularly for *Cenizo Journal* from 2009 ("Roadside Memorials" to 2014 ("Horsehead Crossing"). The piece he is proudest of was about Henry Skillman, 1814-1864, the military scout, pioneer mail carrier and stage driver.

His interest in history continued and increased, particularly regarding the Mescalero Apaches. He had a friend in the tribe, visited the reservation in Ruidosa, NM and learned a few Indian words. He has over 100 books about the Mescalero Apaches in a house well-filled with books.

Fort Davis has always been home. The beauty of the countryside is the same as ever, and the people today less clannish than before. He shakes his head at the thought of the pipeline, and continues shaking his head about "new" Marfa.

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Rare Gems

by *Howdy-Nocona Fowler*

Treasure comes in many different forms. For some it is gold, silver, or precious stones, for others it can be antique glassware, coins, tools, cars, guns, or art of all kinds. In my case, my passion is for rare and antique bridle bits and spurs. I always have my eye open for the next big find. Whether in a dark dusty corner, in a second hand store, flea market, or yard sale, I try to leave no stone unturned as I travel across the country in my quest.

In 1976, while cowboying in

Arizona, I was exposed to a revolutionary spur design. It was unlike any I had ever seen before. Known as a Blanchard spur, this spur design was sleek and “ultra modern,” as one writer described it. I became an instant Blanchard spur fan and wanted to know more about the history of its design and the maker.

E.F. Blanchard of New Mexico developed the design in the very late 1930s or early 1940s. Blanchard settled in Arizona and his spurs sold like hot cakes in that part of the world. I

learned you could spot a true Arizona “brush popper” right away because of how the Blanchard spurs hang on the heels of boots. It would not be until the mid to late 1960s that the rest of U.S. cowboy culture would discover the Blanchard-style spur.

Catering to working ranch cowboys, Blanchard was a one-man show. He only produced so many spurs each year. He was not interested in expanding his operation in order to capture a larger portion of the spur market with his revolutionary new spur design.

By 1967 the demand for Blanchard-style spurs was so great that many spur makers discontinued making other styles of spurs and started specializing in building only spurs based on his designs. By 1968, even the larger bit and spur companies started offering Blanchard-style spurs in their catalogs. Blanchard’s designs are easy to spot: the forward slanted spur buttons, the rounded bottom edge on the spur’s heel bands, 1 1/4" to 1 1/2" wide heel bands, short spur shanks and the sleek manner in which the spur shank con-

nects to the heel band are all earmarks of Blanchard's designs. The whole design made for a better-fitting, more functional spur. Even today, 85 percent of the spurs made in the U.S. feature at least two elements of Blanchard's original design. Demand for Blanchard-style spurs was so great, I personally know of five spur makers in Arizona and New Mexico who only produced Blanchard-style spurs.

In 1963, two things happened almost simultaneously. James Renalde bought the Kelly Bit and Spur Company, which had been in business since 1903. That same year, Kenneth Moore purchased the rights to produce the Rodeo line of Kelly Spurs, an inexpensive line of rodeo-type spurs produced by Kelly Bit and Spur Company of El Paso, Texas. At that time Kelly was the largest bit and spur manufacturing company in Texas – second largest in the world.

After securing the rights to produce the Rodeo line of spurs, Moore contracted with Fred Kyle of Kyle Machine Works in El Paso, Texas, to manufacture the spurs for Kelly's

Rodeo line. Gene Pettigrew, a financial expert, joined the partnership early on. Kenneth Moore left the partnership three years later, in 1968. The partnership of Fred Kyle and Gene Pettigrew continued. According to the coffee shop historians, this new partnership landed yet another contract to produce two types of Blanchard style spurs for Renalde (who was now the largest bit and spur maker in the world) under the Kelly name. This very lucrative contract was canceled not long after it was signed. Coffee shop historians say the reasons for the early termination were: misappropriation of funds, lack of quality control, extreme alcoholism, poor business decisions and selling contracted goods out the back door at discounted prices. We will never know for sure what the truth is. But the contract was terminated, and by 1975 Kyle and Pettigrew was out of business.

For me, the chance to purchase a

continued on page 20



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continued from page 19

pair of Kyle Pettigrew, Blanchard-style spurs in Washington state started me on a fifteen-year quest. Since then I have owned original Blanchards; I've traded for spurs stamped Moore and a number of spurs carrying the Kyle Pettigrew stamp; I even owned a pair of Kyles. I have seen a jillion pair of spurs stamped Rodeo. The one thing that always eluded me was a set of Kyle Pettigrews built on a Blanchard pattern, stamped Kelly.

The brief history of the contract just increased the rarity of the spurs and greatly decreased my chances of ever finding a pair, if a pair even existed. Spurs based on Blanchard's style did not start appearing in major retail catalogs until 1967 or 1968. I have never even seen a true Blanchard-style spur advertised in Kelly's catalogs. I have seen spurs with the forward slanted spur buttons and short shanks but they

lacked refinement, which is the hallmark of a Blanchard-style spur. Worse yet, I could never find any written proof that Kyle Pettigrew ever actually had a contract with Renalde to produce any spurs under the Kelly name. I was either chasing the 'holy grail' of spurs or hunting a completely fictional myth.

Over the years I have been fortunate enough to have owned some very rare and expensive bridle bits and spurs. Most were not planned purchases, more of my being in the right place at the right time. I'm always on the lookout and I study constantly, trying to learn more about the makers and the gear they produced. It was while researching the history of the company and the value of their spurs that I learned of the perhaps mythical contract.

Not long ago I was in Austin, Texas with plenty of time to kill. I was scrolling through some Internet bridle bit and spur auctions, looking for a deal and checking current values on bits

and spurs. As I scrolled through some past auctions I saw a pair of spurs that caused me to do a double take. My scrolling came to a screeching halt as I saw a pair of Blanchard-style spurs. I immediately recognized them as the work of Kyle Pettigrew. When I scrolled back up to read the description it said, "These spurs were stamped Kelly."

I was in total disbelief; there were the spurs I had been hunting for over 15 years. They were nothing special, no silver, just a plain steel pair of spurs, well used with most of the chrome worn off. I just sat there stunned for a minute. Then I clicked on the photos to enlarge them; sure enough, they were stamped Kelly. I went back through the auction information to see what they had sold for, and to see if I could find any information about the purchaser. I could find no information on their final sale. I contacted the seller and she informed me that her reserve had not been met and they had not sold. After further conversation I

agreed to buy them and I put the money in the mail. I must tell ya I did not sleep much the next few days waiting for those spurs to arrive.

I was as excited as a kid at Christmas when I pulled that package out of the mailbox. I quickly cut the box open with my knife and held those spurs in my hands. I just stood there staring at 'em. I had finally found the "holy grail" of spurs.

After I settled down and quit patting myself on the back, the next question was, what am I going to do with them now that I have 'em? After much consideration I had them appraised. Rarity, condition, the history of the design and the maker were all factored in and a value of \$1,200 to \$1,500 was placed on the pair of spurs. Rare doesn't always mean most valuable; certainly I have owned bits and spurs worth far more. I recently showed my spurs to a fellow collector. She inquired, "Do you want to sell them?" I did not hesitate or stutter when I replied, "These spurs are not for sale."

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Big Bend Eats

by Guest Cook *Tiffany Harelik*, Cookbook Author
Illustration by *Avram Dumitrescu*.

CHILI'S LAST FRONTIER

Terlingua, Texas has an average population of less than two hundred, but come the first Saturday in November the former mining-town-turned-ghost-town swells. Over 10,000 guests arrive to attend an international chili brawl in the desert. The best chili makers have brought their recipes for a shot at bragging rights since 1967. It is hot, desolate and prickly. One false step could land you in a spiny cactus, and one wrong turn could lead you into the forgotten quicksilver mines of the past.

I wrote *The Terlingua Chili Cookbook: Chili's Last Frontier* to celebrate the competition's 50th anniversary in 2016. The book contains forty recipes from award-winning chili cooks, as well as local chili recipes from the Big Bend area. The history of the competition is detailed with colorful stories about how the competition broke into three main chili religions, each with its own point system. The 2016 event is one that is going down in the record books. If you can't make it, here are a few recipes and stories from the book.

Mark Hinshaw and Matt Walker make a mean bowl of red. "My older cousin won it [the Terlingua chili cook-off] three years in a row back in the early '80s. That was the first time I heard about it," says Mark. "The first year I attended was 2015. I had to see if it lived up to the hype...it does. The culture is a wonderful mix of misfits, big thinkers and wanderers."

Big Bend Brewing Terlingua Chili

Mark Hinshaw and Matt Walker.

Day one:
Coffee Rubbed Brisket
4-6 lbs Beef brisket
½ cup chili powder
¼ cup ground coffee
½ cup kosher salt

½ cup brown sugar
¼ cup paprika
¼ cup black pepper

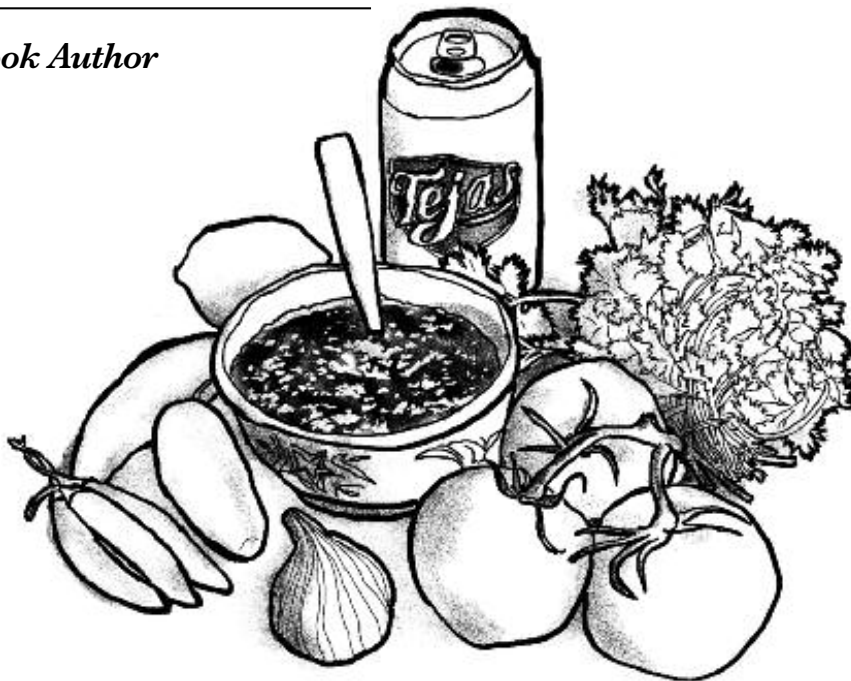
Mix rub, generously coat brisket. Wrap the meat and refrigerate overnight.

Day two: Smoke brisket for eight hours. Cool, chop and refrigerate.

Day three: Make Chili.

3 whole dried guajillo chilies
3 whole dried ancho chilies
1 Tbls dried pequin chili
1 yellow onion, chopped
1 carrot, shredded
2 jalapeños, seeded & chopped
1 habanero, seeded & chopped
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 poblano pepper, chopped
1 Tbls olive oil
2 cans Tejas Lager
7 oz pickled chipotle
¼ lb chopped bacon
4 lbs ground sirloin
2 bay leaves
2 Tbls chili powder
2 Tbls paprika
2 tsp jalapeño powder
2 tsp oregano
2 cups beef broth
3 Tbls tomato paste
1 can Terlingua Golden Ale

Preheat the oven to 350°. Roast guajillo, ancho and pequin chilies until they puff and harden, 10 minutes. Watch so they don't burn. Cool. Break off the stems and discard seeds. Grind the chilies into a powder or paste. Sauté the onion, carrot,



jalapeños, habanero, garlic and poblano in olive oil for 5 minutes. Purée the vegetables with half a can of Tejas Lager. Set aside. Purée the pickled chipotle with remaining Lager. Set aside. In a 10- to 12-quart stockpot, sauté bacon over medium heat, add and brown the ground sirloin. Add the vegetable purée, cook for 10 minutes. Add bay leaves, chili powder, paprika, jalapeño powder and oregano, cook for 2 to 3 minutes. Add the chipotle purée; cook another 2 to 3 minutes. Add the beef broth, tomato paste and the golden ale, simmer for 35 minutes. Stir in the chopped brisket. Adjust thickness, thinning with Tejas Lager as needed. Serves 20-24. Serve with cold beer from out here.

Starlight Theater Chili

Diego Palacios hasn't had the opportunity to cook in the cook-off; he cooks for the masses that are there to enjoy the party. The secret? Diego tells

me, "Here at the Starlight, there are beautiful Mexican women making everything by hand. They taught me which fresh ingredients would be best for the chili. We started charring the tomatoes and jalapeños and onions. It gives the chili a roasted flavor." The vegetables are charred in a cast iron pan and then pureed. Great to use in any chili recipe.

Terlingua Ghost Town Chili

Tom Dozier won the 2010 CASI Championship. You can buy his seasoning mix at ghosttownchili.com. He says, "we are committed to bringing delicious, authentic Texas Red to your home in a manner that is simple to prepare and absolutely tasty."

2 pounds of ground beef, or other ground meat

continued on page 25

That Dog Will Hunt!

Story and photo by Stephen Stainkamp

“I believe that a man’s life is never complete without the companionship of a dog, purebred or cur, large or small...”—Ed Fletcher, Flower Mound, Texas; Friend and long-time Hunter/Hunting Dog Owner

Certain canine breeds—setters, labs, pointers, etc.—have been bred for centuries to flush and retrieve hunters’ game birds—but I have had scant experience with, and never owned, such a breed...until Bubba. I first laid eyes on the tiny tyke at an east Texas puppy mill eight years ago last September. That early-morning day in 2008, dozens of puppies crowded into the filthy enclosure, the proprietor’s backyard, romping and playing and seeking food and shelter where they might—food and covered space being next to impossible to find in those deplorable conditions. When I first spotted him, my heart went out to that tiny pup. Like all the others, he was muddy and covered in feces—but available for purchase—adoption! Dirty as he was, he stood out from all the rest, and when he hesitantly approached me, wagging his tail somewhat suspiciously, I knew he was The One. This was the dog for me!

My ex, Sally, and I took that just-weaned puppy home with us in a box. She was driving, and I was speaking softly to him as he perched on my lap. Before he stepped paw in our suburban Plano home, I had washed and scrubbed the filth from him gently with a soft brush and puppy shampoo three times, depositing him in our backyard.

Initially overwhelmed, yet immensely pleased to be free of that puppy mill, he camped out in the yard: exploring, running free in the grass, lounging beneath tall shady hackberry trees, sprawling out, hovering protectively over his food bowl and devouring dry puppy food like there was no tomorrow!

I named him Bubba, and the rest is history. Our years of daily contact have forged an unequalled and rare bond of



love and trust the likes of which I’ve never known. We are best friends; we are a pack. If you own or have owned a blue heeler, you’ll know what I mean!

Or ask George Strait and his singing dog, Buster. Unfortunately, some years back, the songster had Buster stolen from his truck. I can only imagine how heartbroken Mr. Strait must have been. Another famous blue heeler was the ranch dog Skidboot, whom I once saw on *The Tonight Show* performing

amazing tricks. I like to think Bubba is as bright, although perhaps not as famous.

As a Texas outdoor writer, I have visited exclusive wing-shooting concessions from Kansas to the Texas Hill Country, where I have hunted “over” very expensive bird dogs—the pedigreed kind, about which guests are warned, “If you shoot a dog, you own it!” Such warnings have made me nervous, especially since such well-heeled

dogs can be priced in the tens of thousands of dollars and my shotgun skills aren’t great.

Sally and I rescued Bubba from that east Texas puppy mill, but I have never been disappointed with his pedigree. Blue heelers are considered “blue-collar” working dogs, associated with ranch operations, the herding of livestock: cattle, horses and sheep. Few would classify the breed—a descendant of the Australian wild dog, or dingo—as a “bird” dog.

Generalizations, however, applied to man or beast, are usually shortsighted if not inaccurate. Bubba is a bird dog—and much more! To be sure, he’s a little heavy, or so many have observed. But why have a dog unless you intend to spoil it? A ranch feller I spoke with recently, a fellow blue heeler owner, commented, “I can’t keep the weight on my heeler.” To which I replied, “Try feeding him a little Blue Bell (ice cream) and letting him sit on the couch watching TV—your dog won’t have a problem keeping the weight on!” Seriously, I want a healthy dog, yet I still indulge Bubba.

I’ve learned Bubba is a more enthusiastic hunter than I am. He is, to use the title of a magazine I’ve written for, a *Huntin’ Fool*. On the farm Bubba has eagerly retrieved squirrels and rabbits I shot. Sure, it took a little coaxing at first, but he surrendered the animals, a little slimy but no worse for the wear. And I always reward him for his efforts and obedience. Come dove season, Bubba accompanies me on the West Texas ranch dove hunts. He quickly developed a knack for locating and retrieving downed birds in cover. I put special boots on his paws because of the grass burs and mesquite thorns and he couldn’t have been a happier camper. I field dress and like to reward Bubba with the heart and liver of a white-winged dove. He also swims out and retrieves ducks I knock down over the stock tank.

Bubba has been no less eager to locate and retrieve towering, three-

foot-tall sandhill cranes. His interest in these "ribeyes-of-the sky" culinary treats has never been deterred by the 15-pound cranes' formidable defenses—their sharp beaks, leg spurs and powerful wings. Once he locates the cranes in cover, Bubba dutifully drags them to me.

One day, toting my Remington 870 over my shoulder to open the gate, I spied a formation of sandhills lining up on approach to an adjacent wheat field, and quickly took a knee on the caliche. When I stood for a shot, I selected a single bird and let fly with a load of No. 2s. The bird crumpled and plummeted to earth, but as I watched it descend, I noticed a second bird fold and succumb to gravity. Two cranes with one shot—my personal best! As ever, Bubba is always at my side, and when the 'double' fell to earth, he was quickly upon them.

And if his hunting skills aren't enough, Bubba has saved me from rattlesnake encounters. Famed rattlesnake handler Jackie Bibby trained Bubba with a live rattler. Thanks, Jackie! Mowing the grass, working in the garden, or riding the fence in the

Polaris, I was accustomed to packing my Taurus Judge loaded with No. 7, .410 bird shot for venomous snakes. I've come to recognize Bubba's peculiar bark when he encounters rattlers, and I am able to shoot the varmints before I step on them.

And if all this isn't enough, Bubba blood-trails wounded deer! I was hunting Pecos County a few years back and shot a nice 10-point white-tailed deer. The buck dropped but immediately got up and effected its escape into the thick West Texas brush. I promptly went to my truck and got Bubba out. I proceeded to put him on a leash, grabbed my flashlight and took him to the spot where the deer had dropped. Bubba picked up the deer's blood trail and in minutes, in the cover of early evening, he stood panting over the deer. Bubba received some special treats that night! In Texas Hill Country, Bubba trailed a nice Axis buck I shot with my BowTech compound bow.

I have too much invested in Bubba to expose him to feral hogs. However, while riding my Polaris one night, I sneaked up to a feeder to get a shot at a pig with my .243

ranch rifle. Sure enough, as I edged around a mesquite thicket, I spied a pack of feeding pigs. I raised the ranch rifle—a sure signal to Bubba that I meant business, and shot the biggest porker. As pigs are wont to do, the danged pig ran off, with Bubba on its tail! I nearly lost Bubba that night...but after I searched in the dark for an hour, he returned. I believe he must have lain beside that pig wondering where the heck I was!

I've never seen an expensive bird dog snag a dangerous sandhill crane—or alert to a rattlesnake! Yes, sir, that dog—my dog, will hunt!

Bubba may only be a blue heeler, a working dog for farm and ranch animals, yet he is every bit the pedigree champion retriever, in my book, as an expensive, professionally trained German short hair. Each day, I learn how incredibly smart and resourceful Bubba is and with time I have learned how useful dogs can be, if properly cared for and trained. I don't subscribe to stereotypes or preconceived notions. Like people, dogs can be put in boxes they should not be in.....and suffer for it.

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Folkways

by *Maya Brown Zniewski*. Illustration by *Avram Dumitrescu*.

FIRE EATER FALL TONIC

The renowned herbalist Rosemary Gladstar created Fire Cider in the early 1980s in the kitchen of her California School of Herbal Studies. The name Fire Cider is now under ownership by a company of lawyers, or some such thing, not herbalists. I call my version of this traditional tonic Fire Eater. The drink goes fantastically well with wild game and barbecue and as a marinade for both. Use homegrown or organic ingredients to make this hot and wonderful pick-me-up.

In a quart-sized mason jar place two chopped heads of garlic, peel and all; one jalapeno, chopped; an onion, skin and all, chopped; a little bit of fresh horseradish (jarred is fine if you can't get fresh); a whole lemon, chopped, peel and all; and a knuckle of ginger, chopped. All these amounts are based on taste, so you can vary this according to your likes and dislikes. If you love ginger, add more. You can also add a sprig of rosemary or a chunk of turmeric, or other herbs or spices of your choice. Some people love the heat and flavor of cayenne in Fire Eater, so they add a little cayenne.

Next, fill the jar within an inch of the top with apple cider vinegar. Cover the top of the jar with wax paper or plastic wrap and use a canning jar lid to seal it. The wax paper

or plastic wrap over the top is to keep the vinegar from reacting with the metal lid. Let the Fire Eater sit for two to six weeks. The longer it steeps, the stronger it gets. Strain the liquid into a clean jar.

Feel free to dip some out after one

Fire Eater and one to two ounces vodka. To make a Fire Eater beverage, hot or cold, use one ounce of Fire Eater, one ounce honey and eight ounces water, either hot or cold. You can add an ounce of Fire Eater to tea, lemonade or cactus

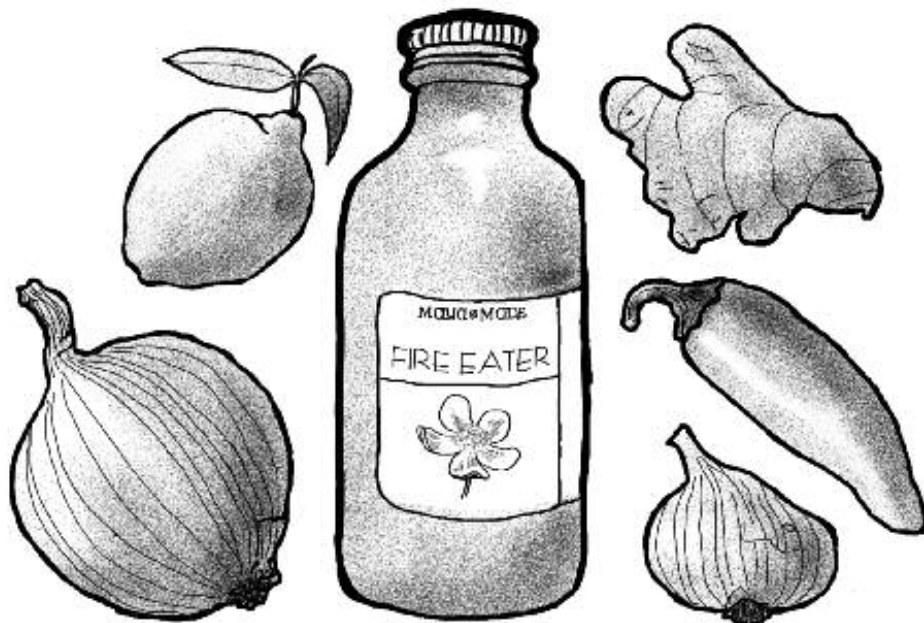
of firm tofu (a box is about 14 ounces) with warm water. Soft tofu will work if you can't get firm. Cube into pieces about one inch square. Don't get out a ruler, an approximation is fine. Put the tofu in a non-reactive bowl. Pour about a quarter

cup of Fire Eater over the tofu and refrigerate for an hour or so. Meanwhile, chop up what veggies you have. I particularly like cauliflower and sliced carrots, but pick the veggies you like best. Add the veggies, tofu and marinade to a hot cast iron pan with a little oil in it. You want the tofu to get crunchy and brown on the outside. Cook, stirring as needed to prevent burning, until the veggies are done but not soft. Serve over rice. I also do the same recipe with mock duck (seitan), using broccoli instead of cauliflower.

The Fire Eater veggies that are left after straining out of the vinegar make an ideal chunky condiment. Try chopping up the Fire Eater vegetables and add some of them to the

top of your hamburger. I love this topped with jalapeño cheese. They will add a little zing to hot dogs and brats, too.

Best of all, a shot of Fire Eater makes you feel ready for the wind and cold and snow of the coming season.



day if you wish to try it. It gets better and better the longer the mixture sits, but it is already flavored after one day. I suggest you add honey (use local!) to sweeten it up. You can drink a shot of Fire Eater straight, like a shot of whiskey, or add it to a mixed whiskey drink. To make a Bloody Fire add it to a Bloody Mary either with or without alcohol, no need for Tabasco sauce! Use six ounces of tomato juice, one ounce

juice. Sweeten with additional honey.

For a spicy salad dressing: Mix three parts olive oil to one part Fire Eater, salt and pepper to taste. You can use Fire Eater, with or without honey, as a marinade for any number of tasty meals. Try it on chicken, pork chops, pot roast or tofu. I love the way it makes firm tofu taste so yummy!

For tofu marinade, rinse a block

continued from page 21

- 1 (8-ounce) can of tomato sauce
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can beef broth
- 1 cup of water
- 1 to 2 Serrano peppers (optional)

Terlingua Ghost Town Chili Seasoning

- 4 Tbls of chili powder
 - 1 Tbls of light chili powder
 - 2 tsp of onion powder
 - 2 tsp of garlic powder
 - 2 tsp of cumin
 - ½ Tbls of paprika
 - ½ tsp of cayenne pepper
 - ½ tsp of salt
- Cook the ground meat in a large

pot. Drain the meat and return to the pot. Combine and add tomato sauce, beef broth and water. Bring the mixture to a simmer. Add the chili seasonings. For added heat poke holes in 1 to 2 Serrano peppers and float them on top of the simmering chili. Cook for 30 minutes. Turn heat off. Remove the peppers or squeeze the juices into the chili carefully so as not to add any seeds. Use Serrano to your taste. Let the finished pot rest for 15 minutes and serve warm.

Kathleen's Salsa

Kathleen Tolbert Ryan's father was one of the founding members of the original Terlingua Chili Cook-Off. "I started making salsa at the first Tolbert's Chili Cook-off in the 1970s,"

Kathleen remembers. "This salsa recipe has similar, but not exactly the same ingredients. The serrano adds an extra kick. Then in the 1980s, I made a lot of salsa at home while pregnant with my second son Steven. It made him give some extra kicks during that time. Now he adores salsa."

- 2 (28-oz) cans whole tomatoes
- 4 cloves garlic
- 2 jalapeños
- 1 serrano pepper
- ½ cup fresh cilantro
- ⅓ cup fresh lime juice
- ½ tsp light chili powder
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp sea salt

Drain tomatoes. Add ½ tomatoes,

garlic and peppers in blender, chop. Add cilantro, lime juice and remaining tomatoes; blend. Mix in the spices. For a gentler kick, seed the peppers. Serve with chips or use as an ingredient in your recipes. Delicious.

Mix together and serve with chips. It is a most refreshing salsa on a hot afternoon and goes well with a dark beer or a glass of white wine. Serve it for brunch over scrambled eggs with a mimosa. It is especially good with fish tacos. Makes 4 to 6 big servings

My cookbook, *The Terlingua Chili Cookbook*, is available at local bookstores throughout Texas or at www.tiffanyharelik.com. Special chili tasting and book signing opportunities are also listed on my website.

continued from page 4

the birdsong. Seeing open water and the dapple of sun-

be Marathon's main street south of the railroad tracks, its winding paths of tumbled glass take a visitor on a meandering journey through a world far removed from West Texas.

fascinating family trees. But these days, the jewel in the crown is that little stretch of land between Highway 385 and the Post Road.

About a decade ago, the



Photograph by Leah Cohen

shadow through the leaves of tall trees settles the alkaline dust in my desert-dweller's soul.

The Gage Gardens is perhaps the most spectacular example of these oases. Nestled behind what used to

Marathon has many lovely little places. It has any number of spectacular views of the Glass and Housatop mountains, gorgeous sunsets, little gems of history scattered through its streets. It has anecdotes and romanticism and

eighteen-odd acres that comprise the gardens were just another swath of scrubby, uninteresting land. There had

continued on page 27

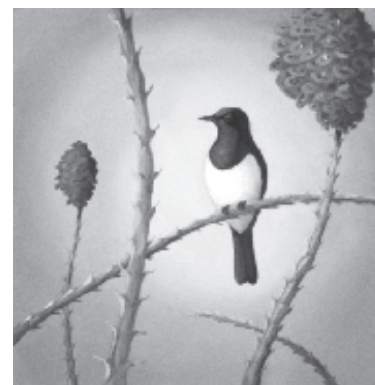
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by Big Bend youth



Cheyenne Rondeaux, age 15. Alpine, TX



Paige Schwerdtfeger, age 8. Alpine, TX



Scarlett Schwerdtfeger, age 5. Alpine, TX



Luna Barrett, 3rd Grade. Terlingua TX

continued from page 25

once been a little farm there, with a strong well. After years of hard work shaping and cultivating the earth, that little stretch of north desert has been utterly transformed, as though a piece of Savannah, GA retired and decided to move to Texas.

The first thing you see upon entering the gardens through the main gate is a broad, trickling fountain, the music of which telegraphs a sense of opulence. Merry splashing, purely for the sake of aesthetics, speaks to the wealth of the place—in the desert, as in any ecosystem, growth (and survival) is limited by that resource in least supply. The presence of water circulating through a broad pool of granite, playing for the most part to an audience of birds and lazy wasps, sends a clear message here.

The fountain sits at the head of a long, broad mall, ending in an elaborate bird-cage gazebo of wrought iron. Many happy couples have said their vows here, and celebrated on the green lawns with their stately urns of flowers. The overall effect is lush and formal, something which might be common in the land of green southern estates. It is lovely and dignified.

But following the paths past the stately formality of the entrance, they begin to wiggle and turn, folding in on themselves to give the gardens an appearance of being much larger than they really are. There is the orchard, where peaches, plums and apples ripen for the picking; you can help yourself to as many as you can eat on the premises.

The plums reach over the cedar fence dividing the path from the orchard, tempting the visitor with low-hanging fruit. Each season has its bounty, and the apples especially are a treat, as few varieties grow and flourish so well in this area.

Passing the little nine-hole golf course, where my daughters like to play their own bizarre version of capture the flag, the gardens spread out to the south into a wide field with a walking path around the perimeter. Little bridges arch over the grassy spillways where water flows in the rainy times, and up at the eastern-most border of the gardens a small pond offers a pleasant resting place for the stroller or jogger.

But my favorite section of the gardens is the place where the glassy paths meander around the central pool, where tall trees and native plants hide the walkway from itself. Little placards inform the visitors of what species flourish there. Stone follies, like ghost town ruins, hide the pumps and electrical boxes. An old water tank on a brick platform, covered in flowering green growth, creates nooks and crannies and little meadows bordered by secret flowers and the occasional surprise fruit tree. Benches and flagstone steps and shortcut paths, shady miniature forests and lush green lawns in carefully shaped swales imbue the visitor with a sense of mystery and a bent for exploration.

The presence of water draws desert creatures, especially since Marathon is an important migration stop for many species of birds and insects. The monarch butterflies grace us in their thousands, clustering to rest in the

cool safety of the trees, covering acres like a fluttering orange blanket. In the spring and fall, migrating flocks avail themselves of the ecosystem that man made. It's easy to sit quietly with a pair of field glasses and scan the branches. It feels like a reminder that nature is always waiting in the wings, to reclaim our careful edifices.


I don't always know how I feel about the gardens. They are beautiful, especially in relation to the natural landscape, if only by contrast. They are meticulously kept and brilliantly designed. The greenhouses that supply vegetables and decorative plants for the main hotel grounds are admirable. I love to bring my children there to run around and explore, to see and touch their lushness and pick fruit. I love to go there myself and be reminded of what a green world smells like. The riots of color and texture and light and shade are restful in the desert world, and stimulating.

But there's also that sense of opulence that nags at the corners of my mind, the question of the wise use of resources whose true limits are unknown. The question is about the value, and the cost, of beauty, and it's a difficult one to answer. The Gage Gardens are generous, are open for all to enjoy; they provide food for the soul as well as the body. They are valuable, for the hotel and for the community. There is a cost there as well, but it's one whose balance is very difficult to calculate, especially when I'm lying in the grass with the trickle of water in my ears, and those sun dapples playing on my face.

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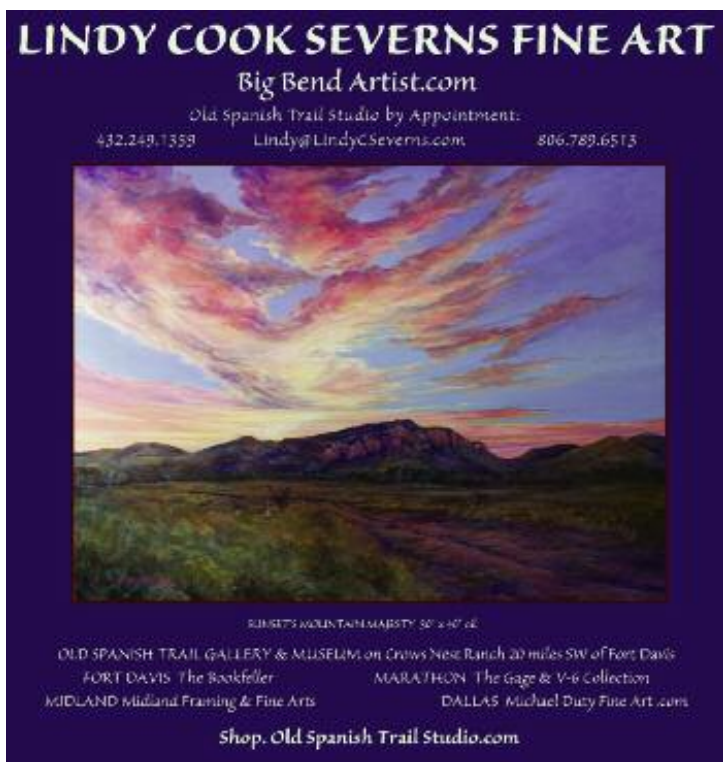
TRANS PECOS TRIVIA

by Carolyn Brown Zniwski

CHILI PEPPER TRIVIA

- How long ago was the first known use of chilies in cooking?
 - 400 years ago
 - 80 years ago
 - 1100 years ago
 - 6500 years ago
- Who is the present day grower who developed 80% of the chilies grown and used in the USA?
 - Oren Hatch
 - Juan Sanchez
 - Ed Curry
 - William Johnson
- What is the hottest chili ever developed?
 - Habanero
 - Carolina Reaper
 - Jalapeño
 - Thai
- Why are botanists developing ever-hotter chili peppers?
 - Cancer research
 - Requested by chefs and gourmet cooks
 - Topical salves for arthritis
 - Flavoring commercially made corn chips
- What is the best thing to eat to relieve the "burn?"
 - Bread
 - Milk
 - Lemon juice
 - Cold beer

Answers: 1-d 2-c 3-b 4-a or c 5-c



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