

The Journal of the American West

Ranch & Reata

Volume 2.3 \$14.95



Don Weller's Watercolor West

Preserving the Ancient Craft of Rawhide Braiding

Pro Rodeo's Toughest Woman – Kaila Mussell

Heartache & Hope – Tom Moorhouse Weathers the Storm

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FRONT GATE



photo by Allen Russell

Preparing for a Horse Show
One of those times when you would give anything to hear the conversation.

Photo by Allen Russell

Following the Lead Mare

The lead mare picks the way as the herd breaks into a gallop, kicking up dust as they move from winter to summer pasture. One of the secrets to controlling a herd and getting a great shot is determining the lead horse, usually a mare. Where she goes, the others will follow.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Potential Energy

By A.J. Mangum

I had been on the road for two weeks, following a circuitous path that involved stops in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana and Idaho, and was due to head home the following morning. My schedule had been such that I hadn't had time to plan my return route. With a mapping program running on my iPhone, I sat in the back of the downstairs classroom of Salmon, Idaho's Sacajawea Center, scribbling notes on directions, distances and likely stops for meals and coffee.

Filling the room were hundreds of empty chairs, all facing a projection screen that stood atop its stand. Within minutes, Argentine rawhide braiders Pablo Lozano and Armando Deferrari would begin a presentation on gaucho culture, a talk that would wrap up a weeklong braiding workshop they had led at the center.

Beginning with a traditional Argentine *asado*, the evening had drawn scores from the Salmon community. As people began to file into the room, the noise level rising by the second, I scrambled to jot down the final details of my route home, nearly



missing the sound of approaching footsteps on the room's polished concrete floor.

The footsteps belonged to Koda Bledsoe, a young braider from outside Boise. I had been photographing the workshop all week, but hadn't had a chance to introduce myself to each student. Koda asked what my photos were for, and I explained that a magazine feature was in the works.

A tall 18-year-old sporting a flat-brimmed hat, Koda carries himself with a maturity beyond his years,

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photo by A.J. Mangum

The hands of young rawhide braider Koda Bledsoe as he examines a work in progress.

and speaks of his craft with passion. In his voice there is both ambition and curiosity, an eagerness to learn and advance. When you're reminded of his age, the realization carries with it a certain reassurance of rawhide braiding's still-unrealized potential.

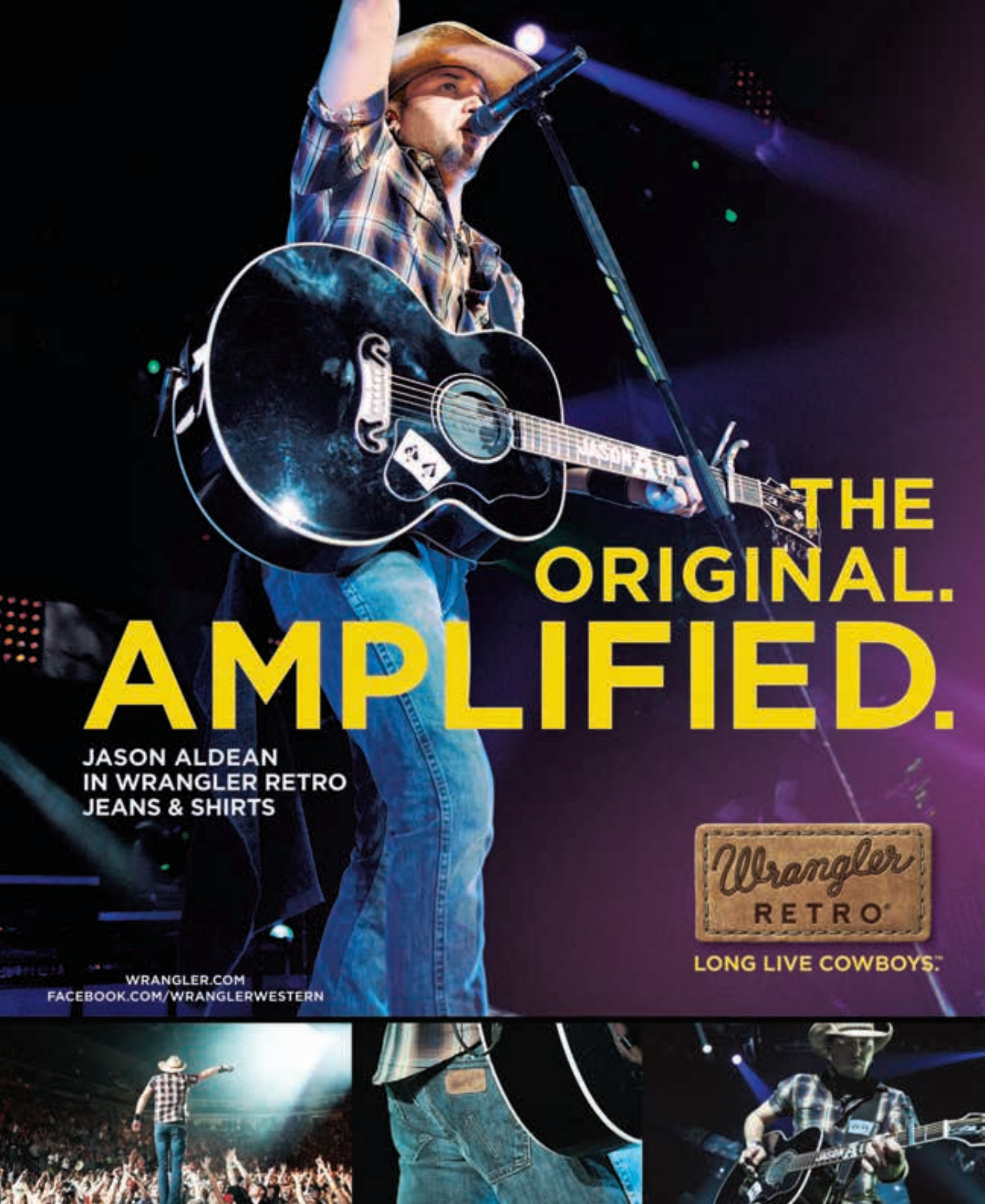
Koda works a great deal with kangaroo hide, distinct for its dark color and smooth texture. Examples of his work, and the work of his fellow students, hung on one wall of the room, providing a backdrop for Pablo and Armando's talk. The various pieces – reatas, reins, hobbles and romals – comprised an impressive rawhide collection, with intricate braiding, meticulous patterns and smooth finishes. Eyeing any given work, it was striking to consider that a functional tool of such beauty came from something as raw, as fundamental, as the hide of a dead animal, and was the end result of an artist's recognition of the material's potential utility. So much from something so simple.

The room gradually filled and, for the next hour, Pablo and Armando provided a running commentary on a slide show built around Argentina's stockmanship culture. They exuded affection for their country, and its horses, trappings and history, their talk made all the more entertaining by the emerging after-effects of the Argentine wine that had flowed abundantly earlier in the evening. The room belonged to the two

gauchos, who instilled in their audience both a newfound respect for gaucho culture and a strengthened appreciation for rawhide horse gear. More than a handful of spectators would surely be inspired to try their hand at the art.

As the presentation concluded, I walked to my car, stepping past a hide that one of the workshop students had set outside, out of the way of the crowd. Rolled into a long tube and secured with string, it had the texture and color of thick parchment. I found myself again reflecting on the material's untapped potential, not only to become a functional tool for a working stockman, but to inspire new generations of braiders and to bring together disparate cultures from opposite ends of a hemisphere.

So much from something so simple.

A large photograph of Jason Aldean performing on stage. He is wearing a cowboy hat, a plaid shirt, and blue jeans. He is holding a black acoustic guitar and singing into a microphone. The background is dark with stage lights.

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CLASSICS

The Pendleton Round-Up

A favorite of fans and competitors since its 1910 inception, the Round-Up was also the setting for one of the most captivating real-life showdowns in an evolving American frontier.



By Gavin Ehringer

Though most people come to Pendleton's big annual rodeo by following the Columbia River east, I am instead speeding west through the pine forests of Oregon's Blue Mountains. Highway I-84 traces the route of the Oregon Trail, enabling me to see the country as pioneers did 150 years ago. As I crest the 4,193-foot pass, I gaze down at the winding ribbon of highway, tapping my brakes instinctively. But soon, I'm back to speeding again.

Willing as I am to throw caution to the wind, I imagine that the intrepid emigrants were even more anxious to make this steep and dangerous descent. After trekking close to 1,500 miles by wagon train, they would have looked down upon gently contoured grasslands stretching to the western horizon, sensing in their travel-

weary bones that the end of their struggle was near. The promise of new country, where a man's value would be weighed not by his class or status but by his efforts, lay spread out before them – if only they could get down the treacherous pass.

I pull off at a scenic overlook, spotting Pendleton for the first time in the distance. It's a town of just 16,600 located in a oblong bowl of a valley. A downtown district of stately brick buildings testifies to the successes of some of the pioneer families. On the northern end of Court Street, I can spot a towering white grain mill, where local-grown wheat is ground into flour and the Pendleton Woolen Mill, whose shirts and blankets have warmed many a cowboy and Indian throughout a cold, harsh winter.

Ty Atchison, Saddle Bronc Rider, 2011 NFR Qualifier
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photos courtesy Pendleton Round-Up

George Fletcher, aboard a bronc at the 1911 Round-Up.

On Court Street’s south end is a stadium rimmed by open grandstands, a goliath structure out of scale to the modest size of the town. And for good reason: this is the home of the Pendleton Round-Up, one of the largest rodeos on the pro circuit and certainly among the most storied. Since 1910, when a whopping crowd of 7,000 showed up for the inaugural event, people each year have

flocked from every point of the compass to see and take part in the spectacle. During the rodeo’s four-day run, the town’s population will swell nearly five-fold. Every hotel in 100 miles will hang a “no vacancy” sign, every home will be thrown open to out-of-towners, and every campground will overflow. Some unfortunates, unable to find accommodations, will sleep in their pickup truck



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beds or contorted into the front seats of their cars. And be happy to do so.

As a writer covering professional rodeo for more than two decades, I've been to every major competition you can name and more than a few obscure "pumpkin roller" rodeos in towns you wouldn't recognize. When people ask which they should see, I unhesitatingly tell them, "Pendleton." Rodeo cowboys agree; in a poll, the reigning world champs of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association overwhelming picked Pendleton as the "can't miss" rodeo of 2012.

Writers better than myself have tried to describe the unique alchemy that makes the Round-Up an event for anyone's bucket list. Some note the colorful pageantry of the parades and street fairs; others talk about the all-night carousing and the infamous "Let 'Er Buck Room." Many rhapsodize about the Indian village.

For me, it's the authenticity and frontier spirit. Eastern Oregon, home to buckaroos and Native Americans alike, is a genuine



Nez Perce Indian and 1911 Round-Up competitor Jackson Sundown.

remnant of the Old West. Indian traditions that predate Columbus and ranching traditions born of the pioneers live on in these vast, desolate grasslands. Here, at the Round-Up, a man's worth is still measured by his deeds.

One of the old stories still told in the bars and around Indian campfires epitomizes the rodeo's soul. It happened just over a century ago, at the 1911 Round-Up. Racism plagued America and memories of the Indian Wars and slavery lingered, but the Round-Up policy was that the competition was open to any man. After a dozen men rode in the saddle-bronc riding semi-finals, the judges tarried in choosing the final three contestants. Finally, they announced the picks: a Nez Perce Indian named Jackson Sundown, an African-American named George Fletcher, and a white southerner from Tennessee, John Spain.

A news reporter would later call the showdown a "racial struggle...for supremacy."

Sundown was a 48-year-old Nez Perce Indian, a nephew of the great Chief Joseph. He'd taken bullets



during the Indian wars and had fled to Canada to escape persecution. Pardoné, he became a renowned rodeo performer famous for his big, flat-brimmed hat and his long braids, which he tied below his chin before riding. Fletcher was an African-American who'd come West on the Oregon Trail at the turn of the 20th Century. Settling in Pendleton, he befriended members of the local Umatilla Indian confederation, learning their language and culture. They, in turn, adopted him and taught him the art of bronc taming. John Spain supplied horses to the Round-Up and was a highly-respected rounder. He'd already won the wild horse race that year.

At stake was \$150 dollars and a silver-accented saddle worth \$350. Sundown went first, his wooly angora chaps flapping like wings as he topped off the bronc "Lightfoot." After nearly 25 seconds of furious bucking, kicking and even biting, Sundown's horse brushed the judge's mount. The contact dislodged one of Sundown's feet from a stirrup, causing him to lose his seat on the next jump. The Indian landed hard. Dazed, he was taken from the ring on a stretcher to the applause of the appreciative rodeo fans.

Next to ride was Spain aboard a feared bronc called "Long Tom." It was said the horse bucked so hard that the saddle's cantle would wallop a rider's back, forcing the breath from his lungs. After a furious bout of bucking, Spain and Long Tom busted through the wooden fence that separated the race track from the bucking arena. The pair went hurtling toward the grandstands to complete the ride. Some would later claim Spain "grabbed leather," as the pair crashed the fence, touching the saddle with his free hand in violation of the rules. But if that was the case, the judges failed to acknowledge it.

Last to go was Fletcher, aboard the horse "Dell." To no one's satisfaction, the horse merely ran off with the rider. Fletcher was awarded a re-ride on "Sweeney," a pale horse that worked tirelessly to unseat him. Mid-ride, Fletcher pulled his hat with his free hand and fanned the hard-bucking bronc, a showman's stunt to demonstrate that he was trying to cool the feverish horse.

Pendleton's knowledgeable audience roared for Fletcher's performance, which clearly outshone the others. Then, the announcer, who was perched in a bird's nest stand in center arena, called out the winner's name: John Spain.

Though stunned, the crowd applauded with civility as Spain rode past the grandstand on his new trophy saddle. But anger roiled at the injustice. Somehow, Fletcher, "the people's champion," had to be honored. The crowd was moved to right a wrong. Thinking quickly, sheriff and Round-Up board member Tillman Taylor cut Fletcher's hat to pieces and sold each as a souvenir. He raised enough money to buy Fletcher a \$350 saddle equal to that awarded to Spain.

Eventually, both Sundown and Fletcher would be honored in the Round-Up Hall of Fame. Exactly a century later, Spain earned a posthumous spot there too.

Finally, I've arrived at the Round-Up. I stand on the grass infield, my camera at the ready. To me, this grass is as hallowed as the frozen tundra of Lambeau Field is to a Green Bay football fan. Echoes of the great rides and legendary stories reverberate. Despite the warm day, a shiver runs down my spine.

The announcer utters the famous words that open each show: "Let 'Er Buck."

Let 'Er Buck indeed!



Gavin Ehringer is a writer and photographer based in Denver. Thanks to the authors of *Pendleton Round-Up at 100: Oregon's Legendary Rodeo*, for documenting the history of the Round-Up.

It's a worthy read, richly illustrated.

OF NOTE



New and Interesting Things from Out West.



GEAR UP FOR COWBOY CROSSINGS

The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum is once again proud to host Cowboy Crossings, a major lineup of fine art exhibitions and sales, October 12-13, 2012. This is a truly great show for all you cowboy art and craft junkies out there as the Museum is presenting the Cowboy Artists of America (CAA) 47th Annual Sale



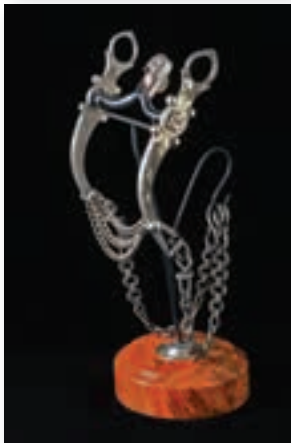
& Exhibition alongside the Traditional Cowboy Arts Association (TCAA) Exhibition and Sale, now in its 14th year. The combination offers collectors of Western fine art an unparalleled opportunity in one location.

“Many people look to the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum as a leader in offering the very best in Western-based artistic expression in a variety of media. We take that responsibility seriously,” said Chuck Schroeder, president of the Museum. “Cowboy Crossings is perhaps the most unique combination of exquisite works in painting and sculpture, as well as leather, rawhide, silver and steel anywhere in the world. We are very proud to play host to these fine artists and to show off their best current work.”

The CAA works to authentically preserve and perpetuate the culture of Western life through fine art. The group’s inaugural exhibition was held at what was at the time the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in 1966. Since that time the CAA Sale & Exhibition moved to the Phoenix Art Museum until 2011 when the group returned to the Museum. Today, the organization represents some of the most regarded Cowboy artists, including 20 active members, exhibiting more than 100 works of art during the exhibition.

The TCAA is dedicated to preserving and promoting saddle making, bit and spur making, silver smithing and rawhide braiding – all traditional crafts evolving from the cowboy culture of the American West. This year 15 artists will offer approximately 50 works of functional art for purchase and exhibition.

Reservations can still be made online at www.nationalcowboymuseum.org or by contacting the Museum at (405) 478-2250, Ext. 219. An online catalog will be available for viewing in early September and commemorative printed catalogs will be available for purchase.





ARTIST MEHL LAWSON: BOOTS IN BOTH WORLDS

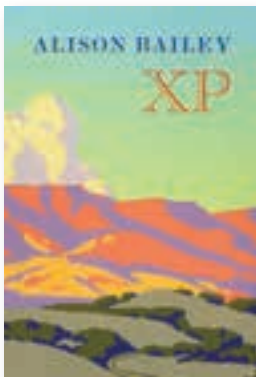
Mehl Lawson is an artist in multiple mediums – rawhide work, sculpture and horses. He is an heir to the proud vaquero tradition of Old California: a dedicated discipline of the refined, subtle elegance of the Santa Barbara style that inspired the creative spirits of such men as Ed Borein and Luis Ortega. Whether an heroic size sculpture, an action



bronze or a finely braided *bosalita*, Lawson brings a concentrated focus to his work that produces horse-back memories and sculptural images of pure grace and beauty. Lawson excels at depicting the devotion between man and his horse and his sculptures capture the spirit of the western buckaroo, the working men of the great California and Nevada ranches. Lawson will be exhibiting in both the CAA and

TCAA portions of Cowboy Crossings.

www.tcowboyarts.org/members/rawhide-braiders/mehl-lawson



XP

By Alison Bailey

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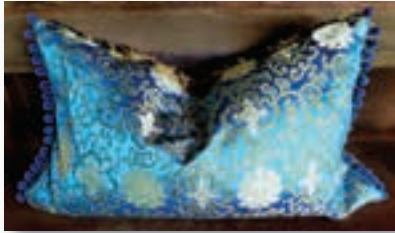
MARTIN 0-18T

Back in the late 1950s these little tenor Martins were highly coveted due in large part as it was the instrument of choice Nick Reynolds played in the Kingston Trio. In a recent interview, Bob Shane, the only surviving member of the original group stated that he learned to play guitar on one of these, tuning the strings DGBE, like the top four strings of a guitar in standard tuning.



These 0-18Ts are still around and still sound as sweet as when Nick Reynolds played one on *Scotch and Soda*.

TRAVEL BLANKETS AND ACCOUTREMENTS



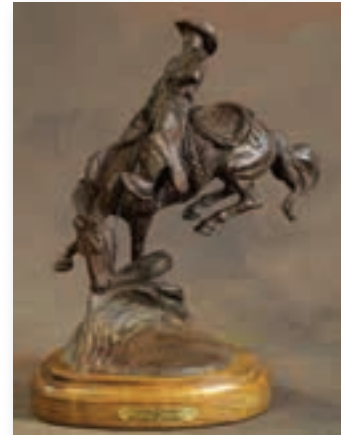
Readers of this journal are aware of our friend Teal Blake as his watercolors grace each feature and department heading. His talented wife, Joncee Blake has created a superbly crafted collection of blankets and pillows to ease the strain a bit for friends with young families, hauling horses all over the place. “I originally started doing these blankets and pillows for our friends who were all having babies as kind of a fancy baby blanket,” she explains, “but I have ended up selling a majority of them as travel blankets to a lot of horse women we know who are driving non-stop and stuck in a vehicle. I am inspired to compose beautiful things that are timeless and will be loved, treasured and worn to death.” Joncee’s wonderfully thoughtful creations would cheer up any pick-up. To see more, www.montystudio.com



AMERICA’S HORSE IN ART AT THE AQHA

The fifth annual America’s Horse in Art Show and Sale returns to the American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame & Museum August 11 to November 10 in the Scharbauer Gallery. The gallery features more than 30 world-renowned Western artists’ work, including this year’s signature piece, *He Knows His Job*, by the well-known Western artist Mary Ross Buchholz.

“It’s a great feeling to know the Amarillo Arts community recognizes the contributions the America’s Horse in Art exhibit makes to local culture,”



Nite Latch
Harold Holden



The Bay
Jack Sorenson

said Chris Sitz, AQHA senior director of the American Quarter Horse Foundation. “These artists and their artwork truly display the heart and soul of our country’s western roots and what the Amarillo

community is all about.”

Art pieces range from pencil drawings to sculptures. Buyers not attending opening night can purchase artwork online, by telephone at (806) 376-5181 and by email at artshow@aqha.org. Purchased artwork will remain on



Drinking Buddies
Mary Ross Buchholz



Cowboy and Horses
Buck Taylor

exhibit through November 10.

Proceeds from the artwork sales will go to the American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame & Museum to support its efforts to preserve the history of the American Quarter Horse.



THE NATIONAL REINED COW HORSE ASSOCIATION SNAFFLE BIT FUTURITY COMES TO RENO, NEVADA, SEPTEMBER 17-29

It is known as the “Greatest Show on Dirt” – the National Reined Cow Horse Association Snaffle Bit Futurity, featuring the Cinch Intermediate Open division. Twelve days’ worth of exciting competition kicks off September 17 and continues through September 29, 2012 at the Reno Livestock Events Center in Reno, Nevada.

Thrills, and sometimes spills, abound as 3-year-old horses, showing in the snaffle bit, test their athleticism and cow sense in a trio of demanding events: herd work, rein work and fence work. The reward for the best performance is the \$100,000 first-place paycheck and the coveted title of NRCHA Snaffle Bit Futurity Open Champion. The total payout for all the divisions at the show is expected to top \$1.1 million.

“This is the National Reined Cow Horse Association’s signature event, and we are taking some steps this year to make the show even more exciting,” said NRCHA President Todd Crawford.

Reined cow horse competition has its roots in the traditional California vaquero method of training. A way of life that blossomed from the 1830s into the 1860s. The Spanish stockman, or “vaqueros,” relied on their equine partners during long cattle drives from Mexico into California, and in the daily ranch work including roping, sorting and doctoring the cows. The vaquero training method of making a bridle horse is a slow, meticulous process that takes years to complete. The National Reined Cow Horse Association is dedicated to preserving the history and tradition of the reined cow horse and sharing this exciting sport with the everyone.

For more information, visit www.NRCHA.com.



National Reined Cow Horse Association President, Todd Crawford, Blanchard, Oklahoma, shown here riding Sinful Cat (WR This Cats Smart x Sinful Playgirl x Freckles Playboy)

EMPTY SADDLES

George R. Hearst, Jr. (1927 - 2012)

George R. Hearst Jr., was chairman of the Hearst Corporation and the oldest grandson of the media titan William Randolph Hearst and passed away on June 25th. He was not only superb in business, but equally as a rancher, horseman and generous benefactor to the performance horse world. He is survived by his wife, Susan; his twin sister, Phoebe Hearst Cooke; two sons, George III and Stephen; a daughter, Erin Hearst Knudsen; six grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.



Paul Sollosy (1911 - 2012)

One of the finest painters of the vaquero’s world was artist Paul Sollosy. Mr. Sollosy, who passed away on July 20th at 101, leaves a life-long legacy in his watercolors and oils for his love of the horse and cow culture and of the ranchos of the Pacific Slope. During an interview in 2006, Mr. Sollosy said, “I rode some great horses and with some really good hands. Most of them are gone now but not the memories.”



MONTANA WATCH

The folks at Montana Watch Company prove that we still make exquisite things in this country. Their “TaTanka” Model, 1920 mechanical timepiece with Swiss movement, ETA cal. 2892-A2 is a



classic example. It features a 43mm sterling silver case with western deep-relief engraving. The custom *bulino* engraved dial is protected by a scratch resistant sapphire crystal. This is more than a timepiece as it comes with a hand-tooled saddle leather strap and is finished with a custom-engraved sterling silver buckle. Lovingly manufactured in Livingston, Montana, it is a grand timepiece of heirloom quality. www.montanawatch.com

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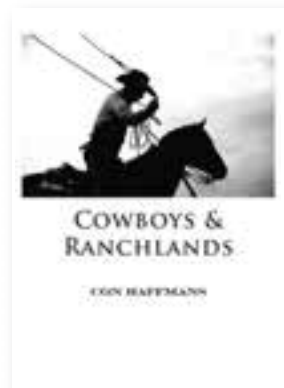
OUR NEW OF NOTE ILLUSTRATION



A public thank you to the talented Teal Blake for creating a new illustration to grace our Of Note section. Thank you, Mr. Blake.

COWBOYS & RANGLANDS

Utah photographer Con Haffmans has spent the past two decades chronicling the lives of working cowboys from Idaho to Texas, producing a body of work unparalleled in documenting ranch culture. Haffmans has collected his images into a single volume, *Cowboys & Ranchlands*, published by our own A.J. Mangum through his Colorado company The Frontier Project Inc.



CALIFORNIA RANGELAND TRUST PRESERVING PRIVATE RANGELANDS

In 1998, a group of innovative ranchers within the California Cattlemen's Association founded the California Rangeland Trust. Recognizing that the environmental health of the state's rangelands and economic health of its rural communities are intertwined, they created an organization to provide and promote alternate ways to safeguard rangeland agriculture and the natural balance of its ecosystems. California Rangeland Trust is working to permanently protect hundreds of thousands of acres of California rangeland through agricultural conservation easements.

California Rangeland Trust works closely with landowners to protect and enhance the environmental and economic benefits that these working landscapes provide. To learn more about the California Rangeland Trust and to find out about their annual "Western Affair" on September 29th – please visit www.rangelandtrust.org



J PARSON
The Outlaw Trail
www.jparson.com

Our pal J Parson has a new CD out, *The Outlaw Trail*. As J says of the record, "This is a piece of work I have always wanted to do. I have been fortunate to put just the right musicians together to help me capture the sound that I knew these songs could achieve. With these fine players, my songs have become everything they should be." Fans of J Parson will want to play this music time and time again.



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STEEL STRIKE

In our last issue, we introduced you to Philip Smith and his company, Steel Strike. His is a story of a passionate and persistent entrepreneur in the West and we felt he should tell you his story in his own words.

“Our mission has been to create a line of furnishings that tells a story true to the heritage and spirit of the American West. A melting pot of civilizations that gathered here, battling new frontiers in search of freedom and independence. Each bringing with it, it’s own sophistication, style, and craftsmanship, a combination of European and lodge, Cowboy and Indian, in essence a culture and lifestyle unique to itself and distinct from the rest of the world, the western lifestyle.

Yet, that in itself was too broad a term and not defined enough to actually establish a brand around. I wanted something refined, and elegant, something cultured and well bred. So, I took my inspiration from characters and architectural references. The warrior qualities of the American Indian, the swagger of John Wayne, the brashness of Teddy Roosevelt, the Bavarian approach to lodge and hunting, the Spanish influence on architecture like the Alamo, the Santa Fe adobe style to Southwest colonial. Consolidate it all into one term that I felt, defines and distinctly separates it from the rest, “Cattle Barron.”

I started Steel Strike in Santa Fe, New Mexico and moved it to Buena Vista, Colorado dedicating the last 22 years of my life building and refining the line. I believe we build one of the most impressive lines of mountain and western lifestyle furnishings on the market. Our longevity and the notion of sticking to our guns, so to speak, on our “Cattle Barron” approach has kept the clientele coming back. Sure, we adapt with new styles and trends, incorporating them into the line, but the underlying theme remains the same. The new contemporary western flair is just another way to express the same story but all of the main elements and characters are still in place. You must first understand your heritage and where you come from to give yourself a foundation before you can create new approaches to design. We are always excited about coming up with new ways to tell a story. It helps to keep it interesting and fresh.

My father always told me not to forget to enjoy the ride, and this is one that just keeps giving back. We invite you to check us out at www.steelstrike.com and befriend us on Facebook to see new products.”

MARLEY’S GHOST

Jubilee

www.marleysghostband.com

Marley’s Ghost is nothing less than a national treasure, the capable inheritors of the archetypal Americana blueprint drawn up by The Band. As the *L.A. Weekly* aptly put it, “This West Coast [group] deftly, and frequently daffily, dashes across decades of American music to create a sound that’s steeped in tradition but never bogged down by traditionalism.” Marley’s Ghost is a



virtuoso aggregation composed of singer/multi-instrumentalists Dan Wheetman, Jon Wilcox, Mike Phelan, Ed Littlefield Jr. and Jerry Fletcher – celebrates its 25th anniversary with the scintillating roots-music tour de force *Jubilee*. The album, produced by Nashville legendary Cowboy Jack Clement and recorded at the city’s venerable Sound Emporium, which Clement built, features guest performances from Emmylou Harris, John Prine, Old Crow Medicine Show, Marty Stuart, Larry Campbell, Byron House and Don Heffington.

“One of the things that we were really clear on with this record was that we wanted it to be a Marley’s Ghost album with friends sitting in, not guest stars with us as the backing band,” Wheetman explains. “And it worked.” A great listen.





UP FOR BID, A WESTERN LEGACY – THE Y CROSS RANCH



There are times in life when opportunity knocks, especially for those who love the great historic ranches of west. The Y Cross is one such place and it is now on the market for the first time through Ranch Marketing Associates. The University of Wyoming Foundation and Colorado State University Research Foundation are offering the legendary Y Cross through a public sealed bid process. Spanning over 60,000 acres located between Cheyenne and Laramie and originally assembled in 1941 as a purebred cattle operation in one continuous block, the Y Cross Ranch has a variety of terrain capable of supporting a healthy ecosystem for livestock, agricultural production and wildlife. It runs up to 850 pair along with 800 yearling cattle and features unobstructed panoramic mountain and valley views, scenic topography, over 800 acres of irrigated meadows, ten creeks, elevations from 6,400 to 8,613 feet and the ability to produce over 1,000 tons of grass hay. “The Y Cross Ranch represents an extremely rare investment opportunity to own a classic western, low-overhead, large production ranch in a prime Wyoming location,” says Ranch Marketing Associates’ co-founder, Ron Morris. “The property is offered for sale in its entirety including all real estate, improvements and water rights through a sealed bid process. Bids will be opened on November 13, 2012 at the Little America Hotel in Cheyenne, Wyoming,” Morris adds. There are few places like this left, let alone up for sale in such a unique way so for more information, visit www.RMABrokers.com



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CZECH REPUBLIC VAQUERO COUNTRY

Interest in the historic vaquero approach to horsemanship is spreading all over. Case in point: *Horseman* magazine that our saddle pal Barb Borankova publishes in the Czech republic. Can't read a word of it but it one of the most beautifully produced publications we have come across. Atta girl, Barb. www.horsemanonline.cz/horseman



PLUCKIN' THE WIRE

by Lynn Miller

Publisher's Note: We are pleased to welcome the writing of Lynn Miller. A published author with fourteen titles, a painter, a farmer, and rancher. A worker of horses and longtime publisher of The Small Farmer's Journal, Lynn will check in on life's lessons for us – making sure jobs are done right and always, pluckin' the wire.

Farming and ranching; for those of us decades into wrestling a livelihood from crops and livestock, its long been painfully obvious how quick and hasty work often spells calamity or double-work later. Interesting how true this is for many other aspects of society and governance. The admonition to “do it right the first time” has long been lost to governments and to the lazier social institutions. In governance we see patches on top of band-aids excusing patches that should have never occurred. Imagine a fence with just such a history. I have a few of those and my livestock find them laughable. Same's true with Washington DC, hard for us “sheep” out here not to find humor and frustration in our patch-job governance.

A year or so ago we decided to build a mile of new wire stock-fence: put together a great crew, including a french buckaroo, a hardware man, a retired machinist and two farmhands – more people than we needed but just enough for the songs we would sing, and mighty helpful for our goal of getting it right the first time. Discovered that the way to put together such a crew was to offer unlimited supplies of excellent food and drink. Also to have many meal-break jokes on hand for the telling, like the one about the panda bear in the restaurant... Entertainment can be salve for the blistered beast. It also made a difference that we had fence

supplies at the ready and a master plan.

We laid that fencing out with care. It was already identified, early on, that most of the posts would be dry Juniper we had cut around the place, 300 of them. Steel's gotten precious and at my advancing age “precious” is coming full circle to mean worth-less. In that vein we opted for two point wire to save money and tear. Time will tell if that was a mistake. I harnessed a young team of Belgian geldings to the wagon and we gathered the posts and spread them out. Rented a Bobcat with auger, lined out the trajectory, marked the holes and set to work drilling. All that stuff's important yes, but it's only a trail to get to the music.

On some ranches, even the small handmade outfits we are drawn to, a quarter mile is something we understand; forty acres square – quarter-mile to each side, or incrementally as a piece of a longer fencing. If you're fixing to build a quarter mile of five strand barb wire fence you know from experience that posts need to be well-set, braces need to be strong and true, gates need to be well planned for, and the stretch needs to be drawn to a perfect tension. And, if you have the luxury of a straight stretch with gentle inclines, a quarter mile is just about perfect to split into two braced stretches. But a quarter mile is a long go, and if you

haven't set it up right it'll give you a sloppy fence.

Our ranch is center of the winter habitat for the world's largest mule deer herd (7,000 + or -), and that shared by a herd of Elk. This translates to repeated pressures on that top strand of barb. We want it tight, we want it well-secured at both ends. Add to this that we raise both cattle and draft horses. The big horses require just a little more height than would be acceptable for most cattle (excluding certain strains of Angus which easily clear four foot fences on whim and out of general cussedness). All of this is to say I care about the wire being strung tight and well-secured. That translated to a routine which developed into a rhythm that actually felt like a work song.

Braces were set with cross-pieces notched in and diagonal wire windlasses tightened with old hardwood wagon wheel spokes. Post were set as we six broke up into three teams of shovel and tamping rods. Here's where persnickety pays off; Big Jon and I were merciless about having the wire side of those posts in perfect alignment and straight up and down. If a post was set off a little we'd make 'em take it out and reset it. Got to where no one would tamp a post until one of us bosses would sight it in and holler “nail it” when all was in alignment. Made for a mighty pretty sight, all those posts marching along straight and true. And it made

BOOTS JUST
GOT BETTER



the next job that much easier.

Wire was tied fast at the end and rolled out, five rolls on a make-shift spooler hung behind a trailer pulled by a three wheeler. Care was taken to make sure the wire lengths laid untangled on the ground. Each of us had a hammer with span marks drawn on the handle so we could use this to keep the wires exactly the same distance apart. If the wire goes up and down even slightly that puts additional pressure on the staples, a straight wire tends to help hold itself together. At the other end of the span a cable come-along was used to draw the wire taut.

Crew spread out along the span; Big Jon on the come-along, George at the beginning, Jean Christophe, Brian and Mark evenly spaced with hammers and staple pouches at the ready, and me dead center and sighting down the line for anything hanging up the tightening wire. As she came tight I would bend over and pluck her up to feel the stretch. If it was too loose I'd holler "MORE" and Jon would take up another four clicks and I'd test her again. When I found the wire properly "tuned" and taut I'd holler "NAIL IT!" and the rhythm commenced of hammers and staples, everyone working towards the center, testing the distance between wires with the handle marks. Once done we'd all of us bend over and sight down that new string and smile

before we'd tightened and stapled the next strand.

The actual wire stretching didn't take long. Building what we call the "portagee" gates took some time though, because I insisted that



it be done a certain way. "Portagee" or wire gates in our North country feature the same number of wire strands running from stick to stick. Sometimes ranchers will allow the actual fence wires to continue past the brace and into the gate. I don't. I use old steel harness rings, tying them into the wire as it wraps the brace end-post. Then I tie in the gate wires to the rings. This allows a "dry" hinge for the gates and prevents the wires from breaking after repeated openings. (I'm still trying to find a latch system that'll allow me to open these gates from horseback. No big deal, fat old ranchers like myself need reasons to get off the horse.) If I figure a gate will be used often and with a hitched team, I insist on hanging a

swinging gate.

And I'll admit to getting a big free-swinging smile each time one of the crew, during our breaks, would holler out "nail it." We all knew during the process that this was one of those adventuresome jobs we'd remember fondly for the rhythms and the punctuations and how it all came together.

Well, there it is. How does this relate to our messed up governments? Its a matter of scale, isn't it? I'm trying to run a ranch. Every project pret' near has a simple objective. With fencing its a tool for handling livestock. Keep that in sight and trust the lessons life has taught you and a plan just naturally presents itself. A ranch is usually a manageable scale of endeavor.

With government there's little or nothing simple about it. Lots of objectives need to be considered, lots of vested interests, lots of rules. With governance the scale is seldom manageable. That's the problem. Hard to do it right the first time when you can't keep a clear focus on the objectives. But that doesn't diminish the worth of the admonition. Do it right the first time. Might be tough. But it's darn sure worth it. Maybe if we had a citizen government where ranchers and farmers and shopkeepers each did a stint of public service running things...? Imagine a lawmaker smiling as he or she left Congress and hollerin out "NAIL IT".



HOME ON THE RANGE

The Will Rogers Ranch: Pacific Palisades, California, 1928

By Alan Hess

Photography by Alan Weintraub

Will Rogers seems to have been everywhere there was a ranch. He was a friend of Pawnee Bill, he toured California missions with Charles Lummis, he was a guest of Frank Phillips at Woolaroc, he kept polo ponies at Kemper Campbell's Victorville ranch. He also had a ranch of his own, albeit one that was very much a movie star's creation.

The boy from Claremore, Oklahoma, got his start in show business touring with the Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch Show at the turn of the century and ended up as one of Hollywood's highest-paid stars. When he built his last home, he located it off Sunset Boulevard near the Pacific Ocean, far from the prairie.

The Pacific Palisades house was nothing like Rogers' own birthplace in eastern Oklahoma, a simple wood frame building. It echoed the great hotels of Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon. It began in 1928 as a one-story lodge next to the polo field where Rogers rode ponies with friends like Daryl F. Zanuck, Walt Disney, and Hal Roach. The long, rambling wood house has the feel of an oversized, well-to-do suburban home of the 1920s, but one that adopts the rough-hewn luxury of the ranch style. The rustic charms of wood trusses fabricated of peeled logs create an atmosphere of simplicity, no matter how much hard work went into the construction.

Over the years Rogers added to the original house. He liked Kemper Campbell's two-story living room with a balcony running along one side, so he raised the roof on his lodge and added a balcony and guest rooms. After he decided to move his wife and three children out of Beverly Hills in 1931, he built a two-story addition, with a dining

patio and portable barbecue in between. The flagstone terrace also had an outdoor fireplace for chilly evenings.

The original lodge is a compendium of the cowboy style: stone fireplace, wood paneling, wagon-wheel chandeliers, deer-horn furniture, Morris chairs, Remington and Russell figures, Navajo rugs tossed casually over railings. The family wing, however, is modernized Western. The fireplace andirons are silhouettes of cowboys, but the knotty-pine paneling is stained and polished, lighter in tone than the paneling in the original house. The addition, with its stone base and long second-floor balcony, is less like a cabin and more sophisticated in its Monterey Colonial style.

For all the attention to cowboy detail, for all the stables and corrals, there is no mistaking Rogers' spread for a working ranch. If the polo field in the front yard isn't a dead giveaway, then the four-hole golf course on the front lawn is. This is Hollywood Ranch style, an idealized vision of the outdoors life using an inventive aesthetic of natural materials, self-consciously crude finishes, and recycled elements like wagon-wheel chandeliers – as if that was all they had on hand when they needed lights.

Built twenty years after Pawnee Bill's prairie mansion, this one had no need to import fancy Eastern conventions or classical ornaments. Like Frank Phillips, Rogers could revel in the purity of rough logs bearing the trace of the axe's hacks, of deerskin leather pulled inelegantly over tables, lampshades, and chairs, of antlers stacked up as a table pedestal like amorphous abstract art. The Western aristocracy had found a style they could call their own, and they wore it proudly.





BY HAND AND HEART

Paying it Forward

Three generations of Idaho rawhide braiders exemplify how traditional crafts are kept alive in the modern cowboy culture.



By Melissa Mylchreest

If you ask Steve Derricott about the origins of rawhide braiding, he'll take you literally.

"From stone-age time on, humans have used animal skins and furs in one form or another," he begins. He'll skip ahead quickly through time, talking about Hernando Cortez and the introduction of horses to the Americas, the adaptation of Spanish leather-working styles in this new venue, and the vaqueros of California, how they took pride in the tack they made by hand.

Not all artists possess such a deep sense of history, but for Steve and many of his fellow rawhide



photos by A.J. Mangum

Braider Steve Derricott got his start in the craft with a grant from the Idaho Commission on the Arts.

braiders, this knowledge of the past informs the work they make today, whether it be reins or a headstall, a bosal or a reata. There is a sense of tradition that pervades the art form, a sense of decorum that encompasses pride, discipline, hard work, and an appreciation for both aesthetics and pragmatism. And, like many traditional arts, the best way to learn the secrets of rawhide braiding is through apprenticeship with a master craftsman. In Idaho, a unique program through the Idaho Commission on the Arts supports such apprenticeships, and in one instance has allowed several generations of rawhide braiders to learn

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from one another.

Steve Derricott was born to a ranching family in Idaho, and grew up watching his father make rawhide tack items. He left the ranch behind, however, to pursue a career in geology. Ranching and leatherwork were in his blood, though, and soon he returned to his roots, buying and operating Gfeller Casemakers, where they still make “profoundly functional leather goods.”

By 1994, his interest in rawhide braiding had rekindled, and he and his father, Lloyd, applied to the Idaho Commission on the Arts for a “traditional arts apprenticeship” grant. They subsequently spent long hours together, working, learning and sharing stories.

“The apprenticeship program is something that I really cherish, that I value very highly,” Derricott says. “Not only were Dad and I able to share the rawhide part of it, but we became closer during that time as well. He related stories and tales, and that might not have happened if it hadn’t been for that opportunity.”

Because of this formative experience with his father, Derricott understood the immeasurable value of apprenticeship. As he honed his skills, attended workshops, and designed tools to improve the rawhide lace-making process, he kept an eye out for the

opportunity to continue the apprenticeship tradition. The chance presented itself once he got to know fellow Idaho leather artist, Deana Attebery.



Since the stone age, humans have crafted animal hides into tools. Modern-day craftsmen create reatas, bosals, reins and hobbles from rawhide, employing techniques once carefully guarded by master artisans.

Derricott and Attebery tell the same story about the origins of their apprenticeship:

“Steve was doing some rawhide work with his father at the same time I had a grant to improve my leather skills,” Attebery recalls. “We got to be friends, and one day I saw this beautiful bosal and headstall that he had made. I really admired it, and said ‘Oh man, how much would you sell that for?’”

Derricott’s initial response broke Attebery’s heart: “Nah, I won’t sell it to you.”

Attebery was crushed. “I thought, ‘He’d sell it, but not to me? Why? I thought we were friends!’”

But then Derricott gave a sly smile. “I won’t sell it to you,” he told her, “but I’ll teach you.”

Attebery was more than eager. She too grew up on a ranch, around horses, using her hands to create things that were both beautiful and useful.

“I remember when I was a kid,” she says, “we had a pony, and I braided a harness for it out of baling twine.”

Her parents had given her a leather-tooling kit when she was young, and her skills grew, eventually allowing her to become a saddle- and holster-maker. But rawhide braiding was something she had never tried,

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and Derricott gave her the chance.

Attebery says learning from a master artist makes all the difference. Although books about rawhide braiding exist, she says, “I don’t know how many people I’ve talked to who can’t make heads or tails of it. You just can’t learn from a book. It’s a hands-on thing. You’ve got to have someone to teach you.”

Master and apprentice developed a close friendship during their time working together. Years later, Attebery still calls on her teacher regularly. And like Derricott, she’s eager to give back as well, and pass along what she knows.

Koda Bledsoe sounds earnest, articulate, and focused, far more so than most 18-year-olds.

“I used to wander through tack stores a lot,” says Bledsoe, who grew up in Horseshoe Bend, Idaho. “And I’d see all these leather reins that were commercially made but, to the untrained eye, still really eye-catching and appealing. I’m an inquisitive person, so when I saw them I said, ‘I want to learn how to make those.’” He started experimenting on his own, but it wasn’t until a local 4-H commissioner introduced him to Attebery that he had the chance to learn the art.

Through the same grant program that helped Derricott and Attebery over the years, Bledsoe was able to spend long hours side by side with Attebery, learning the ins and outs of braiding.

“During the last year, I’ve been working with her, learning how to make bosals, reins, headstalls,” he says, “and just learning what she knows.”

And like those before him, he’s found a lasting

relationship with his teacher.

“Deana and I have spent 17-hour days together,” Bledsoe says. “We work well together. She’s kind of adopted me into her family, and she’s become like a



Deana Attebery was already a leather artist when she began studying with Derricott. She’s now an accomplished braider mentoring new generations.

second mom to me.”

These bonds between student and teacher are nothing new in the art of rawhide braiding. Historically, families would pass the skills along from generation to generation, or cowboys that worked together would learn from one another’s braiding skills. But braiders were also often close-lipped about their craft, and would rarely share beyond their immediate circle.

“It used to be just a family thing,” says Attebery. “Some of the very best braiders took all of their knowledge to the grave.”

But that seems to be changing, she says, and Derricott concurs.

“People seem more willing to share their knowledge now,” he says, and adds that social media has played a

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role in opening up the art form to new innovation. “I can sit down at a computer and ask for help from a fellow in Argentina or Germany or anywhere on the planet. ‘I saw a picture of a bosal you did, and it had a really interesting heel knot. How did you make that foundation?’ Those opportunities for interaction just weren’t there in the past, and now they are.”

Bledsoe finds the Internet useful too, and trades his art on forums in order to get his work out into the world.

“People equate my age and my skill level,” he says, “so it’s harder for me to sell work to people who don’t know me.”

Bledsoe knows it would be easier to have someone better known, like Attebery, sell his art for him, but he’s determined to build a reputation.

“I want to get my name out there,” he says, “and become like Pablo [Lozano] and Armando [Deferarri] eventually, 50 years down the road.” Argentines Lozano and Deferrari are considered among the world’s best rawhide braiders, and have conducted several Stateside workshops. Bledsoe, Attebery and Derricott are among their students.

Information and knowledge about braiding are flowing more freely now than ever, and the result, according to Attebery, is that rawhide braiding is “becoming a true art. It’s always been beautiful, but lately

everyone is pushing themselves to a new level. It’s truly fabulous to see what’s coming out of that. It’s still all functional, which is the cool part, but it’s beautiful too.”

And as the art form grows, this group of braiders hopes that curiosity about it will grow as well.

“Don’t be intimidated,” Derricott says. “Talk to people. You’ll be able to find someone that is willing to share with you. And it’s really rewarding to take a piece of old cow skin and turn it into something functional and beautiful and enduring.”

Attebery hopes, too, that more people will be interested in the lifestyle that supports the art form. “I’d like to see the world be interested in our western lifestyle, because it’s going away,” she says. “There aren’t ranches like there used to be, there aren’t cattle drives like there used to be. I would like people to love it, or at least try to understand it.”

Derricott continues to hone his skills every day, even as a master craftsman. Attebery is beginning work with a new, eager student, who pushes her to improve her own braiding and teaching abilities. Bledsoe recently wrapped up his apprenticeship, and looks forward to studying biology at Boise State University in the fall, and heading eventually toward veterinary school. And the old art of rawhide braiding continues to grow and flourish, tended by the strong and careful hands of the artists so devoted to it.



At 18, Koda Bledsoe is already creating work that’s praised by horsemen and rawhide collectors.



Melissa Mylchreest is a writer based in Montana.



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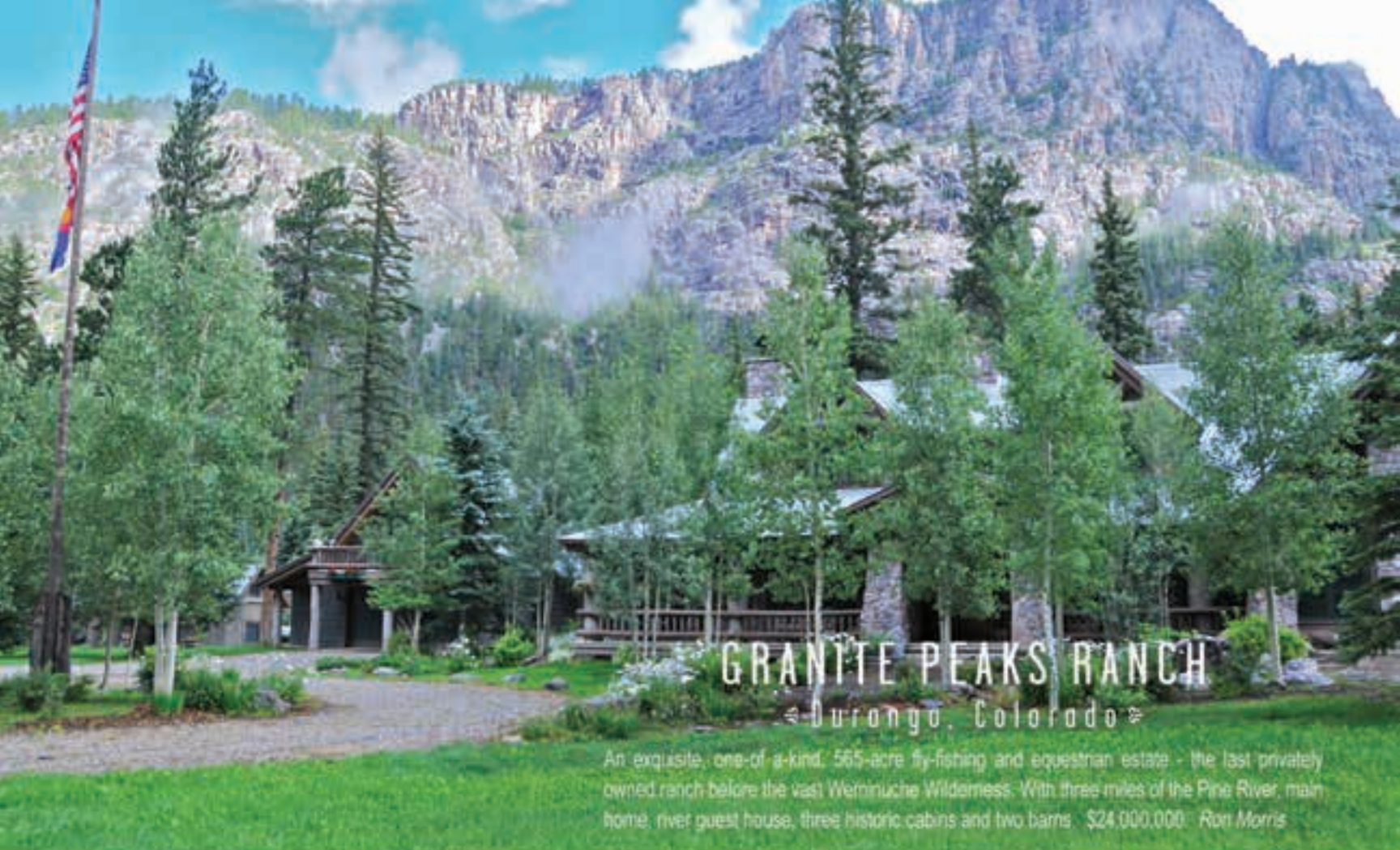
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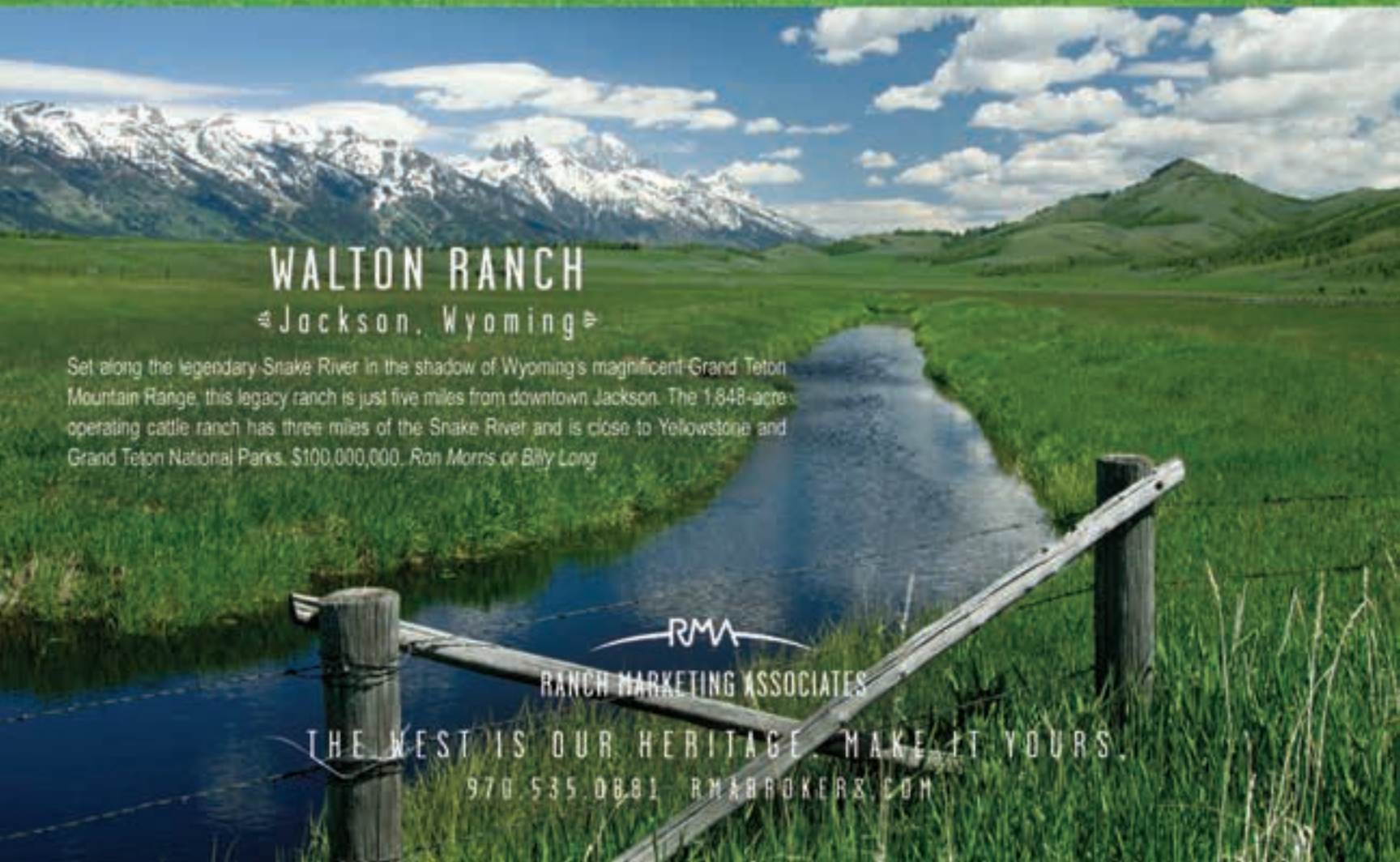
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Painting is a way to transfer a thought too big or too personal to put into words.

— William Reese

Don Weller grew up drawing horses and cowboys when he wasn't exploring horseback along the Palouse River or over the rolling hills that surrounded his childhood home near Pullman, Washington. He roped calves in high school and college rodeos and sold some cartoons to *Western Horseman* magazine. His passions were horses and art. Life was pretty simple.



6:30 AM Big Creek Ranch

When he graduated from Washington State University with a degree in Fine Art, he sold his horses and moved to Los Angeles, spending decades doing graphic design and illustration. He did covers for *Time Magazine*, *TV Guide*, and illustrated stories in *Sports Illustrated*, *Boys Life*, *Pro*, *Readers Digest* and many others. He did posters for the Hollywood Bowl, The National Football League, The Rose Bowl, and the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. He illustrated three children's books and published a coffee table book about cutting horses, *Pride in the Dust*. In his spare time he created five stamps for the United States Post Office. Besides illustration and graphic design, he taught school part time, three years at UCLA where he met his wife Cha Cha, and eleven years at the Art Center School in Pasadena. But enough of the resume. After creating his cutting horse book, he began to wonder what it would be like to ride those cutting horses. He found out, and his life adventures expanded to cutting contests, rodeos, and ranch life.

Now Cha Cha and Don live in rural Oakley, Utah, with Buster the border collie, two cats, and five horses who are



Spin Cycle

Now Cha Cha and Don live in rural Oakley, Utah, with Buster the border collie, two cats, and five horses who are

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Breakfast as Dawn

bred to cut. Today, asking Don what he does, he replies with a grin, “I paint and ride cutting horses.” In the summers the menagerie grows to include cattle and sometimes buffalo. In winter they ski. Life is good. And so is this book. In fact, it is beyond good. It’s a window into a way of life that this painter has exquisitely depicted and given depth. Watercolor is harder than most folks can even imagine yet beyond his superb drawing capability, the movement and depth that Mr. Weller has achieved in this collection is quite remarkable.

WEST

By Lars Aberg

Photography by Lars Stranberg

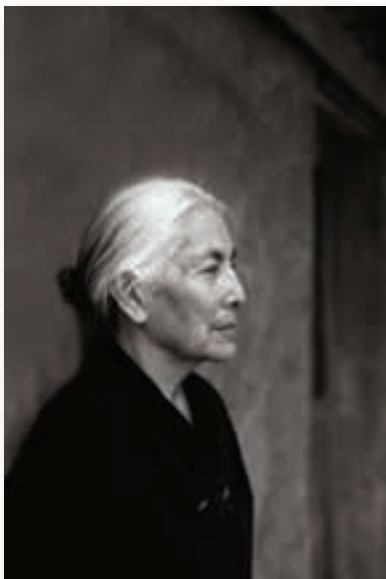
Gibbs Smith Publishers

West, as described on its jacket is, “...about the romance and design of the American West.” Swedish author Lars Aberg and photographer Lars Strandberg offer at once a distinctively European view of the region – “It captures the true spirit of America – and its forces of nature. It embraces the notion that the republic should not be thought of as the center of the world but rather as the drifter that still tries to get away.”



The stunning book is an homage to the off-the-beaten-path West, as if the authors threw away their *Michelin Guide*, put the top down on the rental car and headed out west to points unknown. The result is a stirring vision of a region in flux. According to the author, “Outside of here is America and its most exciting and captivating notion is the West. This is not only a geographic place, it’s a state of mind, a part of people’s imagination. Out here, you can leave your old wardrobe behind and acquire a new identity, creating the platform for a new beginning.”

In their journey through the mythology and the landscape of the West’s wide expanses, they have created a truly beautiful and engrossing portrait of the modern West that is at once celebratory and non-stereotypically engrossing.





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THE COOK HOUSE

Manflo Beef Tips



By Kathy McCraine

In the spring of 1866, Texas cowman Charles Goodnight, plagued with Indian troubles, the uncertainties of Reconstruction, and thieving neighbors, began putting together a herd of cattle to drive to New Mexico for sale, thus blazing the famous Goodnight Trail. One of his first problems was creating a mobile kitchen to feed his cowhands.

Modifying a durable army freight wagon made by the Studebaker Company of Illinois, he invented the first chuck-box, a hinged lid that let down on a swinging leg to form a cook's work table. He stocked his "chuck wagon" with easy-to-preserve items like beans, coffee and salted meat, as well as "the first sourdough keg that ever went up the trail," according to historian J. Evetts Haley.

Today, nearly 150 years later, the chuck wagon

continues to capture the fancy of old West enthusiasts, some of whom began in the 1980s to hold competitions. In 1996 the American Chuck Wagon Association was born, with the mission of preserving the heritage of the chuck wagon and its use during the era of the great cattle drives. Today it has members in 31 states, Canada, Germany and Switzerland.



Bryan and Karen Jones.

At sanctioned chuck wagon cookoffs, the authenticity of the wagon, camp, dress, cooking gear, and ingredients are judged, as is the food itself. Cooks compete in five categories: meat, potatoes, beans, biscuits and dessert, all of which must be true to the spirit of cooking on the trail in the 1870s.

One avid competitor is Bryan Jones of Nuevo, California, who acquired his antique chuck wagon 22 years ago and has been



participating in competitions, parades and living history displays ever since. When he married his wife, Karen, six years ago, she jumped in to become his “waddy,” or helper. Bryan named their wagon the Manflo Chuck Wagon, after Flo, the fiberglass cow he carries around as a joke.

The wagon came from an old-timer whose grandfather used it on their family farm near Livermore, California. After generations of work, it had been left out in the elements and required major restoration.

“The only thing the old-timer remembered was that his grandfather bought the wagon for \$28 in Indiana and drove it out to California in the late 1870s,” Karen says. “When Bryan began researching it, he confirmed that it was a Studebaker, just like the Goodnight chuck wagon.

Bryan, who also does blacksmithing, added a chuck-box to the wagon and painstakingly restored it, going so far as to build every bolt and screw just as they would have in the 19th century. Today it frequently wins the wagon-judging category at cookoffs. The Joneses also like to hook up their Belgian draft mules, Sugar and Spice, and participate in parades.

Bryan was interested in Dutch oven cooking long before he got the wagon, learning by trial and error. He enjoys playing a character and looks the part of an oldtime “cookie” with his gray beard, battered hat and white apron. Karen, in her long 1800s-style dress, silk scarf and hat, no doubt looks better than any waddy that ever went up the trail, but she does her part to keep the fires going and the pots boiling in competitions, which are always conducted under a time limit and intense pressure. Often friends Ned Larson, Dennis Moffet and Mike Warren help too.

“Most of the time Bryan just looks at whatever he’s

got to cook and starts chunking things in,” Karen says. “I’ve never seen him take out a cookbook or do quantities. It’s just a little of this and a little of that.”

As far as giving out a recipe, she quotes the prim and proper, 80-year-old lady chuck wagon cook who said, “Honey, I’d rather tell you about my sex life than give a recipe away. The following recipe is based on one that placed at this year’s Arizona National Livestock Show cookoff in Phoenix, adapted for home cooking.

Manflo Beef Tips

- 2 pounds top round steak, cut in cubes
- 4 cups water
- 4 teaspoons granulated beef bouillon
- 1/2 teaspoon ghost chiles (chile petins), crushed
- 8 ounces diced green chiles
- Sea salt and pepper to taste
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 1/4 cup oil
- 1/4 cup flour



Season the beef with salt and pepper and place in a large Dutch oven with the water, bouillon, and chiles. Bring to a rolling boil and continue to boil gently for 3-4 hours, adding water as necessary to keep the meat covered. Stir in milk and cream and simmer about 10 minutes. In a separate skillet, make a roux. Heat the oil until almost smoking, then stir in the flour. Continue to stir, being careful not to burn, until the mixture reaches a rich brown color. Add to the meat and continue to simmer until the gravy thickens, about 10 minutes. Serves 4-6.



Kathy McCraine is the author of *Cow Country Cooking: Recipes and Tales from Northern Arizona’s Historic Ranches*, available at www.kathymccraine.com.

Fine Eatin' Out West

A Review by Lynn Miller

PAMBICHE

Portland, OR

This place is a treasure! Theodore Roosevelt claimed the west, some say to elegant effect. And as legend would have it he saw “the west” as a moveable feast boundaries in flux. He was quick to include the Caribbean island of Cuba and quicker still to dismiss Ohio. Is it the aridity that wants to brand Spain as western – or is it an issue of how a long-held culture embraces the flavors of its embellishments, design and nourishment?

I’m western, stewart a ranch and enjoy pushing the boundaries of what it means to own right-embellishment. My mother’s people, all Puerto Rican, trace their lineage back to Spain and the black Moors, so I am to be forgiven for my attraction to flavors Hispanic and North African in heritage. I like to imagine a hint of the Moorish influence in the saddlery of G.S. Garcia. (Is there a design to raisins and goat?)

This is a long setup to introducing a waterhole and eatery that ought to be on the Vaquero Splendid list, *PAMBICHE*, on 28th and NE Glisan Street in Portland, Oregon.

My favorite food writer, that one-eyed huntsman from the north country, Jim Harrison, has written novels which some might describe as western torch songs ripe with sauced-over archetypical cowboys and indians. He’s the one what got me thinking food shouldn’t be taken lightly. I’ve come to believe that the memories of outstanding meals ought to be worn on the psyche like travel stickers on luggage.

Half the fun for me, anyway, is in discovery. So when a friend suggested I check out an east Portland Cuban Cantina called *Pambiche*, I thought ‘well maybe, maybe...’ No maybes about it. What I found was a place any self-respecting stockman would enjoy tying his gather-horse to. *Pambiche*, the name of a Caribbean dance, seems to suit this colorful





large hole-in-the-wall where the “feel” of a land and its people seem to sway like a cathedral incense pendulum.

And the food is incredible. A signature dish is *Ajiaco* – a taino Indian “pepper pot” stew influenced over the centuries by Spanish and African cookery, considered a national dish of Cuba. It’s a one pot meal

with root vegetables (*yuca, malanga, name, boniato*) yellow plaintain, butternut squash, chunks of adobo-rubbed pork and beef with rice and corn fritters. And it must be accompanied by Hemingway’s favorite Cuban beverage, a Bacardi-grounded *Mojito*.



Another splendid dish is the *Vaca Frita* (right) citrus-marinated beef shredded and char-grilled with garlic and onions served with fried ripe bananas, black beans and rice.



The food and the atmosphere of this place say “*we know who we are, show us who you are.*” That’s a pretty western attitude I would say. I rate this place five conchos. Hope you get a chance to check it out.





THE WESTERN WEB

A look at all things cowboy on the information superhighway.

Between Grass & Sky

Bridging cinema and literature, a short film features
Buck Ramsey's classic poem "Anthem."



By Rod Miller

44

Buck Ramsey was a cowboy. He wrote that he “rode among the princes of the earth full of health and hell and thinking that punching cows was the one big show in the world.” A 1962 horse wreck ended that, confining him to a wheelchair until his 1998 death. That accident, perhaps, offered him the opportunity to think long – and deep – about cowboy life, a quality evident in his poem “Anthem.” It’s the prelude to an epic poem originally published as *And As I Rode Out on the Morning* in 1994 and in an expanded work, *Grass*, in 2005, both from Texas Tech University Press.

In 2009, the Nevada Museum of Art in Reno collaborated with Elko’s Western Folklife Center to create *Between Grass and Sky*, a multimedia exhibit celebrating the 25th anniversary of the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering. “We felt it was important to honor the voices of cowboy poetry, to bring the exhibition to life, so to speak,” Ann Wolfe, the museum’s curator, says. And that led to production of a short film featuring “Anthem.”

“In considering a poem to highlight as a part of this project, we felt that ‘Anthem’ embodied many of the shared values of ranching in the 21st century,” Wolfe says.

Meg Glaser, WFC’s artistic director, concurs. “With their emphasis on art plus environment, the content of ‘Anthem’ was a natural fit,” she says. “We wanted the message of the poem to be heard, and people to know of Buck Ramsey and his larger body of work.”

Three reciters were chosen to interpret “Anthem” for the film: Joel Nelson and Andy Hedges of Texas, and Utah’s



Between Grass & Sky: Rhythms of a Cowboy Poem



Texas poet Joel Nelson is one of three performers who recite "Anthem," by Buck Ramsey, in the short film *Between Grass & Sky*.

Jerry "Brooksie" Brooks. "We felt it was important to convey to audiences that cowboy culture is incredibly diverse," Wolfe says. "We wanted to represent a diverse range of voices, representative of the cowboy poetry genre."

"WFC provided names of reciters we knew recited 'Anthem' beautifully and had connections with Buck Ramsey," Glaser says. "The final choices were made by the museum and the film's creators."

Nik Hafermaas of UeBersee Design in Los Angeles provided the film's artistic vision. Following a few lines in Buck Ramsey's voice, the film intercuts dynamic shots of the reciters with dramatic scenes of landscapes and horses.

Brooksie met Ramsey only once and has been reciting "Anthem" since his death. "The first time I heard the poem I was dumbfounded," she says. "I tried to learn it over the years, but without success. You can't shove a poem into your head." While at a poetry gathering she learned of Ramsey's death and, she says, "I went to my back to my motel room and reeled it off. I realized I knew it, subconsciously, but it took news of Buck's death for it to settle into my consciousness."

See the film at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZS7ruJL2ztU. It will take just over five minutes of your time – the first time. But you won't be satisfied with one viewing of this film, or one hearing of the poem that inspired it.



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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Let Her Buck

Alberta bronc rider Kaila Mussell redefines the feminine role in rodeo.



By Wendy Dudley

*On the rodeo road, she chose the warrior's way
Better hold on tight, get tapped off just right, saddle bronc girl
Hey Kaila! Hey Kaila, whatcha gonna do?
How far are you gonna go to make the dream come true?*

– “Saddle Bronc Girl,” by Ian Tyson

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Rodeo announcers, take note. When Kaila Mussell is on deck, don't call her a cowboy. “I know it's hard to tell from the chute, but give me the credit I deserve and do some research. My name is Kaila. I am a cowgirl, and there is only one of me.” Succinct advice from a straight-talking bronc buster, the only female saddle-bronc rider in the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association. And if that doesn't grab attention, then try this: She was recently immortalized in the song “Saddle Bronc Girl,” written by Alberta rancher and cowboy musician Ian Tyson.

“She's one gutsy girl,” says Tyson, who's included the tune on his latest CD, *Raven Singer*. “And she can ride. I wish her well.”

Saddle-bronc riding has never been for the feint of heart. But Mussell is all about heart. Her journal entries reveal a rider discovering her inner self, pushing boundaries not for women, but for her own self worth. Some meditate through yoga; Mussell massages her soul by matching her mental strength with the power of bucking horses.

“There is something about riding broncs that draws



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me like no other, and keeps me getting through no matter what the circumstances,” she says. Bronc riding is more challenging than any other rodeo event she has entered, from riding steers to barrel racing, and there’s an unpredictability, from the judging to the luck of the draw. “I know it in my heart I have it, and there is nobody that is going to stop me from fulfilling my dream to the best of my ability. Nobody can measure my heart, nobody can measure yours either, so remember that.”

Mussell, a member of the Stó:lō First Nation from Chilliwack, in southern British Columbia, is once again stirring up dust on the rodeo road after taking time off to heal from a multitude of injuries. Yes, she bleeds and breaks just like the guys.

Her path is not all that unusual, considering she comes from a family deeply entrenched in the sport. Her father, Jack, rode the bulls and broncs, her mother, Cindy,

and sister, Filene, ran barrels, and her brother, CEJ, was a saddle-bronc rider, steer wrestler and calf roper.

When Kaila was growing up, her father – who remains a close mentor – instilled in her a can-do philosophy. “I was raised to believe that you should try and do whatever it is you want to do,” she says, “that just because you are a girl, you still shouldn’t let anything stop you.”

Hearing his words cited so many years later brings a smile to her father’s voice. “There is no one else like her,” he says, recalling how he used to toss her onto the back of his young colts while his wife nervously watched from the sidelines. “Cindy said I was going to get her killed, but I knew she’d be okay. She was about seven, and she’d start riding them around doing figure eights with just a halter on them. To this day, she can just leap on and go. I told her to do whatever she wants. Living on the edge



A WESTERN AFFAIR

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photos by Bernie Hudymsa

Kaila is a rodeo rarity: a woman competing as a PRCA saddle-bronc rider.

is exciting. If you always play it safe, life is dull.”

His encouragement spurred Kaila on, as she competed in three-day eventing, jumping, vaulting, steer riding and barrel racing. She was a self-taught trick rider at the Calgary Stampede from 1996 to 1999, riding her Quarter Horses Katie and Sumas. After attending a few rodeo schools, she competed for three years on the amateur and semi-pro circuit. Her first saddle-bronc ride was more than 10 years ago, and she scored 78 points to win the event.

“It was amazing to be doing what I wanted to be doing,” she says. “It’s a big adrenaline rush. I’m just happy to make a great ride on a great horse, even if the score’s not that great.”

But she did get the scores. In 2002, she tied for fourth place at the Indoor Championship Rodeo in Prineville, Oregon, and then won in Enumclaw, Washington, earning her pro card in 2003. The achievement prompted admiration from four-time world champion bareback rider Bobby Mote. “She’s pretty tough,” he said at the time. “She can ride with the boys. That’s for sure.”

There have been naysayers, but the cowboys she rubs shoulders with in the top league are pros, and a good ride goes down as a good ride, regardless of the rider’s gender.

Other cowgirls, such as Bonnie McCarroll, rode broncs in the early 1900s, but Mussell is the only woman to compete professionally in modern-day bronc riding.

“The others rode old-style, where the stirrups were hobbled, or riders just stayed on until the horse stopped bucking,” Kaila says. “And today’s rodeo stock is of much higher quality bloodlines. They are bred to buck.”

Mussell recently appeared as McCarroll in *Oh, You Cowgirl!*, a documentary about early 20th century cowgirls, and she is featured in Reba McEntire’s music video, *I’m Gonna Take That Mountain*.

In her first year of professional bronc riding, she was always in the top third of the competition, often just out of the money. She moved to Texas, to be at the heart of the sport, but after five years, she began to question herself. Her expenses were mounting and she suffered a slew of injuries, resulting in three shoulder operations and knee surgery.

“I had to think whether I wanted to do this for another 11 years,” she says. “I’m a perfectionist, so I put a lot of pressure on myself, and there were all the expenses, and I had no sponsor.”

Kaila returned home to Chilliwack to rehabilitate both mentally and physically. Just when she was about to change gears and head north for lucrative work in the

oil and gas industry, she pivoted, like a spinning bronc, deciding she had to give it one more chance.

She tips her hat to Ian Tyson for getting her back in the rodeo saddle. In researching new material for a song, he drove out to meet Kaila last May, recognizing she had a unique story to tell. Six months later, “Saddle Bronc Girl” was released as a single.

“It came out when I was at my lowest,” Kaila admits. “For someone who doesn’t really know me, Ian did a phenomenal job. He encompassed who I am. The song helped me realize I still had a lot more left in me, that I still had the burning desire, that I wasn’t done yet. So I turned things around. My head is right, and I’ve got my glitches sorted out.”

Tyson was drawn to Kaila’s story.

“I heard about her through a mutual friend, and she really interested me,” he says. “She’s really way out there.”

Facial piercings and body tattoos of horses and inspirational sayings certainly make Kaila a modern-day cowgirl. She has a bronc rider pictured on her right ab, a bucking horse on the back of her right calf, a pin-up cowgirl on her left thigh, an eagle and a cowboy hat on her right thigh, and tribal work around her torso. Weaving among them are phrases such as, “the battle is over, success begins,” and “crazy like you.”

And that’s not all. Kaila’s hair is always an abnormal bright color, the latest being a palette of pink, purple



Bronc rider Kaila Mussell at work.

and turquoise, sometimes worn as a Mohawk and other times spiked and punkish.

“I don’t want to fill the stereotype of the typical cowgirl,” she says. “I want to buck the norms. I’ve gotten a lot of flack about it over the years, but this is who I am, take it or leave it. I kind of like to keep people guessing. It’s held me back at times in getting sponsorships, but



I'm happy with who I am and I don't think I should change. Like another of my tattoos says, 'I will always be true to myself.'"

Her dad, Jack, just shrugs. "She's like her granny," he laughs. "She always had to be different. She's herself, she's one of a kind."

Today, at 34, Kaila is essentially living a line torn from Tyson's song: "Hey Kaila, how far you are you gonna go to make the dream come true?" She's back driving her Chevy hatchback up to 700 miles a day to reach the next rodeo, listening to country tunes as the miles slip by. She steers clear of greasy hamburger joints, reaching instead for power bars and protein shakes. An admitted fitness freak, she enjoys marathon running, power lifting, martial arts, and snowboarding.

"She puts everything she has into everything she does," Jack says. "She gets bored real quick. But nothing has ever been handed to her. She's done it on her own. She works like a mad fool."

And, lately, things have been going her way. She came second in February in Davie, Florida, and then was asked to join Team Phoenix, an all-native rodeo team. She got her saddle altered, moving the cantle back and narrowing it to accommodate her short legs.

"The difference has been like night and day," she says. "After all, I'm just a short little munchkin." All that muscle is packed into a five-foot-two frame.

Once in the chutes, she blocks out all extraneous thoughts, stopping what she calls the mind chatter. She has visualized the ride over and over. When the gate opens, she and her bronc are in a duet.

"My dad says it's sort of like a dance between the rider and the horse," Kaila says. "You just follow its lead."

And she's adjusted her attitude, has become more



sure of who she is.

"I'm listening more to myself," she says. "I'm listening to what I want and like. I never try to draw attention to myself. I am serious about what I am doing. This is not a novelty. I get satisfaction in winning over people's attitudes. I want to be on top of my game. I made it this far, so why settle for less."

Her next stop? Hopefully, the National Finals Rodeo. "I'd be the first woman to qualify."

And Jack will be right there.

"The sky's the limit for her," he says. "They just don't make them like her anymore. She's as tough as nails."



Wendy Dudley is a writer living in the ranch country of Alberta.
Learn more about Kaila Mussell at www.saddlebrongirl.com.



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THE WESTERN HORSE

Paul Dietz

The Arizona horseman helps people one horse at a time.



By Guy de Galard

On a balmy afternoon, a dozen people gather around a lunch buffet served on the deck of a horse property in Scottsdale, Arizona. The host, Vi Meyer, has invited the group to attend a demonstration given by Arizona horseman Paul Dietz, who has been working for the past 14 months with Meyer's three-year-old Paint colt, William.

"I wanted to show to some friends and fellow riders," she says, "what a great job Paul did with William." Paul, who conducts 20 to 30 clinics across the country each year, is a Buck Brannaman protégé, and has developed a reputation for an encouraging demeanor and a style that blends lightness and forward thinking with contact and control.

The horseman's relationship with horses started at a young age. When he was 10, his father bought him his

first horse. Soon after, he became interested in team roping, but noticed that everything in the event seemed based on force and leverage. At 14, Paul met Brannaman, who was conducting a clinic at a boarding facility where the teen was working.

"Buck started 22 horses during that clinic," Paul recalls. "One kept kicking and fighting, but Buck's horse wasn't affected or distracted. His horse was *with him*. This style of riding and watching a horse being with you, as a partner, really affected me."

Paul did everything he could to ride as often as possible with Brannaman and the two struck up a friendship. Along the way, Paul also learned from horsemen Tom Dorrance and Ray Hunt, both mentors to Brannaman.

"I kept asking Buck if I could go on the road with



photos by Gay De Garland

At a cow-work clinic, Dietz demonstrates how to control a cow's movements through pressure.

him and when the opportunity came, he finally hired me," Paul says. After more than three years traveling with Brannaman, Paul decided to strike out on his own. "I had learned and retained so much that I wanted to put it to use." His close work with Brannaman laid the foundation for Paul's own horsemanship skills and style to develop and, in 2001, he was one of a few dozen leading horsemen invited to participate in the Tom Dorrance Benefit, hosted by Hunt in Fort Worth, Texas.

After lunch, Meyer's guests gather along the arena fence to watch Paul work with William. The horseman starts with some groundwork. Soft-spoken and humble, he establishes a soft connection with the horse. It's an example of what he tries to convey to his students, that a horse should offer a mirror, of sorts, reflecting a rider's real self.

"I want to show that there's another way of

handling horses," he says, "a way that uses the horse's natural body language and that's more suitable to the horse. My goal is to help people gain confidence, and teach them to prepare their horses for any situation or maneuver. This also gives them partners with whom they can learn."

Paul boils down horsemanship to six basic movements: moving forward, moving backward, moving the front end right and left, and moving the hindquarters right and left. When he climbs aboard the Paint, he stresses for his audience the importance of not asking the horse to move immediately, and instead sits quietly for a few minutes. He then asks William for a soft feel, bending him left and right, then asking him to break at the poll. Paul then rides William through various exercises at a trot, then a lope. His riding is precise and subtle, his horse relaxed and responsive.



Paul Dietz asks for soft feel

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“When riding, I ask my horse to stay between my legs and my reins,” he says. “When I settle my body, I want my horse to settle his body.”

A week later, Paul is conducting a cow-work clinic in Rio Verde, Arizona. It is a crisp, sunny morning and the horses are frisky. Half a dozen students signed up for the clinic. Laine Roberts wants “Sip,” her 11-year-old Thoroughbred gelding, to get used to cows so that she can “help friends who have cattle.” Joey Ogburn and Christopher Moore own and operate Reigning Grace

Ranch, a rescue facility for horses and at-risk kids. Moore wants to “learn real cow work from a true horseman.”

At first, students practice without cows, one student being the rider and another acting as the cow, while the rest of the group acts as the fence. Paul explains the concept of riding short, behind the eye of the cow, or riding long, ahead of the cow. He then brings in a small herd of cattle. The riders try to keep the cattle in a herd by circling around them. Once the herd has settled, one rider cuts a cow out and works the animal around the herd.

One by one, the riders take turns working a cow under Paul’s keen eye while he gives tips and advice. “The horse’s position should dictate the cow’s movement,” he calls out. “Stay just ahead of the cow’s eye if you want it to turn, and stay behind the cow’s eye if you want it to move forward. Turn *to* the cow, never away from it.” Paul also stresses the importance of timing. “There are a lot of places to quit, but only when you’re on a gain. It’s important to release after a good turn. If not, the horse never gets any reward.”

Likewise, Paul advises riders to employ strategic timing as they map out their horsemanship goals. When work begins with a horse, he tells his students, a rider should adopt a leisurely pace that, in the long run, can save time, as haste can lead to problems that can plague a horse for a lifetime. “You make good horses from going slow,” Paul says.

Above all, he tells his students to remember to enjoy their work with horses. “Sometimes, we’re so focused on the end result,” Paul says, “we forget that riding horses is supposed to be fun. It’s all about getting horses a little better each day.”



Guy de Galard is a Wyoming-based photographer and writer.
Learn more about Paul Dietz at www.pauldietzhorsemanship.com.



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NATIONAL FFA ORGANIZATION



The Jacket

In 1927, prior to the founding of FFA, the Agricultural Section of the American Vocational Association adopted an official cap that readily identified students of vocational agriculture.

The adoption of the official colors, corn gold and national blue, in 1929 was the first step toward an official dress uniform.

The delegates to the 1930 convention implemented an official dress uniform consisting of a dark blue shirt, blue or white trousers, blue cap and yellow tie.

At the 1933 convention, the delegates replaced the blue shirt, trousers and tie with an official blue corduroy jacket.

Thus, the fabled blue corduroy jacket was born — the same jacket that FFA members wear with pride today.

The FFA Blue Jacket Carries History of Pride and Accomplishment

A former FFA member wrote, “I spent my high school years learning not so much in the classroom as in an FFA jacket – at parli pro contests, at state fair, at soil judging and national conventions.” Nicholas Kristof is now a columnist for *The New York Times*, but he clearly treasures his experiences as an FFA member when he wore the organization’s blue corduroy jacket.

Along with the FFA crest emblem, the blue jacket is one of the National FFA Organization’s most cherished symbols. Instantly recognizable, the FFA jacket instills pride in those who wear it and creates a visible bond for the more than 540,000 FFA members across the country.

When the Future Farmers of America was founded in 1928, the organization adopted an emblem “that every boy studying agriculture in high school should feel proud to wear,” said the *National Farm Journal*. The FFA crest emblem, which features the cross-section of an ear of corn and a wise owl



perched on a plow in front of a rising sun, was released as a coat-lapel button; but in those first years, FFA had no official coat on which to place it.

In 1930, FFA adopted an official dress uniform of dark blue shirt, blue or white trousers, blue cap and yellow silk tie. Shortly thereafter, the iconic blue jacket came to FFA, not because of symbolism but because of practicality. In 1933, the Fredericktown, Ohio FFA



Band was slated to perform at the national FFA convention in Kansas City. The group's advisor, J.H. Lintner, knew the dress shirt and trousers of the official FFA uniform would not suffice for the occasion. "Some other garment was needed for the nippy October weather in Kansas City," Lintner recalled later.

The band decided a uniform jacket would be necessary. Corduroy was popular at the time, and the group chose navy blue. On the back, they affixed a large sewn version of the FFA emblem. The jacket clearly made an impact. That same year, national FFA convention delegates voted to drop the official uniform in favor of an official jacket of blue corduroy. But it wasn't until another band, the Utah State FFA Band, sent 72 boys in blue FFA jackets and white trousers to perform at the 1934 National FFA Convention that the idea of the jackets took hold.

Jacket orders ballooned, growing from about 6,000 in 1947 to 30,000 in the 1948-49 school year. The more jackets were ordered, the more popular they became. FFA produced 60,000 blue jackets in 1953. In 1971-72, the FFA catalog included a girl's FFA jacket for the first time. In 1976, Johnny Bowman of Aurora, Missouri received the two millionth FFA jacket.

"Be careful – your jacket is showing," advised *American Farm Youth* magazine in 1961. "As you accept the dignity of wearing the jacket that carries the emblem and colors of FFA into the battle of life, may the world be greatly pleased with the good deeds it will see performed by the chosen few. When they see the FFA jacket, they feel leaders are being trained."

From the sea of blue jackets that fills arenas during national FFA conventions to the single blue jacket seen in our nation's capital when a national FFA officer testified this year in front of a U.S. Senate committee, the National FFA Organization's blue corduroy jacket identifies the exceptional young people who work every day to fulfill the FFA motto: Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve.



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*"Learning to Do,
Doing to Learn,
Earning to Live,
Living to Serve."*

The Frontier Project

Fraternidad

A work in progress examines the Argentine influence on North American rawhide braiding.



By A.J. Mangum

Rawhide braiders comprise a fraternity of sorts, a brotherhood of artisans working at a trade that, despite having roots that go back to the dawn of man, is riddled with puzzles and mysteries that discourage beginners and confound even veteran craftsmen. Instructional material is rare (*correct* instructional material even rarer), leaving determined braiders to improvise solutions and fill in blanks as best they can, even if it means spending years employing flawed techniques.

This is where the aforementioned brotherhood becomes relevant, as a braider's most valued source of information is most often a more accomplished braider willing to share his trade secrets. Braiders are willing to travel far for such knowledge. For example, in recent years, North American braiders have made pilgrimages to the ranching communities of Argentina to seek out master craftsmen and learn the techniques behind the country's signature braiding style, defined by finely cut strings, intricate weaves and detailed patterns.

Argentine braiders have reciprocated, with craftsmen such as Armando Deferrari and Pablo Lozano traveling north several times to conduct workshops for their North American counterparts. As the global fraternity of braiders grows, the world seems to shrink.



During an outdoor session, Argentine braider Pablo Lozano (left) explains a technique, as Domingo Hernandez translates.



Argentine braiding is known for its fine detail and intricacy.

This past spring, Idaho craftsman Jeff Minor – a saddlemaker, silversmith and rawhide braider – organized a weeklong workshop with Deferrari and Lozano. The event, held the first week of May, in Salmon, Idaho, drew braiders from the Northwest and Northern Rockies, as well as from Germany.



Cutting string from a piece of rawhide.



A braider's toolbox.



Reatas, bosals and romals all get their start as freshly cut strings of rawhide.

“Most of the students are advanced, and the workshop will increase their knowledge, adding another aspect from Argentina,” Minor said. “Pablo and Armando are passionate about teaching people about their culture, and they’re exceptionally good at their craft. But even if you won’t become that good, if you can strive to make each piece a little better than the last, that’s the essential to keeping this traditional art alive.”

Held at Salmon’s Sacajawea Center – an educational complex devoted to the history of the Shoshone guide and her role with the Lewis & Clark Corps of Discovery – the workshop covered all aspects of rawhide braiding, from the selection and preparation of hides, to cutting quality strings, to braiding and refinement.

“To meet Armando and Pablo has been a big dream,” said Albert Frunz, a rawhide braider and workshop student from Stuttgart, Germany. “The rawhide tradition in Argentina is longer than it is here in the States. Everything they use for horse gear is rawhide. I wanted to meet them and



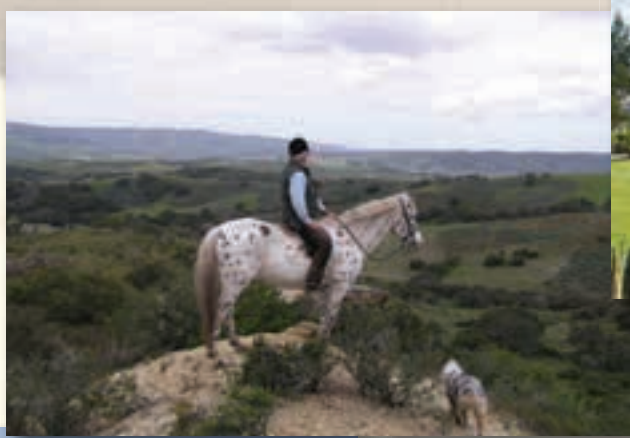
Against the backdrop of the Sacajawea Center grounds, a hide dries atop a jackleg fence.



Students team up to twist a reata.



As students continue to work, Armando Deferrari sneaks a quick look at their efforts.



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When it comes to rawhide, the finished product can represent hundreds of hours of effort.



Enrique Capone performs quality control on a rawhide strand.



A craftsman uses a blade to refine his work.

learn from them about preparing rawhide and doing finer work.”

The class divided its time between interior and exterior workspaces. Hides soaked in a nearby creek, then dried atop a jackleg fence before being taken inside to be divided and cut. Deferrari and Lozano led students through each stage of hide preparation and braiding, explaining their approaches, then offering guidance as students worked to replicate the Argentines’ techniques. Florida’s Domingo Hernandez provided translation throughout the workshop.

“Argentine braiders are able to help their North American counterparts because some of the techniques used in North America might have been lost when master artisans didn’t share them with new generations,” Deferrari said, speaking through Hernandez. “This experience is an exchange of information, though. We also take home knowledge we learn from braiders here.”

Throughout Salmon, a ranching town of 3,000, cafes and coffee shops buzzed with excitement about the workshop, which became the focal point for a celebration of livestock culture north and south of the equator.

As the week wrapped up, an asada drew hundreds from the Salmon community, with the traditional Argentine meal setting the stage for Deferrari and Lozano’s entertaining presentation on gaucho culture.

The Salmon workshop will serve as a backdrop for *Fraternidad*, a short-subject documentary about the Argentine influence on North American rawhide braiding. The project is expected to be completed by the fall.



Salmon, Idaho, craftsman Jeff Minor organized the braiding workshop, which blossomed into a community-wide celebration.



Pablo Lozano (foreground) ensures a reata twists correctly.



A.J. Mangum is the editor of *Ranch & Reata*.



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LIGHTING OUT

Ghosts of the Past

Take a drive along Texas Forts Trail and experience the western frontier that early settlers knew.



By Paul A. Cañada

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Like specters stuck in place and time, the dozen chimneys silhouetted against the West Texas evening sky continue to guard the surrounding countryside from a danger long past gone. If you stand perfectly quiet, close your eyes, and block the sounds of cars traveling down nearby Farm to Market Road 600, you can almost hear the bugle blow taps. It's entirely possible to be transported back to a time when the Texas frontier was embroiled in a brutal conflict between Anglos and Indians.

Outside of three stone buildings, the chimneys and foundations are all that remain of historic Fort Phantom Hill. The mostly wood structures were destroyed in a fire that occurred shortly after the U.S. Army abandoned the post in 1854. Today, Phantom Hill is one of nine forts featured along the Texas Forts Trail, a 650-mile highway

tour of these historic ruins in the Lone Star state.

The Texas Forts Trail is part of the Texas Heritage Trails program. It provides travelers with a glimpse into Texas' troubled frontier past, when Anglo settlers pushed into the realm of the Comanche and Kiowa, and soldiers did their best to keep the peace. The Trail system features eight forts and a Spanish presidio, each having an important role in the Anglo settlement of Texas' hostile territory.

While the Trail succeeds at reminding us of Texas' distant past, it also helps ensure the posts remain for new generations to experience. According to Robert Bluthardt, the site manager for Fort Concho, there are a half-dozen frontier forts that remain on private land and are in ruin, while others, like Fort Worth, are completely gone.



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photos by Paul A. Canada

Not much remains of Fort McKavett, along the Texas Forts Trail, but the ruins still provide a lesson in frontier history.

“A lot of what’s left of some forts is only roadside markers,” said Bluthardt. “After they were abandoned, farmers and ranchers swooped in like locusts and stripped them for the lumber, and now there’s nothing left.”

While Forts Phantom Hill, Chadbourne and Griffin have a few structures standing, most of what’s left is the ghostly skeletons of stone foundations and chimneys. Others, like Forts Concho, Richardson and McKavett are preserved fairly well, and offer visitors a glimpse into what the forts might have looked like in the mid-1800s.

The first forts established in Texas were presidios, built by Spain. The structures provided protection for nearby missions, served as deterrence against European

and Indian encroachment and provided a base for expeditions north.

Today, Presidio San Saba, the second stop along the Texas Forts Trail traveling south to north, is in ruins. However, the unearthed foundation of the old fortress walls makes it easy to imagine its size and importance in the mid-1700s. At one time, the Spanish presidio housed 300 soldiers and civilians.

The fort, originally known as Presidio San Luis de las Amarillas, was built in 1757. Its primary charge was to protect the nearby Mission Santa Cruz de San Caba. The Mission was attacked, looted and burned to the ground one year after being built by Norteños, a name the Spanish gave to various northern bands of Indians



that opposed them, but the presidio continued on until it was abandoned in 1772.

In 1936 and 1937, a crew hired by the Texas Centennial Commission began reconstructing the Presidio, but only succeeded at building the northwest portion of the fort. The builders worked hard to stay faithful to the original design of the structure. Unfortunately, it began to deteriorate not long after its completion. Today, all that stands is the gateway, tower and a section of wall.

The crown jewel of Texas' Spanish presidios was the Presidio La Bahia near Goliad, Texas. Visitors will have to travel well south of the Texas Forts Trail, but will be well rewarded for their effort. La Bahia was constructed at its current site by the Spanish in 1747.

The presidio was fought over and captured numerous times; twice by insurgents during the Mexican War of Independence, by the Republican Army in 1813 and by the Long Expedition in 1821. Days after the start of the Texas Revolution, a group of insurgents battled and took the presidio from a Mexican garrison and renamed the presidio Fort Defiance in 1835. Retreating from the presidio, Col. James Fannin and his 344 men were captured by the Mexican Army and executed.

During the 1960s, Kathryn O'Conner donated \$1 million to restore the beautiful fort. The reconstruction project was overseen by architect Raiford Stripling. He rebuilt the

structure from ground up to look exactly as it had originally. Strolling through the museum, visiting the chapel and admiring the towers can easily occupy an entire morning.

Following the annexation of Texas, the U.S. Army was challenged with protecting its international border with Mexico. In order to protect the Texas-Mexico border, Forts McIntosh and Duncan, and the Ringgold Barracks, were added to existing Forts Polk and Brown, established during the war with Mexico.

"The line of border forts didn't move or change like the north-south line of forts protecting the western frontier," noted Bluthardt. "The only change was in terms of the Army staffing – reducing, increasing and then

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reducing again the garrisons along the Rio Grande. It's ironic that over time, the Army's commitment to them would rise and fall in response to issues which regrettably are not dissimilar from what we're facing today."

While none of the border forts are actually featured on the Trail, remnants of most are accessible to the



The ruins of Fort Chadbourne offer clues as to the experiences of soldiers who manned frontier forts.

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public. Portions of Forts McIntosh and Brown are now part of Laredo Community College and the University of Texas, Brownsville. In Eagle Pass, a number of Fort Duncan's structures – a museum, the powder house, an officers' quarters and a couple of storage buildings – are part of a community park.

In order to protect the important overland routes that allowed emigrants, mail and freight to move westward, Fort Bliss, built in 1849, was reactivated, and Forts Davis, Lancaster, Quitman and Stockton were added. Of these forts, Fort Davis, in the scenic Davis Mountains, is probably the best preserved and offers interpretive programs for visitors. The fort's 24 roofed

structures and 100 ruins and foundations are a National Historic Site, managed by the National Park Service.

The U.S. Army established military posts at strategic points to act as barriers between nomadic bands of Indians and Anglo settlers.

"The new posts were built along a north-south that shadows today's Interstate 35, give or take 50 miles," explained Bluthardt. "Fort Worth was the furthest north, followed by Forts Graham, Gates, Croghan, Martin Scott, Lincoln, and Fort Inge the furthest south."

Soon, settlements pushed beyond the first line of forts, making it difficult for the Army to provide adequate protection. A second line of forts was added. Forts Clark, Terrett, Mason, McKavett, Chadbourne, Phantom Hill and Belknap were built 50 to 100 miles further west of the initial line of posts. Other than a lone, reconstructed building, stone foundations, or a roadside marker, very little remains of the first posts. However, Mason, McKavett, Chadbourne, Phantom Hill and Belknap are all stops along the Texas Forts Trail and offer visitors plenty to experience.

The sites for Texas' posts were selected chiefly for their available water sources, forage for stock and construction materials. In fact, the Army was eventually forced to abandon Forts Phantom Hill and Belknap due to a lack of good water.

"Unlike eastern forts, where hostiles used nearby forests to cover attacks, Texas forts were built on open ground and didn't require defensive walls," said Bluthardt. "The forts were rarely attacked by Indians. If at all possible, the forts were built on high ground with good drainage because stagnant water was associated with disease."

Despite being too far apart and often undermanned, the federal fort system was beginning to bring



some semblance of peace to the Texas frontier. Unfortunately, federal troops were forced to abandon the forts, or be captured, when Texas made its declaration of secession in 1861. Many of the abandoned posts in North Texas were occupied by Confederate troops, while others, like Fort Davis, were looted and burned by Indians.

During the Civil War, Indian raids into the settled Texas frontier escalated and it's estimated the Comanche and Kiowa pushed back the frontier a hundred miles in places. Following the war, the Army quickly moved to re-occupy Forts Bliss, Clark, Davis, McIntosh, Ringgold and Stockton but, in some cases, the stay was short-lived. Newly constructed Forts Richardson, Elliott, Griffin and Concho replaced older posts. They were further west and north, and better

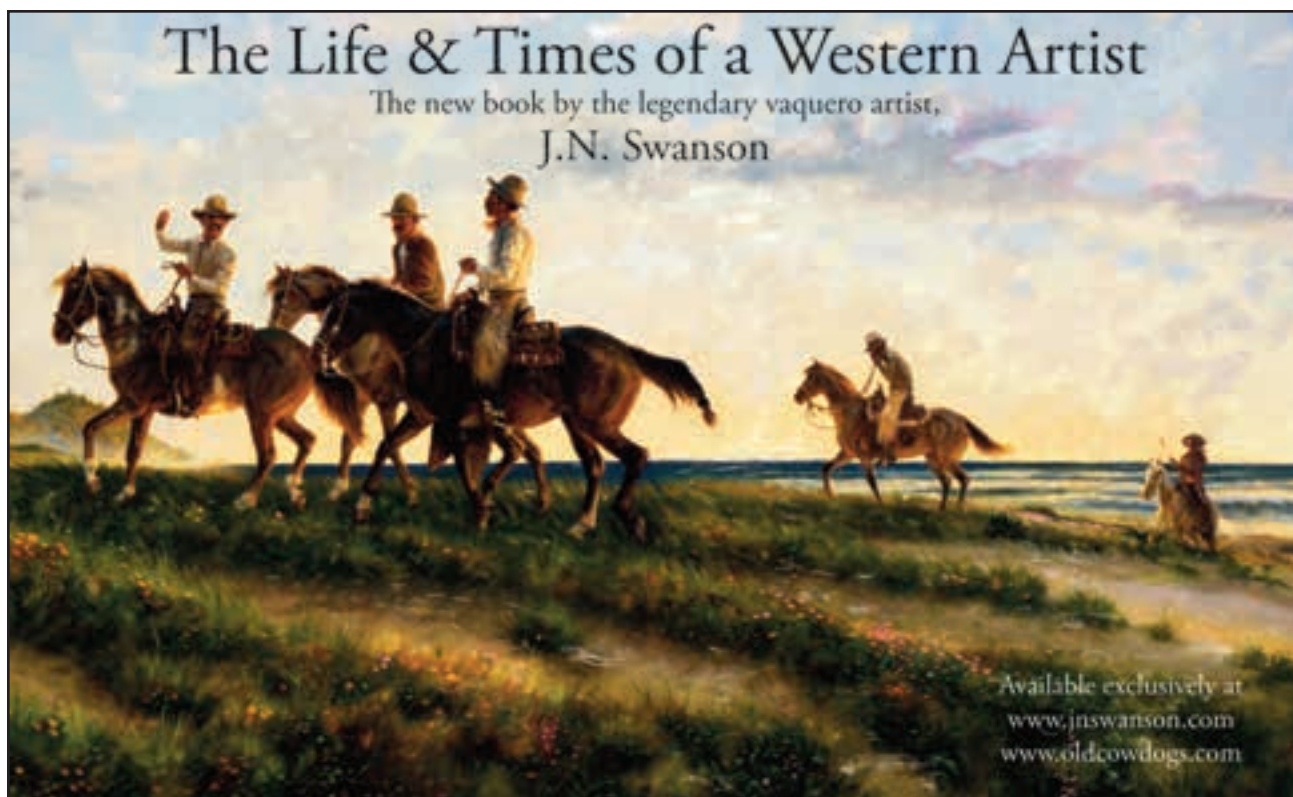
suited to launch scouts, pursuits and larger-scale offensives against hostile bands of Indians.

In June of 1875, Chief Quanah Parker, who's own life story defined the Anglo-Indian conflict in Texas, led his tired and beaten band of Comanche into Fort Sill. That event marked the end of Texas' Indian War and the need for the state's frontier forts.

Each of the forts highlighted in the Texas Forts Trail system offers visitors something different. Fort Richardson's proximity to Jacksboro demonstrates the positive impact some forts had on nearby struggling settlements. Conversely, Fort Phantom Hill illustrates how unforgiving the Texas frontier could be on settlers and soldiers. Whether presidio or fort, each site tells the tale of clashing cultures and the inevitable impact of westward expansion.



Paul A. Cañada is a writer based in Texas.



Cowboy Horses

An excerpt from *Cowboy Real*, a work in progress by one of the West's foremost authorities on all things cowboy.

By Don Hedgpeth

The next day I caught him up to ride, and he showed me a thing or two. He started to buck, and first my six-shooter went, then my Winchester went, then I went, and he finished up by bucking the saddle over his head. After that I would not have taken a million dollars for him. — Teddy Blue

Billy was the name of that little bay horse and Teddy Blue had him for twenty-six years. Cowboys say that it is a fortunate man who gets to have one or two top horses during his lifetime. They also say that a man is known by the kind of horses he rides and how he rides them. Everything that has to do with cowboys also has to do with horses. Cows are just something that gives him a good reason to ride. The cowboy doesn't commune with the cows; it is the horse that has a hold on his heart.

A little bit of horse history...the archeological evidence (which I have not examined for myself) suggests that some sort of small horse was indigenous to North America. According to the paleontologists, after having been hunted and eaten by Stone Age Indians for 40,000 years, the little horses began to disappear over a period of 7,000 years and were all gone by about 15,000 years ago. I am not prepared at this time to contradict these academic estimations.

I do take it for true that normal-sized horses were brought to the New World, along with cattle, by the Spanish, beginning with Columbus on his second trans-Atlantic trip in 1493 and by Cortez in 1519. I also

believe that the techniques associated with handling cattle by men on horseback were developed in the Mexican interior and disseminated along with horses and cattle throughout what is now the American Southwest.

The Spanish horse was called the Barb. This was the kind of horse the Moors were riding when they invaded the Spanish mainland in 710. Lost, strayed, and stolen Spanish horses were acquired by the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico early in the Seventeenth Century. The buffalo hunting tribes of the southern plains traded with the Pueblo tribes for horses and then passed them along in trade with other tribes farther north. Within two hundred years, all the Plains Indians had horses.

Spanish horses were also the foundation stock of the herds of feral horses that ran free throughout the West by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The wild horses were called mustangs, and although they were descended from Barb bloodlines, their physical appearance had been altered to some extent by the evolutionary influence of the prairie environment.

The Spanish also left some horses behind after their early explorations in and around Florida (1539-1543). Those horses and their progeny were acquired by



In the Land of the Mestenos, by Jim Rey, represented by the Claggett/Rey Gallery, Vail, Colorado; www.claggettrei.com.

southeastern Indian tribes, principally the Chickasaw. Colonists in Virginia and the Carolinas cross-bred their heavier type English horses with the lighter and quicker Chickasaw ponies to produce a better kind of hybrid horse. In the middle of the Eighteenth Century, English

Thoroughbreds were introduced in the American colonies and also became part of the equine genetic mixture.

Sam Houston brought the studhorse Copper Bottom to Texas in 1839. Copper Bottom's sire was the Thoroughbred stallion Sir Archy, whose bloodline

would also produce the legendary Texas horses Steel Dust and Shiloh. Steel Dust, Shiloh, and Old Billy, who was by Steel Dust and out of an own daughter of Shiloh, became the primogenitors of the western stockhorse by the beginning of the trail driving era. They were simply called Steeldusts and Billy horses back then, but would come to be called Quarter Horses for their quick start and speed over a quarter of a mile racecourse.

William Anson, who bred and raised ranch horses around San Angelo in the early days, said of them:

Owing to the absence of a studbook, these horses have undoubtedly been bred more for type and performance than for strict bloodlines and pedigrees. Comparatively few can lay claim to pure lineage, but in spite of this, type is very firmly established, and with whatever breed he is mated, the Quarter Horse transmits certain unmistakable characteristics to his offspring.

This horse, the cowboy's kind, was the hybrid mixture of Spanish Barb, mutated mustang, the common English heavy horse, and the Thoroughbred. It was a horse ideally equipped for the West, with a reputation for speed, agility, stamina, intelligence, a willing temperament, and the ability to fend for itself and survive in any sort of surroundings. The true measure of both men and horses in the West was not about who you were, or where you came from, but what you could do. The cowboy and his kind of horse could do it all.

The horses tended to be of a larger size on the northern plains than they were in Texas and the rest of the Southwest. This was due to outcrosses with the bigger breeds that were used as wagon teams on the Oregon Trail and to pull the pioneer's plow. In Texas and elsewhere in the Southwest, the Thoroughbred influence was more evident, and when crossed with the Barb blood of the mustang, a better combination for

cow work was produced.

The commingling of bloodlines results in a biological phenomenon known as heterosis, in which the offspring display a trait called hybrid vigor. This trait produces qualities in the offspring greater than those in either of the parents. The vigor aspect of hybrid vigor in cowhorses is best exemplified on cold mornings in a cow camp when a cowboy confronts the challenge of climbing aboard a horse that has its ears laid back and is bound to buck.

The rest of the world calls a bucking horse a bronco; the cowboys call them broncs. Some buck out of fear, but a bunch of them buck just because they can and because it feels good. Some cowboys seem to have been born to ride bucking horses. Unfortunately, I wasn't one of them. I have been bucked off more times that I care to remember. But those memories fade with time...and they pale in comparison to the pure exuberance I felt when I was able to stay in the saddle until some horse had worked the kinks out and decided to settle down.

Bronc riders have a bravado about them that sets them apart from most other ordinary cowboys, like the bronc stomper in the old song about the Strawberry Roan:

*He says this old pony has never been rode
And that man that gets on him is sure to get throwed.
I gets all excited and I ask what he pays
To ride this old pony for a couple of days.
He says "ten dollars." I says I'm your man,
The bronc never lived that I cannot fan.
The bronc never lived nor never drew breath
That I cannot ride 'til he starves plumb to death.*

Jim McCauley was one of the others, like me, who never knew the secrets of successful bronc riding. In his vinegary little book, *A Stove-up Cowboy's Story*, McCauley recalls:



*I wish I had never saw a horse.
Probiably (sic) I would not have had to been
cut on and suffered so much. Too many
bad horses has been the cause of most
of my troubles.*

The cowboy's kind of horses could qualify as domesticated, but that has never meant they were docile. It was said of some of the old cow outfits that the men were a lot like the horses they rode...they wouldn't do to monkey with. Those outfits were proud of their best rough string riders. Back in the wild times, when two outfits came close to each other by the banks of a flood-swollen river, or at a shipping point, bets were made on which bunch had the best bronc rider. Every trail outfit had an outlaw or two in its remuda and they would be roped out for a cowboy of the rival outfit to ride. It was

how rodeo began, back when pride was the prize.

Samuel Thomas Privett, better known as Booger Red, was a legendary Texas bronc rider. He traveled through the countryside with a string of bucking horses, accompanied by a helper who drove a wagon carrying bedrolls, cooking equipment, and an assortment of ropes, halters, and spare saddles. Booger Red would hit the small towns on a Saturday when all the country folks came in to trade what they had for what they needed. He would drive his string of broncs right down the middle of Main Street and then pen them in a rope corral on the town square or in a wagon yard. Folks were starved for entertainment in those days and the crowds gathered quickly. Booger Red would saddle and ride his broncs, while his helper passed his hat in the crowd for nickels and dimes.

The old-timers said that Booger Red sure put on a

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show; grown women swooned, and small boys went to bed that night and dreamed of growing up to ride bucking horses like Booger Red. Once, on a little patch of prairie on the outskirts of Fort Worth, it is said that he rode a horse that had killed another rider earlier the same day. They said that the bronc bucked itself blind, but Booger Red rode him to a standstill and then had to be helped down from the saddle and was unable to stand on his own.

Bronc riding took a heavy toll on even the best ones. I knew a true champion who died alone in a cheap motel in Billings, Montana...bleeding internally from past punishment and maybe remembering the bright times when the crowd would stand and cheer as he rode one to the whistle. The old adage that says "There is something

about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man" doesn't necessarily apply for bronc riders.

If I had to pick one word to describe those horses the cowboys rode in the early days, that word would be versatile. This one kind of horse was capable of doing anything and everything a cowboy asked of it. But given enough time, man in his overweening arrogance can't help fiddling with nature's perfect patterns.

Today's Quarter Horse is something other than it once was. Instead of being one physical type of horse that could do everything, it has been bred in all sorts of different directions and become a bunch of different physical types designed to do a lot of different things.

There is no such thing anymore as a typical type of Quarter Horse. The ones bred to race look different

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than those bred to show at halter, and they in turn look different than the ones bred to be hunter-jumpers, or to pull sulkies. I am convinced that the modern Quarter Horse is not a legitimate breed, and that its Association is only a registry for a lot of different kinds of horses. I believe the Quarter Horse studbook should have been closed a long time ago in order to preserve the original physical type and the bloodlines of what was once proudly known as the western stockhorse; the kind created for cowboys.

Fortunately, there have been and still are folks who took their stewardship of the cowboy kind of horses seriously. It is not surprising that it has been cow people who have done the most to preserve the genetic integrity of what their kind of horse once was and still ought to be.

Hats off to all the original old time Quarter Horse breeders who honored their covenant with the Steeldusts and the Billy horses...men like Coke Blake, Billy Anson, Dan Casement, Ott Adams, George Clegg, Coke Roberds, Samuel Watkins and all the others.

And hats off too, to the ranches that still raise the kind of horses that a cowboy wants to ride...the Haythorns, the Waggoners, the Babbitts, the Four Sixes, the Pitchforks and all the others.

For the cowboys of every era, from the days of the open range until way past tomorrow, all the best times begin on the back of a good horse without a thought of the ride ever ending.

But it will...and a cowboy cast afoot by age or infirmity becomes a source of sadness for all who knew him back when he was wild and willing to climb on



anything and spur it just to see what would happen. And even as he remains a horseman in his heart, it doesn't help...not when others who are like he once was ride off early on a fresh feeling morning.

An old, crippled-up cowboy told me one time that "some pleasures were worth the price." He smiled when he said it. I hope that it's true. I do know that it was the horses who made us more than we would have been without them.



Don Hedgpeth is the author of several books, including *Joe Beeler: Life of a Cowboy Artist* and *Follow the Sun: Robert Loughheed*. *Cowboy Real* is expected to be published by the Claggett/Rey Gallery, Vail, Colorado, in the near future. Stay up to date on the book's status by visiting www.claggettrey.com.

Gallo del Cielo

The Journey of the One Eyed Rooster

By Tom Russell

*Gallo del Cielo was a rooster born in heaven,
So the legends say,
His wings they had been broken
He had one eye rolling crazy in his head...
—Gallo del Cielo*

His name was Augustine. He was originally from Toluca, near Mexico City, and he'd been around the frontier forever. Fixing rooves, hanging rain gutters, cleaning yards, planting pecan trees. Mucking out horse stalls and all the odd, bottom line jobs of the horse trade. He was a good man. At least three quarters good. There was a certain part of him always working on an angle, and the angle usually had to do with pumping a few more dollars out of you. He was one of those characters who was a jack-of-all trades and a master of the sudden dire warning. *Cuidado!* Action was needed at once, because something was about to collapse or blow up

around the hacienda. Horses were bound to stampede and pipes might burst, and if that thing wasn't fixed immediately we were all in trouble.



That *thing* usually entailed another three to five days of work. If Augustine was painting your front porch, he'd indicate to you that the porch was soon to collapse if he didn't build a new wood frame to prop the roof up. Then the new frame needed to be painted. And the roof itself should be replaced soon or it might cave in and kill you while you were sleeping. You get the picture. Augustine was

a good man. But a hustler. That's how he survived. And prospered. On the frontier.



Here's the deal. One day, several years ago, I left Augustine in charge of the yard while I went out on tour around the U.S. He had the keys to the front gate and the number of my cell phone. He was going to keep an eye on things, you see, and keep the yard clean. *No problema.* That's another issue. Augustine didn't speak a word of English, and my Spanish has grown sketchy, but effective in the clench. With hand signs and bad grammar I get the job done. *Mostly.* A lot of dialogue on this border gets lost in translation, like a tequila dream. There's a universal sign around here of holding up your hands, elbows bent, palms up and out, pointed away from each side of your body, then shrugging your shoulders. This means: *I refuse to accept responsibility for any actions – past, present, and future.*

Okay, so I'm gone a week and Augustine calls me up in a panic. Something to do with *gallos*. He kept shouting the word over and over.

"*Gallos?*" I yelled back. "*What Gallos? Roosters?*"

"*Gallos,*" he kept saying. The connection was bad and I was in the middle of a sound check.

"*Gallos,*" he yelled, following it with a long string of speed-talking street Spanish I couldn't make out.

"You mean my song, *Gallo del Cielo?*" I was kidding him.

"*Si, si, gallos! Gallos!*" He kept running on about something to do with roosters.

"Okay, Okay." I said. "*Todo bien.* Whatever..." Maybe he had to build a high fence to keep the neighbors roosters out. Or maybe he wanted another one of my cowboy records to give to a friend. Because of my *Gallo* song, which Augustine loved. *Quien sabe?* Another scam.

Thirty years ago I'd written that eleven verse song, a *corrido* in English, about a fighting rooster with one eye. The rooster from heaven. *Gallo del Cielo.* It had become a hit among cowboy audiences. That rooster



kept raising its one-eyed presence my life. Maybe Augustine had translated it into Mexican street Spanish. To *record it*. Make a million. Whatever. Maybe he wanted the publishing. I believed this guy was capable of hatching anything. But I was busy. I hung up.

Two weeks later I drove up to my front gate. I got out of the truck and reached out for the lock and I noticed odd motion inside the fence to my right. There were three circular cages lined up in a row, and inside each cage, perched on a stick running through the wire, sat three roosters. *Fighting roosters. Gallos de pelea.* There was no mistaking the high arched necks, crimson feathers and cocky demeanor. They were also hooded to keep them calm. Warriors. A fighting rooster operation. On my property. All within easy view of the front road, where farmers and ranchers and moms taking their kids to school could evidence what that crazy-assed songwriter was into now. *Chicken fighting.* No wonder he wrote that depressing song. He's a *cockfighter!* There goes the neighborhood. Bring out the tar and feathers, etc. Soon they'd be marching up the streets with their signs. The humane society backed by the Salvation Army Band, followed by *Mothers Against Cockfighting.*

Augustine and I had strong *palaver* about this deal, an hour later. It was all a big misunderstanding, he said in *Spanglish*. He threw his hands up, palms pointed to the side, in the universal gesture. He and his partner

only needed a temporary place to keep the roosters. They were planning to move them any day now. They were waiting on something. He stood out there near the cages, gesticulating wildly. Then he proposed to make me a partner in the operation. A third party. Probably

the investor I was thinking. They were going to win a lot of money. He pointed down to the evil looking cocks. The *gallos* were ready to tear each other's eyes out. The roosters were champions, he said. We would all make out. *Millionarios!*

"*Basta. Basta.*" I kept saying. "*Finito.* Get them out of here. Illegal!"

"No!" Augustine said. "No! In Chaparral. No *illegal! No, no, no.*"

Okay. Cockfighting was actually legal in New Mexico at this time (a few years ago), and the New Mexico State line was just up the street.

And maybe it wasn't illegal to actually *to own* these roosters in Texas, but I wanted them gone anyway.

The palaver and sign lingo went on and on, and I finally agreed that they could keep the roosters on the property for two weeks, provided they moved the operation to my back field. Out of sight from the main road. This they did. Augustine introduced his partner, a little man in a cheap straw cowboy hat, long sideburns, and pointy-towed boots with silver tips. He looked like miniature version of the *charro* singer Vincente Fernandez. *Chapo*, I believe his name was. He died his long sideburns and mustache with boot polish. A *puro*





macho caballero in cheap boots. A *cockfighter* right out of a grade-B Mexican movie.

They trained the birds every afternoon. *The partners*. Training entailed the boys swallowing a half dozen beers while sparring the roosters. A battery operated radio played *narco-corrido* songs and *rancheras* from an AM radio station over in Juarez. They'd pull the birds from the cages and hold the beasts by the tails and face them off, then allow the roosters to thrust at each other without making contact. It built endurance. Like sparring.

The roosters looked pretty damn *game* to me, but I wasn't investing. It made for an entertaining happy hour. I would pour a cold beer or hefty glass of *Rioja* and go out back to watch the birds work and listen to the music. Colorful as hell. The boys were planning on their first fight in Chaparral, a nearby New Mexico town. Chaparral had two official gaming pits, with organized cockfights every Saturday. The boys showed me the little program cards, which were printed with ornate fighting-cock graphics and *Tecate* beer advertisements on the back. It looked official alright.

Augustine kept humming *Gallo de Cielo*, trying to entice me into the deal. I was never getting away from that damn chicken song. It was taking over my life. I had to sing it every night on the road. All six minutes. It took a good deal of concentration. You had to remember the names of all the California towns where Carlos Zaragoza fought his rooster, until

old one-eye met his match. It was a good song, sure enough, but now I had these *gallos del pelea* in my back yard. It was the curse of the one-eyed rooster.

The whole matter was resolved a few days later when a pack of wild dogs ravaged the neighborhood, wiping out three of my neighbor's guinea hens, a peacock, two turkeys, and all three of Augustine's fighting roosters. *Well two and a half*. One *gallo* staggered off into the apple trees and hid in there a few months, his spirit broken. He was found face-down in an irrigation ditch. He couldn't take it anymore. Game over. We suspected suicide. Augustine disappeared for a few months, muttering about trying to raise money to buy a broken down race horse in Santa Teresa.

Since then my neighbor has been fond of citing

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verses from *Gallo del Cielo*. He keeps mentioning the time I was almost in the fighting rooster business. You have to endure these jibes when you've written a cockfighting *corrido*. But allow me tell you a few more stories surrounding *El Gallo*. The anecdotes are becoming as legendary as the song, and the song might be more legendary than the songwriter.

II The Wild Dogs of Mexico

*Carlos Zaragoza left his home in Casas Grande
When the moon was full
No money in his pocket,
Just a locket of his sister framed in gold.
He headed for El Sueco, stole a rooster
Called Gallo del Cielo...*

I wrote *Gallo del Cielo* in a garage in Mountain View, California in 1979. I'd been in the music business about eight years and quit for awhile to tend bar in San Francisco. I was trying to write novels and concoct better songs. I worked at a comedy club called *The Holy City Zoo*, where Robin Williams dropped by to hone his routines. He helped me pour beer. During the week I wrote songs in an empty garage down the peninsula. I had a few notes made in Mexico, and an idea for a long tragic story with a *corrido* form, like a gunfighter ballad, but I have no full recollection how this Gallo saga was created that morning in the garage. Townes Van Zandt used to call them *sky songs*, because they seem to fall out of the heavens. *Gallo del Cielo*. Rooster from heaven.

A *corrido*, in English, about cockfighting? The *corrido* is a long, running story in rhyme. From the Spanish word *correr*: to run. *Corridos* sung during the Mexican Revolution link back to similar stories sung by the Moors when they invaded Spain. The Moors invented much of what has colored our deep West –



from horsemanship to *reata* braiding. And cockfighting was an ancient blood sport which had been blessed by St. Augustine of Hippo, who thought God directed the action of the great fighting roosters. Maybe I absorbed this through my fallen-away Catholic bones.

Okay. I'm in the garage with a bunch of song notes. Fragments about Pancho Villa. About three years before I'd taken the Chihuahua-Pacific train from Chihuahua, Mexico, up to a little town called Creel in the Sierra Tarahumara. They called this the *chicken train* (of course) because it stopped at every station along the mountain line, and old ladies would come up to the train windows and sell tamales and quesadillas and mangoes and things I couldn't identify, let alone be stupid enough to eat. It was a wild, hot ride – twisting and switch backing up the Sierra.

We arrived in Creel, a few hours from the rim of the Copper Canyon, and I stayed at an old inn owned by an old man they called *The Professor*. The whole scene was right out of the movie: *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, or that Sam Peckinpah film: *Bring Me the Head of*



Alfredo Garcia. Creel was a fly-blown village where *mal hombres* on bony, spavined horses clattered through the town square and rabid little rat dogs snarled at you 'round ever corner. I've been back since. It hasn't changed. It's the *wild west*, amigo.


Creel is a crossroads for lumbermen, drug dealers, beggars, and Tarahumara Indians selling rough wooden carvings and blankets. The French poet Antonin Artaud went crazy around here eating peyote with the Tarahumara. If you should research the town of Creel on your computer, you'll find that almost every recent news item and film involves a major gunfight, with automatic weapons, between drug families. It's a quaint little town all right. Perfect for the beginning of any *narco corrido*.

Back to 1976. This hotel *Professor* took me on a little tour, out to one of the Tarahumara caves. An

Indian woman with a serape around her head sold me a toy violin she'd made. These were an ancient people. Corn planters, goat herders, and cave dwellers. They had a wise look behind their milky eyes, as if they were waiting for western civilization to rot. They'd survive up in their caves. The husband was off running through the mountains. The Tarahumara are known for their ability to run long distances without tiring. In fact they're considered the greatest long distance runners in the world. The *Professor* filled me in on all this.

I could go on and on about Creel, but the point here is that once *The Professor* had my ear, he bent it with Pancho Villa legends. All the way back from those caves he told me stories. Pancho Villa will never go away in the mind of the people, or in the songs of the West. His image is on the pack of tortillas I bought in

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Switzerland this summer. The truth of Villa's history is complex; the myth of Villa outlives the facts. He was a slippery old ghost. Pancho invaded Columbus, New Mexico in 1916, and the U.S. sent Black Jack Pershing after him, with a young George Patton in tow, but they never caught him. He was finally assassinated by his own people. His last words were: *don't let it end like this, tell them I said something.*

It was *The Professor* who told me Pancho used to ride through the mountains, during the Revolution, and take over the big ranchos and haciendas on behalf of *the people's revolutionary cause*. If one of the large landowners had a beautiful daughter, then Pancho would offer to marry the daughter, on the spot, in exchange for letting the landowner keep his land. I guess there was a priest travelling with the boys. Pancho married quite a few young women in this manner. *Dozens at a time*. So sayeth *The Professor*.

Villa didn't drink. He liked cigars, American ice cream, good horses, and pretty women. One of my favorite Villa corridos is *Siete Leguas*, the song about Pancho's famous horse. The steed could run seven leagues without tiring. I suppose I was beginning to dream up my own *corrido*, like *Siete Leguas*. A historical action ballad, seeped in Spanish culture.

Back to the young Mexican women. That Villa marriage anecdote stuck in my mind, and I used the idea, later, in the refrain of *Gallo del Cielo*. Carlos Zaragoza steals the infamous one-eyed rooster, wades across the Rio Grande, and plans to fight *Gallo* up the California coast, in order make enough money buy back the land Pancho stole from his father. Carlos is promising all this in letters home to his sister back in Mexico. She was probably the ugly one. The spinster that Pancho didn't marry.

Now back to that garage in Mountain View.

I polished up the song in a few hours then went into the house and sang it straight through to my first wife.

She got up from the table, with tears in her eyes, and told me I'd written my first great song. Now I must say, at that particular point in time, there was a question (among my in-laws) of whether this songwriting deal was going to work out for me as a viable career. (*"When is Tom going to face reality?"* Etc.) *Gallo* solved all that, and in fact the old rooster took off down the road and got me involved in situations I would have never dreamed up. That's the great thing about songs. They have a life of their own. Like your children. Some leave the house and become doctors and lawyers. Some go to prison. All are God's children.

I'd written the song. All I had to do now was hang on. And *remember the words*.

III The Asphalt Jungle

*Hola my Theresa I am thinking of you now
In Santa Barbara
I have fifteen hundred dollars and the locket
With your picture framed in gold
Tonight I'll put it all on the fighting spurs
Of Gallo del Cielo...*

Two years now after I'd written the song I'm in New York. The asphalt jungle. Trying to make ends meet. Driving taxi cabs twelve hours a day and working on a novel for The William Morris agency. The novel is going nowhere. The cab driving is killing me. Twelve hour shifts. Six at night, 'til six in the morning. Bad dudes in mirrored sunglasses in the back seat, staring at my neck. Guns in their socks. Or so I imagined. This was the early 1980's New York of graffiti-ridden streets, muggings, and murder.

One night I'm driving down a dark avenue at two in the morning and a group of dangerous looking Puerto Rican gents are blocking the middle of the street, flagging me down. Six of them. The cab company boss told me never to stop in those situations. Cab drivers were in

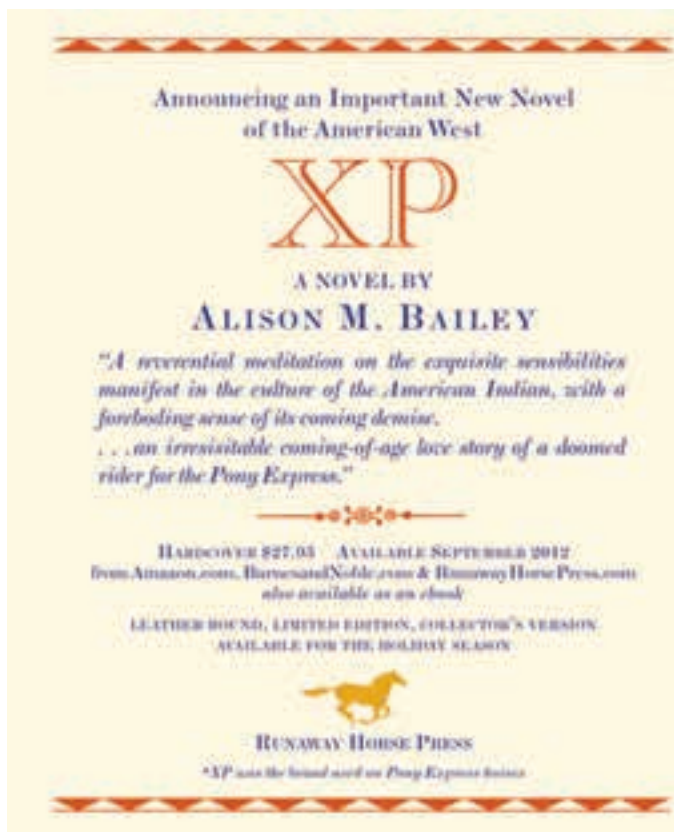


season that year for robbery and murder. So I jammed the gas pedal down and scattered these *cabrones*. I passed them and they screamed and cursed. Then my cab seemed to explode. It flew up into the air and crashed down in a blast of scraping metal, yellow sparks, and doom. I assumed they'd tossed a hand grenade under the car and I whispered a *Hail Mary*, threw my money under the seat, and reached for a tire iron.

These guys ran up to me, shouting something like: "*Que paso? You okay? What you trying to do, loco? We were trying to warn you, hombre, 'bout that hole!*" Indeed. *The hole*. I got out of the car and there was a ten foot deep chasm in the collapsed street. About fifteen feet wide. The car had flown over it, hit the far edge, rose up again and skidded a few feet beyond and was now *totaled*. Game over. There goes my job, I thought. I left my Puerto Rican pals and walked a few miles back to

the cab station. Ready to hand in my license. But the owner of the company didn't fire me, or even charge me for damages. He was a songwriter too, you see. A country singer on the weekends. We use to play music together. His favorite song was *Gallo del Cielo*. The one eyed rooster saved me again.

I took a month off cab driving to work as an *Urban Cowboy* singer in a Puerto Rican carnival, and *Gallo del Cielo*, was the most requested song. Cockfighting is the national sport of Puerto Rico. The song was continuing to save my life, except that one of the security guards took issue with me over the last few verses. He didn't like the rooster dying at the end. *Losing*. It depressed him. It shamed the national pride of Puerto Rico, or something. *It would not end that way*, he kept moaning. Angry about it. One night I made the mistake of leaving my guitar in the dressing room, and I'm sure it was this



gentleman who shot a hole in the back with his service pistol. That guitar, a 1946 Martin D-18, is sitting right behind me as I write this essay. Bullet hole intact. It's the guitar I wrote *Gallo* on. Rooster memories surround me.

I went back to New York, and back to the cabs. Dreary business. One night, around midnight, I picked up Robert Hunter in front of a theater in Rockaway Beach, Queens. He had a guitar case and a glass of Jack Daniels in his hand. He also had a long cigarette holder, with a lit cigarette in it. Right out of a movie, this guy. His name was up on the theater marquee: "*Robert Hunter Tonight! Songwriter For the Grateful Dead!*" Hunter had written Dead classics like *Truckin'* and *Friend of the Devil*, and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame with them in 1994. He also co-wrote most of the songs on the last Bob Dylan record: *Together Through Life*. A master poet of rock and roll.

He stepped into my cab and gave me the address of a motel in Jamaica, Queens, and we took off. I struck up a conversation with him. Told him I was a songwriter too. I blurted it out. Now you might expect a famous songwriter would scoff at that. Or ignore you. Not Robert Hunter. He said something like: "*Oh Yeah? You're a songwriter? Cool, man. Sing me a song, then.*"

The chips were down. I pulled out my strongest card. *Gallo*. Started singing it accapella.

He stopped me after the first verse and made a few comments. Then he apologized. "*Hell, I'm sorry. It sounds interesting. Sing me the whole song. I'll be quiet.*"

I sang the whole thing. Every cockfight in every town. I finished up and checked the rear view mirror. He was staring at me.

"You wrote THAT?" he said.

"Yeah," I said.

"Sing it again, man. *Sing it again.*"

And so I did. The cab meter was up to over a hundred bucks, but time seemed to stop. We were both wrapped up in the journey of the one-eyed rooster. The

money was on the table.

*Hola, my Theresa, I am thinking of you now, in
Santa Clara,
Yes, the money's on the table,
And I am holding to your locket framed in gold...
Tonight I'll put it all on the fighting spurs of Gallo
del Cielo...*

Robert Hunter loved the song. He demanded a tape. *Immediately*. That very night. So we drove back in the opposite direction, fifteen miles to my house, and I crawled under the bed and found a cassette demo of the song. I gave it to Hunter, who was now promising to play it for the *New Riders of the Purple Sage*. He said *they had to* record it. I drove him back to the motel. The tab was maybe two hundred bucks. He paid in cash, and I never expected to see him again. I already thought it had been a damn fine evening. But, hell, he'd forget about it.

He didn't forget. He called me a week later and said the *New Riders* had lost their record deal. But he was coming back to New York for a show at *The Bitter End*. I should come down and hang out. I was thrilled. Fast forward to that evening in Greenwich Village. I'm drinking *Jack Daniels* in Robert Hunter's dressing room before the show. Excited. Then he gets up on stage, and about twenty minutes into the show, he starts a story: "*You should hear the song I heard from a cab driver the other night...but hell, let's just get him up here to sing it himself.*"

I gulped. Felt a bead of sweat run down my back. I hadn't performed in a few months. I was rusty and the song was demanding, even if you're sober. Which I wasn't. I got up on stage, in front of a packed house. Hunter handed me his guitar and split. I looked down into the faces of hundreds of reverent Dead Heads waiting for the magic song Hunter had promised them. All eleven verses. The room was silent. I started, hesitantly, but the story took over and I melted into the song and let the rooster



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do the work. I finished the song to rowdy applause and looked around for Robert Hunter. He'd vanished. Somebody yelled out: *Do another one, man*. And I did two more. I'd regained my footing and my confidence. I was back in the music business.

Hunter appeared back on stage and, later that night, offered me a gig opening for him at the old Lone Star Café in New York. I've been working full time in the song-trade ever since. I thank Robert Hunter. And the one eyed rooster. I've made *Gallo* a solemn promise that I'll never forget the words. And never change the ending. Shoot another hole in my guitar, *amigo*, but the story stands.

IV Midnight in the Palace of Milkshakes/Sundown on the Rio Grande

*Do the rivers still run muddy,
Outside of my beloved Casas Grande?
Does the scar upon my brother's face, turn red
When he hears mention of my name?
Do the people of El Sueco, still curse the theft
of Gallo del Cielo?*

After the taxi cabs I lived in a boarded-up storefront in Brooklyn for ten years. An artist's garret, with a loft bed and a desk, and little else. I wrote songs and played honkytonks in Manhattan and Long Island during those *Urban Cowboy* days. Up the street from my bunker there was a little Cuban/Dominican joint called *The Palace of Milkshakes*. They specialized in Cuban sandwiches and huge milk shakes. On weekends they covered the windows with cardboard and held illegal cockfights. No *gringos* allowed. This was my neighborhood. I was living inside that song.

Around that time, early 1980s, I sent a cassette tape of *Gallo* to the cowboy-folk legend Ian Tyson. I'd been a huge *Ian and Sylvia* fan in the 60s and I'd written Ian letters over the past years. He had a solo career and a television show in Canada. He loved *Gallo* and recorded

it on an album which put a spark back into cowboy music and resurrected his career: *Old Corrals and Sagebrush*. *Gallo del Cielo* was on the record.

Ian and I began a co-writing relationship with songs like *Navajo Rug*, *Claude Dallas*, *The Rose of the San Joaquin*, *The Bank of the Musselshell*, and others. Ian's record: *Cowboyography* stands as one of the most important cowboy records ever recorded, and it turned the Western genre around. We've since recorded *Gallo* and *Navajo* as duets on several of my own cowboy records.

Yes, *Gallo* took off down the road and stuck its one-eyed head into every little nook and cranny of the music world. Katie Lee, now ninety years old, and one of the first ladies to run the rapids of the Colorado River, recorded the song back in the 1980s. The most passionate version yet recorded is Joe Ely's, on the record *Letter to Laredo*. Joe nails the song. A wild flamenco guitar rolls through the track. His version took the song into the rock community, where it landed at the feet of Bruce Springsteen. *The Boss*.

I drove home from a gig one winter's night in New York; must have been in the early 1990s. I recall it was a snowing. Wet streets. Tough going. Two hour drive. I made it back to my artist garret and collapsed into a chair, leafing through the damp mail that had been shoved under the door. One letter came from England. Scrawled inside on hotel stationery was a note about *Gallo del Cielo*. It was from Bruce Springsteen, on tour in England. "*When Joe Ely played me that song I said, man, who wrote that? It's a great song...thanks. We'll get together...*" The Springsteen connection gets weirder now.

Clarence Clemmons, Springsteen's great saxophone player, passed away recently. He published a book a few years ago titled: *Big Man*. There's a scene in the book in which Kinky Freidman, Clarence Clemmons, and Bob Dylan are talking about Dylan seeing Joe Ely play in a roadhouse:

"*Joe did a hell of a song tonight,*" says Dylan. "*A Tom*



Russell song. It's about a fighting rooster. It's called 'Gallo del Cielo.' It's good. And I'm hard to impress." Who knows how or whether this scene actually transpired? But it's in the book. The rooster works in mysterious ways. His fame and journey continue to impress me. Onward he rolls. There's now a famous cutting horse stud named *Gallo del Cielo*, and also resort cabins, pit bulls, and fried chicken recipes.

Enough anecdotes.

Some nights at happy hour I pour a glass of *Rioja* and watch the sundown reflect back on the Franklin Mountains in El Paso. The high rocks near the summit turn a crimson red, then roan-grey and finally dark brown. I sip the Spanish wine and wonder if Augustine is out there somewhere training a champion rooster or pumping illegal

vitamins into an old racehorse. I miss his schemes. And the old *Professor*, up in Creel, must be long gone.

In the end, I don't know where this rooster song really came from. Or where it will go next. It was crafted from fragments and journeys and the memory of blood rituals. Maybe it passed down from one of my past incarnations, when I was walking around in the desert with the original St. Augustine, before Christ was born. According to his *Confessions*, St. Augustine of Hippo understood the cockfight: "to be divinely endowed as a visible sign of an invisible reality...every motion in these fighting animals, who are unendowed with reason, is graceful and brave, and guided by a higher power."

Amen. The rooster and his song were born in heaven...so the legends say.



Tom Russell's latest album is *Mesabi*. His most recent book is: *Blue Horse/Red Desert: The Art of Tom Russell*. His catalogue is available from www.tomrussell.com *The Songs of Tom Russell* will be published by Bangtail Press in October 2012.

When the wheels fall off the "wagon", you're going to need a better team.



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Gallo del Cielo

A Song by Tom Russell

Carlos Zaragoza left his home in *Casas Grandes* when the moon was full
No money in his pocket, just a locket of his sister framed in gold
He headed for *El Sueco*, stole a rooster named *Gallo del Cielo*
Then he crossed the *Rio Grande*, with that chicken nestled deep beneath his arm

Now *Gallo del Cielo* was a rooster born in heaven, so the legends say
His wings they had been broken, he had one eye rollin' crazy in his head
He'd fought a hundred fights, and the legends say that one night near El Sueco
They'd fought *Cielo* seven times, and seven times he left brave roosters dead

Hola, my Theresa, I am thinking of you now in San Antonio
I have twenty-seven dollars and the locket of your picture framed in old
Tonight I'll bet it all, on the fighting spurs of *Gallo del Cielo*
Then I'll return to buy the land Pancho Villa stole from father long ago

Outside of San Diego in the onion fields of *Paco Monteverde*
The pride of San Diego, he lay sleeping on a fancy bed of silk
And they laughed when Zaragoza pulled the one-eyed *del Cielo* from beneath his coat
But they cried when Zaragoza walked away with a thousand dollar bill

Hola, my Theresa, I am thinking of you now in Santa Barbara
I have fifteen hundred dollars and the good luck of your picture framed in gold
Tonight I'll bet it all on the fighting spurs of *Gallo del Cielo*
Then I'll return to buy the land that Villa stole from father long ago

Now the moon has gone to hiding and the lantern light spills shadows on the fighting sand
Where a wicked black named *Zorro* faces *Gallo del Cielo* in the night
But Carlos Zaragoza fears the tiny crack that runs across his rooster's beak
And he fears that he has lost the fifty thousand dollars riding on the fight





Hola, my Theresa, I am thinking of you now in Santa Clara
Yes, the money's on the table I am holding now your good luck framed in gold
And everything we dreamed of is riding on the spurs of *del Cielo*
I pray that I'll return to buy the land that Villa stole from father long ago

Then the signal it was given, and the roosters rose together far above the sand
Gallo del Cielo sunk a gaff into Zorro's shiny breast
They were separated quickly, but they rose and fought each other thirty seven times
And the legends say that everyone agreed that *del Cielo* fought the best

Then the screams of Zaragoza filled the night outside the town of Santa Clara
As the beak of *del Cielo* lay broken like a shell within his hand
And they say that Zaragoza screamed a curse upon the bones of Pancho Villa
When Zorro rose up one last time, and drove *del Cielo* to the sand

Hola, my Theresa, I am thinking of you now in San Francisco
There's no money in my pocket, I no longer have your picture framed in gold
I buried it last evening with the bones of my beloved *del Cielo*
And I'll not return to buy the land that Villa stole from father long ago

Do the rivers still run muddy, outside of my beloved *Casas Grandes*?
Does the scar upon my brother's face turn red when he hears mention of my name?
Do the people of *El Sueco* still curse the death of *Gallo del Cielo*?
Tell my family not to worry, I will not return to cause them shame.





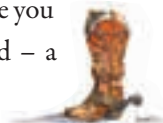
A VISIT WITH BUCK BRANNAMAN

I have had some great horses come through my life. I can tell you I learn more from them than they learn from me but in the end we seem to have a pretty good deal with each other.

One little horse I had early in my career was this little buckskin named Cinch. He and I traveled the country together. I hauled him around in a stock trailer and we covered the miles – from coast to coast. He seemed to be a crowd pleaser as everywhere I went people always seemed to like this little horse. Years after I stopped using him and retired him to our ranch, people always asked me about Cinch and how he was doing. Cinch was a little guy, but we got along well together and he was pretty dependable.

Horses don't care what color you are, how tall or short you are, how small or large you are, whether you're rich or poor, attractive or unattractive. None of that means anything to the horse. A horse takes you at face value for how you make him feel at that moment. It seems to me this would be a good way for all of us people to behave with each other, too. Lord knows, in this day and age, the whole world could stand a bit more of that.

Cinch is gone now, but his life and what he gave me is deserving of a little reminder here that horses leave lasting memories that can carry great value. Memories that can teach as well as simply have a warm place in your heart. Cinch was one of the good ones. I hope you are as lucky as I was to have – or have had – a Cinch in your life.



Horses and life, it's all the same to me.

- Buck Brannaman



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Like a Jackass in a Hail Storm

With his roving cowboy crew, Texan Tom Moorhouse made news with his effort to beat the drought that has stricken the ranching culture. Now read the *real story* about his motivations, and the deeply personal rewards he discovered.

By Paul A. Cañada

The regional forecast called for heavy snow flurries and so the crew was anxious to reach their destination before the weather arrived. Pulling a trailered chuck wagon and horse trailer, they carefully managed the hazardous road, crisscrossing the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Their destination was a ranch camp, about 8,500 feet above sea level and nearly 40 miles, as the crow flies, outside Raton, New Mexico.

The team of cowboys included West Texans Tom Moorhouse and John Welch, Fort Worth photographer-cowboy Peter Robbins, and a couple of good hands. Only after unloading the wagon and horses, and setting up the teepees, did the group allow itself to relax and enjoy their high-country surroundings. The Texas crew was in New Mexico to gather and brand calves belonging to the Tongue River Ranch. For Moorhouse, Welch and

Robbins, the setting promised another chance to revisit times past and talk about new adventure.

As forecasted, it began to snow. Facing a 10-mile ride in the morning, the men retired early. As the night progressed, the wind picked up and the snowstorm worsened. Unbeknownst to the sleeping men, the wind gusts reached 70 miles per hour, knocking down an estimated 300 power poles in the Raton area.

When morning finally arrived, the men awoke to a bitter cold. Tents and horses were covered with snow. Moorhouse, the first out of

the sack, made his customary wake-up call, four shots fired into the mountain air.

One by one, the men gathered in the cook's tent, where Moorhouse always sleeps. In the corner of the tent, Tom's bedroll was covered in snow. Robbins asked his friend, "Tom, how did that go last night, sleeping



photo by Peter Robbins

Texas cowboy Tom Moorhouse.



photo by Peter Robbins

Funneling the herd.

under all that snow.”

Downplaying the obvious, Moorhouse noted with a smile, “Like a jackass in a hailstorm.”

Life often sends unexpected events our way, whether we’re ready or not. Sometimes, they’re welcomed, often not. The way Moorhouse sees it, when all is said and done, the best we can do is shoulder it and survive to live another day.

Robbins would later say about that moment, “The more rugged and bravo it gets, the better he likes it. He’s just wired that way.”

Whether he likes it or not, Tom Moorhouse is considered a legend in West Texas. He’ll be the first to tell you he’s no different than any other man. The truth falls somewhere in between. Few men can ride a horse or flank a calf like he can and yet, like each of us, he is vulnerable and can be shaken by life’s unexpected turns.

This is a story about how one good man sustains hope in hard times.

Tom Moorhouse was born in the heart of Texas’ cattle country. He was raised on his father’s modest ranch, located between Benjamin and Guthrie. After graduating from high school, he enrolled in Sul Ross

State University in Alpine, Texas. When home, he worked for the Four Sixes Ranch, staying out with the chuck wagon all summer long. While in school, he rode for rancher Gage Holland.

It was at Holland’s ranch where he met his first love, Sue Horne. She worked for Holland as a secretary, but would ride and work cattle when needed. The couple married in 1969 and moved back to the ranch to help Tom’s father. Soon after, Tom’s brother, John, returned home and together the two worked to significantly add to the family’s cattle operation.

“We raised mother cows and yearlings on wheat under the name Moorhouse Ranch Company,” shared Tom. “That’s when I gained a lot of experience dealing with drought and bad markets. I learned you can dwell on either the bad or the good and we chose to focus on the good.”

Like most ranchers and farmers in Texas, the Moorhouse clan knew hardship. Tom’s father had experienced the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl years, cowboying for a dollar a day.

“My father didn’t inherit anything and he didn’t have oil,” said Tom. “He worked hard for it, one acre at a time. My dad passed his resolve and work ethic on to

us. He was a big influence on us boys.”

Sue and Tom were close, planning each day together. The couple had two children, Jed and Jody, who both rode and cowboied. Every Sunday, the family got dressed and drove to Benjamin, where they attended



photo by Kim Robbins

For Moorhouse, pictured here at his wife’s funeral, cowboying offered an escape from grief.

the First Christian Church. The mostly senior congregation mentored the couple and would play an important role in the hard days to come.

When the children were in their early teens, Sue was diagnosed with liver cancer. The couple was sent to Baylor University in Dallas where Sue received treatment for about a month. Eventually, they were sent home and a makeshift infirmary was set up in the bunkhouse, where Sue would be more comfortable.

The hospice taught Tom how to administer medication and care for Sue. She passed a couple of

months after returning home. The couple had been married for 20 years.

Tom remembered back to one of his and Sue’s customary horseback rides. She turned to him and said, “If ever I was going to build a house out here, right here on this hill is where I would build it.” He never forgot and buried his wife in that pasture, overlooking the glorious West Texas plains.

Sue had a blue roan named Sue’s Blue, a wedding gift from George Humphrey. Tom started and trained him, and “Blue” became an exceptional horse. Three to four years after Sue had passed, Blue died. Tom took him up to the gravesite and buried him nearby.

“When Sue died, I had the two kids and it wasn’t easy,” said Tom. “Thankfully, they were old enough to take care of themselves when I left in the morning to work. The main thing that got me through Sue’s death was my faith in God and knowing where she is. We always worked hard there at the ranch and so staying busy was a big help too.”

A year after losing Sue, Tom met Becky, the daughter of a brand inspector, Manford Elliott, and his wife, Ann. Before becoming an inspector, Manford worked for the W.T.

Waggoner Estate Ranch. Not surprisingly, Becky and her sons, Brad and Seth, loved to ride.

“Losing Sue was a big loss,” said Tom. “While staying busy helped, I was still lonely. With Becky, I had a new friend, someone I could relate too.”

The couple shared much in common and quickly became friends. Friendship matured into love and the two were married 12 months later. As he did with Sue, Tom planned his days with Becky and she would often ride with him. That changed when the couple, Tom, 43, and Becky, 35, was pleasantly surprised by



the arrival of their son, Gage.

After Gage's birth, Becky didn't ride out with Tom much. Instead, she spent her time fixing the inside and outside of the house. She had a natural talent for landscaping and loved planting trees. Later, when both Tom and Becky went to work for Millard Morris at the Tongue River Ranch, she planted more than 30 trees at their new home.

While Brad and Seth learned to cowboy, the lifestyle took a stronger hold on Gage. The family continued to weather tough times and counted their good times as blessings. They had good friends, a loving church and a healthy family.

In 2007, the hard times got tougher, when Becky was diagnosed with breast cancer. After a mastectomy, she healed. Everything appeared fine. Three years later, she began to have back trouble and went to see a chiropractor. The pain persisted. Finally, the couple visited the Dallas doctor who had helped her beat breast cancer.

Becky was diagnosed with bone cancer. It was treatable, but not curable. After treatment in Dallas, she was sent home to Tongue River. She was doing well and was back to work, landscaping.

Family friend John Welch remembers well a conversation he had with Tom at that time. "I remember him telling me, 'I already know how this all goes and none of it's going to be easy.' Tom was as strong as he could be about it, but it sure did affect him. He's a man of great faith and he clung to that hope."

In January of this year, Becky's pain returned and it was more intense. The couple again returned to Dallas.

Becky was a woman of great faith and never showed

any fear of dying. Tom knew that and learned to appreciate it. A month before she passed, Becky prepared Tom, giving him detailed instruction about her funeral.

Eventually, she was sent home to the Moorhouse Ranch because it was closer to the Knox City hospital.



photo by Peter Robbins

Traveling throughout the West and working in a variety of environments posed unexpected challenges, such as a sudden snowstorm.

At Knox City, the doctors got control of the pain and Becky returned home for the last time. She was buried on the hill with Sue, and Tom's parents. Tom and Becky were married for 22 years.

"The way I figure it," said Tom, "I was blessed to have the opportunity to live with two outstanding women. I am thankful for that and so that's how it is. But, knowing that doesn't make everything all right. There's still a lot of sorrow and emptiness."

Like his father, Tom believes in pouring himself into his life's work and into what he loves to do. He also believes this life is just a preparation for the next to come. Perhaps it's no surprise that he's finding a way through this life by devoting himself to his work.

The trip taken to New Mexico provided

Moorhouse with an opportunity to do what he loved most: working cattle with the crew and spending time with his good friends, Welch and Robbins. The extended drought devastated Texas' cattle industry. The



photo by Peter Robbins

Cowboy camaraderie helped keep the crew motivated for each day's effort.

lack of water and good pasture resulted in many ranchers selling their stock. The more fortunate ranches like the Tongue River, Spades and Four Sixes sent cattle north to states with available pasture.

"We dried out and couldn't keep the cows on the land we had," explained Moorhouse. "We didn't want to sell them and so we found places in New Mexico and Montana to send the cattle to. It being spring, we needed to brand the calves and so we put a crew together."

Although Welch had just retired from his CEO position at the Spades Ranch, he agreed to take charge of the relocated cattle until they could be brought back home to Texas. Welch threw in with Moorhouse and the crew of a half-dozen made their first stop the range country outside Raton. It would take the men nearly all of April to brand cattle in six states.

The plan was to move the wagon and horses to a ranch, camp alongside the pens and work the country near the pens. After clearing an area, they moved the camp to another set of pens and worked the country around them. They spent their days strictly gathering and branding calves.

After awaking to the blizzard in New Mexico, Moorhouse did something he has never done before: abandon camp. The men turned the horses out and asked the caretaker to keep an eye on them. They then returned to Tongue River in Texas and spent a week branding the ranch's cattle.

When they returned to New Mexico, the horses were well fed and ready to go. The cattlemen reached and gathered the herd and began the process of pushing them

through the steep, rocky high country.

The business of cowboying can be dangerous. A lot of things can go wrong, real fast, in a branding pen. Understandably, those were the times Tom was most focused and his troubles the furthest away.

"Instead of being home, where I am constantly reminded Becky's no longer there, the trip gave me an opportunity to be in a less familiar environment," said Moorhouse. "Unlike around home, not everything I saw reminded me of her. I stayed busy and my mind was on other things."

Still, there were times when Tom seemed lost in his thoughts, revisiting another place and time. Moving mother cows and calves to the branding pens is a slow and deliberate process. It's important not to push the herd too hard and risk stressing the slower calves.



During these unhurried times, it's natural for a cowboy to slip into deep thought. The leisurely pace is relaxing and the surrounding country inviting. Tom often seemed to drift and wander in the places of his heart.

"I would ride up and ask if he was all right," said Robbins. "You could tell he was going into deep periods of sadness. He would reply, 'Peter, it's really hard right now.'"

The trip proved to be a godsend. Only the passage of time can mend a heart burdened by a tremendous loss. Away from home, Moorhouse was able to occupy his time with work and keep his mind busy. It was an important start of the healing process.

"There's nothing Tom would rather do than be out with the wagon and with a bunch of men, working cattle," said Welch. "That's all he has done his entire life and it's all he's ever wanted to do. It's where he belongs."

As we get older and most of those we've loved have passed on, we begin to walk through life feeling as if we have overspent our time. Tom is getting to the point where he has more to look forward to in the next life than he has in this one. Yet, it isn't Tom's call. He has so much more to share and teach, and more living to do.

There is a welcomed part of Becky that remains behind, the couple's 22-year-old son. Gage is enrolled in Texas Tech. He drives home on weekends to be with his father and works the ranch throughout the summer. The two men will no doubt find comfort in each other's company.

"That boy is a carbon copy of his father," said Welch. "He loves to train and ride horses, and is one heck of a cowboy. His interests are similar to Tom's. The two aren't touchy feely, like some, but they're awfully close."



photo by Peter Robbins

Drought conditions at home prompted Texas ranches to send herds north. When it came time to brand at various outfits, Moorhouse assembled a cowboy crew.

Tom will tell you this life is just preparation for the next. And so he finds a way to get through this one. He loses himself in the love of his work, all the while keeping in mind this is a temporary situation.

"That's really how he gets through all this," said Robbins. "He hunkers down and outlasts it. He hunkers down, but he stays engaged with people. He stays engaged with life, no matter how bad he's hurting."

Like that jackass in a hailstorm, the tall, West Texas cowboy stubbornly refuses to let the storm beat him down permanently.



The Wild Bunch

Buckaroos bust out of the chutes in Amarillo, Texas, at the Working Ranch Cowboys Association's new ranch bronc riding event.

It is a long way from Elko, Nevada, to Amarillo, Texas – 1,132 miles to be exact. For a working cowboy or buckaroo it is not always easy to get time off during the busy spring season or to collect enough cash to pay an entry fee. However, seven bronc riders representing the Western States Ranch Rodeo Association and buckaroo culture, known as “The Wild Bunch,” met in Elko and drove to Amarillo, Texas, over Memorial Day weekend to compete in the first annual Working Ranch Cowboys Association Championship Ranch Bronc Riding. Dubbed “The Wild Bunch” on the WSRRA’s Facebook page, the team consisted of J.D. Brock, Eli Burr, Wyatt Duncan, Seth Franklin, Pook Hoots, Derrick Huffaker and Nolan O’Leary. Two additional WSRRA members, Adrian Brannan of California and Cole Estill of Nevada, also competed at the event, and Brannan recorded several television and radio spots to promote the event.

On the windy evening of May 26, 40 working cowboys representing ranches in California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah and Wyoming vied for more than \$15,000 in cash and prizes in the coveted ranch bronc riding event. Riding horses provided by Colorado stock contractor Harry Vold, the cowboys competed in a long go with the top 10 riders advancing to a short go. Total points on two head determined the winner. A bonus,

seven female bronc riders competed in their own division, which had more than \$10,000 up for grabs.

Colorado cowgirl and pickup woman Jessica Moser of Karval, Colorado, was the only female bronc rider to make the six-second buzzer. Though Moser has started several colts on her family’s ranch and comes from a family of Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association bronc riders, it was her first time entering a ranch bronc riding competition. Her dad and brother were on hand to help her saddle and get on her bronc. The cowgirl took home \$12,000 in cash and prizes, including jeans provided by Cowboy Honor and a Gist trophy buckle.



Jessica Moser



When The Wild Bunch threw their saddles in the car and set off for Amarillo, they did not know how they would be received, what to expect or if their rigs would even pass the mandatory judges' inspections. In ranch



The Wild Bunch

bronc riding competition, the cowboys must ride their everyday working saddles with full or $\frac{7}{8}$ double riggings. No PRCA bronc saddles or centerfire, $\frac{5}{8}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ riggings are allowed in WRCA competition.

"I knew one of us had a good shot of winning," says Brock, who along with Burr and Huffaker are appointed WSRRA Ranch Bronc Riding Representatives and evaluate stock and stock contractors at WSRRA-sanctioned bronc ridings. "I believe [the Great Basin] has the best bronc riders around and we have a way of lighting the fire in each other."

When the dust settled in the Will Rogers Range Riders Arena, Brock was the winner, scoring 81 in the long go and 86 in the short round. Ky Fuston, a cowboy on the Bell Ranch Division of Silver Spur Ranches in New Mexico placed second and Huffaker was third.

Brock, 26, grew up on ranches in Idaho and Oregon and from the time he was 12 years old was helping his dad start colts. His interest in ranch bronc riding began just

out of high school with a goal of winning the bronc riding at the Jordan Valley Big Loop in Jordan Valley, Oregon.

"I was late for the rodeo and came running across the arena as they announced my name," he recalls. "My stirrups were too long and I didn't measure my rein right. I had no business riding a bronc and it showed."

That first ride was so ugly that Brock had to keep perfecting his abilities by entering more bronc riding events. Years of starting cranky ranch colts has given Brock the instincts to feel and move with bucking horses so he can get the horses confident to buck and ride to the best of his abilities.

"I have a lot of respect for good broncs," Brock says. "It's all about showcasing those horses and the buckaroo culture. The guys in Texas ride different rigs and work their livestock differently than we do out west. Money and pride are great motivators, but when I lift my rein and nod my head they are the last things I think about. It's all about making the horse shine and to get the most points out of my horse and my two feet. I did not want to come home feeling empty."

A cowboy and outfitter who drifts around Idaho, Oregon, Nevada and Wyoming, Brock returned home with a check for \$6,000, a supply of Cowboy Honor jeans and a Gist trophy buckle. It was the biggest payday of his bronc riding career. He also received invitations to the Arizona Cowpuncher's Reunion held this past June in Williams, Arizona; the Tom Butler Memorial, October to be held October 20 in Post, Texas; and the 2013 WRCA Championship Ranch Bronc Riding.

Though Brock is making a name for himself as a ranch bronc rider, the 26-year-old says he wants to be known for more than that. He considers himself a keeper of traditions started by early buckaroo horsemen.

For more information on WSRRA, visit wsrra.org on the WSRRA Facebook page.



YOUR HORSE'S FEET, A SERIES

By Pete Healey, APF

As there are two sides to every coin, so is there to every horse, both mentally and physically. Often a client will have a question about the difference in shape from one front foot to the other as it is quite common these days to see a low angled foot and an opposing high angled foot. Most often the lower foot is on the left side about 80% of the time. So why is this and what do we do about it?

In veterinarian journals the foot is often referred to as the 'Distal Limb,' distal being farther from the body and proximal being closer to the body. The limb on the front is composed of the shoulder down to the foot, so being part of the whole; the foot has a direct relationship to the shoulder or the proximal limb. If you stand directly in front of the horse and look at the shoulders, a horse with mismatched feet will have one shoulder more developed than the other. The more upright foot will have the flatter shoulder with shorter flexor muscles that connect to the Deep Flexor Tendon that ties into the bottom of the foot. Notice how the horse stands; the bigger more developed side is forward – this places more weight on the heel of this foot. The smaller side is a bit back – this foot is weighted more on the toe. Whatever is weighted the most will grow the least. This conformational stance can lead to a lower heel on the big shoulder and a high heel on the smaller shoulder. Feet that are out of balance will also show a bulging of the toe on the flat foot and a dishing of the toe on the upright foot; this is due to leveraging of the toe from the ground. If you watch these horses eat off the ground they will always position themselves with the flat foot forward and the higher foot back. Horses raised in big country don't do this as they graze as they walk, left-right, left-right, the grass is out in front and the flies and manure are in the back. These horses are very symmetrical and the shoulders are almost mirror images of each other.

The hind feet can be mismatched as well. Usually the diagonal hind foot will follow the conformational concerns of the front. For example if the left front is flat, the right hind will be a little lower in the heel than the left hind. The difference is less dramatic in the hind feet because they don't have the weight carriage of the front.

Most people don't understand this "high-low" thing. They would like the feet to look the same. I remember talking to a well known farrier one time who told me her own horse grew excessive heel in one foot and that she constantly had to cut it down. So she would lower the heel and it would grow back. Why? The answer is that he needed more heel to balance his foot. Horses are better at being horses than we are. There is more to the foot than just the hoof. The muscle-tendon unit at the top of the limb has a huge influence on it and that is tension. Tension reduces the amount of flexion the foot has to absorb concussion and reduce strain. Lowering the heel on a foot like this just increases the tension which could lead to an injury. I have noticed clinically that most lameness's occur on the limb with the higher foot and smaller shoulder. When something can't bend it breaks.

The answer to these mismatched feet is to simply balance the feet to their conformational needs. One foot may not look exactly like the other but it will be healthy and the horse will stay sound. There is an old saying that you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear but you can make a sow's ear purse that will hold just as much money as a silk one. For more information on balance go to www.balancedbreakover.com.



What He Knows Best

Photographer Allen Russell chronicles life in the American West.

My life fairly well revolves around photography and horses. For a number of years now I have made my living from photography and horse-related professions. I've been a big-game outfitter, horse trainer, breeder, trader and long rider. I've enjoyed competing in reined cow horse, ranch horse, team penning and team roping, as well as endurance, chariot and Quarter Horse racing. Working cattle horseback is a passion at which, someday, I hope to become good. I headquarter out of my small ranch in the foothills of the Absaroka Range, west of Livingston, Montana.

I photograph what I know best, life in the American West. Although my photography has taken me around the world, the West has always been home. I often photograph at events that draw together groups of potential subjects. These events include rodeos, powwows, horse sales, gatherings and ranch brandings. I travel in a small motor home, mostly staying on two-lane highways and avoiding interstates and big cities. I often shoot on Indian reservations and consider them as exotic, fascinating and challenging as any country I have visited throughout the world.

Shooting primarily on location, I seldom set up my images. I'm a strong believer that fact is stranger and more interesting than fiction. I want to capture subjects in their world. My greatest challenge is capturing the natural moment when all elements come together to complete the ingredients of a good photograph. This can be anything from a herd of horses in full gallop getting into good composition to a pretty cowgirl finally breaking down and giving a big smile.

I spend a lot of time watching, positioning myself and waiting. I believe that my background gives me a leg up in anticipating if and when the right moment just might come. Little things, like understanding a horse's leads, a heeler's rhythm, or a cow's pressure tolerance can make the difference. Often, a shot doesn't materialize or falls apart at the last instant. Sometimes, it's something I will have another shot at, other times it's gone.

Some days I'll be found wandering slowly along a dirt road, wondering what life will give me around the next curve. Any way it goes, when I'm in the middle of photographing life in the American West, I constantly keep myself confused as to whether I'm working or having a good time.



Photographer Allen Russell with his Quarter Horse gelding, Red Man.



Bull Fighters

The rough stock rider's best friend, a bullfighter is always a great subject for photography. These two, at Montana's Crow Fair Rodeo, were as good as any I have ever seen.



Saddle Bronc Rider



Draft Horse Teamster
A Percheron draft horse team plows a field in northwest Montana. Draft horsemen have a deep affection for these gentle, devoted giants.



Welcoming Spring in the Absaroka Mountains
All of us who winter in Montana have a special day each year when the skies clear, the sun warms our back and we finally allow the thought to settle that spring is finally here. This was that day, and as I savored the thought I looked over and there stood Red Man, away from the rest of the herd. I could tell he was having the same thought.



War Horse

Each year, Montana's Real Bird family holds the Battle of the Little Bighorn Reenactment at the battle site on Medicine Tail Coulee. Most of the Indian reenactors are young Crows who enthusiastically paint their horses and themselves.



Sioux Traditional Dancer

I call this image I shot at Montana's Crow Fair Powwow "Pride" because of the subject's meticulous regalia and the way he carries himself. In Indian culture, traditional dancing tells of stalking game and battling enemies.



Powwow on Pine Ridge, South Dakota

This was one of those times when everything just came together. As I nervously waited for the grand entry to enter the arena, the light was so stunning that I knew I had the possibility for a great image if I could just put everything together in the seconds before light faded. As though on cue, a majestic traditional dancer came forward and the shot was made.



Crow Traditional Dancer

A Crow woman wears her tribe's traditional dress of bright indigos, reds and greens, covered by sacred elk ivory and a feather fan.

Held in the spring, Montana's Crow Fair Powwow celebrates a new beginning of life.



Going Home Broke

One of my favorites, this image sums up much about small-town rodeo.



Showing Off

These two young cowboys at a Gardiner, Montana, rodeo are with the event's stock contractors. I've photographed them through the years as they grew up horseback. The youngsters help pick up and are more comfortable horseback than on the ground. They also don't mind showing off a bit now and then.



A Little Help from Superman

Jake Costello, a top saddle-bronc rider, behind the chutes with his son. I told him it was cheating to have Superman as a helper.



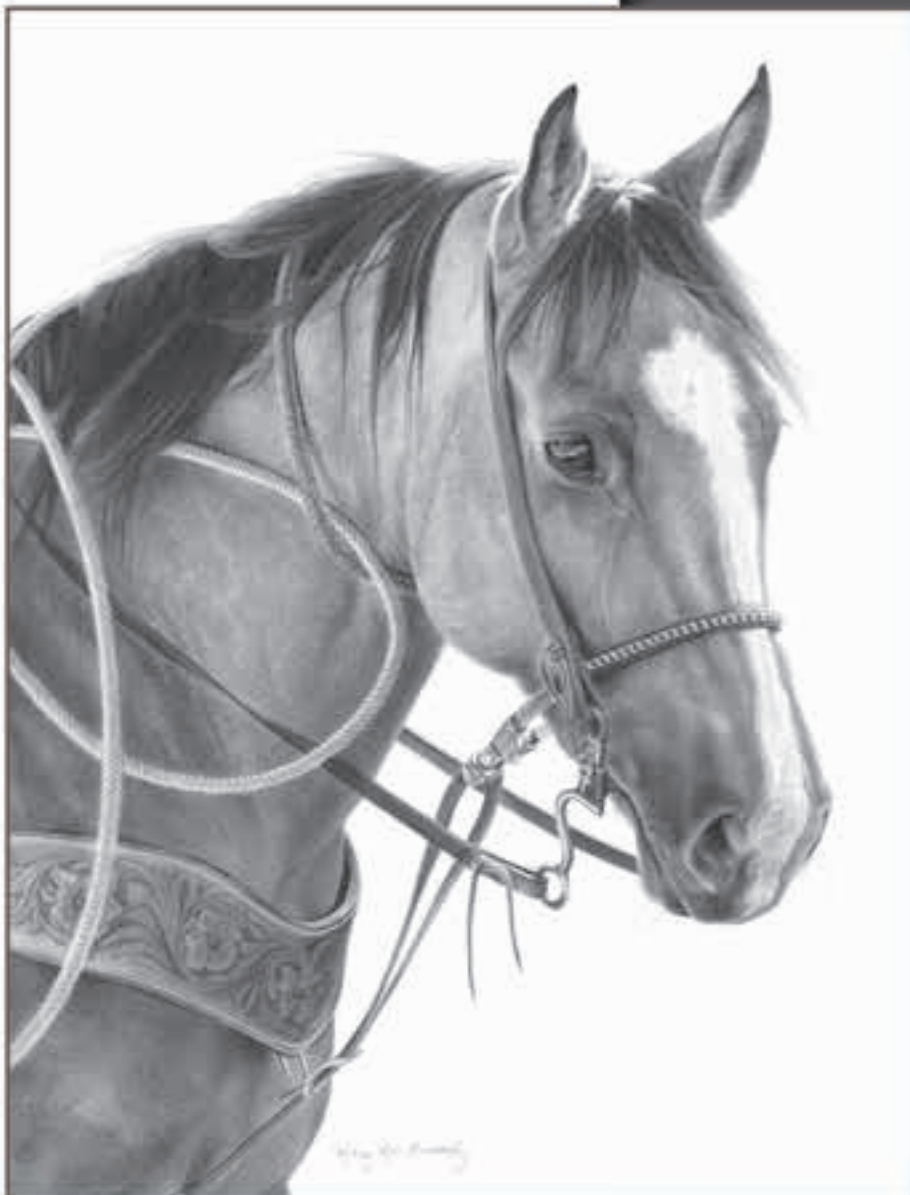
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Crow Indian Returns to Camp

I often shoot on Real Bird family land along Montana’s Little Bighorn River, where the Battle of the Little Bighorn occurred. It is a spiritual place.





HE KNOWS HIS JOB by Mary Ross Buchholz

BRIAN ASHER
WAYNE BAIZE
DON BELL
BUCKEYE BLAKE
TEAL BLAKE
BRENDA BRUCKNER
MARY ROSS BUCHHOLZ
KAYE BURIAN
TYLER CROW
STEVE DEVENYNS
MIKEL DONAHUE
RITCH GAITI
BRUCE GRAHAM
STEVE HARRIS
HAROLD HOLDEN
RICK JACKSON
CONNIE JOHNSON
GREG KELSEY
T. D. KELSEY
EARL KUHN
MEHL LAWSON
JAN MAPES
RICK MCCUMBER
GLYNNIS MILLER
LISA PERRY
ANNETTE RANDALL
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RANGE RADIO

Riding with Bob – Asleep At The Wheel's Ray Benson



By William Reynolds

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Austin, Texas-based Asleep at the Wheel could well be described as the absolute rulers of Texas swing. With nine Grammy Awards and twenty studio albums, the “Wheel” marked the 100th anniversary of legendary Bob Will’s birth with a landmark musical, *Ride With Bob*. In the musical, Asleep at the Wheel’s, Ray Benson plays himself as he boards a tour bus for a gig in Tulsa. The mysterious bus driver turns out to be the spirit of Bob Wills and takes Benson on a tour of Wills’ life, told in an uncomplicated “and-then” fashion. For Benson, who never met Wills, “It was the

conversation I never had.” *A Ride with Bob: The Bob Wills Musical*, has been performed nationwide from San Francisco’s Palace Fine Arts Theatre to The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.



“We’re a dance band. That’s what we’re about. And that’s plenty.” – Ray Benson

Over the course of the last 42 years, Philadelphia-born Ray Benson and the band he founded, Asleep At The Wheel, have boldly defied the fickle lures of the mainstream – and thrived – by sticking to the noble cause of keeping that distinctly American of musical art forms – Western Swing – alive and kicking. Along the way, they’ve entertained



hundreds of thousands and won praise and admiration from everyone from Willie Nelson to Bob Dylan, George Strait to Van Morrison. It's been quite a ride but listening to Ray, it's far from over.

"When I was a kid in the 50s I always wondered what the world was gonna be like and what I was gonna be doin' in the year 2000! The year 2000 seemed like a far off star, so distant that I'd never really reach it or live to see that momentous day. Heck, I had visited the "House of the Future"

at Disneyland and read all the Jules Verne books so I knew we would be flying cars on highways of radar and wearing rubber space suits. But a funny thing happened, the recent past became the present and the roots of Western Swing took a mighty hold on a few of us in the 70s and 80s. By the 90s it became clear that this hybrid of Western music and swing had not only survived but had become a part of the fabric of modern country music in a big way."

Big is a good way to put it. In the world of country music Ray Benson, all 6' 7" of him, has been hailed by many as the post-modern king of western swing. As the 9-time Grammy™ winning leader of Asleep at the Wheel, he holds the distinction of having won Grammys™ in each of the last four decades over the band's forty-plus years in the music business. Asleep at the Wheel is not just your typical dance band, they're an institution: an ever-shifting lineup (over 80 members to date) of like-minded musicians united under Benson's crusade to carry the torch of big band Western Swing music into the 21st Century.

For Ray Benson, the will to play the guitar began in Philadelphia, PA – far, far away from the city of



Austin, Texas, which the Wheel has proudly called home for over 30 years. "I was born in 1951, and big band music was still very much around, and in my community it was still very much the thing," Benson explains. "I played bass in my school stage band in tenth grade, and my musical director introduced us to Count Basie. My friend Lucky Ocean's parents were sort of like beatniks, and his dad gave us some Lester Young records when we were still in high school. But I just happened to be a weird kind of guy: I was also into folk music, Chicago blues and country. My goal was to be more different than anybody, and that's what Asleep at the Wheel was all about: doing roots music that was different and eclectic."

"I've been told that I'm relentless, so I guess I am," he says. "Every time that I figured I was going to quit, we'd have a wonderful, incredible show where the people were so appreciative that we were doing this music that it's like, 'Well, hell – this beats working, so why not keep doing it?' He pauses and then says with a grin, "Western swing ain't going away."

A shining moment for Ray Benson's philosophy came about with the release of the Wheel's critically



acclaimed *Ride With Bob* album. A tribute to Bob Wills and The Texas Playboys, the album struck gold on the charts and at the Grammys. The album features many of Bob Will's classics including "Roly Poly," "Cherokee Maiden," "Milk Cow Blues," "Faded Love," and "San Antonio Rose" – among others. All performed by the Wheel and everyone from Clint Black to Lee Ann Wolmack to Mark Chesnutt and the Squirrel Nut Zippers. "That's what made the album work in sort of a cross generational way," Ray continues. "I get the Squirrel Nut Zippers, who were at the time very popular and were right in the groove. They got it and were thrilled to do it – along with all the country artists. They were all so cool about it. Mark Chestnut, who's on the record, tells a story about a new kid in his band had who heard all this talk about Bob Wills. "Bob Wills, and who the hell is this Bob Wills?" he asked. So the kid went into a truck stop and bought a tape and back on the bus and he's listening to it and after a little bit comes up to Mark and says, "Mark, there's something wrong with this tape. There's some guy talking over everything." Mark says, "Those are the vaqueros." That addition Wills made was straight from the Mexican Vaqueros culture – perfect for the song – Ah-hah, yi-yi-yi! And that was what was so appealing about Bob, the ability to take all of this different music of the culture and do it. So with this album, I wanted to show that broad

interest and versatility. So when we did the St. Louis Blues with Merle Haggard and it's funny, Merle Haggard knew more about Bob Wills than anybody."

Ray's devotion to Bob Will's unique history has made him quite a student of the Texas fiddle player. "Bob was a farmer and at that time, all of West Texas was filled with cotton farmers – hard-scrabble cotton farmers. But the lure of the cowboy was always there for him as it was such a romantic notion. The man on his horse, who rides through, you know, and he's independent and everything. So from the earliest time there was also a horse culture in Bob's shows and Bob was *quite* a horseman. He rode out on stage and the band guys all had to ride out on horses for the rodeos. Now, these guys were jazz musicians, not cowboys, so many of them rode like jazz musicians – on the horns! Bob had a horse called Punkin and another one called Flea Bite and Punkin was his big "show" horse because every western star had a horse. That horse was a much about Bob's style as it was about the horse. It was that the myth of the cowboy – and myth is a funny word. The history of the cowboy mixed with the myth of the cowboy and then with the later "Hollywood-ization" of the cowboy. It was not historically correct, but it was culturally correct yet diverse – as was Bob Wills."

www.aridewithbob.com

www.asleepatthewheel.com



Asleep At the Wheel: *Route 66*
<http://youtu.be/6alMntvDZB8>



A Ride With Bob: The Bob Wills Musical, the back story.
<http://youtu.be/Uan1ncc5dHA>



Asleep At The Wheel with Ray Benson, Lyle Lovett and Suzie Bogguss
http://youtu.be/ffshJF_uGD4

The Road Trip List

More classic, must-have tunes for those early morning sojourns to the rodeo, a roping or just the drive to the office.

#13, 14, and 15 Lucinda Williams, Levett and McClure and Jimmy Buffett score from *Rancho Deluxe*

With this chapter in the continuing saga of our endlessly cool Road Trip List, we could be accused of swerving off the road a bit due to the fact that a couple of these albums may be a bit tough to find. But then that's the fun of all this, right?

Lucinda Williams

Lucinda Williams

Lucinda Williams released her classic, self-establishing and self-titled album, *Lucinda Williams*. This release featured "Passionate Kisses," a song later recorded by Mary Chapin Carpenter which garnered Lucinda her first Grammy Award for Best Country Song in 1994.

In 1988 Rough Trade Records released the self-titled *Lucinda Williams*, it was later re-released in 1998 by Koch. But here is the \$64,000 question – who produced the album? Williams' self-titled album was produced by non-other than Gurf Morlix. Gurf Morlix? Morlix was Williams' guitarist, band leader for over eleven years and produced both her 1988 self-titled album and 1992's *Sweet Old World*. Morlix has worked with the likes of Warren Zevon, Patty Griffin, Robert Earl Keen, Mary Gauthier and our own Tom Russell.



Of Williams, Emmylou Harris has said, "She is an example of the best of what country at least says it is, but, for some reason, she's completely out of the loop and I feel strongly that that's country music's loss." Harris recorded the title track from Williams's *Sweet Old World* for her career-redefining 1995 album, *Wrecking Ball*.

A force unto herself, Williams can be raw as well as hopelessly tender and has been subject of almost cult-like adoration. This album was her first and on it sits one of the classic story songs about a young woman breaking away from a life as a waitress to find her fortune in Big Town, USA. The lyrics

of "The Nights Too Long" may tell the story, but Williams' voice paints the true picture.

"The Nights Too Long" by Lucinda Williams

"Sylvia was workin' as a waitress in Beaumont
She said, "I'm movin' away, I'm gonna get what I want
I'm tired of these small town boys that don't move
fast enough
I'm gonna find me one who wears a leather jacket
And likes his livin' rough"



So she saved her tips and overtime and bought an
old rusty car
She sold most everything she had to make a brand
new start
She said, "I won't be needing these silly dresses and
nylon hose
'Cause when I get to where I'm goin'
I'm gonna buy me all new clothes"

The night's too long, it just drags on and on
And then there's never enough
That's when the sun starts comin' up
Don't let go of her hand
You just might be the right man

She loves the night
She loves the night
She doesn't want the night
Don't want it to end
Don't want it to end

Levett and McClure

Living in the Country

Dan Levett and Marc McClure both from California's San Fernando Valley, released this Warner Bros album in 1969. Levett, later a guitarist with the Beau Brummels and McClure (of Joyous Noise) released this distinguished folk and country rock album very



early in the music's genre. Both proved to be more than average singers but their guitar work on tracks such as "Paradise," "Living In The Country" and "Farewell to Sally Brown" stand today as

superbly memorable. Ironically this album can be found again due to the resurgence of vinyl. Worth the hunt.

Jimmy Buffett

Rancho Deluxe (Soundtrack)

Remember way back to issue # 1.6 (it had the hackamores on the cover) of this magazine? Our first road trip list featured album #1 – the soundtrack to *Paris, Texas*. This soundtrack surrounded the film

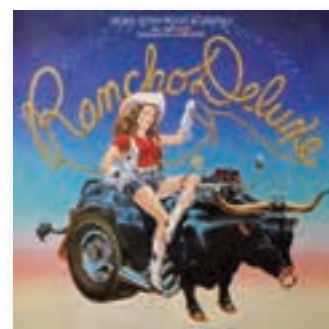


Jeff Bridges

Rancho Deluxe, released in 1975 and featured Jeff Bridges and Sam Waterston along with a number of superb character actors including Slim Pickens, Harry Dean Stanton (also in *Paris, Texas*) and Elizabeth Ashley.

The album was Buffett's sixth and he wrote all the songs along with the "incidental" music as it is called. Two songs on the album received a lot of radio play, "Livingston Saturday Night" and "Wonder

Why We Ever Go Home." But it's the lyrics of the theme song to the film and the often neglected classic about love gone wrong, "Left Me with a Nail to Drive," that makes



this album a must have for parrot-heads as well Montana-era Buffett fans. The circle on this one gets even tighter in that the screenplay of the film was written by Thomas McGuane, husband of Buffett's sister, Laurie.



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The Taproot of American Cowboy Music

Cowboy Celtic connects the past with the present.

By Jayme Feary

A plant's secondary roots seldom grow in a straight line. They meander here and there, growing downward and outward from the taproot in search of water and nutrients. If a spade or shovel shears the taproot, the secondary roots, and the plant, will often die.

Likewise, new music genres extend like secondary roots, searching for audiences. While they spread into new soil, they must remain connected to the nourishment of their musical origins or they, too, may die.

American country and American western music are not the same. They share a similar rural heritage, and industry types linked the two for a time, but western is as different from country as a yam is from a sweet potato. Many listeners don't care about the distinction. After all, music is music. And who doesn't enjoy both yams and sweet potatoes? But some fans of western draw sharp lines, detesting modern country music and its pop leanings. Likewise, some country fans hate the western genre, writing it off as nostalgic and irrelevant, music of the past.

Despite the differences, country and western music sprouted in similar, rural soil. A primary difference is that the genres grew up in different regions. Fiddler Les Hamilton, self-described musicologist and member of the award-winning cowboy band Prickly Pair, says:

"Country music as we know it today has its roots in the South. Western music had to do with the great expanses of land from Canada to Mexico and all of the influences that were there." Think overalls and seed company caps vs. Wranglers and cowboy hats.

Country music, though steeped in southern culture, has always sought to broaden its audience, reinventing itself by following pop music. Western music, like its cousin bluegrass, is a form of folk music. Regarding western music, Don Cusic, music historian and professor of music business at Nashville's Belmont University, says, "In terms of the songs, it's not the sound itself so much as the lyrics. If the subject matter is life in the West and the ranching culture, then they're western."

We might, therefore, call western the "Folk Music of the American West." The subgenre of cowboy music is the folk music of a specific part of western culture – ranch life.

Some music experts say that western music is an outgrowth of country. But although the two genres share commonalities, they developed somewhat separately. Country music remained a folk genre until radio helped to popularize and commercialize it. Western music developed independently before anyone who lived west of the Mississippi had ever heard a country song.



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photo courtesy Cowboy Celtic

Cowboy Celtic: Nathan McCavana, Denise Withnell, David Wilkie, Joseph Hertz and Keri Lynn Zwicker

Hamilton points out the fact that his area in Wyoming didn't get a local radio station until the 1950s.

"We didn't know about Bob Wills or Bill Monroe," he says. "We only knew about what was passed on through the traditions of our family. There were no record stores."

Without radio stations, Hamilton and other westerners developed their own music, which evolved from the tunes of their ancestors.

At times the two genres – influenced by music from western movies, the western swing sound, and the culture of cowboys and horses – grew together like conjoined twins. But at their heart they remained separate, individuals from different places. Western

music rooted itself in the soil of its own inhabitants – immigrants who had brought their culture, including music, with them from other places. Mexicans, African-Americans, and the Irish and Scottish (Celts) exerted the most influence.

Cowboy music focuses on cowboy culture: ranching, horses, people and western rural life. Much of cowboy music tends to focus on the past and lament all that is lost. It is often nostalgic, though more frequently today's artists are writing and singing about contemporary subjects, such as performance-horse events, technology, conservation and the effects of modernity.

Today, mostly because of the proliferation of cowboy music and poetry festivals, cowboy music is growing in



popularity. Rick Huff, music critic and executive vice president of the Western Music Association, says, “[Western music] is a wide-open thing, and because it has not had commercial attention, it’s kind of grown like wild weeds.” He points out that there are more artists performing and working in western music today than during its golden era of the 1940s and ’50s, the heyday of cowboy movies. Today, more than 200 specialty radio shows feature western music.

Cowboy music owes much of its popularity to the immigrant cultures that produced it. Celtic culture had a particularly profound influence. Here’s the oversimplified history: In the late 1840s, roughly when the fur trade ended in the American West, settlers began spreading across the land. Needing to escape starvation, the Irish immigrated in large numbers. Professor Cusic says, “The great migration from Ireland happened in the 1840s and ’50s with the Irish potato famine.” Hamilton adds that, “During the famine, the Irish landed here, but were forced to move inland. They brought with them their skill, which was herding animals. They also brought their music.” The Irish joined many Scots who had immigrated to America after being expelled from their lands in the 1750s. Streams of Celtic peoples flowed into the western United States.

On the frontier, Celts mixed with Mexicans, Brits, French, Asians, African-Americans from the South, and of course, native Indians. These groups conflated to form a western melting pot of culture. The Mexicans (influenced by the Spanish) and the southern African-Americans had arguably the greatest influence on the culture. But the Celtic peoples – mainly the Irish and Scot – made huge


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contributions, too. The Celtic culture revolved around music, and it loaned its melodies and harmonies to a surprising number of American cowboy songs. Says music critic Huff, “The Celtic influence is the predominant overseas influence. It’s largely Irish.” But some experts believe the Scottish contributed as much or more.

Settlers appropriated Celtic tunes and changed the lyrics to fit their new lives in the American West. Many of the most famous cowboy songs are really Celtic

melodies with American lyrics. Songs like “Phelim Brady, the Bard of Armagh” received new words and became “Streets of Laredo.” “Bonnie Dundee” morphed into “Fareweel Tae Tarwathie” and then into “Railroad Corral.” Some people would take an original American song and apply a Celtic style. Like Les Hamilton and his late wife, Locke, some western musicians routinely matched a Celtic tune to a cowboy song or poem. Hamilton comes from a long line of Scots. He understands that the cowboy music he plays today stems from his family’s heritage. “We were playing to our roots,” he says.

Today, Celtic melodies and harmonies remain a cornerstone of cowboy music. But unless listeners are music historians, they might not know this fact because the Celtic influence is not always obvious. Many cowboy songs sound purely American.

David Wilkie is at the forefront of educating the public about the Celtic taproot of cowboy music. He is not an academically-trained historian, but he is perhaps as knowledgeable about the Celtic-cowboy link as any person. And he happens to be a Canadian living in Turner Valley, Alberta. Wilkie is an acclaimed mandolin player and descendent of Scottish grandparents; he teaches through entertainment. He founded Cowboy Celtic, a band whose music combines exceptional writing, musicianship and scholarship. Huff describes the group as “a link to the Irish heritage of western music and an important creative step beyond it.”

Wilkie has always loved music. Born in San Francisco, he moved to Canada and worked as the music director at Calgary country radio station CFAC. He hosted a cowboy music show and enjoyed the benefits of a steady job, but all he wanted was to perform music. He began playing mandolin for Ian Tyson and eventually started his own group, the Great Western Orchestra.

In 1985, Wilkie and Tyson performed at the first

National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada, where they played to minuscule crowds. But late one night in a bar, a twist of fate occurred. Wilkie says, “This guy got up and sang ‘Annie Laure’ and it just stopped everybody. They were very moved by it. And I thought, ‘Geez, what’s that all about?’” Wilkie remembered hearing the song from his Scottish grandmother. How many cowboy songs, he wondered, shared a Celtic history? So began a long journey with many surprises. In 1989, he traveled to Scotland and Ireland where “I started hearing songs in the pubs that I knew as cowboy songs.”

In 1995, Wilkie turned his new knowledge into what would eventually become a new subgenre of cowboy music. He produced and recorded the album *Cowboy Celtic*. “I had no plans on doing it again. It was just a one-time project.” But the reaction was so positive that he formed a cowboy band with a Celtic sound that both entertained and educated his audiences. To the basic instruments of guitar, mandolin, and fiddle, Wilkie added an Irish whistle and a harp. What would people think? A cowboy band with a harp! Demand for the music took off and invitations to perform flowed in. Today, Wilkie says, “That was sixteen years ago and we’re still doing it. I never thought anything was going to come of it. Sixteen years. I can’t believe it.”

Wilkie not only performed the cowboy version of Celtic tunes, he also took American cowboy songs and performed them in the Celtic style. Professor Cusic describes Cowboy Celtic’s brand of music as “a western band in that they showcase the Irish and western connection, but they are Irish folk as well. They are new interpretations of the Irish music medium.”

Wilkie wrote his own songs, including the rousing and controversial “Custer Died A-Runnin’.” The result was a mixture of music rooted to its past but firmly grounded in the present. He traveled to Ireland and Scotland to record his second album, *Cowboy Ceilidh*;



as with the first album, praise rolled in from critics and listeners alike. *Cowboy Ceilidh* won a prestigious Wrangler Award for Outstanding Traditional Western Music Album from the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.

This award points to two of the keys to Cowboy Celtic's success: the band's unique sound and its exceptional musicianship. Cowboy Celtic recordings are unique in style and superior in quality. Huff says, "They are so good. I think their recordings are an accurate reflection of what you hear live. They are in total control of their sound. You are not ever cheated when you see them live. If you like what you hear [on a recording], you will love what you see." Attend a concert and try to keep from tapping your toes or dancing in the aisle.

Wilkie knows the band is fortunate to have such skilled musicians. "I've had the same band for a long, long time," he says. "We're really good friends and I just love everybody's playing. It just blows my mind. They get me going." The same group continually tours the United States and Canada, and has toured Ireland and Scotland four times. Last summer they completed a successful swing through Peru and Ecuador. The unabated appetite for Cowboy Celtic's music indicates that contemporary music rooted in the past can be a commercially viable art form. Other cowboy-celtic bands have formed. It seems audiences long for fresh music that honors the present by celebrating the past.

Having accomplished so much, what's next for Cowboy Celtic? More of the same, Wilkie says. "I still like to do it. I would never think of not doing it. I like the cowboy scene and the people. I don't ever get tired of it."

Sixteen years, six albums and counting, and Cowboy Celtic continues to entertain and educate audiences about the origins of cowboy music. Firmly rooted in the history of the genre, the music continues to develop and grow secondary roots. As Huff says, "[Cowboy Celtic] is a nod to the past and a step into the future. They keep the heritage alive and take it in new directions."



Jayne Feary is a writer living in Wyoming.
Learn more about Cowboy Celtic at www.cowboyceltic.com.


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A Western Moment



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Many people have asked if the reata in our magazine's name (the *masthead* in the publishing biz) is a real reata. It certainly is and was made by none other than the legendary vaquero, rawhide braider and artist, Ernie Morris of Templeton, California.

See Ernie's work and his books at www.elvaquero.com





TWO WRAPS AND A HOOEY

In Praise of a Little Seasoning

The great Montana writer, William Kittredge, summed up his view of older – let’s call them – “seasoned” westerners in his essay, *Running Horses*. “They were our nobility,” he wrote, “I think they dreamed of capabilities and beauty. They knew better than to imagine you could own anything beyond a coherent self.”

I believe this same humility and understanding can be applied to the steady nature of solid, aged saddle horses. And it brings to mind the memory of an older sorrel gelding a friend of mine owned and that passed through their lives.

Whenever my friend’s daughter would go into the gelding’s pasture to catch him up, the old boy would stand soldier–still. She would reach up and hug his neck as he dropped his head so she could slip the halter on him. When she would start back for the gate, he’d walk right out with her at a good walk, staying at her side – not pulling ahead or dragging behind her.

I remember them at gatherings. Together, standing in the circle with the other riders, ready to move out for the morning’s work. Some of the other horses were much younger and had some difficulty standing still –

what with all the people and horses and the excitement they were starting to feel. That little gelding stood rock still, ears forward and ready for the day, as his charge re–coiled her rope and tied it on. That branding season would mark the gelding’s 24th year and while he was older than most of the horses there, he wasn’t old, just a little more “seasoned.” And the little girl riding him wouldn’t want any other horse under her. Neither would my friend, her father, sitting two horses away. That gelding had been through three of his kids – one boy had shown him in local 4H and FFA competitions, hauling him all over the West – while his other son had taken him through four years of high-school rodeo and an endless number of weekend team ropings – not to mention the countless gatherings and brandings on their ranch and on neighbors’ places.

That day, the little twenty-four-year-old gelding – a sorrel, grade horse with no papers or fancy registration to his name – carried a ten-year-old girl – a third youngster in the family – into a new chapter of western adventures for both of them. “I wish I had a pasture full of horses like him,” the father told me. “That’s a horse I could put anybody on and never

worry.” He smiled, looking over at her, “Now I can’t get her off of him. He doesn’t seem to mind though. Just hope he lasts.”



photo by the author

Riding another circle, starting another story.

found “respect for one’s elders” is coming from the recent growth of organized and sanctioned ranch ropings and similar ranch-oriented contests. These are

competitions that feature ranch horses – not show horses – doing ranch-oriented work such as sortings and doctoring, events that allow quiet, seasoned skills to be shown – where slow is fast, with competency outweighing everything else. It is in the union of such work where the work becomes a dance making the two barely discernible from each other – as writer Thomas McGuane wrote, “...some enchanted transformation through which the horse and rider become a third

That’s not an unusual story really, even though for many, older horses can be looked on sometimes like an older car – after three, four, or five years – some sell and get a new one. For years, young horses have been raced and been in competitions where three-year olds are considered experienced, in many cases finished with “showing” careers. To their credit many of these young horses are capable of taking all that fast training and use in those early formative years and go on to other lives as great competitive, pleasure or family horses. Many make it, many don’t.

Today, we see more horses being used and even celebrated for their skills and “life experience” late into their teens and even into their twenties. Maybe this new

much greater thing.” If it had to be put into one word, it would be trust – a relationship that only comes with time.

Historically, we value the stories handed down by the *viejos* – the old ones – in the West. It would seem only natural then, to also value those who have served within those stories. Those skilled, aged horses that served the cowboys and stockmen so willingly, so skillfully, for so many years. Many *are* valued. The lucky ones are treasured. Like the little sorrel gelding trotting off with a precious cargo, showing a ten-year cowgirl the wonders of the West. Riding another circle, starting another story. BR



Keith Seidel



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