The Journal of the American West

Ranch & Reata

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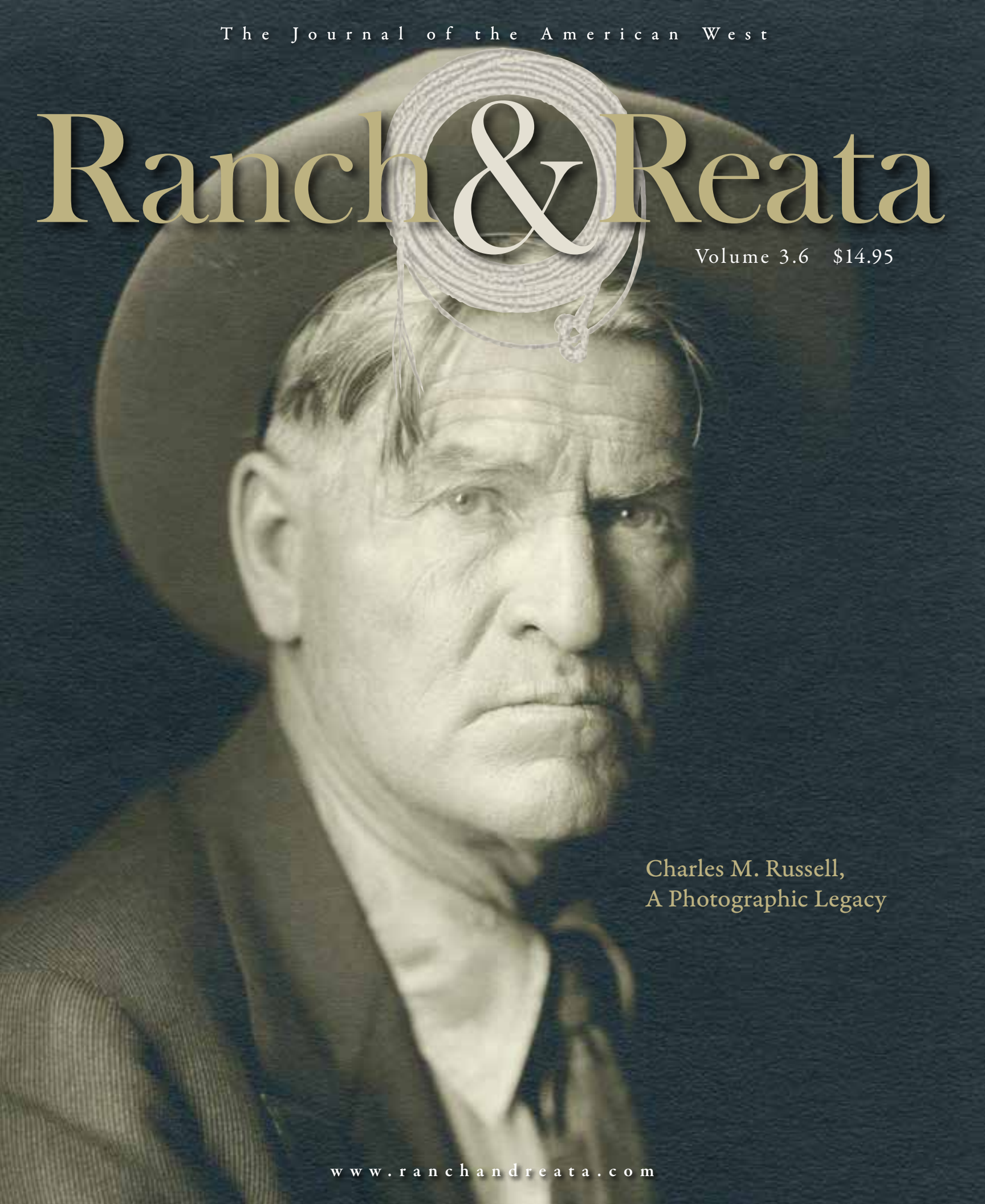

Charles M. Russell, A Photographic Legacy

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FRONT GATE

photo by Tamara Gooch

Early morning traffic.

Photograph by Tamara Gooch

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Cover image: Charles M. Russell, 1864-1926. The image is from the new book, *Charles M. Russell, Photographing the Legend* by Larry Len Peterson. See more in our "Books to Find" section. Photo courtesy University of Oklahoma Press.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Wolf Stories, Past and Present

By A.J. Mangum

This issue includes Melissa Mylchreest's story, "Hope on the Range," about the Blackfoot Challenge, a partnership linking ranchers, wildlife specialists and federal agencies in Montana's Blackfoot Valley. Among the program's goals: a progressive approach to managing the increasing threat wolves pose to the region's cattle herds. The Challenge employs a range rider, as Melissa writes, "to reduce negative encounters between livestock and predators." The job description brought to mind another story about an effort to reduce wolf predation on cattle herds, and the unexpected reaction it triggered from readers.

Years ago, while at another magazine, I assigned a contributor to write about the efforts of a group of ranchers that had banded together in an ambitious effort to improve grasslands, create new beef-marketing campaigns, and protect their herds from wolves, which had been reintroduced to their region. The writer interviewed the group's founders and managers, and produced an in-depth piece on the strategies they'd put in place to overcome some of the challenges of ranching in the modern West. To illustrate the story, we acquired some unpublished Associated Press photos depicting the program's own range rider, a cowboy hired to spend

photo by Melissa Mylchreest

A wolf track in Montana's Blackfoot Valley

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months at a time in some of the Northern Rockies' most remote backcountry, protecting herds from wolves.

The reintroduction of wolves to cattle country is among the West's most controversial topics, so I expected strong reader reactions to the story. I couldn't have predicted the nature of the reactions we received, though.

Once the issue hit newsstands and mailboxes, I began hearing from outraged readers who lived in the region in which the ranchers' group focused its efforts. They weren't bothered by the existence of an alliance looking out for stockmen's interests, nor did their anger have anything to do with the debate surrounding wolf reintroduction. No, readers were not upset at the story's actual subject matter. They were irate over what they *perceived* its subject matter to be.

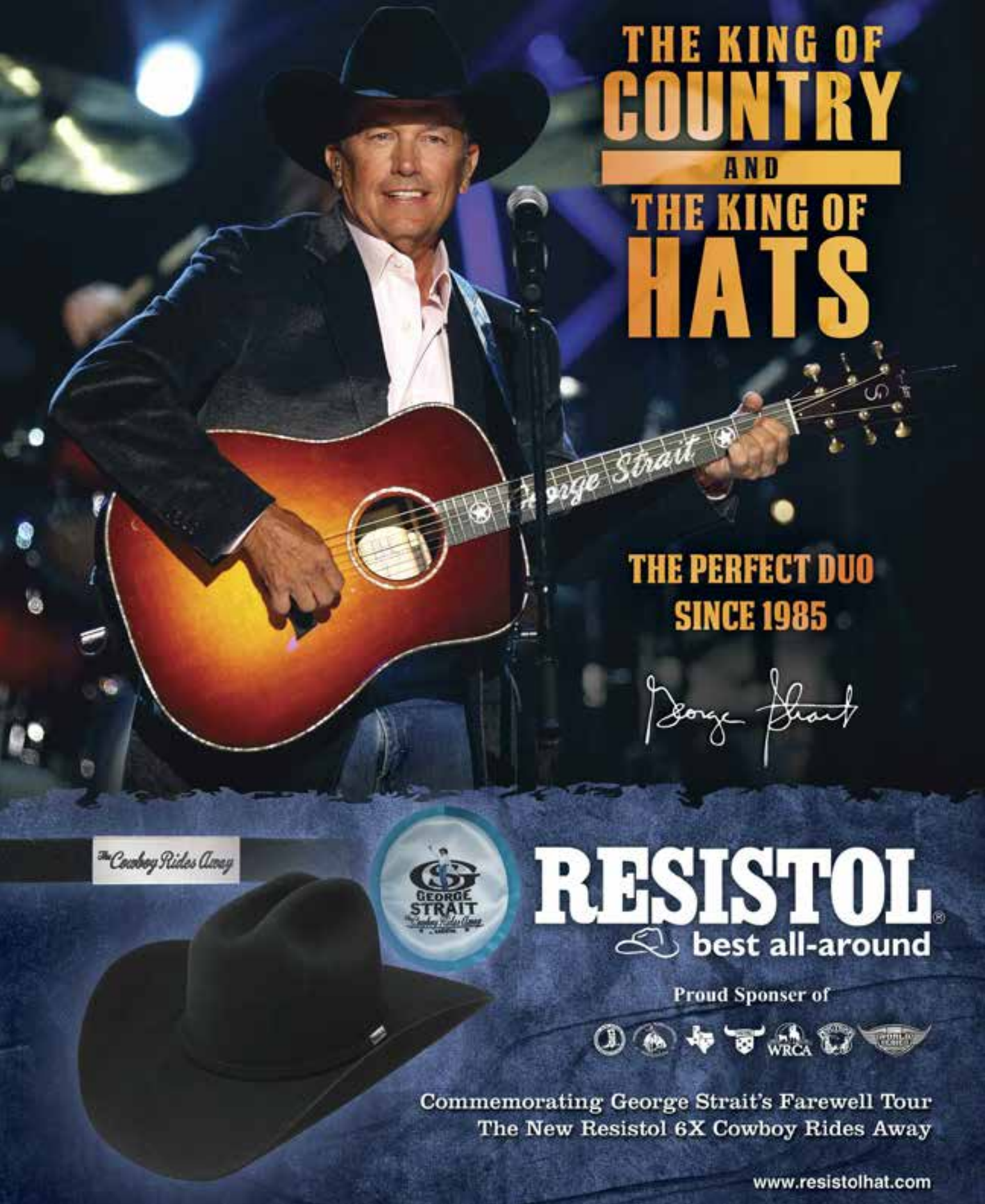
As it happened, the cowboy hired by the group – the range rider depicted in our AP photos – had a criminal record, and had previously been arrested for crimes related to illegal immigration and horse theft. Our story, of course, wasn't about the range rider; the writer hadn't quoted him, or even interviewed him. For the purposes of our story, he was simply a prop for photos illustrating one of the ranching group's many initiatives.

However, not one of our many angry callers had read the story. Based solely on his photo appearing in the magazine, they were convinced this bad actor was the story's central theme, and that making a hero of him was our editorial goal. They were not about to be convinced otherwise. When I tried to explain the story's actual content (a strategy I abandoned after the first few calls), callers countered with the storyline they imagined existed within the article. I actually began to feel a sense of disappointment in our story, as the one being described to me, while pure fantasy, was much more interesting.

What amazed me was the consistency in the callers' false narratives. Each offered criticisms inspired by the same menu of offending excerpts that simply couldn't be found in the actual article. I formed a hypothesis: One reader (*subscriber* might be the better term, as there was clearly little *reading* being done) opened his or her magazine, saw the AP photos in question and, rather than reading any accompanying text, made some very specific leaps of logic as to the article's content. Said subscriber then began working the local grapevine, sharing a concocted version of the article with anyone who would listen. The fires of collective outrage stoked, folks began dialing my number. I ended up hearing from close to two dozen vitriolic callers, none of whom had any idea what the offending story was actually about.

The takeaway: Some readers don't read, attention spans can be painfully short, and motivation to check one's facts before sounding off can be nonexistent. And, while we're told that an image is worth a thousand words, a photo taken out of context can suggest a storyline that just isn't there.

Nonetheless, this once-disconcerting memory now serves only to entertain, and I'm happy we're able to include Melissa's story in this issue. It's an insightful look at an innovative team that could be rewriting, for the better, the rules as to how predators are managed in cattle country. It also happens to have great photos of a highly reputable range rider, and is a joy to read.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Interesting Things and Stories from Out West

And so it's winter, and a crazy one at that. Nutty cold weather in the east and stupid drought dry conditions out here in the west. So rather than get riled up, just figure winter is a time to sort of "get ready to get ready" for spring. It always comes so until it arrives we have loaded this issue's Of Note section with great things to read and to listen to – along with some news and items of interest from out West. Have a peaceful read and hold on. Spring will be here soon enough.

photo courtesy Photofest

Actor Steve McQueen in the title role as Junior Bonner. McQueen was one of Hollywood's biggest during the 1970s.

"Tell Him Junior Sent You"

The Making of Junior Bonner

By Dan Gagliasso

"Amarillo by morning, up from San Antone.
Everything that I've got is just what I've got on.
When the sun is high in that Texas sky
I'll be bucking at the county fair.
Amarillo by morning, Amarillo I'll be there."

— George Strait

photo courtesy Photofest

For many, Steve McQueen created the ultimate, iconic figure of a rodeo cowboy.

It was 1972 and Hollywood had rediscovered the world of rodeo. Larry "Bull" Mahan had won five consecutive World's Champion All-Around Cowboy buckles, he would win a sixth a few years later, and had captured the imaginations of *Sports Illustrated* readers and the viewers of *Wide World of Sports*, establishing the rodeo cowboy as a world-class athlete in the modern public's mind.

In the 1950s, Hollywood had covered rodeo inspired by the colorful South Dakota saddle bronc rider Casey Tibbs and the record setting "Iron Man" of rodeo, Jim Shoulders. Tibbs eventually found himself immortalized on television screens by Jack Lord as the fictional Stoney Burke on ABC, though without his trademark purple chaps, purple shirts and wild ways. Occasional films like *Bronco Buster*, *The Lusty Men* and *Arena* tried to capture 1950s rodeo, but in the end were too filtered through "Hollywood" eyes and sensibilities.

All of that changed in 1972 when two of the best rodeo movies ever were released, Cliff Robertson's heartfelt *J. W. Coop*, which he co-wrote, produced, directed and starred in, and director Sam Peckinpah's evocative *Junior Bonner*, starring superstar Steve McQueen. As a suburban kid in northern California who'd spent time around ranch and country folks, I loved both films. But it was Steve McQueen as Junior Bonner that finally inspired me to join the California Cowboy's and International Rodeo Association circuits, where I was bucked off of way too many bulls.

photo courtesy Katy Haber Collection

McQueen tried to do many of his own stunts, notice the position of the flank strap and the bronc's halter here. Moments earlier this bronc had blown up in the chute under the actor.

McQueen was the standard bearer of "cool" back then and playing a laconic, iconoclast bull rider who has to "go down his own road" made him all the more so.

Junior Bonner's crazed but brilliant director, Sam Peckinpah, was better known for bloody body counts in films that grabbed audience by the guts, like *The Wild Bunch*, *Major Dundee* and *Straw Dogs*. Yet this almost gentle character story of an aging bull rider who returns home to true-to-life family

photo courtesy Photofest

McQueen in a scene with Robert Preston. Preston co-starred as McQueen's father, Ace Bonner.

conflicts and his hometown rodeo struck a cord with both McQueen and Peckinpah. The usually head-butting director knew these kinds of people; he'd grown up around Fresno and Coarsegold, California where, as one of his best character actor and former rodeo bullfighter Slim Pickens once recounted, "It was a damn rough place, more like the turn of the century than the twenties or thirties. There were a lot of tough old characters up there; you had to live through it to understand what it was really like. But it was a hell of a good old time."

If Sam didn't know modern rodeo, he'd at least tried his hand at it at the Pines Junior Rodeo back in 1938. Telling writer Garner Simmons, "I rode this one bull calf who dumped me on my ass but good. And I was just bullheaded enough to try another. Well, that son of a bitch turned right around and did the same thing to me." Young Sam got the message, but it also gave him a healthy respect for rodeo hands in general.

Screenwriter Jeb Rosebrook had spent summers in Prescott as a teenager and had attended the Prescott Frontier Days Rodeo, back then the oldest continuing rodeo in the world. His original screenplay was conceived as a study of a conflicted Western family set against the background of the changing West in modern America. Traditionalist dreamers like Junior and his dad Ace, wonderfully played by Robert Preston, verses the modern commercialism that younger brother Curly zealously pursues like a junior executive. At one point, Curly tells big brother Junior, "I'm working on my first million. You're still working on eight seconds."

Though filmed and set in the early 1970s, *Junior Bonner* is in many ways more of a 1950s rodeo movie. Robertson's *J. W. Coop* showed the culture clash of rodeo hotshots like Larry Mahan who only worked one end of the arena, flew their own planes, wore their hair stylishly long and had their own stockbrokers. In *Junior Bonner*, McQueen and his friend and fellow top competitor Red Terrwilliger, played by Bill McKinny, work rough stock events and the steer wrestling. They haul their bulldogging horses down the road behind big ol' Cadillacs and have the time to hang out, brawl and gamble instead of juggling good draws and hitting half a dozen other big Fourth of July rodeos on what is known in the rodeo world as "Cowboy's Christmas." The lack of rodeo authenticity really didn't matter, since the film was more about families and the end of an era. It was the people who came off totally believable.

photo courtesy Photofest

McQueen with a lingering look from his role in *The Thomas Crown Affair* three years earlier.

Peckinpah's personal assistant and girlfriend at the time, Katy Haber, recently told me "*Junior Bonner* was really about Sam's relationship with his father. If you look closely, all of his films had that theme somewhere in them." It was most obvious in *Junior Bonner*, though Robert Preston's Ace Powell was far more of a charming rogue than the director's father, who was a respected lawyer and Superior Court judge.

As depicted in the film, Ace Bonner is a former rodeo champion himself, a glad-handing rounder of a dreamer who has chased everything from silver mines and the friendly ladies of Nevada brothels to mountain lions. Now in his sixties, he wants to go off to the last frontier of Australia for a new wild goose chase, but entrepreneur son Curly, played by Joe Don Baker, who has sold off the family ranch to finance his own success, won't send him. McQueen's Junior always seems to be in his father's shadow, but doesn't mind at all. To Junior he is always Ace, more of a best friend and wayward big brother than a father. Junior Bonner, the quite dignity of a simple, decent man almost at the end of his rope, still digs down one more time for one last ounce of "Cowboy Try."

photo courtesy Photofest

McQueen horseback. From his role as Josh Randall in the 1958 television series, *Wanted: Dead Or Alive* to his big screen role in *The Magnificent Seven*, McQueen was quite at home horseback.

One of the most effecting scenes in the film is when Junior has entered him and his dad in the wild cow milking, a usually raucous and unofficial rodeo event that mainly involved local entries. Except for the interference of Ace's dog, the father and son team almost win. Father Ace looks confused as Junior downs the half-full Coke bottle of milk ending any chance of winning. "We could've won!" Ace starts to scold his son, but Junior smiles and places his arm around his dad's shoulders, "We did, Ace."

Academy Award winner Ben Johnson, who came from a family of World's Champion ropers, played stock contractor Buck Roan. In1953, Johnson won the PRCA World's Championship in Team Roping. He always liked to reminisce that it was movie money he made working for John Ford on classics like *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949) and *Wagonmaster* (1950) that gave him the funds to pursue that World's Champion buckle.

Later in life, Johnson remembered, "I never had the money to buy all the equipment: trailers, car, good horses and what have you. So, when I got in that position, I quit everything, the picture business and everything else – and went rodeoin'. I made quite a bit of money that year, but you have to help your friends along sometimes to get on to the next show. So, consequentially, at the end of the year, all I had was a broke down car, a mad wife and no money, but I'd won that World's Championship."

Johnson knew that earlier rodeo world like the back of his hand, and Casey Tibbs was also along to coordinate the film's rodeo scenes. If you look closely, you'll notice that the trophy buckle McQueen wears in the film is the 1953 Rodeo Cowboys Association World's Champion Team Roper buckle. Ben Johnson loaned that buckle to McQueen. Today the film's costume designer would commission a top silversmith to make several buckles for the lead character, but this was a film made almost on the fly, which is what makes it feel so real.

Jim Nichols was a local disc jockey at KNOT in Prescott back in 1971 during the filming. "I watched a lot of the

filming. Peckinpah shot it all very real. I remember watching Ben Johnson and McQueen doing a shot walking by the Buckey O'Neill statue downtown in front of the courthouse."

The whole town of Prescott seemed to jump in to help out, from the rodeo committee to the merchants and just regular folks. The annual rodeo parade was a centerpiece of the story where Junior and Ace reunite and it was all filmed during the actual parade. "Peckinpah shot it with multiple cameras all around," remembers Nichols. "He was really a hard working director and got a full days work out of every day I watched them."

photo courtesy Photofest

In 1972's *Junior Bonner*, Steve McQueen played a rodeo hand returning to his hometown rodeo to keep his competing years alive just a little longer.

Screenwriter Rosebrook told me that locals played some of the most memorable roles in the film. "There was a fill-in bouncer named Jim at Matt's Bar, right next door to the Palace where we filmed the big fight scene. Sam decided that he was 'the guy' and just went over and got him and told him this is what I want you to do," chuckles Rosebrook. Big Jim, who towered over everyone in the bar fight, uses cowboy logic to break up the big brawl. He slugs his way up to the stage, takes off his hat and, over the noise, announces to the band leader, "I think it's time to play something patriotic, fellas." Rosebrook had spent enough time around cowboys to know that there never was a cowboy fight that couldn't be broken up by the "Star Spangle Banner."

The two barrel racers who travel with Junior's friendly nemesis Red, one of which seems to have romantic history with Junior, were played by fifth generation Arizona rancher Roxanne Knight and local horsewoman Sandra Pew. She and her husband Galyn were recently named the 2010 Ranchers of the Year by the Arizona Farm Bureau.

Local singer Rod Hart and the Bob Cox Band wound up doing two great original songs, "Rodeo Man" and "Arizona Morning," for the film. They beat out nationally known Buck Owens and his band for the privilege. "Arizona Morning" is used to great effect in the beginning of the film as Peckinpah utilizes split screens of Junior driving and thinking back to the previous night's buck off of top bull Sunshine.

If you look closely during the rodeo grounds scene when McQueen waits to see if Ben Johnson's stock contractor has rigged the draw allowing him one more shot at the unridden bull Sunshine, you'll see 1972 World's Champion Steer Roper Allen Keller in the background. The always rough and ready Keller became a stuntman as well as a close friend and sometimes bodyguard to director Peckinpah.

It was local businessman, Frontier Days' Rodeo chairman and Arizona Film Commission member William Pierce who was the glue that held everything together. He recently told me, "They were looking to film in New Mexico so I asked what they needed and then showed them that I could find whatever they wanted around Prescott." Pierce found locations, made arrangements and did whatever it took to help the filmmakers. He even played himself taking Junior's entry fees in the rodeo sequences. "I got a call from casting at midnight telling me I was doing a scene with Steve McQueen the next morning. I'm no actor but a movie like that was real good for the community so I did it and it worked out fine."

Though McQueen liked to do a lot of his own stunts, stunt coordinator Mickey Gilbert and professional bull rider

photo courtesy Katy Haber Collection

Controversial director Sam Peckinpah looks relaxed in this scene with McQueen and Robert Preston. Sandra Pew and Roxanne Knight on horseback played the barrel racing Twine sisters.

Frank Kelly doubled for McQueen in many of the bull riding scenes. Some of the most bone jarring scenes where Junior hangs up in his rope on Sunshine were captured with Pierce's son-in-law, a former top American Junior Rodeo Association bull rider, as the actor's stunt double. "He took a suicide hitch when he took his wrap. So hanging up was a good possibility. Once he hung up, Peckinpah kept hollering to keep the cameras rolling," says Pierce who saw the action up close doubling as one of the rodeo clowns.

In 1974, Casey Tibbs remembered that, "Steve damn sure did do some of his own stunts. He wanted to do a bunch of them." For obvious reasons, film insurance restrictions dictate that stars can't do their own stunt work since, if the star gets hurt or worse, the production would be over for good, potentially costing millions of dollars, but McQueen was an exception. There was no way he could put on a world's champion class bronc or bull ride so McQueen's bull riding close-ups were filmed on a mechanical bull, which upset the star to no end. Yet Tibbs recounted, "He did get on this one bull and insisted on coming out of the chute on him."

Bill Pierce remembers that Tibbs entered the bronc riding, "He wound up getting hurt pretty good and we had to haul him to the hospital, all the time with ol' Casey hollering 'I'm alright, I tell you!'"

There's another great scene that has McQueen actually getting down on a saddle bronc in the chute. As can happen, "Steve accidentally spurred that bronc in the chute," reminisced Jeb Rosebrook. The bronc blows up under him for real and several of the cowboys jerk the actor up out of harms way. McQueen stays completely in character and reacts with an underplayed cowboy shout.

Unlike most Peckinpah films where there was always a hard surface tension everyday on the set, Katy Haber remembers, "It was the most relaxed film I ever saw Sam work on." Though at one point during the filming of some of the rodeo scenes, director Peckinpah lost his cool with the cowboys working the cattle pens and chutes, cussing them out in a blue-worded storm. Out of nowhere, one of the bulls suddenly charged out of the holding pens, sending Peckinpah scrambling and crashing over one of the film's big Panavision cameras. Years later, one of McQueen's rodeo doubles told

photo courtesy Katy Haber Collection

The wild cow-milking event at the Prescott Frontier Days Rodeo became key part of the story line.

Rosebrook casually about the incident, "You don't cuss a cowboy."

Rosebrook generously acknowledges that it was Ben Johnson who came up with one of the best lines in the film. At one point, in the Palace Bar, Robert Preston's Ace asked the question, "If this world is all about winners, then what's for the losers?" McQueen looked to Rosebrook, since there was no retort in the script, but Johnson just grinned and gave them the more than appropriate words, "Well, somebody's got to hold the horses."

Junior Bonner eventually made $4,650,000 at the box office, though it cost approximately $3,500,000 to make. Early 1970s audiences were far more accustomed to seeing McQueen racing cars and motorcycles and shooting guns, yet its wonderful themes and beautiful characterizations have made it a film that has lived on in people's minds and hearts. Jeb Rosebrook still receives appreciative comments from numerous fans of the film and is often asked to speak about it at both writer's conferences and film gatherings. As a young actor, Bruce Boxleitner, star of the film *Tron* and television's *How the West Was Won* and *Babylon Five*, was so influenced by the film that he strongly considered changing his professional last name to Bonner. Steve McQueen considered it his best role and his favorite of the twenty-nine feature films he starred in.

Today, the great Western novelist and New Mexico cowboy Max Evans of *The Hi-Lo Country* and *The Rounders*, who was a close friend and fellow carouser of Sam Peckinpah's, says that, "*Junior Bonner* is the greatest rodeo movie ever made."

At the end of the film, Junior proves himself to himself one more time and becomes the first bull rider to top Sunshine for eight seconds. After dropping the film's romantic interest Barbara Leigh, McQueen's real-life girlfriend at the time, at the airport, Junior walks into a downtown travel agency. "How much for a man and a dog to Sydney, Australia, one way?" he asks the agent. And then, with the better part of his winnings from the bull riding, he buys a first-class ticket telling the agent that she can have it delivered to Mr. Ace Bonner at the Palace Bar. A little confused, she asked who she should say the ticket is from. To which McQueen smiles slowly and says, "Tell him Junior sent you."

More Mark Drain

The cover of our Holiday issue featured an incredible buckle by silversmith Mark Drain. We stumbled upon this piece he made several years ago as a cantle piece. www.tcowboyarts.org/members/mark-drain/

Brighton's Powder River Wade Saddle

Here's a "wade" saddle from Brighton Saddlery that is a lighter weight version with a ⅞ drop inskirt rig and 2 ½" stirrup leathers on a ½ style fender. While being 8 lbs. lighter and closer contact than its counterpart with a flat plate rig and full stirrup leathers, it sets easy all day and is herd bull tough.

This style of saddle can be hand built with any number of options on a custom tree. Choose your style of wood post horn, cantle and specify gullet widths. Design it dead plain, full floral or anything in between. It is shown with a Nettles 5" bell stirrup, but any stirrup, including 5" lined stainless bells, can be requested.

Order from Brighton Saddlery, the exclusive home of Powder River Saddles. www.brightonsaddlery.com

Cowboy Images Wild Rags

Family-owned and operated, Cowboy Images Wild Rags has been rooted in a small ranching and farming community in south central Idaho since the late 1900s. Their Wild Rags are made from the highest quality, 100% silk available, sewn in America. They offer a variety of weaves, categorized as light, (Habotai), medium (Crepe de Chine) and heavy (Charmeuse). The weight and size of the Wild Rag will determine warmth and insulating properties of this natural fiber. You can choose from the largest selection of colors, prints and sizes available anywhere. Their standard size Wild Rag is a full 36 inches square – sizes range from the Roy Rogers style (7x36) to extra large (44x44). They also offer a few fabrics as large as 54 inches square, custom sizing is always available on request.

Their goal is to provide you with Wild Rags available in the largest selection of colors, patterns and sizes, made from the highest quality 100% silk with beautifully serged hems sewn in America. Please visit www.Cowboywildrags.com

Cowdog Collars from The Life of Ryley

The ultimate accessory source for your favorite family member on four legs, The Life of Ryley, offers an almost endless array of products and cool things – including these ultimate dog collars with sterling silver buckles from Old Cowdogs and bridle leather straps by saddle maker, Gordon Andrus. www.thelifeofryley.com

High Noon 2014 – January 25, 2014

Once again, the hopeful and the dedicated made there way to Arizona for the annual High Noon Western Americana Auction and Sale. For years this event has been viewed as the most important western collectable, gear, art and ephemera auction in the nation. Over one hundred artisans and vendor booths rounded out a truly wonderful western weekend. One of the landmark items sold was this incredible saddle made for Lady Henrietta Annie Yule – in 1928 she was said to be the "richest woman in the world." The saddle was made by the Visalia Stock Saddle Company, ordered from their branch store in Santa Barbara – right next door to Edward Borein's studio. Lady Yule loved the ranchero life-style of the area and she became one of Borein's greatest supporters. The saddle is a treasure. Read more about the saddle at www.ranchandreata.com/LadyYule and visit www.highnoon.com for the prices realized on this auction and to see past catalogs.

The Lady Yule Saddle came to the auction with an estimate of $60,000 to $90,000. Bidding on this lot opened at $30,000 but furious bidding from the floor, phones and Internet quickly escalated the final sale price to $141,600 – over $50,000 above high estimate. Watch the sale of this amazing saddle at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0i1_3TTdNuw.

Saddle up to benefit Happy Trails Children's Foundation

The Victor Valley Child Abuse Task Force was formed in 1982 with the mission of stemming a rising tide of child abuse, neglect, abandonment and death in the High Desert of San Bernardino County in Southern California. In 1992, the name was changed to the Happy Trails Children's Foundation, to reflect the participation and support of Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, King of the Cowboys and Queen of the West.

The Happy Trails Children's Foundation built the Cooper Home in Apple Valley, California, the long-time home of Roy and Dale, to provide a safe haven for at-risk children who have been severely abused and/or neglected. Today, the Cooper Home serves as a long-term residential care

and treatment center for severely abused boys. The day to day operation of the Cooper Home is provided by Trinity Youth Services, a national non-profit child care organization with more than 40 years experience operating children's programs in 14 group homes and foster family agencies. Through the years, Happy Trails Children's Foundation has acquired three silver saddles and two replicas of saddles from the 1800s which were offered in drawings to benefit the abused children served by the foundation. Recently, they acquired their fourth silver saddle and are now offering it in a drawing that ends during our 4th annual Friends of Happy Trails Banquet on May 17, 2014.

This is a vintage classic silver mounted saddle that any Hollywood cowboy hero would have been proud to own and ride! It's an eye-catching rig that comes with its own colorful custom corona pad and saddle stand made just for this outfit. Tickets are available at $10 each or 11 tickets for $100 and the winner need not be present for the drawing on May 17. For more information, www.happytrails.org.

New Spring Styles from Cinch and Cruel Girl

Cinch springs into warmer temperatures with this large light blue and gold plaid cotton button-down on a white background with round white logo buttons and premium neck tape.

Cinch Modern Fit offers a tailored style to the Cinch line. This small plaid is debuted featuring a raised, textured plaid weave with accent bias cut piping and round cream buttons.

Cruel Denim pops with bright orange and classic turquoise to stores this April. This plaid, pearl snap shirt sparkles with rhinestones and nail heads along the shoulders. Bias cut pockets complete the look.

Visit www.cruelgirl.com and www.cinch.com

Vintage Bison Belts and Accessories – "Tatonka-Tough"

The Vintage Bison U.S.A. brand of belts and leather accessories is manufactured at the Lejon of California factory in Corona, CA. Vintage Bison products are bench-made using genuine American Bison leathers. These unique leathers offer a rustic combination of softness and durability. The tanning process showcases the natural beauty and grain of the leather, which makes these products so appealing. Lejon's highly skilled craftsmen fashion exceptional belts and accessories from these leathers. www.americanbisonleather.com

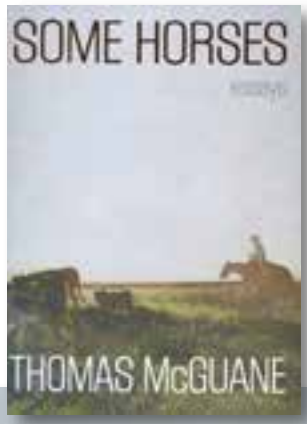
Legacy

A wonderful and forward-thinking exhibit was staged for this years annual celebration of cowboy culture in Elko, Nevada – The National Cowboy Poetry Gathering – its the 30th Anniversary, in fact. This year's theme was "Expressing the Rural West – Into the Future!"

Through performances of poetry and music, thought-provoking films and lots of chatting and discourse, artists and audiences of all ages shared their art, music, gear and opinions on meeting the challenges of rural life in the modern West.

In particular, the next generation of cowboy artists presented their work and discussed their brand of ranch life – how they perceive the rural west will evolve in an era of increasing connectivity. To support that continuing dialogue, we will be presenting from time to time, examples of the work of legacy families' and their new generations of artisans moving ahead, into the rural future of our culture.

Scarf designed by Buckeye Blake



Book cover illustration, *Morning Gather*, watercolor on paper, by Teal Blake

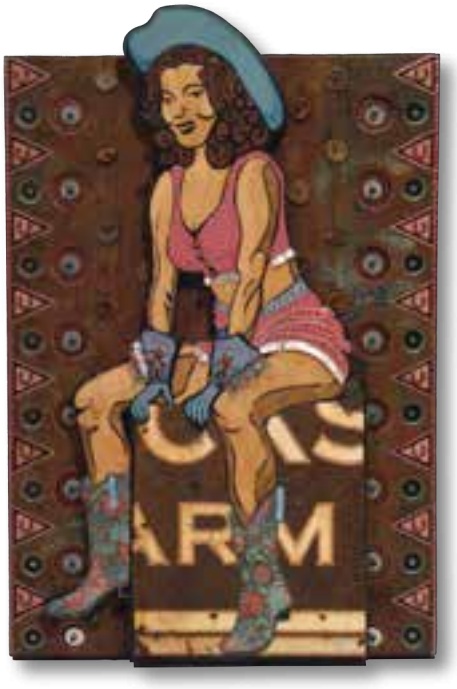
Kid Russell and Monte, Circa 1889. Polychrome bronze by Buckeye Blake, father of Teal Blake

Here are two examples in the work of artist Buckeye Blake and his son Teal and saddle maker, silversmith and passionate cyclist, Jeremiah Watt and his silversmith daughter, Nevada. You can find out more about Buckeye Blake and his work at www.theblakestudios.com and Jeremiah Watt at www.ranch2arena.com. Find out what's up with Teal Blake at www.tealblake.com and Nevada Watt on Facebook.

Saddle and hardware by Jeremiah Watt

Sterling silver and gold bracelet by Nevada Watt, daughter of Jeremiah Watt

Brad and Sundie Ruppert's Vintage Sculpture



We came upon Vintage Sculpture at the recent Denver Western Market – a yearly pilgrimage to the mile-high city to view all-things-western at the industry's largest trade show. Brad and Sundie Ruppert in their "Vintage Sculpture" booth were hip deep speaking with customers but took the time to tell us their story – and we are all about good stories. Sundie weighed in with the details, "Creative businesses can start in unusual and creative ways and we actually started Vintage Sculpture in 2000 with an assignment from our son Tucker's 2nd grade teacher. Tucker came home with a Thanksgiving assignment to "make a turkey as a family." He decided, after much consideration, he wanted to make his bird out of the vintage ceiling tin we were making into boxes and selling at our local farmers' market. So our family worked together to make a ceiling-fan gobbler. He turned in his turkey and came home with an A – and five orders from teachers and parents for more!"

That turkey has led the Rupperts down many roads – creating and selling the art they fashion out of cast-off and vintage materials, the truest form of recycling! They relish the fact that they get to do what they love everyday. They find inspiration everywhere – from the piece of metal their kids pick up while walking down the street to stopping at little hole-in-the-wall joints to search out vintage treasures in antique stores and flea markets to being inspired by fine art museums. See more of their work at www.vintagesculpture.com

Home on the Range

Looking for a place to hang your hat, maybe spread out a bit or find a quiet and inspirational spot to write that next novel? Here are some seriously cool places listed by our friends at Mason & Morse Ranch Company. www.ranchland.com

61 Bar Ranch in Rawlins, Wyoming

$10,750,000

The 61 Bar Ranch features 96,447 acres in one contiguous block of land situated in the Haystack Mountain Range and along the North Platte River. The ranch offers over five miles of North Platte River frontage, which is a source for irrigation, blue-ribbon fishing, and opportunities to hunt deer, elk, and antelope. This diversified ranch consists of 29,000 deeded acres, 40,960 acres of BLM, 2,960 acres State School lease, and 23,527 acres private lease. Improvements include an excellent calving/vet barn, 2,000 head permitted feedlot, working corrals, two homes and several support buildings.

Windsong Ranch in Gardner, Colorado

$1,750,000

The 325-acre Windsong Ranch is located north of the Huerfano River Valley in Gardner, Colorado on the southwestern slope of Green Horn Mountain. This is an area of small to very large working and recreational ranches. The views from almost every place on the ranch are outstanding and the San Isabel National Forest and the Greenhorn Wilderness are only a mile from the front gate. This ranch is a rare find as it has all the attributes many buyers are looking for such as live water, good agricultural production, a newer residence, hunting, fishing, and year-round recreational activities that include hiking, horseback riding, biking and 4-wheeling.

Rainy Mesa Ranch in Reserve, New Mexico

$3,900,000

Rainy Mesa Ranch is an end of the road location within the Gila National Forest in western New Mexico near the small town of Reserve, New Mexico. The 350+/- acre ranch features spectacular hunting combined with a viable ranch operation. The area is known for trophy game animals including elk, deer, bear and lion. The ranch is improved with five homes including an owner's lodge, guest home/cabins and a manager's residence. Rainy Mesa Ranch is largely tree covered and includes live water and water rights. The unique feature of this ranch is that the deeded property controls access to a large remote area of national forest with live water, allowing for excellent hunting opportunities.

Ryan Michael Style

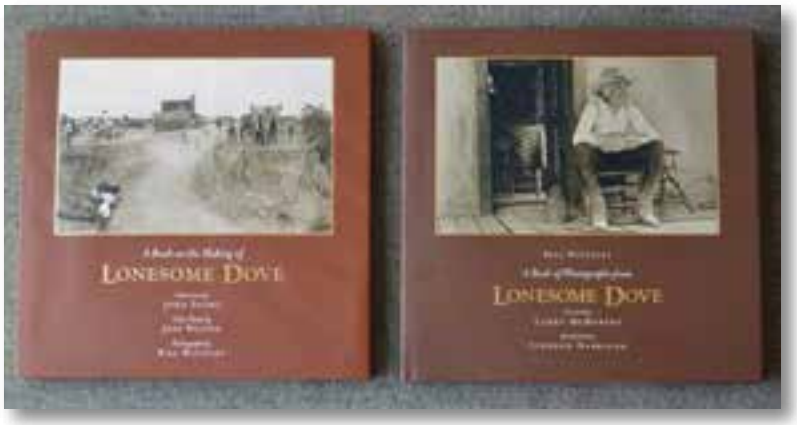
If the romance of the West dwells inside your heart and provides a dramatic backdrop for your spirit, then there's a good fit between you and Ryan Michael shirts. Whether the West is where your life happens or simply where your heart lives, they've crafted fine apparel through refined and innovative Western designs that capture your confidence and character.

Like a lively story spun around a campfire, our garments are colorful, rooted in history, have surprising details and create a lasting impression.

Pliable cotton delivers a tightly woven Aztec jacquard with contrasting azure accents. Prominent saw tooth pocket flaps take their cue from the rough cut Western hills. Hex wood snaps and contrast stitching complete the design. Available at fine retailers everywhere. www.ryanmichael.com

Lonesome Dove at 25

Hard to believe isn't it? Relive the experience that changed the western and the mini-series context forever in two books about the legendary film. *A Book of Photographs from Lonesome Dove* and *A Book on the Making of Lonesome Dove* – both featuring the photography of Bill Wittliff, the film's writer and an executive producer – should do the



trick for any "LD junkie." The books are filled with memories and great behind-the-scenes images. Created as part of the Southwestern and Mexican Photography Series, The Wittliff Collections at the Texas State University, they capture the mythic and memorable world of Capt. Call and Gus McRae. Available through the incredible publishing effort at www.utexas.edu As Gus aptly put it, "The older the violin, the sweeter the music."

American Hat Company tops off its upcoming 100th Anniversary with a 1000X hat

In anticipation of celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2015, American Hat Company will craft a 1000X Pecan hat, in very limited production. The hat is 100% belly beaver and mink, with a 14K gold buckle set with a diamond and designed to commemorate the company centennial. In 1915 Sam Silver founded the American Hat Company and started

making and selling hats. Three generations of the Silver family continued to carry on the tradition of founder Sam Silver until it was sold in 1984 to Bill and Billie George. The current owners, Keith and Susan Maddox, purchased the American Hat Company in 2003 and moved it to Bowie, Texas, where they continue the company's legacy of building fine hats. www.americanhat.net

Speaking of Anniversaries...

Priefert Ranch and Farm Equipment Celebrates 50 Years.

For over fifty years, Preifert has provided ranchers, farms, fairs and rodeos with the finaest in stock handling equipment. Founded by Marvin Priefert in 1964, Priefert has grown into one of the largest farm, ranch and rodeo equipment manufacturers in the world. When Marvin built his first head gate in a one-room shop on his farm, he had no idea that his first piece of ranch equipment would help revolutionize the livestock handling industry and go on to become the foundation of one of the most respected ranch equipment manufacturing companies in the business. Now in its third generation of leadership, Priefert is still family owned and operated. Its product offerings have expanded to include cattle, equine, poultry, canine, and rodeo lines, making Priefert a one-stop shop for all your farm, ranch, and rodeo needs.

Marvin's original one-room shop

Considered the leading innovator in the livestock handling industry, Priefert continues to develop and produce equipment that is safe and durable for both the animal and the operator. Starting with Marvin's invention of the first side closing, gliding action head gate, Priefert has continued to lead the way by introducing the first contoured side-squeeze chute, the first double-pivot calf table, the first open-sided sweep, and the first full line of powder-coated products. Priefert maintains total quality control by designing and executing each part of the development and production of its products. Starting with raw steel, Priefert oversees each step of the process through to finished good, creating products that are pound for pound, dollar for dollar, the best value on the market. Congratulations for providing such quality to the livestock industry here and abroad. See more about Preifert at www.preifert.com

Original shop and production facility, late 60s, early 70s

Top: Bill with 1964 headgate
Center: Bill with model 81 chute and pre '85 headgate
Bottom: Bill with 2013 chute

Priefert production facility in 2009

Bill, Travis, Ed and Nate in 2013

The REAL Ranch Horse Invitational Sale

The Montana Ranch Horse Association will again host the REAL Ranch Horse Invitational Sale April 18 and 19 at the Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch in Billings, Montana. The sale features ranch horses whose all-around working backgrounds make them ideal candidates to go forward into numerous stock-horse disciplines.

Horses consigned to the REAL Ranch Horse Invitational Sale must be at least four years old, with solid working backgrounds as ranch horses.

Strict guidelines ensure that consigned horses are sound and ready to be put to work the day they're sold. Horses must be geldings or mares, at least four years old, with a working background on a ranch or in a livestock operation, and consignors must make their livings on horseback. Just prior to the sale, consigned horses are thoroughly screened on-site by a veterinarian; unsound horses are sifted and any blemishes are fully disclosed. The sale also has a Young Ranch Horse category for geldings and mares three years and older with at least 90 to 120 rides and some roping experience.

All sale horses are previewed performing ranch chores, such as roping or working a cow. An open ranch-horse competition and a team-roping preview, featuring consigned horses, precedes the sale, giving prospective bidders additional chances to see horses at work before bidding.

Learn more about the REAL Ranch Horse Invitational Sale, and view an online catalog, at www.realranchhorses.com. Contact MTRHA at (406) 446-2203; realranchhorses@hotmail.com.

Editor's Note: The REAL Ranch Horse Invitational Sale is unlike any other, in that great measures are taken to ensure only sound, solid ranch horses make it to the sale ring. In addition to being a great model for horse auctions, the sale is a terrific way to spend a weekend in Montana. – AJM

New Necklace from Montana Silversmiths

Montana Silversmiths Antiqued Silver Plume Feather Necklace is proudly made in the U.S.A. It features a long plume feather pendant finished in silver and antiqued to highlight the intricately detailed engraving. Split into three pieces and linked to form one long feather allows the pendant to swing in a natural movement.

For more information or to purchase, visit your local western retailer or www.montanasilversmiths.com.

Vaquero Legacy – the Czech Republic

The reach of the vaquero culture and quality horsemanship never ceases to amaze. In the Czech Republic there is a growing group of riders dedicated to the culture enough that they support a superb magazine. Our friend Barb Borankova publishes *Horseman* with great style and authority, with all sorts of articles on clinicians, gear and cooking styles from here and from over there, now if we could only read it....

For information email Bara Borankova at ranch28@seznam.cz

Time to Listen

Here are a number of albums we found to be worthy of your listening – either as downloads, streamed, CDs or – if available, in vinyl, our favorite. There is nothing like holding an album cover. Most are available at www.amazon.com or on iTunes

Neil Young: Live At The Cellar Door
Neil Young
Reprise

This album collects recordings made during the Canadian singer/songwriter's intimate six-show solo stand at The Cellar Door, a venue in Washington D.C., between November 30th and December 2nd, 1970. It features "Cinnamon Girl" performed on piano rather than guitar, a handful of Buffalo Springfield songs, including "Expecting To Fly" and "Old Man" which wasn't released until two years later on 1972's *Harvest* album. Nice to hear the early NY.

Zion Canyon Song Cycle
Red Rock Rondo
Steamboat Mountain Records

Red Rock Rondo is an award-winning chamber folk ensemble consisting of six of Utah's best-known acoustic musicians: Phillip Bimstein, Kate MacLeod, Hal Cannon, Charlotte Bell, Flavia Cervino-Wood and Harold Carr, performing on piano, guitars, violins, oboe, English horn, concertina, harmonica, bass and vocals. Their music is a well-crafted synergy of folk, jazz and classical, woven into a truly original Americana style.

Zion Canyon Song Cycle tells the story of the area around Springdale, Utah, but really is about the larger picture of the evolving West as told through local eyes. The album went to number 10 on the national folk music charts. Superb wooden music. www.redrockrondo.com

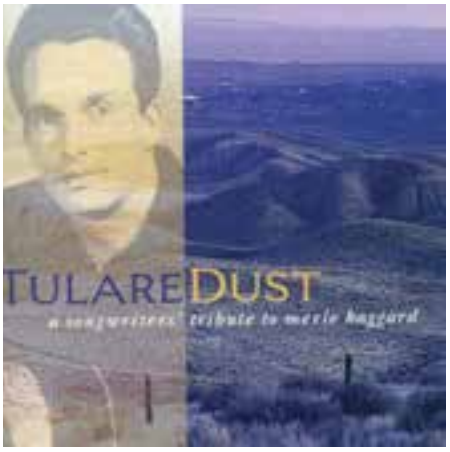
***Lucinda Williams* (25th Anniversary re-release)**
Lucinda Williams
www.lucindawilliams.com

This re-release of Lucinda Williams' 1988 album harkens back to why the original release deserves so much credit for helping to start the Americana singer/songwriter revolution. You all probably have one of the original CDs somewhere and we have talked about this album before but it cannot be said enough – the album is worth the purchase for the story song, "The Night's Too Long." There is a bonus CD of non-LP tracks that are true joys.

Heartaches & Highways
Emmylou Harris
Rhino/Warner

A couple of years after her mentor and friend Gram Parsons died, Emmylou Harris released her first record, *Pieces of the Sky*. She went on to become one of the most important voices in folk-rock/singer/songwriter circles. This album brings together some of her finest work including, "Boulder to Birmingham" and "Beneath Still Waters" and her glorious interpretation of "Wayfaring Stranger." She continues to amaze.

Tulare Dust – A Songwriters' Tribute to Merle Haggard
Produced by Tom Russell and Dave Alvin
HIGHTONE Records



Our own Tom Russell and multi-facetted producer and founding member of The Blasters, Dave Alvin, released this tribute album to Merle Haggard in 1994. Artists celebrating the "Hag's" work include an amazing array of talent from Dwight Yoakam to Robert Earl Keen, Tom Russell to Katy Moffat, and Rosie Flores to Lucinda Williams. Iris DeMent's take on "Big City" is worth the price of admission. This album is twenty years old, but is a timeless piece of work. Russell and Alvin created a record for the ages with this.

Time to Read

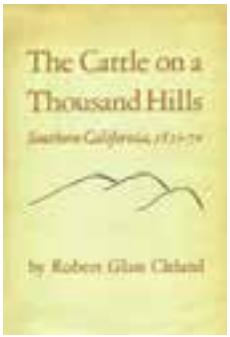
We speak a lot about books – old and new in this magazine and the reason is simple. We like to read as much as you do. Here are some that are all over the map – old, new and in between.

Adventures in Contentment
David Grayson
www.amazon.com

The early 1900s saw a rapid movement towards modernization and mechanization. In many quarters a sort of cultural backlash resulted in people reconsidering success and social station. Ray Stannard Baker, in 1907 considered America's "most-read reporter," saw the changes around him and created in David Grayson, – his pen-name and alter persona – a writer who related to this new alternative way of thinking. He published the first of nine volumes of his *Adventures in Contentment* series, eventually attracting several million readers world-wide. When read today, one sees a remarkable similarity in the feelings of those today who feel the world has gotten a little too out of hand. NSA anyone?

The books are in public domain now and are available in generic reprints. They are Thoreau-like and, well, calming.

The Cattle on a Thousand Hills
Robert Glass Cleland
www.ucpress.edu



First published in 1941, *The Cattle on a Thousand Hills* describes Southern California in its transition from a cattle frontier of Mexican rule and vaquero culture to an agricultural American community on the eve of great industrial and urban expansion. The story includes the conversion of great grazing ranchos into farms and settlements, the gradual displacement of frontier violence and instability by a more restrained, law-abiding society, and the impact of Anglo-Saxon customs and institutions upon the pastoral life of the Spanish-Californians – not to mention the life-changing droughts of the mid-1860s. This is a fine read of the era.

Decades: An Expanded Context for Western Art, 1900 – 1940
Charles C. Eldredge, Betsy Fahlman, Randall R. Griffey and Ron Tyler
University of Oklahoma Press (www.oupress.com)

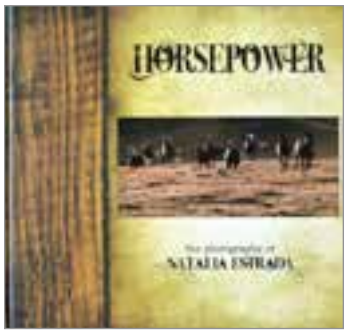
This ninth volume of the University of Oklahoma Press' *Western Passages* series explores western American art within the context of the first four decades of the twentieth century. It divides the period from 1900 to 1940 into ten-year increments to investigate major artistic movements and important figures in western American art across mediums, styles, and subjects. In four wide-ranging essays, readers examine western American art alongside concurrent events in American art and history. These essays reveal intriguing –and often surprising – moments in the culture, western American art, and social change. The Great Depression and the resulting government efforts to put "artists back to work" created fascinating interaction and oft times odd cultural pushback – creative v. capitalists. The book is wonderfully illustrated with many times, some surprising imagery. Western art is not just a cowboy on a horse and this book will open many doors into new ways of thinking about indigenous art and western genre.

Legacy of Silver and Saddles: G.S. Garcia to J.M. Capriola 1864 – 2004

Dee Dee Garcia White, Paula Bear Wright, Linda Harris and Janet Pearce Petersen

Park Place Publications

This book spans 140 plus years and tells the story of two great saddle companies – G.S. Garcia Saddlery and J.M. Capriola Company – from their beginnings to their merging together. This is a classic story of hard work, tenacity and family dedication. Beyond just being a book about saddlers, this is a look at the American dream. You can still walk into "Caps" in Elko, Nevada and buy a Garcia bit and a pair of spurs. In fact you should. And while you are there, buy this book and have young John Wright sign it to you. He's part of another generation keeping the tradition alive. See more at www.capriolas.com



Horsepower: The Photography of Natalia Estrada

Natalia Fernadez Estrada

Privately Published – www.ranch-academy.com

Natalia Estrada is a Spanish classic dancer, an actress and television personality in Spain and Italy – and a photographer. Natalia is half of the website, www.ranch-academy.com. The other half is Drew Mischianti, cowboy, journalist and writer and together on their website, they are the go-to place for all things bridle horse in Europe. As they say on ranch-academy.com – "Ranch Academy wants to share the real western traditions, bringing to the Ol' World (Europe) the almost vanished California School of Horsemanship. We teach the art of ranch roping and the gentle handling of cattle that still roam free...even in some part of Europe – like central Italy and Southern central and northwestern Spain."

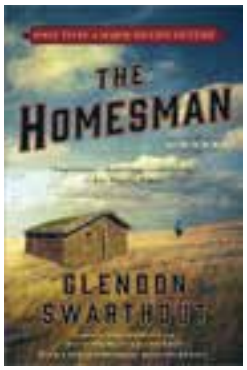
To that end, the photographer side of Natalia has published a stunning volume of photographs from her horseback travels all over her world – here and throughout Europe. This luxurious volume will be at home with any western collection.

Selections from The Western Writers of America Bookshelf

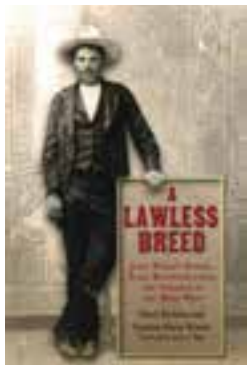
Western Writers of America, Inc., was founded in 1953 to promote the literature of the American West and bestow Spur Awards for distinguished writing in the Western field. The founders were largely authors who wrote traditional Western fiction, but the organization swiftly expanded to include historians and other nonfiction authors, young adult and romance writers, and writers interested in regional history. The organization actively helps its members promote their books and articles, and aggressively promotes the literature of the American West. Here are some selections of new works by some of their authors. www.westernwriters.org

Prolific historian Chris Enss examines the love lives of Old West women, including the wives of Wild Bill Hickok, Kit Carson and Geronimo in *Love Lessons from the Old West: Wisdom from Wild Women* (TwoDot).

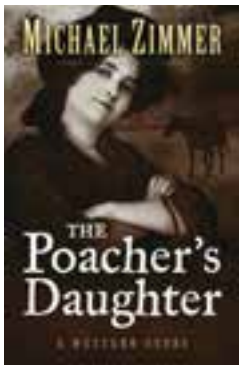
Dusty Richards puts gives an ex-Texas Ranger a new bride and a new job – county sheriff in Arizona – in *Once a Ranger* (Berkley) for fans of old-fashioned traditional shoot-em-ups.



To tie in with the upcoming movie starring Tommy Lee Jones, the late Glendon Swarthout's award-winning, grim Prairie novel *The Homesman* (Simon & Schuster) has been rereleased as a paperback.



Historians Chuck Parsons and Norman Wayne Brown bring Texas's most infamous outlaw to life in *A Lawless Breed: John Wesley Hardin, Texas Reconstruction, and Violence in the Wild West* (University of North Texas Press), now available in paperback.



Award-winning writer Michael Zimmer creates one of his best heroines, "Rose of Yellowstone," in the gritty, realistic *The Poacher's Daughter* (Five Star).

Walter Ufer at NC&WHM

Bob Abbott and Assistant
by Walter Ufer (1934/4)
Oil on canvas, 50 ¼" x 50 ½"
The Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky

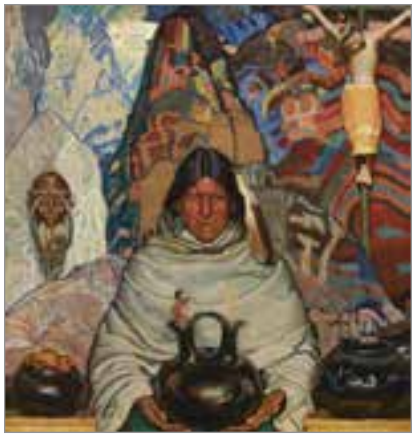
Beginning February 7 and running through May 11, 2014, the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum will host the world premiere exhibition, *Walter Ufer: Rise, Fall, Resurrection* honoring the centennial anniversary of Ufer's first trip to Taos, New Mexico, in 1914 and the early beginning of the Taos Society of Artists. The exhibition includes 50 works by Ufer, and more than a dozen works by the artist's contemporaries.

Hunger by Walter Ufer (1919)
Oil on canvas, 50" x 50"
Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Walter Ufer: Rise, Fall, Resurrection offers examples from his two extended stays in Germany, his work in Chicago, as well as the art created in New Mexico, which later garnered him national attention. Ufer's work is well-known for scenes of Native American life, particularly of the Pueblo Indians, and his landscape paintings executed in a high-keyed palette. The National Cowboy Museum is the only venue for this one-of-a-kind exhibition, which unveils the fascinating story of Ufer and his life as an artist.

Black and white photograph of Walter Ufer painting *Mary in Munich* taken in 1912. Courtesy of the Harwood Museum in Taos, New Mexico

Despite immense financial debt, suffering from alcoholism and disabling depression, the artist was able to achieve national success in his lifetime. In 1936, two years into sobriety, Ufer died suddenly of appendicitis, leaving his family destitute. His work was all but forgotten until 1970, at which time the Phoenix Art Museum featured Ufer in two major exhibitions, thus beginning his reintroduction into mainstream art.



Superstition by Ernest Blumenschein
Oil on canvas, 46" x 44 ¾"
Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Again in 2014, Ufer's artwork is being reevaluated in *Walter Ufer: Rise, Fall Resurrection*, which studies the complete picture of one of America's most controversial artists among the Taos Society of Artists member of that time.

More than 20 museums are lending works for the exhibition, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the National Academy Museum, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, the Gilcrease Museum and the Fred Jones, Jr. Museum of Art, as well as numerous private collectors from across the United States. Additionally, the exhibition includes works by Ufer's closest associates, members of the Taos Society of Artists: Ernest Blumenschein, Victor Higgins, E. Martin Hennings, Oscar Berninghaus, Joseph Sharp, Bert Phillips, E.I. Couse, William H. "Buck" Dunton, Julius Rolshoven, and Catharine Carter Critcher. Ufer's students are represented by works from Edmund Davison and the brothers Carl and Frank Woolsey, as well as his wife of 20 years, Mary Monrad Frederiksen Ufer. www.nationalcowboymuseum.org

Paige Nicholson is Miss Rodeo America 2014

Miss Rodeo Mississippi 2013 is the 2014 Miss Rodeo America. The title and the organization/pageant competition exist for the purposes of selecting a young lady to serve as an official spokesperson for the sport of professional rodeo and providing educational opportunities for those young women who compete in the pageant. She travels some 100,000 miles during the year of her reign, appearing at nearly 100 rodeo performances, as well as appearances at schools, civic groups and other special events, educating the public and creating awareness about the sport of rodeo, its sponsors, and its opportunities. Miss Rodeo America is the official ambassador America's original professional sport of rodeo – serving as the official spokesperson for the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association.

Paige calls Lawrence, Mississippi home, is a graduate of Mississippi State University, and plans to obtain a Law Degree from the University of Mississippi and pursue a career that allows her to be an advocate for agriculture and protect the western way of life. Ah, the West. www.missrodeoamerica.com

Ariat introduces new boots

Here's something new from Ariat, The Meridian is a fine-looking boot for a hard-working girl. It is superbly handcrafted with stylish cutouts on the foot accompanied by a contrasting underlay and an exaggerated toe spring. Other features include a 1.75" scoured and distressed heel and hand-nailed Veg Tan leather outsole. ATS® technology provides superior support, stability and comfort to keep you light on your feet.

Why not add some add spice to your outfit? The Luna is a Spanish-inspired design with foot and uppers crafted from premium full-grain leather. Goodyear® leather welt construction provides maximum durability. Ariat's 4LR technology offers support and cushioning for everyday wear. Styled with star shaped hardware from top to bottom, these boots will catch some eyes. Finished with an exaggerated toe spring, a 1.75" scoured and distressed heel and a hand-nailed Veg Tan leather outsole. www.ariat.com

The Meridian

The Luna

Scottsdale Art Auction – April 5, 2014

Olaf Wieghorst (1899-1988)

Scottsdale Art Auction, now in its 10th year, will host its 2014 auction on Saturday, April 5, with two sessions. Over 350 lots of the finest in Western, wildlife and sporting paintings and sculptures will be offered. Paintings and bronzes by Masters of the American West, storied artists like Frederic Remington, Charles M. Russell, Frank Tenney Johnson, William Herbert "Buck" Dunton and Ernest L. Blumenschein will be complemented by works by some of the finest names in contemporary Western art: Howard Terpning, Martin Grelle, G. Harvey, John Coleman, Ken Riley, and many more. Offerings in sporting and wildlife art include the works of Carl Rungius, Philip Goodwin, Ken Carlson and Bob Kuhn.

All the works in the auction will be on view two weeks prior to the auction. Full color catalogues will be available and every lot will be on view at: www.scottsdaleartauction.com.

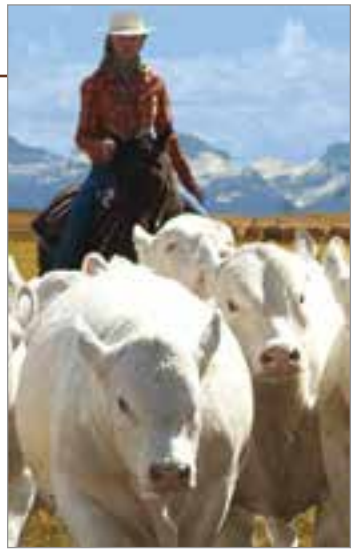
Olaf Seltzer (1877-1957)

Grammy Style

New country artist Kacey Musgraves stole the 56th Annual Grammy™ Awards show with her LED lit cowboy boots. The twitter-sphere lit up during the singer/songwriter's performance of "Follow Your Arrow" from her freshman album, *Same Trailer, Different Park* during the awards show. It will be interesting to see which boot manufacturer A) signs her for an endorsement deal and, B) how long it takes for illuminated boot styles, or some variation, to come to market. Nice job Kacey.
www.kaceymusgraves.com

Montana's Leading Charolais Bull Sale – April 5, 2014

DeBruycker Charolais will conduct their bull sale on April 5th of this year at Western Livestock Auctions near Great Falls, Montana. Need to add uniformity to your calf drop? DeBruycker Charlolais-sired calves bring more per pound than any other comparable weight calves. For a downloadable copy of the bull sale catalog, please visit www.debruyckercharlois.com



Cowgirl U

The National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame invites you to the ultimate immersion into cowgirl culture. During this three-day weekend, you'll learn true cowgirl skills while enjoying the serenity of Paws Up – Montana's premier luxury ranch resort. Experience educational workshops, trail rides, sporting clays shooting, photography, campfires, music and mingling with the Cowgirl Hall of Fame Honorees. Event is limited to the first 40 women, ages 18 and older. www.pawsup.com

Skytop Trading

Next time you're in Denver, wander on up the hill to the village of Estes Park and visit the Skytop Leather Shop, you'll probably meet the owner, George Barker. Skytop Trading is a collection of craftsmen and artists dedicated to bringing back the art of leather case-making, or creating semi-rigid objects using leather tanned the way it was in the old days. It's completely different than "bag" making. They use only vegetable-tanned harness leather from some of America's finest tanneries. Each one is made to accommodate your laptop computer, tablet and charging cords, along with all of the other paraphernalia we all carry when we travel. This will remind you of your grandfather's binocular case, and your kids will someday fight over yours. Visit their website, www.skytoptrading.com,

Saddlemaker Ross Brunk building for Hamleys

Montana maker Ross Brunk has set up his shop to craft saddles for Hamely & Company. Ross grew up in the cowboy and leather culture of Sheridan, Wyoming, and horses and cowboys have always been the main passion. "My father, a western artist, made sure that I developed an appreciation for fine art at an early age by introducing me to a variety of styles and artists," he says. "His bookshelf was always full of reference material, from Norman Rockwell to Charlie Russell, Tissot, and many more. At the age of fourteen, I was working for Don Butler, at the Custom Cowboy Shop. That is where I learned craftsmanship as well as the finer points of quality leatherwork. During this period I also had the privilege to work with Paul Van Dyke, who has been a driving force behind my style." See more of Ross' recent work at www.nrcowboygear.com

Twisted X Exotics

The folks at Twisted X Boots announced the addition of some new exotics to their line of boots. Included are two styles in full quill and two styles in smooth ostrich, along with some additional styles in caiman and shark. See their boot styles at www.twistedxboots.com

Finding His Way

Texas silversmith Matt Litz arrives in the national spotlight.

By Paul A. Cañada

Prior to 2012, few patrons of the traditional cowboy arts had heard of Matt Litz. The Iowa Park, Texas, silversmith had been struggling to learn his craft, mostly through trial and error, replicating work he'd seen in books.

"My work bounced around a lot," Matt says. "There was never a consistent pattern to it because I'd try to re-create whatever caught my fancy. I was trying to find my own way, I guess."

In January 2013, Matt landed in the national spotlight after winning the silversmithing division of the inaugural Emerging Artists Competition, put on by the Traditional Cowboy Arts Association and held at High Noon's Western Auction and Antique Show, in Mesa, Arizona. His work has since won at competitions in Wichita Falls, Texas, and at the Western Design Conference in Jackson, Wyoming.

photo by Paul Cañada

Texas silversmith Matt Litz works in his shop, a building adjacent to his Iowa Park home.

Matt's interest in silversmithing is rooted in West Texas, where his grandfather and father grew cotton and peanuts, and had a cow-calf operation.

"Growing up, I'd go through my grandad's old tack


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photo by Paul Cañada

Matt says he still draws from a variety of influences. His contemporary pieces include trophy buckles and a variety of jewelry.

out in the barn," Matt recalls. "Years later, while attending college, I was impressed with an R.A. Glenn buckle I saw a guy wearing, and I ordered one. I wore that buckle for a few years before I decided to try and build my own."

Matt tackled that first buckle project, and began making spurs, after graduating from Tarleton State University and moving, with his wife, Janay, from Stephenville to Iowa Park, just north of Wichita Falls, where he found work as a welder.

Thumbing through books for inspiration, Matt would carefully study a buckle or pair of spurs that appealed to him, then work on a design of his own. He says he made around 20 pairs of spurs working this way.

"There was no one style I was trying to imitate," he says. "I like traditional work, but my designs came from whatever popped into my head. I really didn't know what the heck I was doing."

The young artisan's interest in spurs took an abrupt turn when he purchased a copy of *Saddlemaker to the Stars: The Leather and Silver Art of Edward H. Bohlin*. Matt was an immediate convert, and began "playing with silver," as he puts it. Now, some eight years later, he builds around a hundred trophy buckles a year, as well as countless wedding bands and other jewelry. Matt credits silversmiths Dave Alderson, of Idaho, and Scott Hardy, of Alberta, as well as Texas bit and spur maker Russell Yates, with helping him fill the gaps in his training. Each, he says, has welcomed his phone calls and questions.

Matt's contemporary pieces originate in his imagination, rather than in reference works, but still reflect numerous styles and influences.

"I've been told I have a distinct style," he says, "but my work changes so much because I'm influenced by just about anything I see. As long as the design flows well and has eye appeal, I'm happy with it."

Matt still works as a welder during the day, and devotes his evenings to his silver business, often working well past midnight, with the goal of producing at least one piece each night. Buying his raw material in sheet form, Matt cuts patterns by hand, using a jeweler's saw; he solders those patterns into place (on a buckle, for instance), then refines the work.

"I have three notebooks full of orders, and I'm booked for the next 12 months," Matt says. "I tell people how long a new order will take and most still don't seem to mind. Others will thank me for being honest and look around for another artist. That doesn't hurt my feelings, as long as I know I'm not taking their money and they're not waiting for me."

Despite the growing interest in his work, Matt is skeptical of the idea of silversmithing full-time in the current economy. He also worries that a full-time effort could hinder his creative freedom and lead to stricter quotas.

"I don't want to be in a position where I have to create an assembly line to make enough money," he says. "I don't want run the risk of having an assembly-line look. Even if I make two pieces from the same design, they look different in the details. Every one of my pieces is different."

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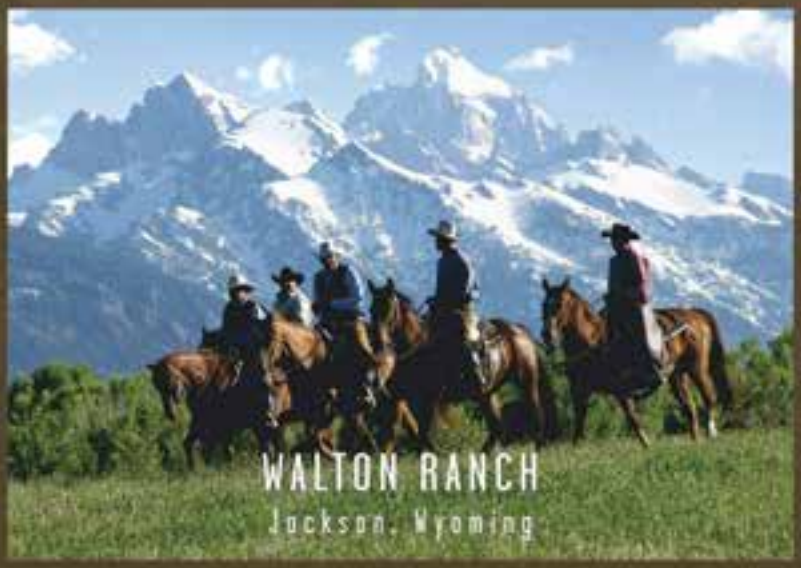
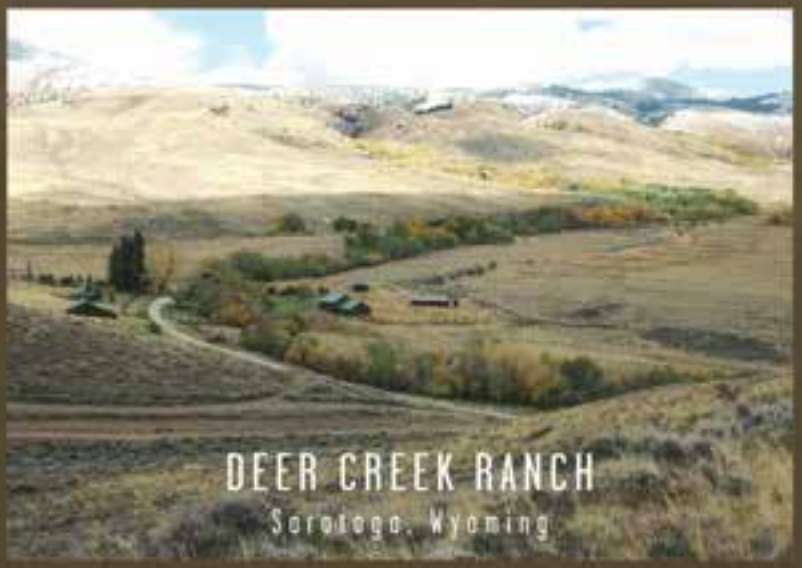
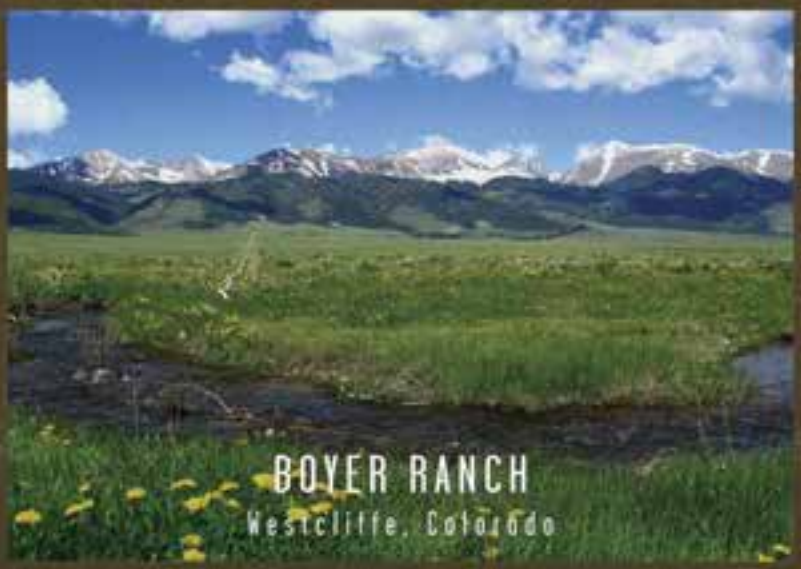


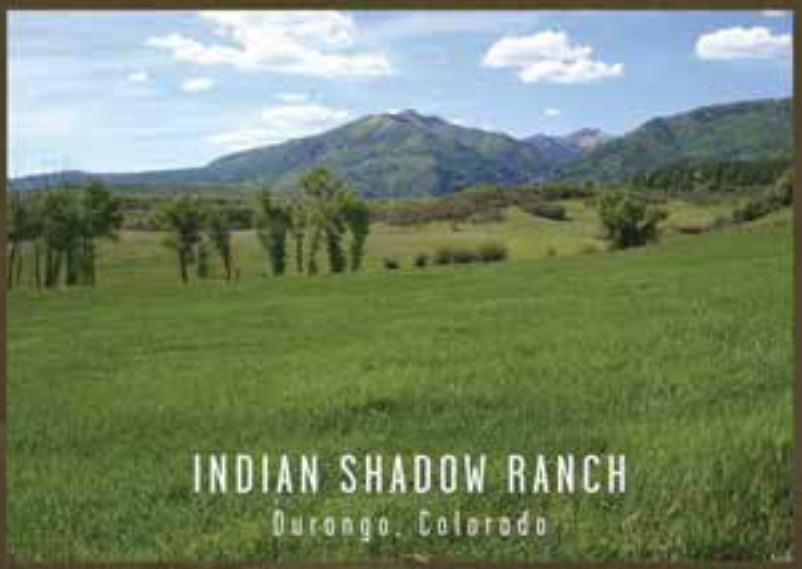
An exceptional property in an extraordinary setting, the 1,848-acre legacy ranch abuts three miles of the legendary Snake River, is surrounded by Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks and is just ten minutes from the renowned Jackson Hole. $68,700,000. Billy Long, 970.948.1333 or Ron Morris, 970.535.0881



1,348 deeded acres situated at the foot of Pennock Mountain with two miles of Deer Creek meandering through the property. The ranch is located near the Old Baldy Club with privacy, wildlife, scenery, water, and turnkey improvements. An exceptional lifestyle and recreation ranch or an excellent horse/cattle operation. $2,500,000. Ron Morris, 970.535.0881



12,505 total acre cattle and hay production ranch rimmed by the Sangre de Cristo Mountains just 1.5 hours from Colorado Springs. Well watered with over 18 CFS of water rights, streams, ponds and wells irrigating 700 acres putting up 1,200 tons of premium hay. Runs 900-1,000 yearling cattle. $9,000,000. Ron Morris, 970.535.0881



1,769-acre ranch with 1 2/3 miles of the La Plata River running through the property and just twelve miles from the popular town of Durango. 6,000+ sq. ft. main residence, guest home, manager's home, barns, shop and exceptional wildlife. $22,000,000. Carl Luppens, 303.394.1400 or Ron Morris, 970.535.0881

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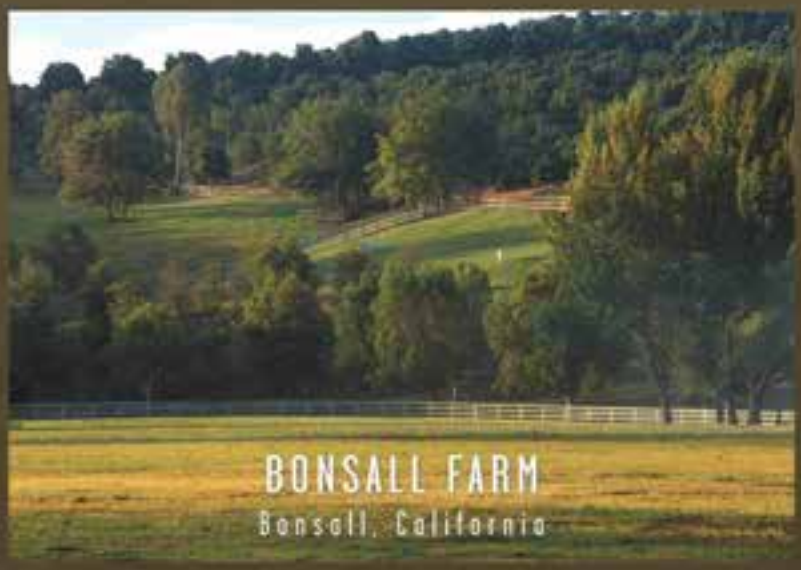
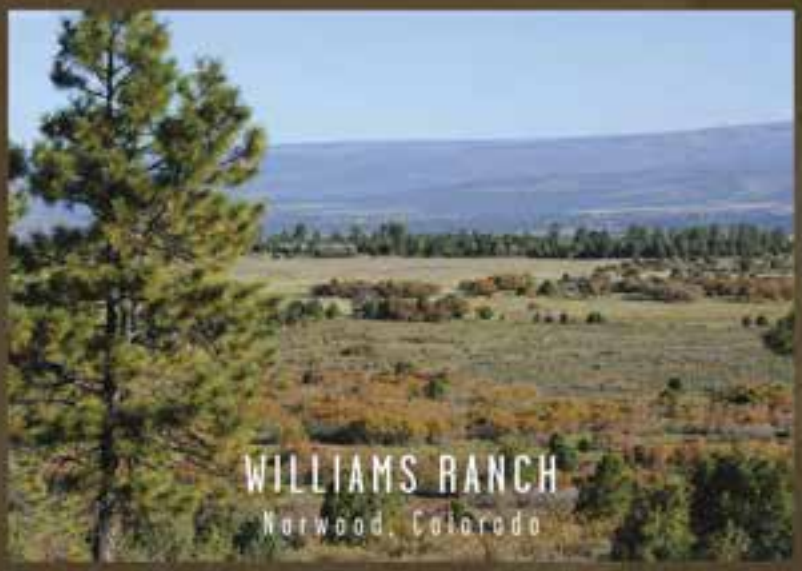
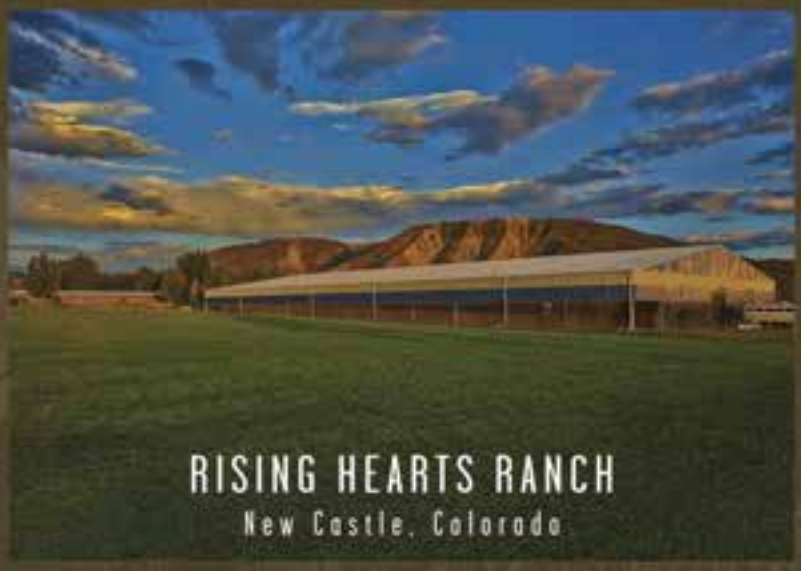


This working ranch offers sophisticated living with easy access to San Diego, Orange and Los Angeles counties. Consists of approximately 140 acres of citrus and avocado groves, alfalfa fields, pastures, ponds and paddocks surrounding a charming 3-bedroom, 2-bath hacienda, ancillary living quarters, barns and workshops. $11,950,000. Billy Long, 970.948.1333



This 1,020-acre working cattle and sporting ranch is just 35 miles from the world-class ski resort of Telluride. Features spectacular views, ample water rights, excellent hunting, nearby fishing and recreation, a 4,000 sq. ft. newer lodge/home for multi-family entertaining, large shop and 4-stall horse barn. $4,475,000. Billy Long, 970.948.1333 or Ron Morris, 970.535.0881



256-acre premier performance horse operation conveniently located near Glenwood Springs and close to Aspen and Vail features a new 6,814 sq. ft. trophy home and a 48,000 sq. ft. barn and arena. This property can work for breeding, showing or any quality horse enterprise. $6,900,000. Billy Long, 970.948.1333

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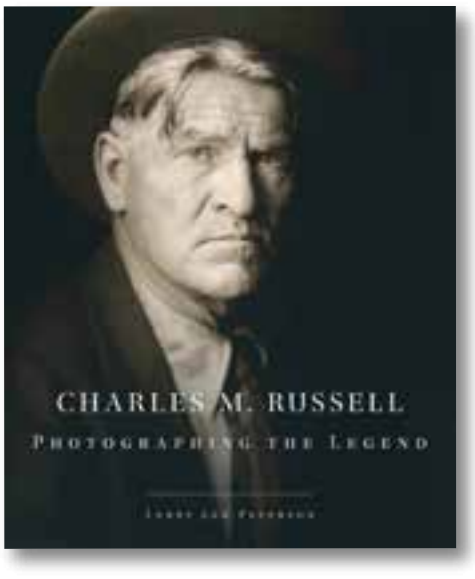
BOOKS TO FIND

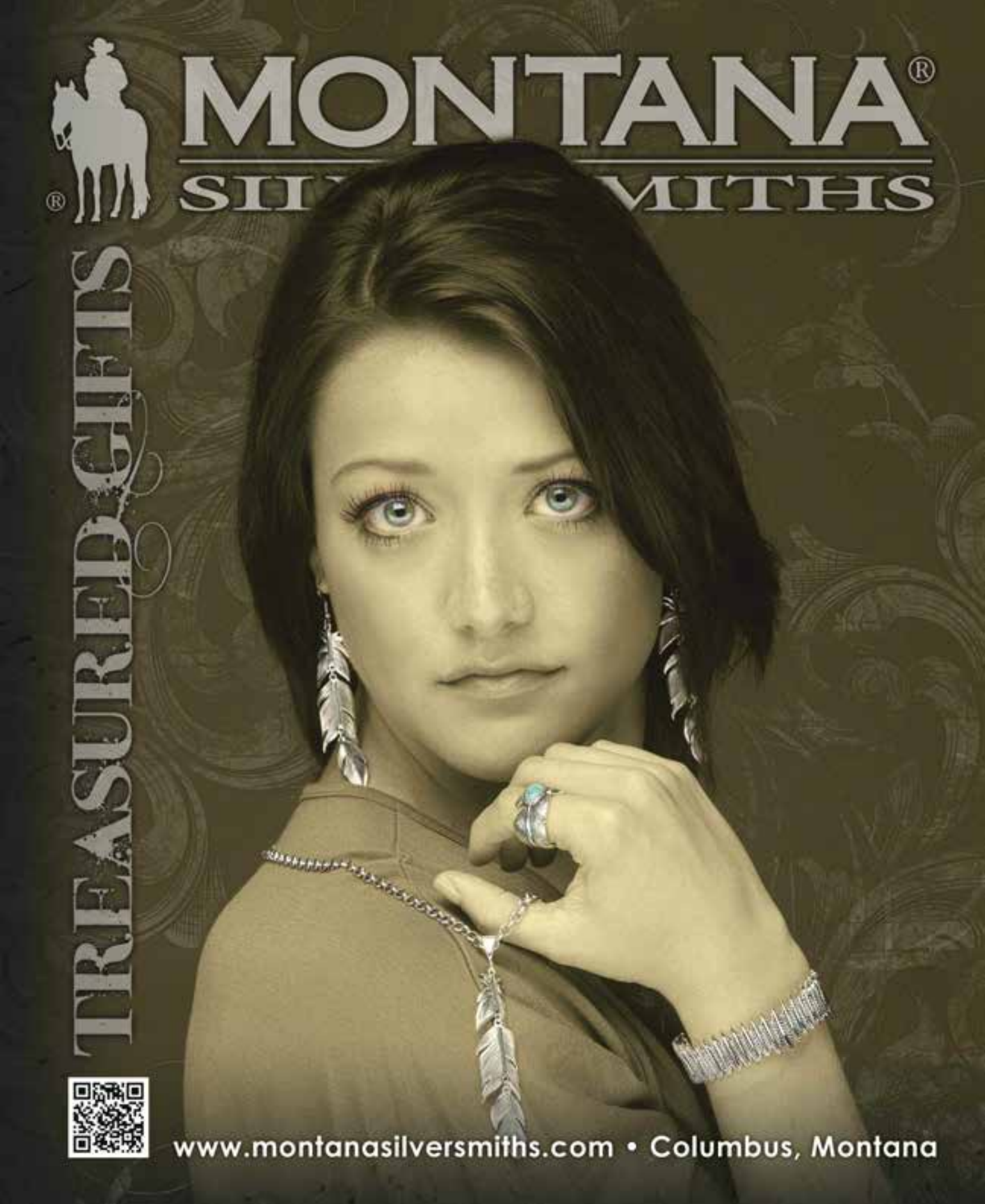
The World of Charles M. Russell, C.J. Hadley and Masanobu Fukuoka

Charles M. Russell
Photographing the Legend
By Larry Len Petersen
University of Oklahoma Press (www.oupress.com)

One may wonder if we actually need another book on iconic Charles M. Russell. He is, for many, almost as familiar as the images he created. Russell remains a symbol of the West and a time long gone and many books have told his story and reminded us of the humble nature of this "man of the region." Larry Len Petersen is no stranger to his subject having written on Russell before in his *Charles M. Russell: Legacy* released in 1999. In Petersen's new book the light is put on the images of Russell himself and readers may be surprised at just how many images were taken of the artist during the evolving art of photography at the beginning of the last century. This biography shares hundreds of images of Russell, many never before published and showed how savvy Nancy Russell was in utilizing the images of her husband to show that Charlie was the real deal and personified what he portrayed in his art.



In addition to Petersen, Russell authority Brian W. Dippie lends his thoughts in the forward with his usual enticing and informative insights into the artist and his image. Of Russell's growing fame he writes, "The first widely circulated studio photograph of Russell, the work of C. E. LeMunyon of Great Falls, showed him standing, three-quarters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CMRRC (TU2009.39.5672a)

Russell painting a watercolor in his tent at the Pablo Buffalo Roundup (one of four painted on site). M. O. Hammond photograph, May 25, 1909.

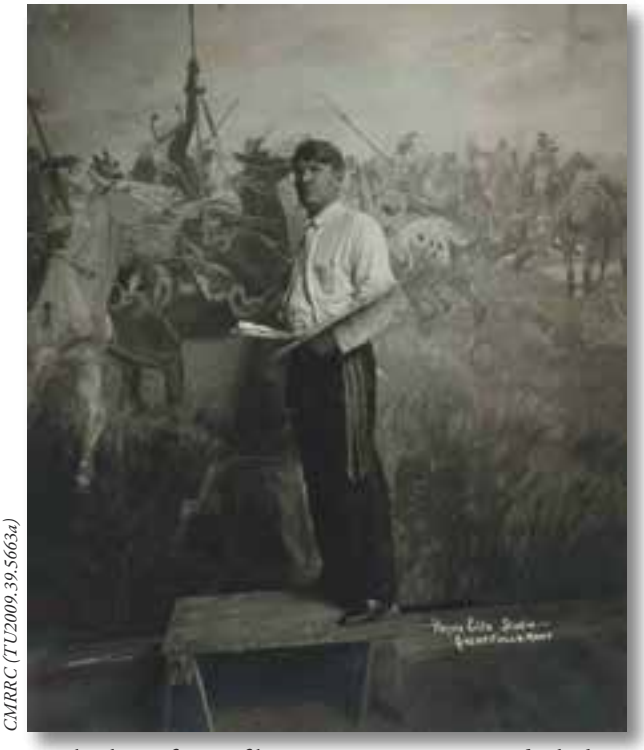
profile, his arms folded across his chest, his sash prominently displayed, his wide-brimmed hat tipped back, framing his distinctive features. Reproduced in a book in 1894, it also appeared in magazines and newspapers and by 1900 had established Russell's public persona. His growing fame in the twentieth century brought a demand for additional portraits, and Russell obliged."

If Russell had the level of celebrity today that he held during his lifetime, he would be everywhere. But the realness of Russell lay in the fact that he was what he seemed. As Mr. Dippie wrote of the coverage he received of the era, "Russell was good copy, and Nancy

CMRRC (TU2009.39.5867a)

The Eaton Party in Glacier Park. Howard Eaton is on the left watching Russell work his magic with wax. Almeron J. Baker photograph, 1915.

was not wrong in putting his face on his art. After all, his appearance mirrored his perspective. He posed, but



CMRRC (TU2009.39.5663a)

Charlie in front of his masterpiece Lewis and Clark Meeting Indians at Ross' Hole. Heyn's Elite Studio photograph, 1912.

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CMRRC (TU2009.39.5765b detail)

Nancy and Charlie on the shoreline of Lake McDonald, 1910.

was no poseur. There was no inconsistency between how he looked and what he believed."

Russell himself was always truthful of his approach to his art – and the West he felt was over, as he stated to a reporter while visiting Canada in 1919. "I have confined myself entirely to historical work. That is, I have attempted to record in the form of paintings what little I could of the old life on the great ranches in the northwestern states... It is largely a thing of the past now – gone as a result of the country filling up with people from the east. The big ranches have gone and the Indians and the buffalo have gone...

Then the only record of the wild, untamed life of the plains and prairies will be that written on canvas."

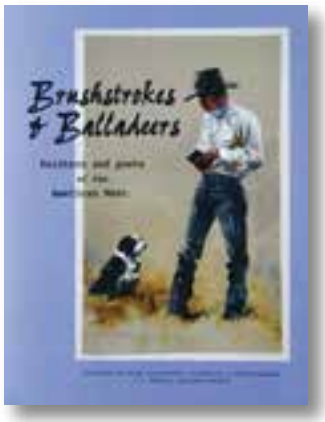
The volume itself answers the question as to if we need another book on Russell with a resounding YES! This is more than a book it is a window into the life of an iconic individual who almost single handidly created the enduring image of the legacy of region.

Russel photos courtesy CMRRC – Charles M. Russell Research Collection, Gilcrease Museum, The University of Tulsa, Tulsa, Oklahoma

CMRRC (TU2009.39.275.18)

Douglas Fairbanks and the Russells on the set of *The Three Muskateers*, 1921.

Brushstrokes & Balladeers
Painters and Poets of the American West
Edited by C.J. Hadley
Range Conservation Foundation and *RANGE* magazine



Those who have spent any time in the West know C.J. Hadley's publication, *RANGE* magazine. It is a pulls-no-punches chronicle about the ways and issues facing the working people of the American West. And as passionate as Ms. Hadley is about the problems facing the region, she is equally as passionate about helping celebrate and support the culture. She has produced over eighty-five quarterly issues of her publication and nine hardback

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books to-date on ranchers and ranching in the outback of her beloved American West. In this, her latest book, *Brushstrokes & Balladeers, Painters and Poets of the American West*, she has created what may be her finest hardback to date – a celebration of art and written word that covers her subject to perfection. Classic and new poems are illustrated with art and drawings by a literal who's who of western artists and writers. Page after page, the eyes are amazed, thanks in no small part to the fine art direction of John Bardwell.

Beyond the work of editing the volume itself – which I am sure was no small task – Ms. Hadley has taken the creative time and effort to remember and underscore the importance of the art and folk life of a region's culture, presenting the celebration in a manner filled with grace with page-after-page of glorious imagery. Beyond her ongoing dedication to the people and the region she loves, this effort alone deserves our thanks and a tip of the hat. This is a must have book.

The One Straw Revolution
Masanobu Fukuoka
www.amazon.com

The West is a place of great culture and unique people but it is important to remember that the actual culture of the West rests within the broader need of feeding others. Ranching and farming – that's the ball game. We have to feed each other. Simple as that. Yet over the years, agriculture has become less simple as "Big-Ag" as it's called, has swept over country and town, in may cases, absorbing small family farm and ranching operations to the point these enterprises are on the edge of going away – even with the awareness created by Willie Nelson's "Farm Aid" and other such benefits. This fact has not been ignored by smart society and the result are actions such as the growing "slow food" movement, farm-to-table cooking and the huge growth of local farmer's markets springing up all over the country.

In any way of life, its circle seems to always come around and the awakening of this more responsible methodology of farming has been quietly evolving for some time.

Today it's being called Permaculture, a term coined in the early 1970s and defined by one the movement's founders, Bill Mollison, as a "philosophy of working with, rather than against nature; of protracted and thoughtful observation rather than protracted and thoughtless labor; and of looking at plants and animals in all their functions, rather than treating any area of agriculture as a single product system."

In 1978, a Japanese farmer who had shed the life of a government crop inspector and plant disease researcher wrote a small book, really more of a daily journal in form, about his journey to pursue a simpler, less chemically involved life. Masanobu Fukuoka's book, *The One-Straw Rebellion*, has recently been experiencing a resurgence in notoriety due to the larger acceptance of permaculture in a world of growing populations. In the West, we call this "stewardship." What this enticing little book does is help instill and reinforce the value of big-thinking responsibility when it comes to just how we are going to feed everyone – without the dangerous, chemical-based approach of Big-Ag. Whether you farm or ranch or not – you eat. This is a book for the ages and life's circle has brought it back to us some 36 years after it was first published.

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Dining on the Yard Bird

By Kathy McCraine

Chicken is something ranchers and cowboys don't like to talk about. You might eat it in a pinch, but it's not a food you would want gracing your plate on a regular basis, and you darned sure wouldn't serve it to company.

Lenny McNab, who was wagon cook for the big O RO Ranch north of Prescott, Arizona, a few years back, said it best when he said, "We don't bring chicken out to the wagon. These cowboys are not going to eat the yard bird!"

Ever go to a cattleman's banquet? How many plates of chicken and salmon did you see being served? Steak is absolutely *de rigueur* in these circles, and no night out on the town is complete without a big steak dinner.

An old cowboy I knew when we ranched back in Mississippi was particularly scornful of chicken. Speedy was as wizened as a dried apricot and lean as a fence stay. "I don't eat anything that's got pimples," he would say in disgust.

My husband Swayze and I, on the other hand, enjoy eating all kinds of poultry from time to time, though I shy away from feeding it to the roundup crew at our 7 Up Ranch, out of respect for the cowboys' feelings, or perhaps fear of a mutiny.

Being a good old southern boy, Swayze definitely prefers his birds southern fried, with mashed potatoes or rice and gravy on the side, but then I think you could fry a hunk of latigo leather in beer batter, and he'd happily devour it. I don't do fried food well – partly due to my lack of patience in getting the grease hot enough, and partly because I hate to clean up the mess – so I flatly refuse to do fried chicken. Consequently, every time we fly back to Louisiana, our first stop out of the New Orleans airport is a Popeye's Chicken stand, so he can get his fix.

Occasionally I can coax him into eating something a little more sophisticated, like the following chicken in sherry sauce that I adapted from an old Spanish recipe. Possibly he likes it because it's cooked in a sort of gravy and served over rice, which

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takes him back to his Louisiana roots.

It makes for a nice change of pace from the steak, roast and hamburger meals we eat nightly, but don't even think about serving it as leftovers. Chicken two nights in one week? It ain't gonna happen in this house.

photos by Kathy McCraine

Chicken in Sherry Sauce

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
Salt and pepper to taste
Flour for dusting chicken
2-3 tablespoons olive oil
½ cup finely chopped shallots
⅔ cup medium dry sherry
¼ cup sherry vinegar
1 teaspoon sugar
1 10-ounce can chicken broth
1 cup coarsely chopped tomatoes
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
2 tablespoons flour mixed in ½ cup water

Season the chicken well with salt and pepper, then lightly coat with flour. In a large, heavy skillet, heat the oil and the cook the chicken over moderate heat, turning once, until golden, about 3 minutes per side. Transfer the chicken to a platter. Add the shallots to the skillet, adding more oil if necessary, and cook over moderately low heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the sherry and cook for 2 minutes, deglazing the pan. Stir in the sherry vinegar and sugar and cook until slightly thickened, about 3 minutes. Stir in the broth, tomatoes and mustard, and season with salt and pepper. Return the chicken to the pan and simmer 30 minutes. Stir 2 tablespoons flour into ½ cup water and add to the pot. Cook another 5 to 10 minutes until gravy is thickened. Serve over rice. Serves 4.

Kathy McCraine is the author of *Cow Country Cooking: Recipes and Tales from Northern Arizona's Historic Ranches*. Visit her web site at www.kathymccraine.com.

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Why America Adopted Cowboy Music

Cowboy music and folklore owes its existence to an unsung hero's dogged persistence.

By Hal Cannon

"Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children's children. Do not let selfish men or greedy interests skin your country of its beauty, its riches or its romance." *– Theodore Roosevelt*

Sure, cowboys would be singing anyway, but certain things had to happen for cowboy music to become a music for all Americans. What follows is some hefty theorizing. Hang on.

From ancient times, the fatted calf has been a metaphor for wealth. And in every society with horses, the horseman has been revered. This makes for a proud occupation, one with its own costume, language, gear, music and supercharged lore – not just in the United States, but worldwide.

It took a major shift in America's self-image, though, to champion the cowboy. And along with that shift, it took some visionaries to help us into the 20th century, with the cowboy as our guide.

"The cowboy's name is butchered by the papers in the east
And when we're in the city, we're treated like the beasts.
But in our native country, our name is always dear
And you bet we're always welcome by the Western Pioneer."

This verse from "The Western Pioneer" comes from one of the oldest cowboy songs I know. It's from a time when polite society looked down on cowboys, and yet the song is still heroic, even if it's only the western pioneer who sees the cowboy as a welcomed guest.

The great American writer Wallace Stegner observed, "The image of the cowboy, before Roosevelt, Remington, and Wister remade it, was hardly heroic or glamorous." Stegner noted that, before the 1880s, the cowboy was usually called a herder and was mostly depicted as "rough, shaggy, uncouth, barbarous, violent – at the very least a disturber of the peace and at the worst a brutal outlaw." In Stegner's chronology, the cowboy did not take on the qualities of a hero until after the first Wild West show in North Platte, Nebraska, in 1882.

So why did this shift take place? After the Civil War, it was as if the entire country had been displaced, and society needed to be re-ordered. Steam-ship engineers replaced tall-ship sailors. White settlement squeezed out Indians. Slaves were free men, but often homeless. Civil War veterans wandered, dazed by the horrors of combat. Utopian religions sought ideal lives in isolation. And emigrants poured into the country in

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waves. All these folks looked for new homes, and many directed their gazes west. By the time the new century arrived, the cowboy played an extraordinary role in the way we came to see ourselves as Americans. The cowboys of the great trail drives defined what it was to be displaced and disenfranchised. Why not cast them as the new American heroes?

Thomas Jefferson's idealized yeoman farmer read Plato, in the original Greek, around the hearth after a day tilling the blessed soil. John Lomax, the first folklorist to collect cowboy songs, had a different idea about men of the soil. He hearkened to an authentic vernacular rather than something trumped up in Greek and Latin.

Though we don't see Lomax's face carved into Mount Rushmore, as we do Theodore Roosevelt's, he played an important role in ushering America into the 20th Century. Roosevelt often drew inspiration from the cowboy to frame the values of his politics, but it was Lomax who allowed the true voice of the cowboy to be heard, something that had profound social consequence in years to come. And Roosevelt and Lomax were not alone. There were many others documenting the cowboy: writers, painters and photographers, and even Jack Thorpe, riding the ranges, looking for songs.

It may not be fair to compare anyone to Roosevelt. He read a book a day and was knowledgeable about almost any subject. He was fearless in his quest for right. He was a visionary when it came to the conservation of our natural world. He was a world-class romantic. And most of all, he had a limitless capacity for a life of vigor, heart and action. A sickly child born into American aristocracy, he came into his own as a rancher, cowboy, horseman and hunter. He had gone west a broken man after both his wife and his mother died on the same day in 1884. His story of redemption in the wilderness of North Dakota is one of the epic American tales.

While Roosevelt had been born into one of the most prominent families in New York, Lomax came from a very different background. A decade younger than Roosevelt, Lomax was born in 1867 and grew up on a small farm south of Fort Worth. This country was on the edge of the western frontier and, as a boy, Lomax witnessed the early cattle drives as they passed through his river valley. Later he recalled how the songs of the cowboys captivated him as a small boy.

He wanted to be a scholar, but had to cobble together an education. He was 28 years old before he finally started his university studies in English literature. Lomax took the lyrics to those cowboy songs, words he'd written down in his youth, to the University of Texas, but when he wrote a paper about them, his professor called his study "cheap and unworthy." Lomax burned his collection behind the men's dormitory. Yet, he persisted. After teaching at Texas A&M for a short time, he was admitted to graduate school at Harvard in 1907. There, he studied with noted professors Barrett Wendell and George Lyman Kittredge, who encouraged him to return to Texas and collect cowboy songs in earnest.

By the early 1900s, America was changing yet again. People were moving to cities, and Lomax believed he was in a race against time to preserve the voices of early cowboys. His was a radical quest: back then few people imagined that common working people had anything creative to offer. Lomax was an odd duck as he traveled across the West, from cowtown to cow camp, asking for songs. He sent hundreds of letters and queries to newspapers, and everywhere he lectured, he asked people to contribute to his quest.

By 1910, Lomax finally had a manuscript ready for publication. His publishers, however, were nervous that the literary, book-buying public would have little interest in the cowboy vernacular. Lomax had never met Roosevelt, but it occurred to him that an endorsement from the former president would give him the gravitas

his book needed. He tried to gain access through his Harvard connections, but had little luck. Then he learned Roosevelt was scheduled to be an honored guest at the Cheyenne Frontier Days rodeo.

When Lomax arrived at the rodeo, ostensibly on a song-collecting trip, *The Cheyenne State Leader* reported the town was "filled with dash and vim and scores of thrills and many amazing developments."

The evening before the rodeo began, Lomax chanced to meet a college mate, Booth Merrell, from western Oklahoma, as he walked into a saloon with his big horn Edison recorder. That night he heard for the first time the classic cowboy song, "Goodbye Old Paint."

The next day started with a parade with the 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalries of Buffalo Soldiers, or African-American troops, followed by the 11th Infantry, then the field artillery with a long string of mules carrying jack guns on their backs. Each unit was escorted by a brass band. Then came three tribal groups in full regalia: Sioux, Shoshone and Arapaho. There were local dignitaries and the rodeo committee in automobiles and carriages, then the fire department and all its shiny equipment. The parade lasted two hours, after which Roosevelt addressed the crowds with Mrs. Frederic Remington by his side. Then the rodeo began.

Lomax finally gained an appointment with Roosevelt at his hotel. By the end of the meeting, Roosevelt had agreed to pen a letter of endorsement for the collection of cowboy songs. That handwritten letter was included as a forward to the first edition of Lomax's book and all editions since. At that point, folklore was the study of finding remnants from the medieval in the stories and ballads of ordinary people or, in Europe, from the peasant classes. Lomax had piqued Roosevelt's interest by making a case that cowboy songs were tied directly to ancient Anglo Saxon lore. The argument for the value of cowboy songs as part of a greater romantic tradition appealed to Roosevelt, who was not merely a

courtesy US Department of the Interior

Teddy Roosevelt horseback in Colorado, circa 1905

politician, but an intellectual. In fact, once he commented, "I have never so wished to be a millionaire or indeed any other person than a literary man with a large family of small children and taste for practical politics and bear hunting."

With Roosevelt's endorsement, Lomax's book came out to great critical and popular acclaim. At that point, the folklorist went back to the former president with a request for help raising funds for additional song collecting. Roosevelt wrote to the head of the Carnegie Institution, asking that Lomax be given $1,000 quickly, for his "very original and instructive study into a phase of native American literary and intellectual growth which of course has been totally neglected." The Carnegie Institution rejected the proposal. Then Roosevelt wrote to the French ambassador, Jean-Jules Jusserand. "They are of course for the most part doggerel," he wrote candidly, "but these are interesting because they are genuine. The deification of Jesse James is precisely like the deification of Robin Hood and the cowboy is a hero exactly as the hunter of the Greenwood was a hero. The view taken of women," Roosevelt added, "seems to be much the same as that taken in many of the medieval ballads." This time Roosevelt secured Lomax a grant.

courtesy Library of Congress

John Lomax, circa 1930s

Lomax made a great contribution as he preserved the actual voice of the cowboy. Today, when we can tune in and share music from all over the world with the click of a mouse, it's easy to underestimate the revolutionary importance of recording local songs. Back then, music varied from town to town, and people in big cities never heard songs sung along the back roads and byways. American classics such as "Home on the Range," "Git Along Little Dogies" and, later, "Goodnight Irene" and "Midnight Special" were unknown until Lomax collected and published them for the rest of America to enjoy.

Lomax was the first folklorist to pay attention to songs that chronicled the American experience; other folklorists of his time focused almost exclusively on European epics and folk songs. The publication of *Cowboy Songs* in 1910 was a landmark in the history of America's interest in its own authentic culture, and made Lomax a national figure. Most importantly, it gave all Americans access to this genre of music.

John Lomax was a 19th century man. Though he

ushered in a new world, he could not see the social and political ramifications of his work that his folklorist children, Alan and Bess, understood and continued to contribute to in a great family legacy. I knew Alan Lomax; his sister Bess Lomax Hawes was a mentor. Bess has been gone now for several years, but I will never forget interviewing her about her father's motivation for doing this incredible work. "His basic message," she told me, "was that everybody who isn't outside the human condition has the potential for creativity and for contribution, and they should be admired for whatever it is that they can produce that is positive."

Often, these contributions came in a complicated mix of creative spirits. The cowboy's popularization created an entire industry that often had little connection to the reality of the old West, or to the working lives of cowboys. Yet, it was Lomax's conviction – his belief that each American had the right to such a creative voice – that earned him the attention of powerful advocates such as Roosevelt. Together, they brought recognition to the American cowboy and his music, and that in turn released a great creative outpouring of literature, film and more music in the decades to come.

Musician, folklorist and journalist Hal Cannon is the founding director of the Western Folklife Center.

Living Poetry

Idaho poet Jessica Hedges writes of the ranch life she knows.

By Rod Miller

It was something of a family ritual. Late every January, from the time Jessica Hedges was 10 years old, the family would bundle up and leave the TS Ranch in northern Nevada, where her father was the boss, to spend a long day in Elko at the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering. There, Jessica says, they "would stay up way too late to get up way too early to feed cows."

Late nights and lost sleep notwithstanding, Jessica gobbled up cowboy poetry like winter feed, ruminated on the art, and thought, "I can do that."

And so she did.

photos by Rod Miller

Jessica Hedges writes and recites poems inspired by daily ranch life.

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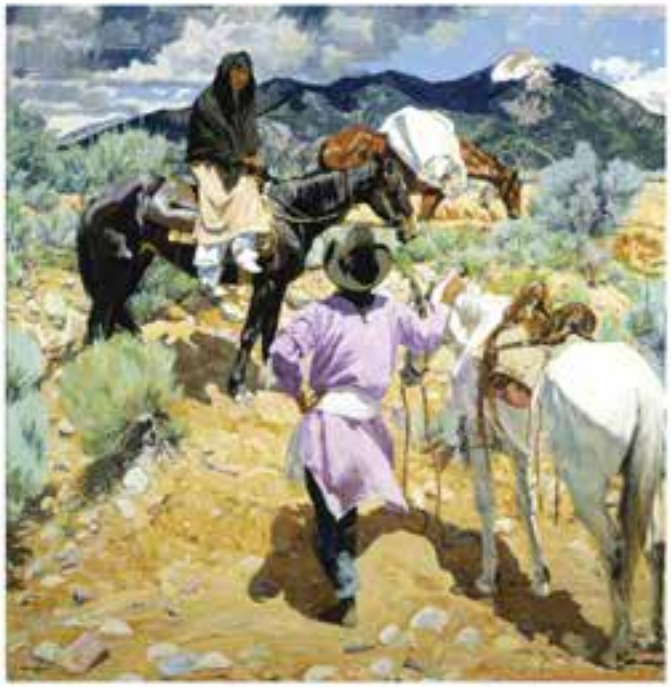

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At Rest, 1927/28, Oil on canvas, 50 x 50 inches, National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum

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"I think I started writing cowboy poetry at age 12," Jessica says, and she spent some time as youngster trying her stuff on Elko's open stages. As she grew older, so did her interest. "I didn't do much of it through high school and college, but really got serious about it at age 20."

Getting serious got her invited, twice so far, to recite on the main stages at Elko, a dream many cowboy poets never fulfill.

Jessica has watched and studied and learned from many performers over the years, but drew most of her inspiration from a poetic legend known in Elko, around the country, and internationally.

"My favorite is probably Waddie Mitchell," she says. "He's not only someone who has done it and is a great writer, he has a unique ability to tell a story. [Mitchell's poem] 'Where to Go' is one of my favorites. Over the last 10 or 15 years, this poem has changed meanings several times, depending on what I needed."

"...some think I've got something special,
And to go for it's all that's essential,
If I'd give it my time and my effort,
With hard work I might reach my potential."

With encouragement from others and growing maturity, when Jessica decided to get serious about writing, those lines from Mitchell's poem showed her the way.

"You have to practice writing just like you practice performing or practice anything else you want to do in life," she says. "The more you do it, the better you get, as long as you're open to changing or taking advice. I love constructive criticism."

But accepting criticism didn't come easy. Jessica submitted a poem, one well-liked when she performed it on stage, to the popular Web site CowboyPoetry.com; it was rejected for its rough construction. She didn't take it well.

"It took me a little while, but I finally licked my wounds and went back and looked at it," she says. "I needed to put on my big-girl pants and get over it. And that's exactly what I did, and I'm a better writer because of it. It took me a little bit to get over myself, but once I did, I changed how I wrote."

"...saddle up with the things that I've told you,
Leave man's little world far behind.
Find sanctuary out on the cow range.
Let the wind do its thing on your mind."

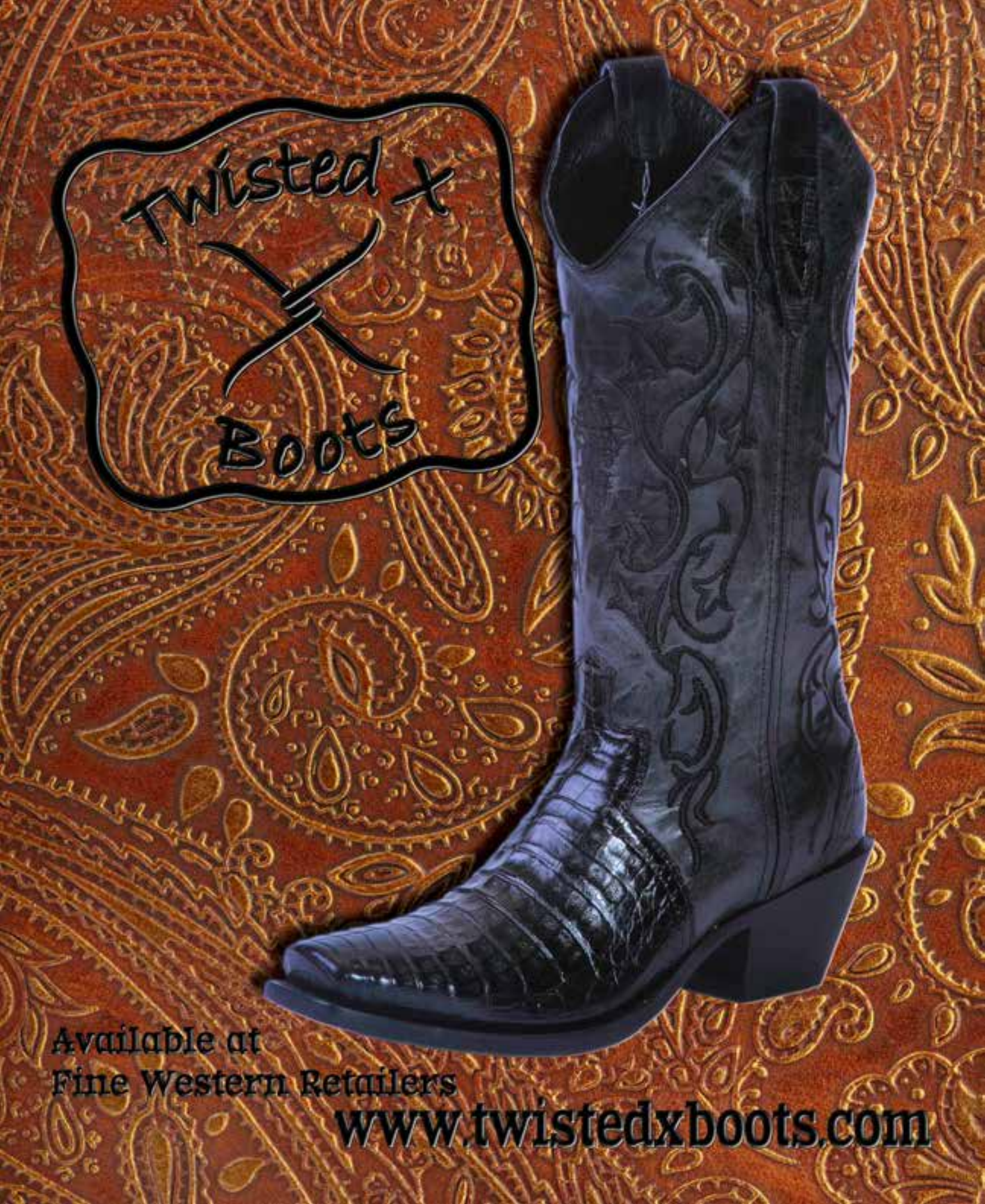
Jessica writes when and where she can, nowadays, but that advice from "Where to Go" describes much of it. "I get a lot of lines or concepts when I'm riding, or walking or driving," she says.

Ideas are recorded in spiral notebooks. "I'll go back later and say, 'Okay, I've got to sit down and write today,' and I might only get three lines out." But, she keeps at it. "When I sit down to write the next time, I'll read through what I've done and maybe only add a couple of lines."

Eventually, after rewriting and revising, there might be a poem there, or she might go back to the drawing board. "I may get in there and find a concept or a couple of words that aren't rolling right, or you get something three-quarters of the way written and you decide you want to go a different direction."

Growing up on a ranch, and now living and working on a ranch as an adult, gives Jessica's poetry authenticity. "That's one thing that makes us a little more distinctive in our writing. This is what we're doing right now. It's literally day-to-day life. I think just writing from a 20-something-year-old woman's perspective of a life I'm living here and now sort of sets me apart."

But, the rigors of ranching and the complications of raising a young family cut into Jessica's ability to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devote as much time and attention to poetry as she would like.

"Some say my fire has too many irons,
There's not enough of me to go all around,
That I'm flyin' too high for my own good
And it's time I come back to the ground."

Obstacles aside, it's a life she's chosen and one she wouldn't trade for another.

"I've been a licensed insurance agent. My husband, Sam, has a degree in diesel," she explains. "We aren't doing this because we have no other choices. We decided this is how we want to live our life, this is how we want to raise kids, this is what makes us happy. I learned that I'd rather not do the heels and the hair every day."

The couple met at Great Basin College in Elko. Both learned trades but soon returned to the ranching life they felt they were raised to live. "We spent two years in Washington at a couple of different jobs, one in Coulee City and one in Soap Lake," Jessica says. "We spent two-and-a-half years in the Burns, Oregon, area. Some of that was cow camp, some night calving, and some crew work in a few different locations." Now, the Hedges find themselves on eastern Idaho's Snake River Plain, where her husband manages a ranch not far from Blackfoot.

Along with the cows and calves and colts they take responsibility to raise, they're busy raising a next generation of their own. A young son, Quirt, is already taking to the saddle and, by the time you read this, a second son, Cinch, will have made his way into the family fold.

While all this cuts into Jessica's time to write and recite poetry, she works to keep those irons in the fire. Of late, that has included teaming up with singer-songwriter Trinity Seely. They've performed together in Colorado and Wyoming, and put together a tour of their own at venues in Utah and Idaho.

Seely enjoys the view from backstage when Jessica performs. "Her performances are fun to watch," she says. "And she's growing. I've watched her strengthen her performance over the past couple of years. When she introduces a poem and tells the story behind it she establishes a connection with her audience, especially with ranch wives, and a lot of other women can relate."

Her admiration extends to Jessica's skills as a writer: "Jessica's poetry is heartfelt and deep. She touches a place other poets don't go. She really grips people by the heart, especially ranch women, and writes about things that touch a sensitive spot. Her authenticity really comes across. When she writes about the sound of spur chains jingling when her cowboy is coming home late, it's real. You can feel that, and know that she has felt it. I sure hope we're able to put together some shows and perform together in the future. It's fun, and so much of our material coincides."

Another iron in Jessica's fire is the Buckarette Collection, a line of jewelry and fashion accessories with a western flair. "I call it my pregnancy insanity project," Jessica says. "We had just come out of cow camp, and I was six months pregnant with Quirt. I was sitting there looking at white walls, not really knowing anybody, not having anything to do. I started seeing all these headbands online and I got to thinking, what if we did conchos or bucking horses? So I got into that and it's slowly evolved. I do jewelry, cell phone covers, sunglasses. I've got somebody teaching me leatherwork, so I've got some new things I'm working on."

"Don't let threads be wound into cables;
Bust 'em now and set your mind free."

Jessica does her best to keep life's complications at bay and not allow busyness to take the joy out of life.

Jessica and singer-songwriter Trinity Seely team up to perform.

"That was a lesson my dad kept telling me over and over," she says, "'cause I'd get so bound up over stuff." Rather than contributing threads of complexity, writing poetry actually helps "bust 'em," she believes. "It's my release valve, and it's just plain fun. My biggest hope is being able to find those next levels of expression I'm not even aware of yet."

Beyond personal benefits, she considers cowboy poetry to be therapeutic for society. "I think we have an entire generation who has lost touch with oral tradition," Jessica says. "In this day and age of social media, e-mail and texting we've forgotten how to communicate with each other in more than 140 characters. Cowboy poetry is part of continuing the history and heritage. I'm passing on a way of life that we're living right here and right now. Because in a hundred years, this is going to be incredibly interesting to somebody, just like cowboys from a hundred years ago are incredibly interesting to us."

"...the perspective he got 'gainst big country and skies
Made his problems seem really quite small
When he compared 'em to the size of this world
And the intricate scheme of it all."

Writer Rod Miller writes about the West in poetry, fiction and nonfiction. His latest novel is *Cold as the Clay*. Another novel, *Rawhide Robinson Rides the Range*, was released in January. Visit online at www.writerRodMiller.com.

Your Horse's Feet, A Series

Break Over

By Pete Healey, APF

In the last issue, I briefly talked about break-over as it applies to the mechanics of the foot. As I have said before, there are four areas that apply to health and equilibrium, and break-over is part of the palmerodistal or heel-to-toe balance of this complex organ we call the foot.

Although the term 'Break-over' is commonly used and well accepted in the industry, there are some in the PhD community that think it should be called something else. There are also several interpretations on how it should be applied and sometimes lack of common sense is part of its application or absence. Basically break-over is the place on the *bottom* of the foot from where the foot starts to roll forward from during stride. The biomechanical position of break-over affects the foot and leg not only during motion but during stance as well. Break-over placement can have an effect on foot circulation, bone density, ligaments, joints, performance, soundness, and the athletic longevity of the horse.

Have you ever noticed that objects of motion have a radius or a round aspect to them? Imagine if wheels were square or the toes of our shoes were flat to the ground, but it's a common practice to trim a horse's foot flat and apply a plum flat shoe without any break-over radius. This rigid style of shoeing is a huge flaw in the industry and is perpetuated by centuries of tradition and ignorance.

The biggest influence on the equine foot is the Deep Flexor Tendon. This tendon attaches to the middle of the coffin bone and as the name implies, flexes or rotates the bone around the coffin joint, which allows the horse to propel forward. This bone is protected by its suspension in the hoof capsule, which is in a constant state of growth remolding which nature designed to replace hoof worn from the natural activity of a foraging animal. The wild horse offers the model for natures design as it simultaneously wears and grows. Research estimates that the hoof goes through cell division every eight hours. Our domestic horses go through a period of hoof distortion that is corrected by manual trimming.

In nature there is equilibrium between the bone and hoof, as the bone rotates so does the hoof because the radius or break-over of the hoof capsule is directly below the tip of the bone. It is common in the shoeing industry to shoe the toe flat, which can place the break-over of the hoof 30 plus millimeters or 1.25 inches out in front of the tip of the bone. Six weeks later because of foot growth, break-over is now 45 millimeters or 1.75 inches out in front of the bone. This is leverage and leverage causes strain and distortion. The toe of the shoe wears out because the foot is trying to get the break-over back under the bone to get it in equilibrium. The human sees the worn out toe of the shoe and replaces it with a new shoe. In the meantime the front of the foot has distorted from the leverage, so the farrier rasps the toe back to make it look correct, but this just weakens the foot without correcting the problem. This rasping the toe back thing is perpetuated by the veterinarian who tells the shoer he needs to "Back the toe up" to get the break-over back, but the break-over is on the bottom of the foot not the front.

The advent of the Natural Balance shoe helped considerably as the design of the shoe places break-over under the tip of the coffin bone. There are several other shoes on the market that provide break-over as well. Basically, all of this can be done just by using a rasp and a shaping hammer and knowing the anatomy of the foot. At some point the veterinarian and farrier industries have to realize that the world is not flat, even a dog that chases his tail understands that he has to get into a round position to catch it. For more information on Break-over and how to evaluate it, go to www.balancedbreakover.com.

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Hope on the Range

Ranchers, predators and trust in Montana's Blackfoot Valley.

By Melissa Mylchreest

A rancher, a wolf biologist and an environmentalist walk into a bar.

In many valleys in the West, people would hold up a hand, and tell you to stop right there; the statement is a joke, all on its own. The notion of getting those three parties in a room together – let alone a bar! – is laughable. But here in Montana's Blackfoot Valley, it's no joke.

Despite the iconic status engendered by Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It*, the Blackfoot Valley remains more or less as it has for generations. The 1.5 million-acre watershed is home to only 2,500 households in seven small communities, and land use is still predominantly agricultural. In many ways, this valley is much the same as many others in the state: cattle roam river bottoms and range into hills, and the local economy is inextricably linked to beef prices, weather, range science and luck.

But here, there's something different happening, as well.

Outside of Ovando, on this late October day, the cottonwood are pulling out all the stops before winter, their yellow riotous in the autumn sun. The Blackfoot itself meanders south of town, looping lazily in this wide, glacial valley. Tawny hills run off toward the mountains, and creeks are lined with red foliage. Clouds pile up on the horizon and, here and there, the landscape is punctuated with dark shapes in the distance: horses, cattle, barns.

"What was that?" says Eric Graham, stopping and throwing the truck into reverse on a deserted dirt road.

"Can you see it out your window?" he asks. "Was it bear, or just horse?"

I peer over the edge of the passenger-side window at the pile along the roadside. Though mashed flat, from this view it's clear it's a pile of horse manure, not bear scat. We drive on, and soon find ourselves parked in front of a gate, overlooking a field full of grazing cattle.

Getting out of the truck, Graham cautions me, "Now, don't touch the dang fence! I got zapped the other day, and they have it cranked way up." His sun- and wind-weathered face cracks into a self-deprecating grin, the dark beginnings of a winter beard shadowing the lower half of his face. He hoists a backpack, pulls a fleece hat down over his ears, and heads toward the pasture.

Safely through the gate, we survey the cows as they eye us disinterestedly, and Graham explains how he found himself out here in the first place, looking for animal scat, getting shocked by fences, and learning the back roads. As he does, it becomes clear that his presence is only one piece in a much bigger story.

"Back before conservation was sexy," says Jim Stone,

photos by Melissa Myldvreest

The Blackfoot Valley is quintessential Montana cow country. Cattle roam river bottoms and range into hills, and the local economy is inextricably linked to beef prices, weather, range science and luck.

a born-and-raised Blackfoot rancher, "there were all these conversations around the valley, and they were landowner-generated."

In the 1970s, the Blackfoot was on the verge of being named one of the top 10 imperiled rivers in the country, a designation that would've likely triggered federal management and restrictions. On hearing the news, locals sat up and took notice.

"We didn't want outside people dictating how we were going to manage one of the most critical resources in the valley," Stone says.

Locals also knew that they wanted to maintain the rural, agricultural character of their valley, and to address longstanding access issues for hunters and fishermen. At that time, distrust ruled the day between ranchers and government employees.

"Nobody had ever talked to the Fish, Wildlife and Parks guys," says Stone, "because nobody really liked them."

Showing incredible foresight, especially in a state known for its staunch individualism, landowners understood the need to work collaboratively with agency representatives in order to ensure the success of their vision for the valley. Little by little, lines of communication opened. In due time, agency folks came to the table as well.

"Our general human nature," says Stone, "is that we

love to fight and butt heads. And then we walk away and we don't have to do anything about it. Fighting is an easy out. But we realized it's really about communities and people. We don't have to agree, but we can have the same values. Trying to do the right thing is pretty powerful."

By 1993, a collaborative – and unique – partnership had evolved, and the Blackfoot Challenge was born. A nonprofit organization, the Challenge aims to conserve and enhance natural resources and a rural way of life throughout the watershed through cooperation and conversation among all stakeholders. Committees within the organization reflect this all-inclusive approach.

"The make-up of the Challenge represents the realities on the ground," says Seth Wilson, Blackfoot Challenge wildlife coordinator. "All of our committees are made up of landowners, representatives from all seven communities in the valley, and all the agencies – the Forest Service, BLM, DNRC, USFW, county weed districts, everyone."

"It took some coming together," says Stone. "We ranchers went out and learned about fish, water temperature, stream dynamics. And the biologists had to learn what a cow looks like, and the needs of a cow. They learned about irrigation and weed control."

In this way, a "ridgetop-to-ridgetop" management developed, based on transparency, cooperation and realistic, on-the-ground strategies.

While many agricultural valleys throughout the West remain vehemently divided, the Blackfoot has seen collaborative progress. Not all landholders are interested in partnering with others, but most are. Several ranchers have put their land in conservation easements, which restrict development, but support agricultural practices. Easements also allow for hunting and fishing access; today, more than 30 miles of the Blackfoot River corridor are open for public recreation. Rare bull trout and westslope cutthroat are receiving the protection that they need to rebuild populations. Wetlands are thriving at the same time as cattle operations. For the most part, Stone says, it's a good system.

"I don't care how educated you think you are," he explains, "these places are dynamic as hell. We've had to neighbor up, and build on partnerships. We've got a Rolodex of resource management now, and I can call up all these folks. I think it's critical to survival."

And on any given day, it's possible to find a rancher, a wildlife biologist, and a conservationist drinking beer together at Trixie's, the local watering hole. While they may have their differences, they all agree on one thing: the Blackfoot Valley is a pretty special landscape, and not a bad place to spend some time.

The only problem is, they're not the only ones who think that.

"Oh, now here's a good one," Graham says, pointing down at a clear, four-toed paw print. We're walking in the ruts of a ranch road that loops around a handful of man-made ponds, and the wolf track is a small one, but distinct and unmistakable.

"This is only the second time I've seen a wolf sign up here all season," he says, "so this is interesting."

Graham works as a range rider for the Blackfoot Challenge, a malleable and growing job currently in its fifth year. A grant-funded position, the general goal of the range rider is to reduce negative encounters between livestock and predators. For those familiar with ranching, the notion of a range rider is nothing new; historically, this was the realm of the cowboy, and earlier, the semi-nomadic pastoralists who moved and lived with their herds. But in the Blackfoot Valley, the range rider had long been gone from the landscape.

The absence wasn't an oversight; there simply hadn't been a need. With big predators eliminated from the valley in generations past, cows were largely safe to

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Blackfoot Challenge range rider Eric Graham aims a radio-telemetry antenna toward the mountains to pinpoint the location of radio-collared wolves.

wander as they pleased, free from supervision. But to wolves and bears, the Blackfoot watershed is a natural paradise, and following reintroduction and protection programs of the 1990s, carnivores came back home.

"By the late 1990s, we had grizzly bears, and confirmed losses of livestock," says Seth Wilson. "There's this great natural river-bottom habitat, and on top of it bears were finding bone yards, carcasses, beehives, garbage, pet food."

When a grizzly killed a hunter in the Blackfoot in 2001, the community was galvanized. Through a long public process, the Challenge identified problems – bear attractants, prime grizzly habitat, public safety concerns – and solutions.

Because grizzlies are known for snatching newborn calves, the Challenge procured funding to provide permanent electric fencing for 18 calving areas. Given that carcasses are a primary attractant, and many ranches have long disposed of carcasses in designated bone yards, an innovative carcass removal program was implemented: When ranchers have a mortality in their herd, they can call a Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks representative, who will discreetly remove the carcass and transport it to a fenced composting facility. Since 2003, more than 1,700 livestock carcasses have been removed from the project area. Despite such measures, though, it soon became apparent that grizzlies were not the only returnees to the valley, and they weren't the largest threat to livestock.

"The Blackfoot was one of the final big watersheds in the western part of the state without wolves," says Wilson. "But the first pack showed up in 2007, and now we have 11 or 12 confirmed packs."

In an effort to get ahead of the curve, keep wolf depredation numbers low, and help ranchers as much as possible, the range rider program was born.

"The main purpose of the range rider is to increase herd supervision rates, and to better understand where wolves are in relationship to cattle," says Wilson. "We communicate across the watershed, and tell landowners where wolves are, and how herds are reacting. When you increase supervision, you can take preventative action. If we find naturally dead livestock, we can remove the carcass. If we find sick or injured animals, we can get them home and doctored. We mend fence. We get lost

calves back to their moms. It's just an extra set of eyes."

Watching over hundreds of thousands of acres might seem a tall order for Graham and his small crew, but he says it's nothing in comparison to the work ranchers do.

"I'm not just the range rider," he says. "I'm a helping hand. These guys get super busy with haying and everything. It's just useful to have someone out there checking their cows on a regular basis."

Standing on a rise over the river, Graham turns on his radio telemetry equipment and aims the antenna into the mountains. Through an agreement with Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Graham is able to track radio-collared wolves in the area he covers. When he picks up a signal, he calls ranchers who have cattle nearby, and alerts them to the presence of predators. He publishes a weekly report that documents where the packs are and what they're up to. He's also aware, though, of the limitations of telemetry, and the power of on-the-ground knowledge.

"I've heard of rangers becoming too dependent on a collar," he says. "They pick up a signal and say, 'The wolves are right there.' But the rancher looks at his cows all bunched up and unhappy says, 'Well, I know your wolf with the collar is over there, but I think there are some wolves over here, too.'"

Graham says he learned early on to trust ranchers' intuition.

"These guys know what's going on," he says, "They've been out here their whole lives. Don't ever come to these guys acting like you know what's going on."

Building trust has been one of the most crucial aspects of the range rider position, a task made easier by the decades-old spirit of valley-wide collaboration.

"Most people around here are great, and that is one of the biggest reasons I was willing to do this job," says Graham. "Try working this job somewhere else, and it could be ugly."

In a state where the debate over predators regularly deteriorates into fisticuffs and even death threats, people in the valley, for the most part, remain civil. Graham says that he steers clear of Trixie's, the local bar, because "wolves and alcohol don't mix," but he's never felt anything but welcomed by the ranching community. And he's careful, he says, to stick to the middle of the road.

"I see both sides. Somebody's pro-grizzly, pro-wolf? Great," he says. "But on the other hand, it would certainly help the ranchers to have a lot fewer wolves around. And if they get their wolf [hunting] tags and want to go shoot one, I can absolutely see why they would."

In many respects, the range rider is the embodiment of the trust that's grown between vastly different constituencies over nearly 40 years of conversation, compromise, and trial and error. Ranchers in this valley have every reason to fear and hate wolves, and many, if not most of them, still do. But they've agreed to work with agencies, implement available management tools, and trust a stranger to come onto their land and keep tabs on their stock. Likewise, biologists and conservationists have put aside their preconceived ideas and asked ranchers for help and advice.

And so far, the gamble seems to be paying off. For the past six years, the valley has lost around four head of livestock each year to depredation. In turn, roughly four wolves have been removed each year, as well. In comparison to places like the Big Hole Valley, where, in two years, 25 head of livestock and 72 wolves were killed, these numbers are astonishingly low. As for 2013? At this writing, no livestock depredation has been reported for last year.

Standing in a vast field, watching a couple hundred cattle graze contentedly, Graham shrugs his shoulders.

"I don't look forward to the day a cow gets killed

on my watch," he says. "And I'm sure it will happen. But so far, I've lucked out this year."

I suggest that it's not luck, that perhaps it's the result of his own hard work and dedication. He shakes his head.

"There's depredation going on all over the state, wolves killing cattle and sheep everywhere," he says. "And somehow it's not happening here. But it's really hard to gauge our success. Really, I measure my effectiveness by a rancher telling me 'Hey, thank you. You did a good job.'"

Graham looks around and takes it all in, here at the tail end of his season in the field. Ranchers are bringing home cattle for the winter, touching base with him to let him know if they're missing stock. Soon Graham will wrap up his work and be done.

The relationship between ranchers and predators – and the people tasked with protecting each of them – will always remain fraught. But here in this big, wild valley, with the wind kicking up and the cows safely munching away and the wolves keeping to themselves, for now, the picture looks hopeful.

Melissa Mylchreest is a writer living in Montana.

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Gate to Great

A South Dakota horse trainer creates second chances for former race horses.

By Emily Esterson

I met Dale Simanton in a Doubletree Hotel elevator, about a mile from Baltimore-Washington International Airport. Tall and weathered, with a cowboy hat, vest and striped shirt, Simanton cut an incongruous figure in an environment of business-suited executives taking meetings or catching early flights. I was leaving for a meeting myself, and Simanton was getting ready to cross the country with a loaded horse trailer.

He didn't know me, but I knew who Simanton was. Just a couple of days earlier, in an equally incongruous environment, I'd watched Simanton work his Retired Racehorse Training Project Symposium horse, Drake's Dancer, nicknamed "Duck," in a makeshift cow pen assembled on the home stretch of Pimlico Race Course, in the down-in-the-mouth Baltimore suburbs. It was a long way from Simanton's home turf on the plains of South Dakota.

The symposium was modeled after mustang makeovers, only with retired off-the-track Thoroughbreds. Each of 26 trainers had been given 90 days to take an OTTB with no training, other than for the track, and start the horse on a second career. The Pimlico event was the culmination of that 90 days, a chance to show off what trainers were able to do with "leftover" race horses, ranging from old claimers to some that just didn't want to run anymore.

Most of the weekend's activities had been devoted to hunt-seat disciplines: jumping, eventing, dressage and polo. Some presentations were riveting, some less so; but when western saddles and cows appeared, the East Coast audience leaned in toward the track and paid

photos by Dorothy Snowden

Dale Simanton rides Crested, a stakes winner of more than $475,000. Crested was bred in the United Kingdom by the United Arab Emirates' royal family. Last year, the horse began a new career as a polo horse in Wisconsin.

attention. Duck and Dale were, without question, Pimlico's stars of the weekend. Each, it turned out, had an impressive stage presence, as well as a strong following, courtesy of online progress reports posted on the RRTP Web site and a fan base that had traveled with the pair from South Dakota.

"When Dale requested cattle for his demonstration at Pimlico, we all thought he was kidding," said RRTP President Steuart Pittman. "We didn't think our friends at Maryland Jockey Club would let cattle anywhere near their track, but we were wrong. We had a conference call with Dale and his crew, and decided he should bring as many horses as he could fit in his trailer."

Simanton brought five horses, all OTTBs trained for ranch work, from South Dakota to Baltimore, enough horses for a mini ranch rodeo, complete with cows. Pittman staged an online contest to nominate professional jockeys to ride horses in the demo. Hall of Fame jockey Chris McCarron rode a 2004 gray gelding, Automobile, in a team-penning competition. Another of Simanton's OTTBs, Slingin' Slew, performed at Pimlico, then left on a Florida-bound horse van for a new life as a fox-hunting horse for Georgian Gretchen Bickel; she'd fallen in love with the horse online and bought him sight-unseen. Simanton described Slew as "a horse who's never made a mistake."

Drake's Dancer (aka Duck) works a 2013 branding in South Dakota, just 90 days after his last race and after just 60 days in training as a ranch horse.

The racetrack is in Simanton's blood. His father was a successful race horse trainer in Montana, and Simanton himself jockeyed until about age 20, when he outgrew the flat saddle and started training. Today, he and his partner, Dorothy Snowden, also from a racing family, run Horse Creek Thoroughbreds, a breeding program that produced, among others, Cyclone Larry, who played the role of Secretariat in the recent film about the great race horse.

Gate to Great, Simanton's program for OTTBs, is a division of Horse Creek. Its genesis was both a financial necessity and a passion. When the bottom fell out of the horse market around 2008, Simanton began watching HRTV and other racing networks for long shots and low-priced claimers, thinking he'd trade one of his nice yearlings for an older horse he could re-train and sell as a ranch horse. When a particular horse caught his eye, Simanton called the office at northern Kentucky's Turfway Park. He ended up becoming acquainted with Carol Hays, whose husband, Dan, worked for a Kentucky race horse trainer.

"They had 150 head in training, and were always looking for homes for horses," Simanton says. "Carol asked what I do and I told her I make ranch horses out of them. Dan started calling me every time he had a horse he thought would work."

In those early days, Simanton was the one working phones, calling trainers he didn't know. Now, his horses come to him from contacts throughout the United States and the program, which takes only geldings, is more successful than he'd every dreamed.

"I've always ridden my race horses, out of necessity," he says. "I did day work for ranchers, and that's what I had to ride. The truth is, most horses don't make it on the track. Early on, I'd watch races at lower-end tracks, watch for horses that might need other jobs, and get hold of trainers. I picked up a couple in Colorado and a couple in Kentucky and a couple in Ohio, and that kept me pretty well caught up on horses."

Simanton's knowledge of the racing world led him to some great finds, like Duck, Slew and another gelding

named Jaden's Runner, destined to be a kid's horse thanks to his mellow, trustworthy nature. When horses arrive at the ranch, Simanton turns them out in a pen for a few days' rest; many have traveled long distances, often more than a thousand miles. If horses are sound at the outset, he'll ride them within the first few days to learn about their personalities and trainability. Then he turns them out for anywhere from two to six months. Not all horses jump into new careers with ease. Some take months of slow, gentle handling to come around.

"I've had horses who hated people so bad, they'd pin their ears when you got close to them," Simanton says. "I just walk by and scratch their ears, give them a pat. I watch for their lip to stiffen up. They start to look forward to seeing you. Then you can start to do things with them. Some of them have lived on the track for 10 or 11 years, and they've learned take care of themselves. You don't do that by being friendly. It takes a while to get their trust."

No matter the disciplines for which horses are destined, Simanton works them on the ranch, uses them on cows, takes them to ranch rodeos for exposure, and rides them through all kinds of conditions. Slew dragged cows to the fire the second time he was ridden, and Horse Creek's stallion Finn McCool has carried cows out of snow banks. Such a background prepares a horse for just about anything he'll encounter on a ranch or in a show ring. And it trumps the myth that Thoroughbreds are too hot, too difficult or too unrideable to be useful off the track.

With his racing connections, Simanton's unlikely to run out of horses. The industry produces some 30,000 horses a year, even in a down market. Thoroughbreds were, 30 years ago, the horse of choice for sporting disciplines, with former race horses at the top of eventing, jumping and dressage Olympic rosters. According to U.S. Equestrian Federation statistics, the number of registered Thoroughbreds has declined from 40 percent of registered horses to just 10 percent.

Simanton hopes his effort will increase demand and value for Thoroughbreds, on and off the track. With a post-racing demand for Thoroughbreds, he says, "maybe they'll quit racing them while they're still standing. If they're running a $2,500 claimer, they're not making money on the horse anyway, so why not quit running him while he's sound and find him a home?"

You get the feeling that if Simanton had the budget, he wouldn't sell any of his horses. In fact, he told Bickel, Slingin' Slew's new owner, that he'd priced the good-natured, athletic horse "not to sell." When Slew begins carrying Bickel's teenage daughter on fox hunts, Bickel will need her own horse again. She has her eye on Duck.

There are plenty of myths about OTTBs, and plenty of discussions about which racing bloodlines work best for specific disciplines. And owners of former race horses love to brag about having a Secretariat or Seattle Slew descendant. Simanton notes that none of the horses he brought to the Baltimore demonstration shared bloodlines, and all were capable of working a cow.

"They might not be *real* cowy, but they have forward motion and eventually they will get the job done," he says. "They come broke to ride, and they want to work. People have the idea that they come off the track and they're nuts, but mostly that has to do with the trainer. They really don't want to run off with anybody. You show them another job and they get pretty good at it."

Emily Esterson is a writer living in New Mexico.

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True Grit and Hard Scrabble:

Charles Portis & John Graves

By Tom Russell

...the sounds and smells and the feel of the weather were known things, but with echoes. The rattle of black wasps flying out at your face to warn you from their nest, the slowing cluck of the rain crow...the steaming southeastern winds...and the clean hot ones out of Mexico.

John Graves, **Hard Scrabble**

"Language is deteriorating." The Flamenco guitar player spit out this declaration as he tuned his guitar.

"I agree," I said. "Writing, literature, songwriting. *Deteriorating*. I can't read modern fiction. Most of it. Can't listen to new songwriters. *Wallpaper*. Deteriorating. Nobody has a *voice."*

We were sitting in a dressing room in Switzerland. Full of pre-show venom and vinegar and making major pronouncements about the downfall of writing, song, human character, culture, and civilization. Idle conversation before a concert. Tongue-in-cheek babble. There was a fifty-dollar bottle of Spanish wine staring us down, but we wouldn't touch it until after the show.

I'd been telling the guitar player (*El Ciclon – The Cyclone of Las Cruces*) that I was reading Mark Twain's travel books on Europe, impressed with his expansive vocabulary. The choice of words. His command of the American language and lingo. The poetics, humor, and deft use of slang. The *writer's voice*. A distinctly Western American voice. And Twain wrote one hundred and fifty years ago.

Writers didn't seem to have that degree of access to the language anymore. Or the nerve to reach for it. Or anything *to say,* for that matter. *El Ciclon* and I agreed on that one. He played a fast flamenco run on the gut strings. Maybe, we mused, the culprit was the Internet age and cell phone communication, and twittering, tweeting, texting – the *character* of humans atrophying along with the language. People blurting out meaningless digital grunts. Books disappearing in favor of Kindle screens. I surmised aloud that reading a book on a Kindle screen struck me about as exciting as kissing a blow-up doll. *El Ciclon* liked that one. (I'd used a stronger word than *kissing*.)

We were satisfied that we'd solved that big issue and walked out and performed the concert. We drank the wine.

This conversation took place a few months before I ran head-on into the work of Charles Portis and John Graves. I was late to the party. I consider them Western writers, since their finest material is based in the West. These two resurrected my belief in American letters and the power of the American writing voice. I tried to find everything they'd published, which is not a hell'uva lot.

True Grit lies at the center of all this. Three years ago I'd not read Charles Portis' *True Grit*. In my ignorance I'd assumed it might be akin to a minor Zane Grey potboiler on the Wild West, aimed at teenagers. A dime novel. An error in judgment on my part. I'd sidestepped an American classic. Two very good movies were made from the book – the first with John Wayne's Academy Award performance in 1968, and the recent remake by the Coen brothers, featuring Jeff Bridges. I had no idea who the hell Charles Portis was when these movies appeared.

Now that I've read and reread *True Grit* I believe, as other's do, it ranks with *Huckleberry Finn*, and to take it further – *The Catcher in the Rye*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and, hell, throw *Moby Dick* into that pile and *On the Road*. Classics built around a narrator with a deep, one-off American voice. Make your own list. *True Grit* is a *tour de force* yarn – a fourteen-year-old gal's blood adventure in the last Wild West. Spinning out a tale of retribution which cuts deep into the reader's heart. The *True Grit* movies, as good as they were, don't rival the book.

First things first. Before I'd decided to read *True Grit* I stumbled on Charles Portis' third novel *The Dog of the South*. A fine place to start. The book that first rattled my cage, three years back.

Charles Portis

I The Dog of the South & Gringos

Beneath the deadpan humor of Portis's deceptively easy-seeming delivery moves the persistent threat that an atavistic wrath will burn away the farce and rise violently into the light of day.

Carla Rotella, **N.Y. Times**

Charles Portis could be Cormac McCarthy if he wanted to, but he'd rather be funny.

Roy Blount, Jr.

In 1984 a bookstore clerk up the upper eastside of New York City came across several large boxes of

Charles Portis' 1974 novel *The Dog of the South*. The boxes were shoved into the back corner of the store basement. The book was out of print. All of Portis was out of print. The clerk read the book and was so impressed he set up a window display filled with copies of *The Dog of the South*. He was quoted as stating*: there isn't a false note in the book*. *The Dog of the South* became an underground classic in that part of town. Word spread out from there. When I came across that bookstore anecdote a few years ago, I sought out a copy.

I opened up the book and read the first paragraph:

My wife Norma had run off with Guy Dupree and I was waiting around for the credit card billing to come in so I could see where they had gone. I was biding my time...they had taken my car and my Texaco card and my American Express card. Dupree had also taken from the bedroom closet my good raincoat and a shotgun and perhaps some other articles. It was just like him to pick the .410 – a boy's first gun. I suppose he thought it wouldn't kick too much, that it would kill or at least rip the flesh in a satisfying way without making a lot of noise or giving much of a jolt to his sloping monkey shoulder.

Welcome to the world of Ray Midge. His wife has run off with her first husband and all the stuff above. Ray's car, credit cards, and gun. Midge is sitting in a dark apartment in Arkansas, shades drawn, plotting their journey by following the sequence of dates and locations on the credit card receipts. He tells us: *I love nothing better than a job like that*. Ray's an oddball, sure enough. He knows a lot about cars and guns, and not enough about women. He'll parlay his dogged innocence and muted sense of outrage down a lengthy, oft hilarious

trek into Mexico and Central America. In search of his car and wife. In that order.

Midge will meet up with an eccentric coot, Dr. Reo Symes, who lives in a broken-down bus he calls *The Dog of the South*. Together Midge and Symes travel south, through the bottom of Mexico, down to Honduras. Hot on the trail. I won't give the rest away, but the novel is basted with comic eloquence and characters that speak their mind in batty, crackpot lingo. Pure Portis.

Charles Portis has written five novels: *Norwood, True Grit, The Dog of the South, Master's of Atlantis,* and *Gringos,* in that order. All are back in print, published by Overlook Press. *Norwood* was made into a film with Glenn Campbell, released after the first John Wayne film of *True Grit*. Campbell also acted in *True Grit*. *Norwood,* the book, is damn good, and *True Grit*, *The Dog of the South* and *Gringos* are great. *Masters of Atlantis*, a quirky tale of cults and wizards, I find unreadable. Four out of five ain't bad.

Overlook recently re-issued a Portis *miscellany* collection, edited by Jay Jennings, titled *Escape Velocity,* which includes a selection of Portis' newspaper and magazine articles, plus a rare interview, and one previously unpublished play. The highlights of this collection are Portis' essay on cheap motels in the Southwest: *Motel Life, Lower Reaches*, and another travel piece: *An Auto Odyssey Through the Darkest Baja.* In the later, Portis and a friend buy a 1952 Studebaker pickup and drive the length of Baja California, stopping every other day to fix the truck with ingenuity, raw nerve, and bailing wire.

Here you find the emerging Portis, the soon-to-be novelist who escaped the newsroom, his ear cocked and ready to hear the rants, raves, and fish stories of every off-the-grid character he encounters. Portis attained a profound understanding of the way real people talk when their guards are down. Dog chat. They step out of Mexican gas stations, old motels, trailer parks, and back street bars, right into his novels. Humans. Can't beat 'em.

A word about his last novel – *Gringos,* which rivals *The Dog of the South*. *Gringos* might be my favorite. I'm re-reading it now at Christmas. Here's the opening:

Christmas again in Yucatan. Another year gone and I was still scratching around on this limestone peninsula.

Jimmy Burns, the narrator and main character, is hanging out in Merida, Mexico, along with a disparate community of Americans. Burns once dealt in stolen Pre-Columbian artifacts. Now he's driving a truck and performing odd jobs, traipsing around the Mayan ruins and headed towards a violent showdown with a cult leader. Sounds offbeat, but the mastery is in the side characters and the dialogue. And a subdued violence that suddenly breaks through to the surface.

Portis makes us care about folks we might usually

ignore, or even run from, should we encounter them on the street on in a bar. The ones that slobber on you, or whine and hiss, as they weep for their departed dogs or failed marriages.

I'll share this scene with you from *Gringos* – Jimmy Burns is having a conversation with an American lady friend who's castigating him for not settling down with a woman. She asks Jimmy what he's been up to and then unloads on him:

"Out at night drinking with your buddies, I suppose. Ike and Mutt are they? Those two you're always quoting?"

She meant Art and Mike, the inseparable Munn brothers.

"You're afraid of smart women, aren't you?"

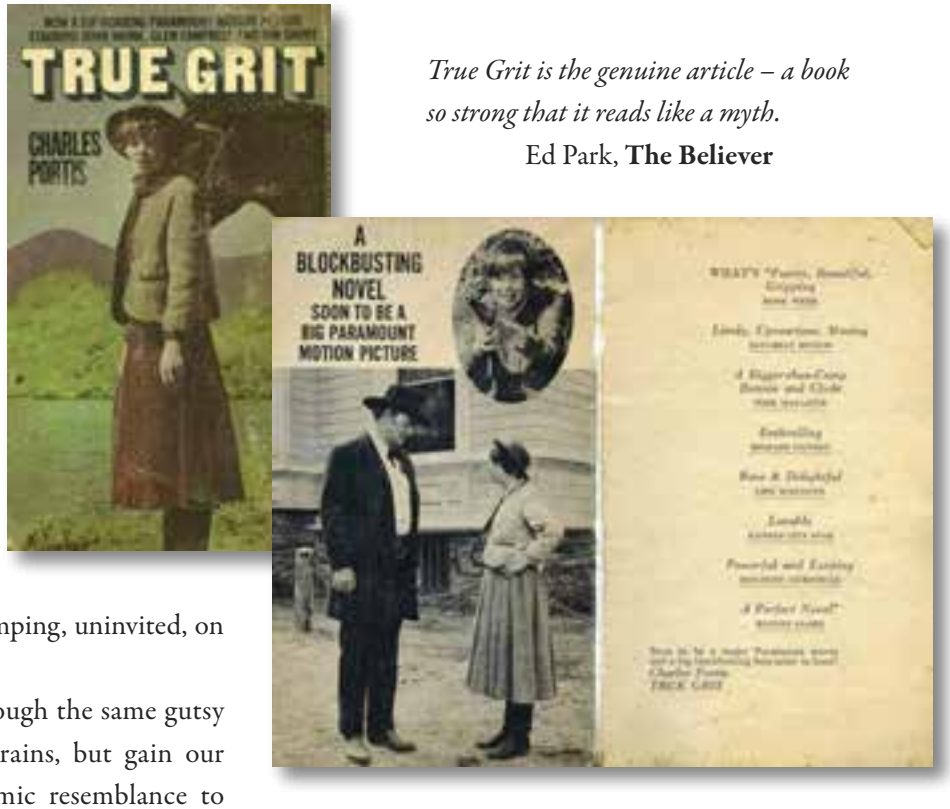
She was right...I was leery of them. Art and Mike said taking an intellectual woman into your home was like taking in a baby raccoon. They were both amusing for a while but soon became randomly vicious and learned how to open the refrigerator.

These charged comedic scenes, laced with candid repartee, are what endear me to Portis. He never concocts a straw-boss narrator to woo our sympathy. Portis is not concerned with *the big issues,* political correctness, or people struggling to find their self-identity. These *people know who they are*, toting their off-kilter baggage across the West, or down into Mexico, knee deep in alligators, bad love, and quicksand. And car parts. And guns.

Roy Blount Jr. states above: Charles *Portis could be Cormac McCarthy if he wanted to...but he'd rather be funny.* Cormac surely ranks near the top of many critics' lists of American writers. No debate on that. And yet...Cormac seems to have created his own country, his personal *Grimm's Fairytales* that issue forth his fathomless mind. Humor? Not much. Gothic humor perhaps. And who are these people in his books? They

emerge like zombies crawling out of his hand-dug well of a mind. Brilliant writing, but sometimes I crave a laugh.

Years ago I used to run into Cormac in El Paso and we'd swap small talk. I passed him by one day in an aisle at the local Home Depot store. He looked confused and was telling the clerk: *Look, you got to assume I'm from Mars. I don't know anything about this stuff.* Which was exactly how I felt. Dizzied from trying to figure out the subtleties of tile grout, pipe joints, and electric wire. *Mars.* We were writers and dreamers. Not handymen. Cormac and I would chat and go our own ways. Cormac is a private man who eventually had to escape El Paso for a gated-community in Santa Fe. Too many German fans were camping, uninvited, on his front lawn.



Portis' characters travel through the same gutsy Southwestern and Mexican terrains, but gain our sympathy from their tragic-comic resemblance to people we've known. And Portis himself is probably a *damn good* handyman. I'll bet he knows all about tile grout, gas refrigerators, car engines, and guns. He grew up in rural Arkansas, served in the Marines, and developed his writing chops as a novice journalist on the New York City police beat. Later he wrote travel features, observing the eccentrics in Mexican bars, motels, and auto-fix joints, where you tend to run into *plain folks*. Folks that talk and harangue and glue things back together.

But lets get down to the big one. *True Grit.*

II *The Wicked Flee Where None Pursueth*: *True Grit*

Like Mark Twain's ***Huckleberry Finn****...*
Charles Portis' ***True Grit*** *captures the*
Naive elegance of the American voice...
Jonathan Lethem, novelist

True Grit is the genuine article – a book so strong that it reads like a myth.
Ed Park, **The Believer**

Charles Portis, all of a sudden, walked away from a lucrative journalist position In London, where he was bureau chief in the early 1960s. He declared he was going back to Arkansas to write novels. He *quit cold*, according to Tom Wolfe in the book: *The Birth of New Journalism*.

Portis left London, wrote Wolfe, and *after sailing back to the States on one of the Mauretania's last runs...he reportedly holed up in his version of Proust's cork-lined study – a fishing shack back in Arkansas – to try his hand at fiction.* In real life it was a shack behind a beer joint named *Cash McCool's.*

Soon Charles Portis published an acclaimed first novel, *Norwood* (1966). *Norwood* concerns one Norwood Platt, a mechanic and country singer from Ralph, Texas, who drives to New York to collect an old debt from an Army buddy. There's regional American dialogue here aplenty. *And food*. Potted meat sandwiches with mustard, baked beans, marshmallows, syrup sandwiches, and automat hotdogs. That ole Portis ear. Then Portis turns quickly around and publishes *True Grit* in 1968 – serialized first in *The Saturday Evening Post*.

For a man to walk away from a day job and go off, on his second book, and write one of the great American novels, is not only a bafflement but akin to Babe Ruth pointing at a spot in the center field bleachers, then hitting a home run directly to that spot. An American triumph of legendary proportions.

How does a man disappear, into rural Arkansas or Mexico, as legends will have it, and return with a book written from the perspective of a one-armed old spinster in 1928 – looking back on events which transpired when she was fourteen, hunting down her father's killer in the 1870s? A novel replete with finely carved cowboy characters, authentic western jargon, Old Testament quotes, and violent action of filmic proportion. Portis, upon completion of the book, wrote a friend and stated: *I think I've just written John Wayne's next movie.* And that is just what he did.

Set photo from the 1969 film adaptation of the film, *True Grit*. From left: John Wayne, Glenn Campbell and Kim Darby.

Set photo from the set of the 1969 film, *True Grit* – John Wayne and author Charles Portis, behind.

True Grit, according to novelist Ed Park: is *a book so strong that it reads like a myth*. Tom Wolfe, Portis' ole mate at the *Herald Tribune*, still couldn't get over it: *He made a fortune...in a fish shack! In Arkansas! It was too goddamned perfect to be true, and yet there it was.*

There are now two million copes of *True Grit* in print. Mattie Ross' voice slaps you in the face each time you crack open the book:

People do not give it credence that a fourteen year old girl could leave home and go off in the wintertime to avenge her father's blood...

Here is what happened...I have never been one to flinch or crawfish when faced with an unpleasant task.

Then she lays it down. And old lady looking back on the winter of 1873, when she vowed to avenge the murder of her father. She hires federal marshal Rooster Cogburn to hunt down the killer – hires Rooster because she believes he has *true grit*. Those two words have now slipped, forever, into our American lingo.

My guess is Portis was well aware of Thomas Berger's *Little Big Man*, which was published a few years before *True Grit*. Yet the film, *Little Big Man,* with Dustin Hoffman, wasn't released until *after* the film of *True Grit*. Berger's *Little Big Man* is a monologue by 115 year old year old Jack Crabb, an orphan boy who was adopted by the Cheyenne. Little Big Man (aka Crabb) meets up with Custer, fights at the Little Big Horn, runs into Wild Bill Hickok and Wyatt Earp, as he pulls us into this big windy story of the West – told in slang-driven Cowboy-Indian tongue. It's a damn good book.

Little Big Man was published in 1964. *True Grit* in 1968. Critics began speaking of a new era of *revisionist westerns* in the book and film worlds – with the good guy/bad guy plot turned upside down, and women, Mexicans and Native Americans given stronger leading roles.

Rooster Cogburn, in the original *True Grit* movie, was an ideal role for John Wayne, and Mia Farrow was the first choice to play Mattie Ross. Farrow balked at working with director Henry Hathaway and wanted the producers to hire Roman Polanski to direct. Imagine that. Boy, that might have been a freakish Western. Farrow was replaced with Kim Darby. Dennis Hopper, Robert Duval and Strother Martin also appear.

Mattie's voice moves the book from scene to dramatic scene. Here are several *Western* tastes from Mattie's narration:

Tom Chaney rode a gray horse that was better suited for pulling a middle buster than carrying a rider. He had no handgun but he carried his rifle slung across his back on a

piece of cotton plow line. There is a trash for you. He could have taken an old piece of harness and made a nice leather strap for it. That would have been too much trouble.

And:

The Texas cowboys rode nothing but geldings for some cowboy reason of their own.

Or, when Rooster is trying to get young Mattie to try a shot of whiskey she replies:

I would not put a thief in my mouth to steal my brains.

Set photo from the 2010 film adaptation of the film, *True Grit*. Hailee Steinfeld as Mattie Ross

The character's breathe and snarl and bleed. Portis inhabits the voice and soul of this little gal growing up in the last Wild West and he yanks us along with her, right into a wicked finale – a snake pit filled with dead men's bones. Perfect for a *Saturday Evening Post* serial. Perfect for the silver screen. Much of the film dialogue was lifted intact from the book, though a good deal of Portis' sly humor is missing in the two movies.

Set photo from the 2010 film adaptation of the film, *True Grit*. Jeff Bridges as Rooster Cogburn and Hailee Steinfeld as Mattie Ross

True Grit is full of charmed, antiquated language. *Talk*. Portis came from a family of *talkers*. The old men, down in his native Arkansas, talked and smoked cigars and pipes, and the kid listened.

Later, one of Portis' tasks on the *Northwest Arkansas Times* was to edit the reports sent by old lady correspondents in small towns. Portis states: *My job was to edit out all the life and charm from these homely reports. Some old country expression, or nice turn of phrase – out they went.* Portis regretted the task – he thought the old ladies were fine writers. And they wrote in perfect penmanship with pencil. He kept those edited anecdotes in the back of his head.

Around the same period that I delved into Charles Portis's work, I came across a fine essay by Gary Cartwright, in *Texas Monthly*, about writer John Graves. I had more homework to do.

John Graves

III Ain't No More Cane on the Brazos: John Graves in Texas

Home after awhile, became a patch of rough and rocky country acreage... for the past forty years... building a house and barn and corrals and fences, the supervision of cows and goats and the other activities that functional rural life entails...the need to learn the hard way, and alone, and how you come to your own things in your head by working with them.

Hard Scrabble, John Graves

In November 1957, John Graves and his dachshund pup, *Watty*, took a three-week canoe trip down the Brazos river, on assignment for *Sports Illustrated*. The river was to be altered by a dam project and Graves wanted to explore the last days of the historic waterway. The magazine rejected the story. Graves built it into a book.

Graves cobbled together his day-to-day river musings and added old pioneer's tales, Indian stories, folklore, encounters with odd characters, and hunting anecdotes. He turned the trip into *Goodbye to a River,* a classic that was nominated for a National Book Award. It's never been out of print.

Here's Graves on achieving his writer's voice:

***Good Bye to a River**, flowed like the Brazos itself...After a decade of deck clearing apprenticeship abroad...I slowly developed a degree of objectivity in regard to who I was and how to handle the language. After those years of trying, I had finally arranged to discern some subject matter that was right for me and, for better or worse, to attain my full voice as a writer.*

I took a break as I was writing this essay and reached down and opened up *Goodbye To A River* to a random page – page 191 – in the *Vintage Edition* paperback. And there, frank and bold, under a quote from Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, is John Graves waxing forth on the nature of the cowboy:

Are we going to redefine the cowboy? Give anew the lie to California's brave video-screen miracles of amorous, bellicose pig slop? Shall we pin-prick the rotund gassy fiction...and eat beans and biscuits and bacon, bacon and biscuits and beans, 'til we're loose with diarrhea and drum bellied with its opposite, and sleep four or five bug-crawling, dust coughing hours a night on the ground without being able to get the boots off our feet, swollen with heat and fungus itch...and worry about the Indians in the territory and at least get sloppy-sleepy drunk in Wichita...where a pasty whore will stash beneath her mattress our wages earned so pleasantly, and maybe in return give us a lasting souvenir?...

Read Andy Adams if you want to see cowhands right; read Teddy Blue Abbott, and Frank Dobie, the groping-worded, utterly straight tales in "The Trail Drivers of Texas," and J.E. Haley's work on Old Man Goodnight.

Ah, the nail bashed upon the very head! Graves is

certainly in the league of Teddy Blue Abbott, J. E. Haley, Andy Adams, and J. Frank Dobie. Chroniclers of the true West. Telling it like it is, and was.

John Graves paddled his canoe down the Brazos, casting poetic fragments in our direction, as he detailed the dying Texas back country – the dirt and rain and heat, the tales of old traders with their *unfortunates thirsts*, and the Comanche's, whose oft-brutal raids matched the pitiless nature of the terrain. Hard country. Tough people. Eloquent writing.

I've gone over many of these paragraphs two or three times, allowing Graves' prose to sink in. He reflections are *Faulknerian*. At times you need to untie the knots that hold his sentences together, and then as you look closer the whole thing comes into focus and reads like a long ballad. Singing up the country.

Both Charles Portis and John Graves served in the Marines – Graves in WW II and Portis in Korea. A firm grounding. Portis arrived at fiction after a stint as a news reporter. With Graves it was the other way around. Graves originally wanted to write fiction, but found his voice in personal narratives based on his daily life. Graves only *fictionalized* names and places when he wished to protect folks' privacy.

John Graves was born in Texas, grew up in Ft. Worth, graduated from Rice University, served and was injured in WWII, and then hung around Europe for a few years, mainly in Spain. He was living the expatriate life, dancing across Hemingway's footprints. How many young writers tried follow Papa Hemingway's path – only to wind up teaching high school English, eventually tossing the failed novel into the wood stove or the storage shed? Almost happened to Graves.

Graves published a poorly received novel, *Spotted Horses*. Disenchanted, he taught high school English in Texas and other environs. Eventually he retreated to his home country, in central Texas, and started over.

With the proceeds from *Goodbye to a River* he bought a rugged patch of land in limestone and cedar country outside of Fort Worth and settled in to build his sanctuary. He called the place *Hard Scrabble*. Thus the title of his second book, which took fourteen years to complete. Graves surmised: *If I hadn't wasted so much*

time building and chasing cows, I could have written a whole lot more. But what the hell, that's how it was.

Graves later published a fine piece of short fiction, *The Last Running*, about a group of old Comanches riding up to Charles Goodnight's ranch, long after the Indian wars are over. They ask for a buffalo from old man Goodnight's herd, so they can run the hunt one more time. The tale is attributed to an actual event.

With the exception of *The Last Running* and occasional short stories, Graves' work is centered on personal narratives imbued with the background history of the rural country south of Fort Worth. These are John Graves' notes from the trenches – hand carved by a one eyed ex-marine who dug in and learned his craft as he discovered how to live on the land.

Texas Monthly's Gary Cartwright visited Graves at his retreat in Texas in 2010. Graves was 90 at the time and recovering from a bad spill – he'd fallen down the back stairs of his office whilst relieving himself off the porch. *Watering the roses,* as we say. Ed Abbey once remarked that: *if a man can't piss in his own front yard he's living too close to town.* Graves was still working long days at his craft.

Cartwright described his friend Graves:

His trademark horn-rimmed glasses kept sliding down his nose, but that familiar twinkle of mischief was still backlighting his right eye – the left one has been glassy blank as long as I've know him, victim of a Japanese grenade on the island of Saipan in World War II. Tiny pieces of metal remain buried over his right eye, under one knee, and in his back... "I'm still here," he said cheerfully.

Graves, in 2010, said he didn't worry about publishing anymore. *Writing was it's own excuse.* John Graves, in the last fifty years, had not only written continuously, but also raised a family and built ranch houses, barns, and corrals, as the family raised their own beef, milled flour, grew vegetables, raised chickens, goats, dogs, hogs and horses. Ranch life. Near the end, when the weather was good, he slept out on the porch of his office – near his writing work. Says Cartwright: *Work is what he has left. Work is who he was, who he will always be.*

As Cartwright's visit neared the end, Graves mused about the dying old ways:

...when local people were a distinctive variety...but that's all been wiped out. It used to be that the differences among people were big, and all those differences interested me greatly. But now I find a lot of sameness. I don't like the way things are shaping up.

John Graves

Charles Portis

As I was finishing this essay, Tom McGuane was kind enough to send me a personal note on John Graves:

I knew John Graves through his books, our correspondence, fishing, and an event we did together at the Texas Book Festival. And in every one of these things, I had the same feeling and impression: that this was the most genuine and self-possessed man I had ever known. He's an example I can't live up to but won't go away, a beacon I guess.

Graves leaves us with a worthy assessment of the writer's journey:

I had discovered and then reported on the need to learn things the hard way, and alone, and how you come to own things in your head by working with them...

The kind of writing I have done has never made me rich...but at this late point that doesn't seem to matter much, because most of the work still seems to me to say more or less the things I wanted it to say when I wrote it, and it says them in my own way.

John Graves passed away July, 2013. Charles Portis is still with us, at age 80, living in Arkansas. He may have said his piece, or might be concocting another classic in that shack behind the beer joint. Both Portis and Graves have shown man as he really is – and have given us characters *of distinctive variety*, from a time when the *differences between people were big* – a time that is regrettably passing now.

It seems to my eye and ear that much of modern writing, and songwriting, is the empty *twittering of sparrows on a pile of manure.* To quote Anton Chekov. Chekov said all you need to write is a *decent pair of shoes and a notebook*. You walk out into the country and write down your observations and listen for interesting *turns of phrase.* Then go home and work at your craft fifty years. Good luck. Charles Portis and John Graves walked that long road. I'm damn glad I bumped into their work. It has lifted my spirit at a time when it needed lifting.

Tom Russell's books: *120 Songs of Tom Russell*, *Blue Horse Red Desert: The Art of Tom Russell*, and his thirty CDs, are available from www.villagerecords.com,
His tour dates appear on: www.tomrussell.com
Tom thanks Gary Brown, Tom McGuane, and Jack Lamplough of Overlook Press for their insights.

Le Cowboy Creole

Geno Delafose traces his nouveau zydeco sound to his rural Louisiana roots.

By Kathy McCraine

It's a sunny Sunday afternoon at Angelles Whiskey River Landing in Henderson, Louisiana. Pickups and cars stream up the gravel road, parking helter-skelter up and down the steep levee containing Henderson Swamp, a cypress-studded lake in the Atchafalaya Basin.

A neon beer sign offers the only clue this ramshackle waterfront building, set on pilings over the lake, is a popular dance hall, widely known as the place to be on a Sunday afternoon. By the time Geno Delafose and his zydeco band, French Rockin' Boogie, take the stage in front of the panoramic picture window framing the lake, the place is packed.

photos by Kathy McCraine

Geno Delafose and his zydeco band, French Rockin' Boogie, are among south Louisiana's most popular musical acts.

Looking cowboy from hat to boots, Geno picks up his Cajun accordion and flashes his big, bright smile. The first blast of his opening song, "Everybody's Havin' Fun," brings the crowd to its feet. In unison, hundreds of dancing cowboy boots pound the polished plywood floor to the beat of the music, until the entire building reverberates on its pilings.

The crowd is young and old, black and white. Beneath twinkling Christmas lights and Mardi Gras beads, cowboys in alligator boots and tight-fitting jeans twirl women in short skirts and goofy straw hats. City folk and college kids, fresh off party barges, gyrate in shorts and tennis shoes. Laborers in Tony Bahama shirts and ballcaps circle the floor, looking for partners. Racial tensions, once rife in this part of the South, evaporate on the dance floor as color lines blur.

One older woman dances alone with a lively step,

French Rockin' Boogie performs in downtown Opelousas, Louisiana.

circling the edge of the vibrating dancers. She wears a gauzy white skirt, purple T-shirt, and bright red lipstick. A fake magnolia pinned to her black hair evokes an old country song: *Delta Dawn, what's that flower you have on?* Geno nods to her in recognition as she glides by, enraptured by the music.

Clearly, this crowd is here to dance. They strut and swirl on the crowded floor as Geno sings in French, "*Allons danser, allons danser, tout le jour et tout le soir*." Let's dance, let's dance, all day and all night. But it is, after all, a Sunday. The dance ends at 8 p.m. with an invitation for the patrons to dance the last song on the bar. Several take the offer.

For Geno and his band, it's the finale to another grueling weekend playing dance halls, benefits, festivals, private parties and rodeos. Whether it's a honky-tonk on the back roads of Louisiana's bayou country, or the bright stage of the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada, where he was featured two years in a row, Geno makes everyone want to dance.

At 41, Geno is one of south Louisiana's most popular zydeco musicians. On a typical four-day weekend, he might drive 250 miles and play seven to eight gigs, in larger cities like New Orleans and Lafayette, and small Cajun communities like Kaplan, Kinder, Breaux Bridge and New Iberia. Many of his fans follow him from performance to performance. He's a cowboy at heart though, and after falling into bed at 3

a.m., he's up early Monday morning, taking care of the small ranch he operates near the little town of Eunice.

Geno has two loves – his music and the 120 Brangus cows and 16 horses he runs on his Double D Ranch. His roots run deep in both directions. One of eight children, he was born on the same little place where he now lives, deep in the Acadiana region of Louisiana, just west of Opelousas. It's the country of crawfish, cattle, rice and soybeans that many people of Creole descent, like Geno's family, call home.

Creoles are of mixed French and black origin, descending from Louisiana's earliest settlers. Until recent years, many spoke only French; Geno, for instance, spoke French with his grandparents before he spoke English. The family struggled to make ends meet on 10 acres, where they had a few cows, horses, chickens, pigs and ducks. Geno grew up helping his dad feed livestock and fix fence, and dreamed of being a cowboy and owning more cattle than his dad could afford.

"I enjoyed growing up out there," he says. "I entertained myself messing around with the animals, riding horses and taking care of the cows. That's why I came back here to raise cattle."

His dad, John Delafose, now deceased, had musical talent that made him famous, if not rich, when he and his band, The Eunice Playboys, helped relaunch the popularity of zydeco music. Like Geno, he worked all day, then played with his band deep into the night. By the 1980s, he was wildly popular regionally, also performing in folk concerts around the world.

Zydeco is a genre of American folk music that evolved in southwest Louisiana in the early 19th

century, born of a blend of Cajun music and two other American music styles, blues and rhythm and blues. The name derives from the French phrase, *Les haricots ne sont pas salés*, which, when spoken, sounds like the word "zydeco," and translates literally to "the snap beans aren't salty" or, figuratively, "I'm so poor I can't afford salt meat for the beans." The word is also said to refer to the music's snappy upbeat tempo.

Zydeco is often confused with Cajun music, but as Geno says, Cajun music, usually performed by whites, gets its influence from country-western, while zydeco is more influenced by blues. The instrumentation is also different. Zydeco bands use the accordion, electric guitar, bass guitar, drums and, unique to the genre, the *frottois*, or rubboard.

Geno in his barn, with his girlfriend Ashley's barrel horse, Rascal, and his dog, Sheba.

Geno grew up with music. "It's just as natural as walking for me," he says. "I just go do it. I don't think about it except when I'm on stage, and then once I'm done with that, I'm thinking about what I'm going to do tomorrow with the cows."

By the time he was seven, Geno was playing the rubboard; at 10 he started playing drums; and by 13 he'd taught himself to play the accordion by watching his dad and brothers. After his dad's death in 1994, Geno formed French Rockin' Boogie, made up of his half-brother, Demitre Thomas, on the rubboard, Popp Esprite on bass guitar, Pat Stelley on rhythm guitar, Germain Jack on drums, and Geno on accordion. The band is so well known in south Louisiana, it's not uncommon for people to stop Geno on the street just to shake his hand, but he's not one to let such attention go to his head.

"Geno has always been real quiet and shy," his mother, Joann, says. "When he gets behind his accordion, though, he gets a big smile on his face, and he just sings song after song."

"A lot of people don't realize I'm shy, but my accordion is my shield," Geno says. "When I get on stage with my accordion, I know all eyes are on it, not me, and I just express myself through my music."

His music is often referred to as "nouveau zydeco," a sound deeply rooted in traditional Creole music, but with strong influences from Cajun music and country-western. While most modern zydeco musicians have begun singing more often in English, Geno prefers to play the old songs in French.

"I can sing in English, but I'm a lot more comfortable singing in French," he says. "I know so many old songs that people don't play anymore, songs I used to hear when I was a little boy, and I've been successful playing the old songs and putting my little twist on them. Most zydeco musicians have moved more to hip-hop zydeco and uptempo Cajun, but I always go back

to my roots and play the old music."

Geno plays three different types of accordion, depending on the sound he's trying to create: a little single-note Cajun accordion, a triple-note accordion favored by Tex Mex musicians, and a big piano accordion like Lawrence Welk played.

"The piano is a lot 'bluesier' than the other two," he says. "The Cajun accordion has more of a chank-a-chank sound, and weighs only eight pounds, while the piano accordion weighs about 45 pounds."

Unlike his dad, Geno is not into writing songs. "My dad wrote a lot of stuff," he says. "Something would come into his mind and he'd start humming it. Then we'd get to a dance, and he'd play a little melody, and we'd jump in there and make up a song. The more we played it, the more comfortable we'd get with it, but he never wrote it down."

Geno plays at Whiskey River twice a month.

Fortunately, John Delafose recorded a lot of music, so those unwritten songs will be preserved. Geno has been solidly successful without writing his own music, and figures, "if it's not broke, don't fix it." In 2007, his album *Le Cowboy Creole* earned a Grammy nomination for Best Zydeco or Cajun Music Album. He released three other albums before that, and his fans hope he'll release another.

Geno has seen a lot of changes in the music scene over the past 30 years. When he started, zydeco dances were for blacks, mostly an older crowd, while Cajun dances were for whites. Today, with a younger generation, and thanks in part to establishments like Whiskey River, dance halls and dances are integrated.

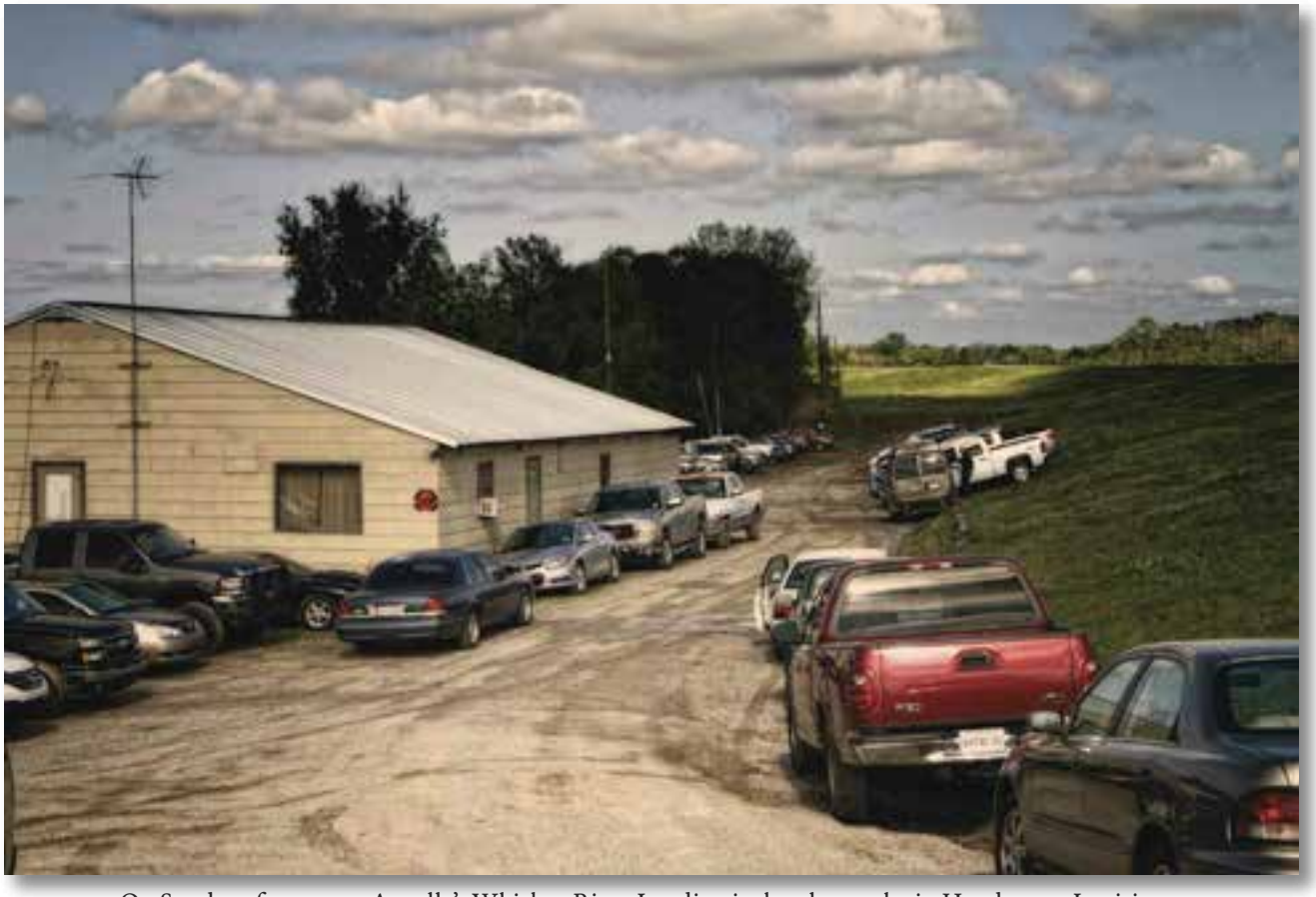
When Terry Angelle bought Whiskey River in 1982, he opened it as a boat landing for boat tours and fishing. According to his daughter, Kelly Denais, who now owns the business with her mother, Terry added the back porch (now enclosed as the dance floor) around 1990 and decided to bring in an occasional band.

"It was just a porch, and he would have a band and sell beer out of an ice chest," Kelly says. "There was no plan. It just happened."

By 1999, Whiskey River was a full-fledged bar and dance hall, attracting popular Cajun acts such as Christina Balfa and Balfa Toujours. Geno was a friend of Christina's, and one Sunday he sat in, playing accordion with her band at Whiskey River.

Terry Angelle was impressed, and when Geno asked him if he and his band could play the venue on a Saturday night, Terry agreed to give it a try. That first Saturday, 350 people showed up to dance, and a month later Geno played a Sunday to 450 people. The next month the crowd swelled to 550, and it just kept growing. Now, French Rockin' Boogie will draw nearly 900 people on a Mardi Gras weekend. Not everybody was happy about their success, though.

"It's not that long ago, but here on the levee and all



On Sunday afternoons, Angelle's Whiskey River Landing is the place to be in Henderson, Louisiana.

the way to Catahoula, there was a lot of racial tension," Kelly says. "Folks were saying, 'I don't know, Terry. I don't know if you should let them play here on the levee.' My dad said, 'This is my place, and you will not tell me who will play here.'"

Geno's played Whiskey River twice a month ever since. After 9/11, when tourism waned and the dance hall struggled, many credited Geno's popularity with helping keep the business going. Kelly says she gets calls from tourists planning vacations to Louisiana around French Rockin' Boogie's performance schedule. Is Geno the venue's most popular act? Kelly thinks so. Geno just flashes his big smile and shrugs.

"I give them a run for their money," he says. "I may not win the race, but they're gonna know I was in it."

Most everyone who knows him agrees Geno is one of the nicest people you will ever meet. Former Eunice mayor, Lynn Lejeune, who handles Geno's marketing, says, "He's a very humble person who's never forgotten his roots or his respect for people, especially older people. He and his band often give their time to raise money for various charities and benefits. I've worked with a lot of musicians, and they're all good people, but there's something about Geno that rises above everybody else."

As a way to give back to his fans, Geno hosts an annual free "fan appreciation day." It started out as a big barbecue and party in his barn. The band played on a

flatbed trailer and people danced in the yard, but when the event started drawing more than a thousand people, they were forced to move it off the ranch. Last year, Geno held the first annual Rockin' and Turnin' $2,000 Added Open 5D Barrel Race, along with his 15th annual fan appreciation day, at the Crowley, Louisiana, rodeo arena. The barrel race drew 238 entries, and more than 1,500 fans turned out for the concert and barbecue.

It's the kind of venue that suits Geno to a T. He enjoys playing rodeos and ranch events because he enjoys meeting ranch and rodeo people. Earlier in his career, he followed in his dad's footsteps, performing around the world, but these days the growing responsibility of his ranch keeps Geno closer to home. He prefers to be hands-on with the ranch work, but his family (his brother, Demi, and his wife, Tessa; his brother-in-law, Charles Fontenot; and his girlfriend, Ashley Fusilier, a barrel racer) pitches in when things get hectic .

"I don't think it would ever work for Geno to have a city girl for a wife or girlfriend," Ashley says. "He loves this too much."

Right now, Geno is riding the wave of his popularity, content to rock along at a frenetic pace, but in the back of his mind, he's always calculating how he can grow his cow herd.

"I want to play music as long as I can and as long as people enjoy it," he says, "but one day, I just want to have more cows."

Kathy McCraine authors this magazine's Cook House column.

A VISIT WITH BUCK BRANNAMAN

Remembering Bif

Over the years I have ridden a lot of horses and several of them have stood out to people who have been regulars at my clinics. One of the most interesting horses I ever met came into my life many years ago. I rode him in clinics for quite a while but I don't think many people today would know the story of that horse. He passed away recently and he was very, very, special to me. He came into my life in the summer of 1988. I named him Bif after Marty McFly's nemesis in the movie *Back To The Future*. Now Bif wasn't much to look at but I learned a bunch from him. He belonged to a horse outfit across the Madison River, near a place I was working in Montana at the time.

I'd been watching the cavy of horses on the other side of the river and for weeks I'd watched this one horse in the group. He was a big red horse and looked to have some age on him – maybe four, maybe five years old. I needed a good gelding for clinics, but I knew that this horse would be quite a challenge. I knew if I could work with him that I would learn a lot from him. My task was to get the chance as the horse was owned by this other ranch.

Finally, I bit the bullet and made the deal to buy the horse. I basically paid what we call "canner price" for him. I'll let you imagine what that means. So I rode into the big pen where "Red" had been run into and roped him. I thought I'd try to lead him into the horse trailer. At the time, I didn't realize how un-halter-broke he was. There was a bunch of activity around as we were getting the trailer positioned, so I'd had him stopped, with the rope around his neck. I needed to check on the truck so I told this fellow in the corral with me to hold onto him.

"Don't pull on him at all." I said, "Just hold the rope, keep it from getting down in the manure." The manure and mud were a couple of feet deep. The corrals at this outfit were really dirty. I started to walk away and this horse felt the pressure on that rope and flipped over backwards four times within about 60 seconds. It was

just awful. I knew I was in deep. So rather than get into a fight, I got the rope fished off the horse's head and urged him free into the trailer, just like a cow. As I hauled him back home, I had some time to reflect on what a potential idiot I was for getting myself into another "project." I just couldn't have a nice easy one. Oh no, I needed to prove something.

We arrived home and chased the big horse into the round corral, just like a mustang. A deep breath later, I walked over to Bif. He was on the west end of a very long and narrow indoor arena. Shafts of afternoon light were creating "bars" he would walk in and out of. Biff saw me the same way he saw every other humans he figured I was going to end his life. I was trying to get him to where I could just drive him away from me, without anything on him. This would be a beginning.

Of course, this horse decided he was going to take care of himself and instead started kicking at that halter and me. He'd actually run backwards at me and fire with both hind feet. This is quite a deal to watch. I spent the next 90 minutes reeling this halter in and tossing it back at his hindquarters, trying to encourage him to move his feet forward and not be so defensive. It was 90 minutes before I got one forward step. He'd miss kicking at me and kick out some fence boards on the corral and it started to look more like a pile of kindling for the fireplace – splintered boards all over the corral. Every time he'd kick, miss me, and kick the fence he would tear up a little bit more of the corral, my boss who was watching would say, "Buck!" like I was going be able to do something about it.

Well this went on for quite a while, ultimately I did get him saddled and he put on a demonstration of bucking like you've never seen. The saddle's monel stirrups were hitting together over his back every jump. I didn't even try to ride him that night. I just tried to get him a little bit more comfortable and then I unsaddled him and put him up. I ended on a good note and I wanted him to sleep on it. And me, knowing full well I wouldn't sleep a wink trying to figure out how I could help this horse.

The next day I started again and repeated the process. He was very defensive again, but we gained ground quicker, and I did ride him. Bif never bucked with me. He was one of the most treacherous, dangerous horses I've ever been around on the ground. But I really do think it was because he had started off on the wrong foot with humans who didn't understand anything but strong arm approaches. Hairy-chested cowboys. With horses, like people, you only get one opportunity to make a good first impression.

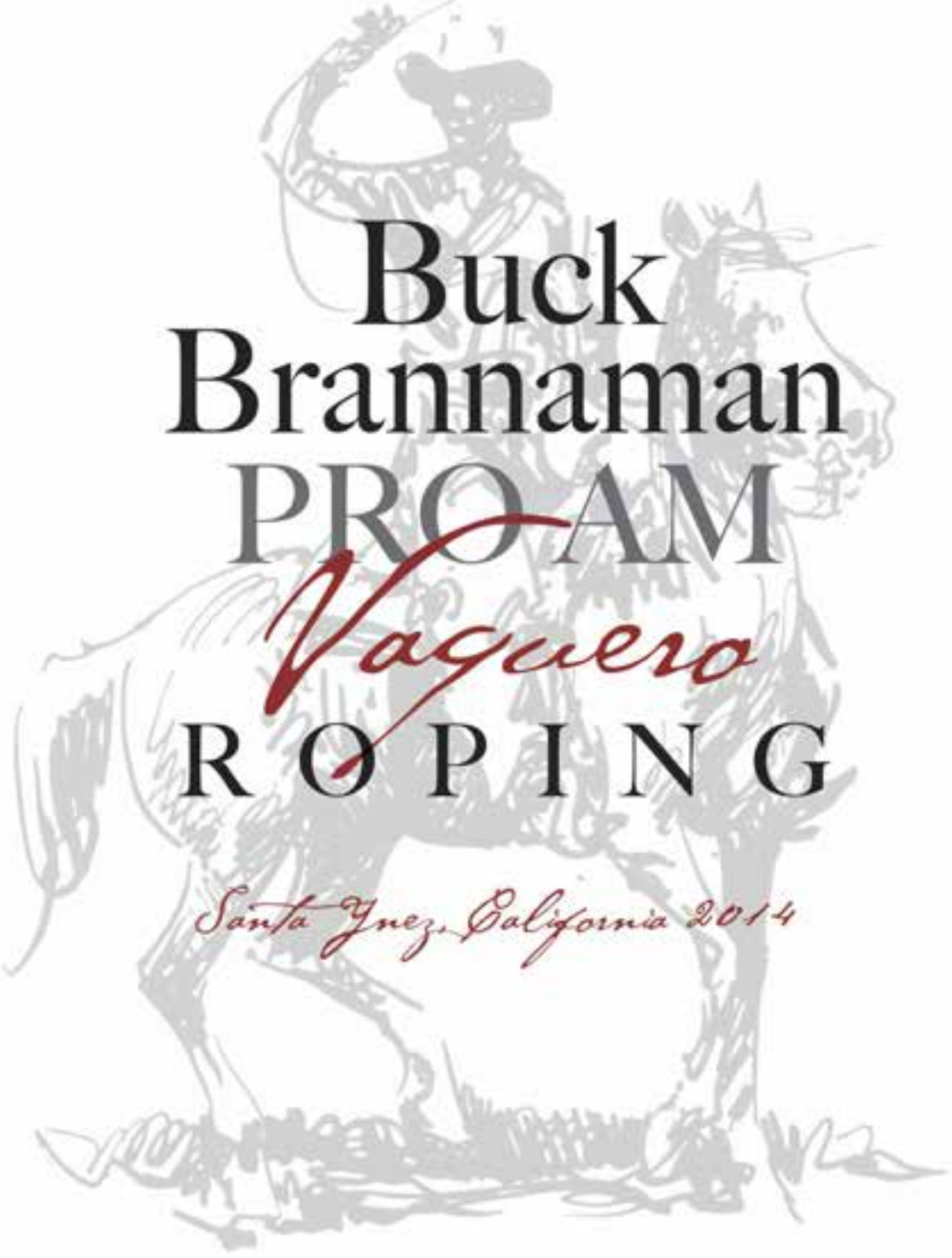
For the next couple years, I hauled him with me to my clinics. The people at the clinics were not allowed to come near my horse trailer because Bif was a panther to be around, but he gradually got better. I could ride him, but it didn't mean he was gentle. Miles together can change things and in time he got a lot better around people. In time, he got all right. In fact he got to be a great horse and I rode him for over ten years. After that I retired him to the ranch and always enjoyed seeing him, remembering the rides we had. We had a pretty rough winter in Wyoming this year and Bif let me know he just couldn't go much further. Bif had a good life.

I travel all over the country and get an opportunity to see lots of different kinds of people and lots of different horses and ways of doing things. Times have been pretty tough for many people and sometimes it's hard to see potential. You can't give up. Some of them prevail despite a rough start and end up with a successful life. That was Bif. He taught me a valuable lesson and gave to me an opportunity to learn. There are Bifs all over, so don't give up.

Thank you, Bif. *Vaya con Dios.*

October 24, 25 & 26

www.brannaman.com



Buck Brannaman PRO-AM

Vaquero ROPING

Santa Ynez, California 2014

THE FRONTIER PROJECT

From Cyber to Fiber

A new book showcases a year of digital western artwork.

Editor's Note: Jim Rey's Sketch Book *is a newly released book featuring more than 180 paintings and illustrations created digitally by western artist Jim Rey. Images depict cowboys, horses and ranch life, the subjects that have long inspired Rey's traditional works of art. What follows is an excerpt from the book's introduction, authored by Rey.*

I've always sketched in the evenings, developing ideas, working on thumbnail drawings, and experimenting with various poses. I've often drawn on the backs of envelopes, in the margins of newspapers or magazines, or on just about anything with some white space.

Over the years, I've tried to collect these efforts in a sketchbook, with varying degrees of success. Often, when I've needed to refer to drawings to flesh out an idea for a painting, I've had trouble finding them. Sometimes, they were lost for good.

A solution seemed simple enough. All I had to do was produce a drawing in a sketchbook and, when the drawing was completed, put the book away. Case closed. Sketch saved. Easy to find.

That obvious solution, though, always felt like a directive ("Put those in a book and don't lose it.") deserving of a rebellious response: "Oh yeah? Watch this." It's been a problem for decades. Unexpectedly, the problem was solved by technology.

In January 2012, I noticed a Wacom Intuos 4 tablet in a computer store, and wondered if I could use it to draw. As opposed to my usual "winging it" approach, I researched the heck out of it and found that what I hoped to be true (that the tablet would be of use to an artist) was, in fact, so.

Using the device, along with Photoshop CS6, I could draw and paint in the digital equivalent of pen and ink, pen and wash, oils, pastels and watercolors. And, when finished, with the push of a button (so to speak), my work would be saved and arranged in a folder. Of course, I could achieve the same with a conventional sketchbook, but the tablet proved to offer even more delightful benefits.

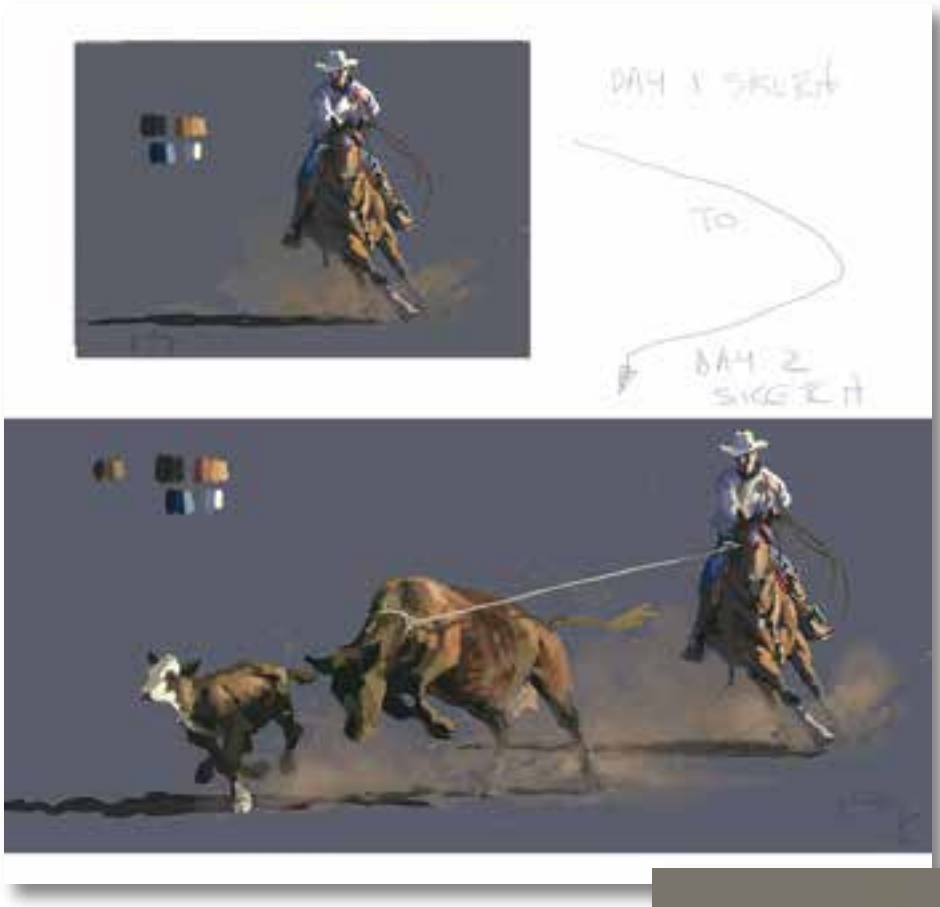
One such benefit, entirely unforeseen, developed in a serendipitous way. After I'd completed a few digital pen and ink drawings, I emailed them to a few friends, family members and collectors, simply as a way to show off my new toy.

Before long, I was beginning each morning by emailing my drawing from the night before. With nothing resembling a marketing strategy, my "e-pen sketch o' the day" club grew in numbers, purely through word of mouth and through tenuous connections to me, to a love of artistic expression, and to an affinity for the western experience. A sort of brotherhood evolved, all based around my evening sketch sessions. What fun.

Other unexpected benefits were numerous: real-time pen and ink corrections; oil- and pastel-type paintings with no clean-up afterward; the ability to move parts of a painting, to enlarge or reduce the size of its elements, to experiment with color schemes on the fly.

The tablet quickly found its logical fit with my creative process. Drawings, photographs and painted sketches make up my research material, and the majority of my digital sketches are influenced by my photographs.

While working on location at a branding, the action's simply too fast for painting (although I've done it), so using a camera is the best strategy for me to capture what I need. For example, a Nebraska Sandhills branding I attend each year has around 45 riders, and 1,200 to 1,500 calves are branded in one day. Many times, I've shot 1,500 to 2,000 photographs at that branding. Believe it or not,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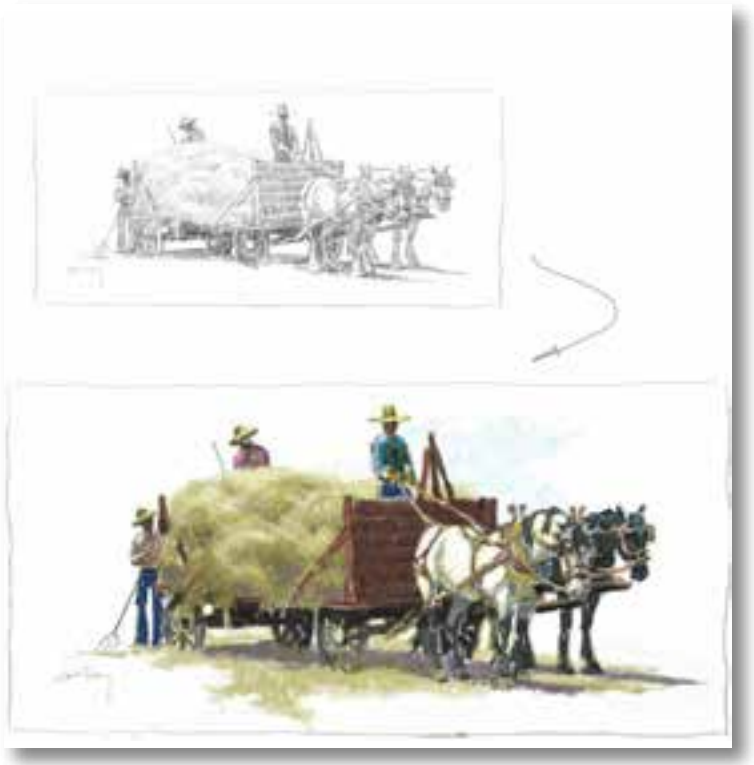


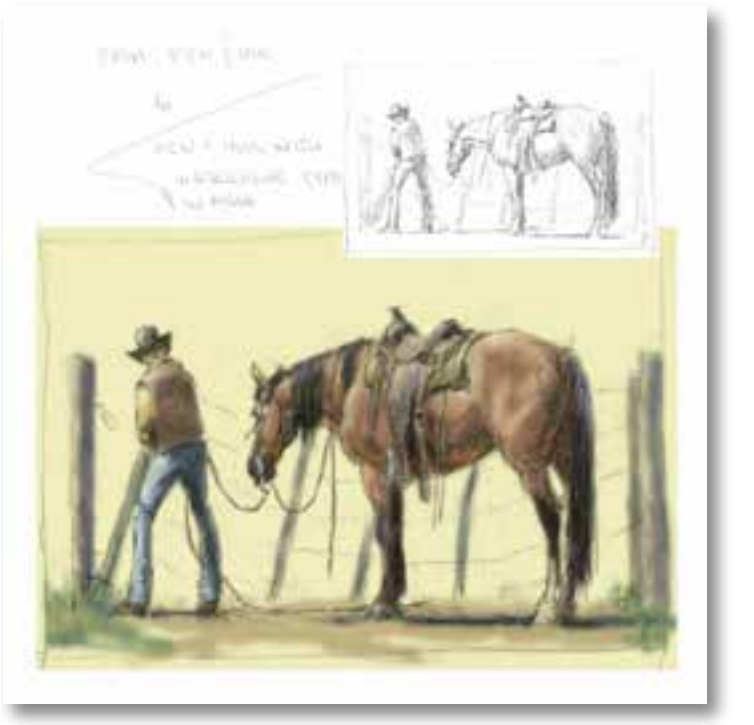
there's always something in a photo I can use somewhere down the line, if not the main subject, then something in the background that I'll want to isolate.

Working in Photoshop, I'll place a photo in the upper left corner of my tablet screen and refer to it as I work on my digital drawing. Once the sketch is blocked in, I delete the photo and continue with my drawing, from that point relying on my imagination.

Since I began working with the tablet, my drawings improved exponentially. One hopes they would've improved anyway, with the same amount of time invested, but all of those new tools likely accelerated my progress. Making corrections while drawing or painting, for instance, is a huge part of being a representational artist. Making changes digitally was not only fast, but engaging, a positive experience reinforced by the childlike joy that comes with a new toy.

So, how do I work one of these sketches into a major painting? The answer: pretty much the same way I work any sketch done on paper into a painting. I bring up the e-pen sketch on my computer monitor, then refer to it as I block in my painting. I purposely leave color swatches in place on many digital sketches to remind me of the colors I used, a helpful step when I'm executing an oil painting based on an e-pen sketch.

I must point out I'm not advocating that anyone buy into this approach. The intent of my book project has been simply to share my thoughts on digital sketches, and the ways in which they can be used.



Jim Rey's Sketch Book, published by The Frontier Project Inc., is available from Amazon.com.

THE HEN HOUSE

Winter Riding, Horse Sales and the Legacy of Legends

By Reata Brannaman, Nevada Watt, Ceily Rae Highberger and Hannah Ballantyne

As many of you probably already know, in 2013 Reata had been given the opportunity to instruct the Montana State University Colt Starting class, and Young Horse Development. Reata is the youngest instructor for MSU. With Reata every step of the way, Ceily, is helping out as the teaching assistant this year. Despite a few bumps in the road, the class got up and rolling, and it doesn't look like it is slowing down anytime soon.

Despite her age, Reata has brought a lot to the program that is helping to move it in the right direction. The knowledge handed down from her mentors is something that she values and is passionate about passing down to her students.

We're going to give you a quick run down of how the program works:

Generous donors from around the country donate their colts to the MSU Equine Boosters to be used in the program.

Reata holds open tryouts for the students

Students get assigned colts

At the end of the semester the colts are all auctioned off in a sale at Copper Springs Ranch; "Equine Boosters of MSU 'Top of the West' Horse Sale."

Some lucky people get well-started horses to embark on their own horsemanship journeys.

Besides just showing up to class, the students have a lot of responsibilities. The students are all required to

Instructor Brannaman's Colt Starting and Young Horse Development at MSU

put in at least 8 hours a week outside of our 4 hours of class, as well as putting on other Equine Science: Colt Starting events.

Another fun aspect of the class is being able to "share" the experiences and progress of the colts and students through the Facebook page.

The class was represented in Las Vegas, Nevada, January 31 – February 2 at the annual "Legacy of Legends" event put on by Buck Brannaman and Carolyn Hunt. The majority of Reata's class was in attendance along with previous scholarship winner, our one and only Ceily Highberger. It was a grand time and the colts did really well.

We were pleased to announce that this past February 17th, Reata's dad, Buck Brannaman had graciously donated his time to do a horsemanship class for the MSU Colt Starting class as well as classes from University of Montana Western, and Miles City Community College Colt Starting classes. The classes were very successful and all the proceeds benfitted the Montana State University Colt Starting and Equine Science department.

Reata Brannaman

Saturday, April 5th will be the "Top of the West" Horse sale presented by the Equine Boosters of MSU as well as Copper Springs Ranch. For more info or a catalog, contact Reata at reatabrannaman@gmail.com.

If you're interested in donating a colt for next year's class, give Reata a jingle. We're always looking for good quality horse flesh for the program.

Natural Spirit

Tamara Gooch's photography documents the beauty of the West, and the character of its people.

One of photography's most understated fundamentals is the notion of an image revealing not only an elemental view of the subject, but also of the photographer who created the image. Tamara Gooch's photography reflects her perceptions, emotions and beliefs, all of which have been shaped by her life experiences in the American West.

"I can't remember a time when the smell of sage and horses didn't send me looking for light and my camera," she says. "For years, I've received emails – usually from people looking for an escape from their offices – thanking me for providing a lifeline of sorts, an emotional diversion. Most seem to share an underlying desire to reconnect with something lost in their world."

Tamara grew up with horses, and spent summers in Story, Wyoming, just outside Sheridan. There, she learned that most cowboys and ranchers live in their own world, one defined by hard work, harsh conditions, long hours and little pay.

"For most of them, there's a trade-off," she says. "They may have cracked hands, blistered lips and worn-out boots, but their lives are rich with things that have meaning: good friends, good horses, good dogs. It's a privilege for them to pass on that way of life to the next generation."

When Tamara picks up a camera, it's often because a horse has caught her attention. Horses are an important part of her life, and integral to her photographic endeavors.

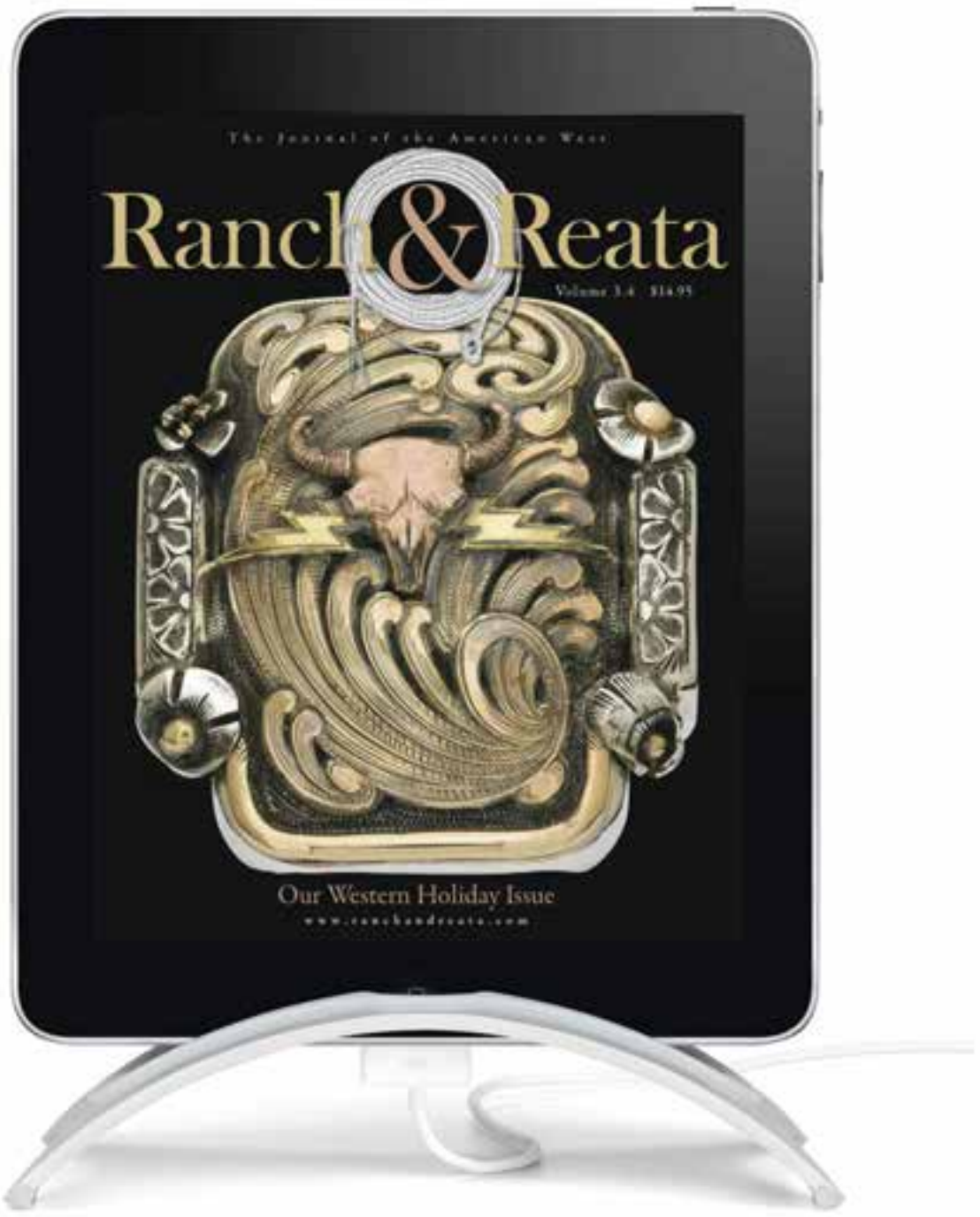
"I love the way light bounces off their manes and tails," she says, "and the sound of their hooves as they gallop toward you. When I capture a scene that offers a glimpse into the secret lives of horses, I know I've got something special."

Tamara describes her photography as a means of sharing the beauty of the places she visits and the character of the people she encounters. The medium, she adds, allows her to experience life more fully, with more intensity.

"I'll continue to explore the limits of my abilities," she says, "and strive to create images that provoke thought, evoke emotion and rekindle our natural spirit."

Tamara's photographs have been published in numerous magazines worldwide, and her work is represented at several of the West's most prestigious galleries, including The Winter Range Gallery, in Wickenburg, Arizona, which she opened with her partner Jess Lee in January 2013. Tamara also participated in the Desert Caballeros Museum's 2012 exhibit *Cowgirls with a Camera*, and will showcase new images in the 2014 exhibit. She lives in Island Park, Idaho, and Morristown, Arizona. Learn more about her work at www.tamaragoochphoto.com or www.westernphotographers.com.

Your Portable West.



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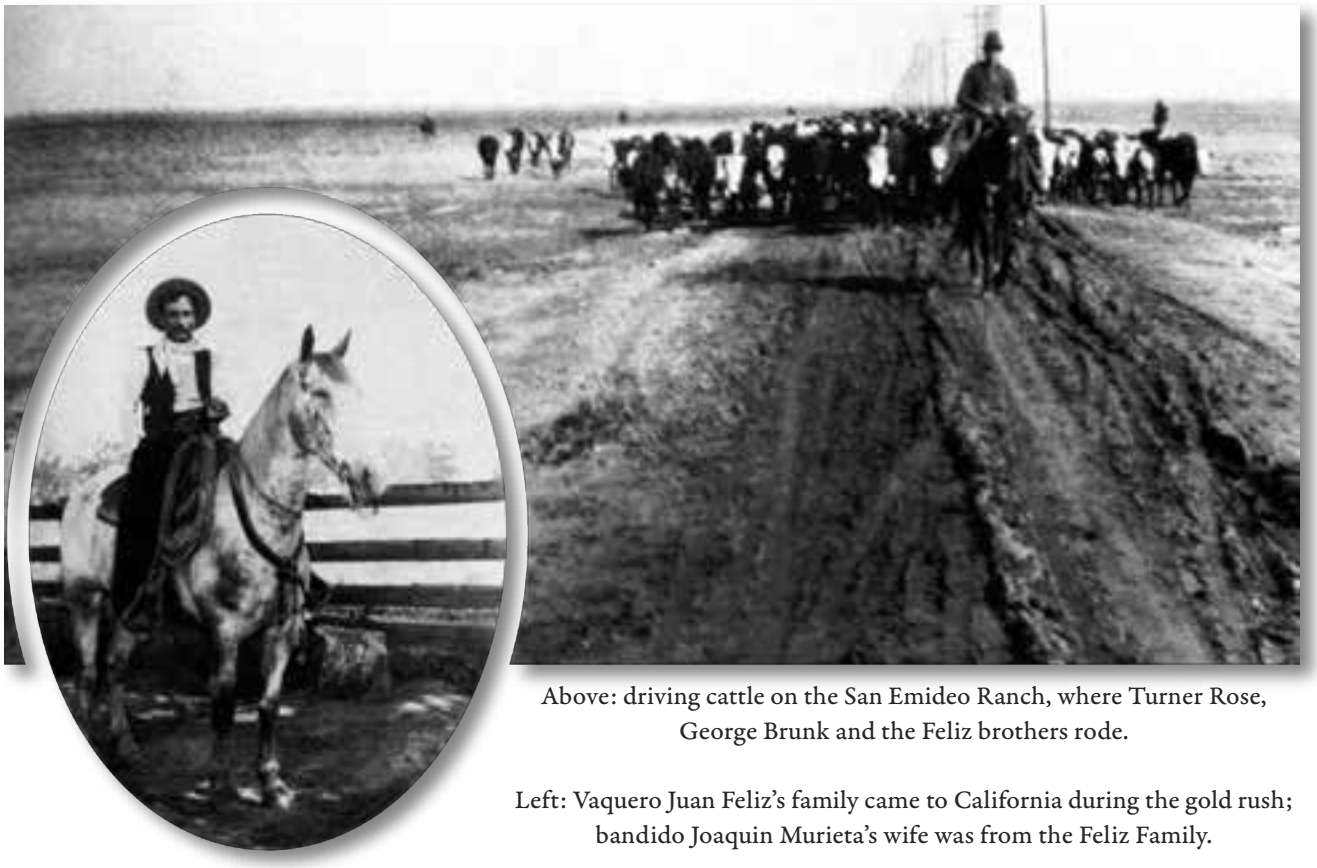
Vaqueros of the Great Ranches of the San Joaquin

The vaqueros, vaquero boss and the horses gave each ranch its distinctive atmosphere and reputation.

By Arnold Rojas



Above: driving cattle on the San Emideo Ranch, where Turner Rose, George Brunk and the Feliz brothers rode.

Left: Vaquero Juan Feliz's family came to California during the gold rush; bandido Joaquin Murieta's wife was from the Feliz Family.

Vaqueros – the molders of my youth, the companions of the best years of my life – have at last told their stories and passed on over the Great Divide. They will never come again, those men who knew deep toil, privation, violence, danger. Men who had learned the uselessness of being afraid. They left me the legacy of a profound affection for rugged mountains, vast plains,

open spaces and limitless skies; for lonely ranches, taciturn old men and horses that were utterly loyal; and a deep sympathy for all dumb creatures.

Now that the old-time vaqueros and buckaroos have ridden their last bronco and lassoed their last steer we shall sit no more by the campfire or ride with them vicariously, listening to them spin their yarns of adventures with bronco horses and wild longhorn cattle; a panorama of limitless plains and interminable cordillera, and cattle streaming into the rodeo ground.

The horses and cattle that wore the irons of the greatest ranches in North America: the Double HH, the S Wrench, the RO, The Diamond A, the Wagon Rod, the J H B, the ZX and the TE, of Terrazzas, who owned the entire state of Chihuahua in old Mexico...and even the brand that combined the oldest symbols of Christian and Moor, the Cross and the Crescent of the Tejon Ranch, all of these are no more.

I became fond of the people with whom I worked, and valued the qualities they possessed, and was jealous for the preservation of their way of life. There still existed the old style ranch life where modern things had little meaning.

Then, men lived close together, pretense was stripped away, and life was unhampered by possessions. I learned the satisfaction that comes of hard work, and the pleasure of eating after 12 hours' abstinence. The richness of broiled beef and the sweetness of cool water, and the deep dreamless sleep of exhaustion.

For many years, because rainfall in the form of irrigation water was scarce or nonexistent, the Southern San Joaquin Valley became cattle country, with alfalfa its main crop. Rainfall decided how many cuttings a field would produce: if rains were scarce a scant hay crop, if rains were plentiful a bountiful crop; it was as simple as that.

In wet years, thousands of feeder steers were shipped into this area during the winter and fattened on the Kern County Land Company ranches. The Company controlled 3.75 million acres running through the center of the southern San Joaquin Valley. Their property sprawled for 80 miles from the Elmo Road near Pond to *Mil Potreros* ("Thousand Pastures") in the Tehachapi Mountains near Frazier Mountain Park.

This huge acreage was divided into a number of ranches, and each ranch had its own superintendent, foremen and vaqueros (who handled the cattle that were shipped in and out of the ranch to market), in addition

Bedrolls and the chuckwagon at Miller and Lux, 1921. Cooks were mostly Chinese men, but the Rosedale Ranch had a woman cook. As a result the vaqueros ate much better, which meant a lot to men who worked for $30 a month plus board.

Vaqueros of the Lake Side Ranch, part of Kern County Land Company's 3.75 million acres of land. Mounted, left to right: Rejin Valenzuela, Frank Feliz, Alfonso Valenzuela, Ramon Feliz and Joaquin Feliz; standing. Mr. Hill, the superintendent. The Valenzuelas had come to California with the Felizes in the gold rush, the bandido Joaquin was part of the clan.

to gangs of mule skinners, sanqueros (men who measured water), hay stackers, hay feeders, blacksmiths, bookkeepers, workmen of all trades, irrigators and cooks who were mostly Chinese men. Often, more than 100 men were employed on a ranch. The "stiffs" lived in a bunk house and ate in the big cook house. The crew of vaqueros – usually 30 or 40 men – had a bunk house and cook of their own; these aristocrats of the saddle did not eat with the "stiffs."

Except for the vaqueros, the workmen on the ranch were all "bindle stiffs" – that is, men who carried their blankets on their backs, were always Anglos and were men who had no roots, "drifters." Well-educated men were sometimes found among them but "bindle stiffs" never lasted long on a job. Unlike the "bindle stiffs," a vaquero never came to a ranch with his bindle on his back. In fact we never even carried a bindle. The buckaroo boss went into town to get his man, or he came out on the "candy wagon" that went into town twice a week for supplies. (The Kern County Land Company stored its supplies in the basement of its office building on 19th Street in Bakersfield.) All vaqueros had to have their bedding, saddle, saddle blankets, bit, spurs, chaps and hackamores.

There were few if any women on the ranches, only the superintendent's wife and his children if he had any. Sometimes the vaquero boss would have a house for his family, or a man and his family would be stationed at

one of the camps. Also few or nonexistent were cars. But in later years (the late '20s, about the time I quit riding on ranches), a few vaqueros were beginning to get cars. Secondhand ones to be sure, but cars nonetheless.

The Poso Ranch was situated in the north of Kern County Land Company from Elmo Road near Pond to Seventh Standard Road, where it joined the Rosedale Ranch. It extended west 15 miles to Goose Lake. Today, two thriving towns and many farms are situated in the middle of what was once Poso Ranch where, at one time, 80 sections (a section = 1 sq. mile) were in alfalfa (during the wet years, of course). For years, thousands of tons of alfalfa were stacked in a section on Kimberlina Road. Hay crops were so bountiful that those stacks often would stand for years before they were fed out. And when that happened, the hay settled so tightly that it had to be sawed out of the stack. Today, that section along Kimberlina Road is covered with a vineyard. Cattle from Diamond A Ranch in southern New Mexico and cattle from eastern Oregon finally finished those stacks of hay. (The Kern County Land Company also owned the Diamond A and the ZX Ranches.)

I remember how cold those winter nights were when we waited, sometimes until daylight, for the trains to load our cattle – sometimes at Wasco, sometimes at Famoso, depending on whether we shipped on the Santa Fe or Southern Pacific.

The vaqueros, the vaquero boss and the horses gave the entire ranch its atmosphere and its good or bad reputation. On one ranch, the vaqueros were good, experienced men who all did their share of the work; on another, the cattle boss was a fair man who saw that every man did his share; on another, the horses were good – well broken and gentle – and on yet another ranch there was a woman cook, which meant good food. (To a man who worked for $30 a month, good food meant good living indeed!) The foreman on Poso Ranch, Carlos Valenzuela, was an imposing personality and one of the best vaquero bosses in the Company's employ. He was a Cahuilla Indian who had been raised on the Pauba Ranch in southern Riverside County near Temecula, one of the Vail family ranches. The Pauba was famous for its good vaqueros.

His four sons – Reginaldo, Willie, Alfonso and Luis – worked on Poso, as did Frank Urrea and that first-class gringo vaquero, Turner Rose, and his brother Billie. Catarino Reese and the Brunk brothers George, Harold, Ernest and Bud (all first-class vaqueros), and the Camargos (whose family still lives in Wasco) worked on Poso too. George Brunk rode a famous bucking horse called *Mula* ("mule") because of his abnormally long ears. In later years, George became foreman on the San Emideo. Of course there were other outstanding vaqueros, but unfortunately, I have forgotten the names of many men who worked for Kern Land Company in those far away years nearly three quarters of a century ago.

Among the better gringo vaqueros were Bob and Vic Huntington, Jim Gorman, Bill Nichols, Bob Bowen, Pinkie Reed, Henry Haskings, George Haskings and Cler Helm, all of whom worked at one time or another on the Kern County Land Company Ranches. The Rosedale Ranch – small compared to Poso, but a big ranch nevertheless – joined Poso on the south side of Seventh Standard Road. The Rosedale Ranch's chief claim to fame was its woman cook and the excellent food provided to its men. The cook, a lady of Dutch ancestry, married Charley Hitchcock, a vaquero on the ranch and father of my lifelong friend Chuck Hitchcock, the horse trainer and buckaroo.

Antonio Moss was vaquero boss; Resurricion Albitre, Teodoro Valenzuela, Zenon Munos and Emiliano Barron were working there. On my first job on a cattle ranch in 1910, I'd worked for Antonio Moss in San Luis Obispo County near Cholame, where he was the boss of the V7.

Bellevue Ranch was on Brundage Lane. South of Rosedale it joined Stockdale Ranch, which was the breeding farm where Standard Bred stallions were crossed on thoroughbred mares to produce the fastest vaquero horses in the Valley.

Willie Tevis, grandson of the last Hispanic governor of California, had a 19-bedroom mansion on Stockdale.

An abattoir was located at Bellevue, which was part of the Kern County Land Company operation. A college now occupies the place were Bellevue ranch house stood.

Catarino Reese was the foreman at Bellevue, the best stockman on the Company's payroll and probably the best foreman as well. Surely he had the best-broken horses of the hundreds that the Company owned. He also had some good vaqueros who had come to him as young boys and whom he had taught to be good men. Catarino, known as a good reinsman, made a bit for each horse he put in the bridle.

Farther south of Bellevue was Lakeside Ranch (between Bellevue and San Emideo Ranch), where Joaquin Feliz was boss. His brothers Antonio, Juan and Francisco, when they weren't working as foreman on San Emideo or for Burt Snedden, worked for Joaquin. They were all expert vaqueros and were cousins of the Valenzuelas and Urreas. The Feliz family came to California with the Murietas, the Duartes and Valenzuelas (including the notorious Joaquin) during the gold rush. Joaquin Murieta's wife, Rosita, was a Feliz. These families for many years hunted wild horses in the San Joaquin Valley and drove them over the Devil's Highroad into Sonora. Frank Urrea, a nephew of the Valenzuelas, learned the vaquero trade from Infact Teodoro and Jesus Valenzuela. Frank was foreman on Poso Ranch in 1921 when I worked for him. In his middle age, he had grown very fat, but it was a delight to watch him part cattle. He would wedge himself into a 16-inch saddle tree. His stomach pressed against the horn, at a gallop he would bring out a steer, often working with only two men to hold the herd. Despite his weight, he rode beautifully. However, he could not keep men working for him because he was very hot-headed and at the least mistake would scold furiously. The men would quit. When his crew was gone, Frank would get fired.

San Emideo, the last Company ranch to the south, was an old ranch at the mouth of San Emideo creek. It had been granted to the Dominquez family. Alec Gody, "the scout," had been one of its owners.

Today, adobe ruins up the canyon and withered fruit trees are all that's left to show that there was once an old ranch there. But when I worked there, a fine orchard bearing prize-winning oranges surrounded the house and other buildings. San Emideo Ranch was big, about 30 miles wide, extending from Maricopa to the Grapevine and from Highway 166 to *Mil Potreros* in the Tehachapis near Frazier Mountain Park. Except for the fence around it, San Emideo was open range.

The old oxcart road from Los Angeles to San Francisco ran up San Emideo canyon and down into San Fernando and Los Angeles. Ruts made long ago by wooden wheels of the oxcarts could still be seen in spots. There were a number of camps on the ranch – Pleito, Santiago, Tecuya – where a man or a man with a family was stationed. John Ringo was at Santiago; Bert Hobbs, with his wife and several kids, was at Pleito. French Pete (Pete Bergian, a Canuck) and Coyote Joe Nicholson at Tecuya looked after the water and kept the cattle from drifting down into the flats. The camp of Pleito had at one time been a regular ranch. There was an old adobe house with a cistern under it. The cistern was full of water, but the water was covered with dead beetles (pinacates). There were still a few fig, olive and pomegranate trees, weather-beaten and gnarled, standing. Most probably those trees were brought in the early days from some mission, for

those are the types of trees that grow in the south of Spain.

One crossed seven miles of plain before reaching the San Emideo ranch house, then there was a series of barren foothills before one reached the Tehachapi Mountains and the meadows of *Mil Potreros*, a series of meadows that were the end of the ranch about 20 miles away.

I can remember more about San Emideo because I worked there several times over a period of 15 years. I don't remember the name of many Anglo boys who worked

George Brunk on his horse Bill. George was one of the "gringo billygoat" buckaroos who sparked what may have been the only cowboy wage strike.

there because they didn't stay long after a year or two; the riding lost its glamour and they left to find another better-paying job, or they got married and had to get a job that paid enough to support a wife. The Hispanic riders stayed on because most could not read or write, unlike Anglo kids, who usually had at least been through grammar school, sometimes even through high school.

The Hispanic riders were never from Mexico. All were born in California or Arizona. Their grandparents, even some of their great-grandparents, had been born here. Some, including Don Jesus Lopez and Pedro Yorba, had ancestors who came to De Anza or Portola. Strangely enough, few if any natives of Old Mexico (other than those from the state of Sonora) worked as vaqueros on California ranches, not that they were not able: many were from enormous cattle-breeding haciendas that sometimes covered an entire state, such as Terrazzas' haciendas in the state of Chihuahua. My guess is that the vaqueros of Old Mexico just did not like the big horses we rode.

Don Jesus Lopez was manager or *mayordomo* and Don Portifio Valencia was the *caporal*; Chico Martinez, Antonio Araujo, Pablo Apodaca, Bob Addington, Nepomuseno Cordero, Willie Husband, Juan Bravo and Adolfo Encinas were in the crew gathering cattle on the Tejon Ranch, when Turner Rose and George Brunk, San Emideo Ranch buckaroos, were sent to the Tejon to "rep" (represent) the Kern County Land Company during the rodeos. They were old friends of some of the members of the Tejon crew, having worked with them at one time or another on one of the many ranches in the great Valley. Since both were very good buckaroos and genial, likable men, they were soon very much at home with the entire crew. In the evenings, in the talks around the campfire, the two buckaroos learned that the Tejon vaqueros were paid only 40 dollars a month, while the Land Company riders were paid 45. Turner and George advised the Tejon men to go on strike for higher wages. Turner, who was something of a bunkhouse lawyer, urged, "Now is the time; the boss needs men, and he will pay."

Accordingly, the elected spokesman of the vaqueros, with some hesitation, approached the respected old *mayordomo*, Don Jesus Lopez, and said, "Don Jesus, 40 dollars is too little, we want you to raise our wages."

Adolfo, who told me the story, here chuckled reminiscently and fondly, saying, "Caramba! The few

hairs that remained to Don Jesus stood up on end." Never in the long history of the Tejon Ranch had a demand for higher wages been heard.

Don Jesus stammered, "Go to the ranch, everyone, and take all the cattle, go!"

When the vaqueros got to the ranch Don Jesus snapped, "Tie your horses and come to the office!"

Don Porfirio, the *caporal*, was in the office when Don Jesus called in the men one by one. When they were all assembled he turned to the *caporal* and said, "This, Porfirio, is no fault of anyone but of those billygoat gringo vaqueros."

"Thi theñor Don Jethus," Don Porfirio lisped, "it could not be of any other than of theirs."

Don Jesus then turned to the vaqueros' spokesman and expostulated, "More wages! Your wages are very high already!"

"The Company vaqueros are paid 45 dollars," the spokesman argued doggedly.

"Who told you that?"

"The Vaqueros from San Emideo."

"What billygoats those vaqueros are! But I have little work for you."

"You have all the Sierra and the desert to work. The rodeos are just commencing."

Don Jesus studied the matter for a few moments and said, "For a little while, but for only a little while, no more, I am going to raise your wages."

But Don Jesus never lowered the wages, as he had hinted; he kept on paying 45 dollars a month.

One morning, after the rodeos were over and all the extra men had been laid off, we were in the corral catching our horses when the old Don walked in and said, "Muchachos, I want you to catch up the colts. We shall take all the old horses out of the saddle-horse band, and turn them out so that they may rest, and we shall ride colts. I am going to pay you five dollars extra for every horse you break."

All of them – Adolpho, 'Lupe Gomez, Willie Husband, Antonio Araujo and even Juan Gomez, who had only one leg – took a horse to break.

Oddly enough, Don Jesus never held a grudge against George Brunk for being the instigator of the strike for higher wages. Whenever the vaqueros were camped at the Lecheria near Lebec, Don Jesus would order the cook to cut some choice piece of meat and to make a present of them to "the gringo billygoat" who lived near the camp of the vaqueros.

Publisher's Note: The late Arnold Rojas, last of the vaqueros, was an intelligent, energetic, self-taught man who knew and loved the world of the California horse and vaquero, saw it vanishing, and described as much of it as he could in books such as *These Were the Vaqueros* and *Vaqueros and Buckaroos* as well as uncollected articles written especially for *The Californians* magazine. This superb magazine on California history was published by Jean and Michael Sherrell from 1983 - 1995 and we are pleased to offer some of the stories Mr. Rojas wrote for *The Californians* through the gracious permission of its publisher, Michael Sherrell. His late wife, Jean, edited the magazine and following each of Mr. Rojas' stories, they gave readers the following insight into his writings: "The atmosphere, detail, knowledge and expression he captured paved the way for us to reenter another era and ride with the vaqueros. Before he died, Arnold – always a generous man who gave gifts as if your acceptance was a favor – asked us to see that his world was represented correctly, as he recorded it in his writings, for as many people as possible, beginning with our readers. Arnold's stories are illustrated with photos from his own collection and other repositories of cowboys, vaquero and horse lore, as well as with original drawings by cowboy-artist-sculptor Jack Swanson, our friend and Arnold's." We thank Mr. Sherrell for allowing us to help keep Mr. Rojas' words alive.

Jesse Wilkinson

Master of the Long Reata

By Bill Goble

A master of the long reata in both its making and use was the late Jesse Wilkinson of Paso Robles. Wilkinson, born at La Graciosa, south of Santa Maria on 18 September 1882, broke in to the life of a buckaroo at the early age of 10 or 12. His uncle, Bill Stubblefield, was a boss for Miller & Lux's southern division, which took in Cuyama Valley, Carrizo Plains and Buttonwillow areas.

As a youth, Jesse worked the ranges of San Luis Obispo, Kern, Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. Under the tutelage of older vaqueros he learned the intricacies of rawhide braiding, which he followed until shortly before his death at age 82 in 1965.

In 1908 Jesse married Nora Jobe. Her father, Sam Jobe of Carrizo Plains, had been a Pony Express rider, stage coach driver, Indian fighter and pal of Buffalo Bill. Jesse and Nora startled cattle ranching on the Carrizo Plains in western San Luis Obispo County. In 1928 they sold out and moved to the Paso Robles area where Wilkinson buckarooed with his brother Ab for a couple years, later moving into Paso Robles where Jesse took up braiding as a trade between riding jobs, turning out reatas, headstalls, quirts, hobbles, reins and other articles. He slowly built up a wide-spread clientele and was known for the excellence of his work. Among his customers were such notables as Will Rogers and Western artist Ed Borein, as well as numerous ranchers, buckaroos and collectors.

Jesse and his brother Ab were tall, dignified, courteous men, known for their skill with the *reata larga*, preferring 85-foot ropes for open range work. When a reata got down to 65 feet through wear and breakage, they got a new one. Jesse also liked 26-inch *tapaderos*.

The Wilkinson brothers were among 60 buckaroos hired by the state of California in the early 1920s to round up Tule Elk then roaming the plains near Button Willow in Kern County. The herd, which had damaged alfalfa fields and interfered with ranching operations, was to be relocated rather than killed. The buckaroos told to not use their ropes, lest the elks be injured, but when the animals became unmanageable, the brothers took down their long reatas and went to work .Jesse caught three out of 10 lassoed that day, and Ab caught and hog-tied several more. The wild elk scattered in every direction as the buckaroos pursued them. A small number were caught and shipped to Sequoia National Park, where they disappeared shortly after release and were never seen again.

Jesse continued braiding until the late 1930s, when

photo courtesy the Museum of The Cowboy, Santa Ynez, CA

Jess Wilkinson (left) Official Marshall of the Pioneer Day Parade, Paso Robles, CA, 1958. Ab Wilkinson, Jess' brother at right

he returned to buckarooing on the Santa Margarita Ranch, then later on the huge Nacimiento Ranch which the government took over and converted into Camp Roberts at the outbreak of World War II. By the time Jesse retired as buckaroo boss of the Cammatti Ranch he and Nora had four children, two boys and two girls, all born at Maricopa. They also finished raising their grandson, Ernest Morris of Templeton, after his father died when Ernest was 12 years old. Morris, known today as the "vaquero artist," learned braiding while working with his grandfather as well as the finer points of buckarooing. He now devotes most of his time to turning out pen and ink sketches, paintings, and bronzes of buckaroo life, but can still handle a long reata. Using a 78-foot reata with a large loop, with several extra coils in his throwing hand, he demonstrated to this writer that he can throw out to 50 feet or farther and make a catch.

"Jesse, like other oldtime rawhiders, picked old, poor cows for hides for reatas," Morris said. "When a cow was thin there was a lot of glue in the hide, which gave the strings strength. Fat cows lost the glue. A reata was expected to outlast at least five grass ropes."

Jesse and Ab headed a buckaroo crew which took a large herd of cattle from Santa Margarita to the Tejon ranch in Kern County in the early 1920s, crossing Carrizo Plains and the Temblor Range. Among the Tejon crew sent out to receive the herd was the late Salvador Carmello, who recalled in a conversation with the writer a full 50 years later that the Wilkinsons "were top buckaroos, very fine men and very nice to talk to. They knew cattle."

When the Visalia Saddle Company tried to induce Jesse to braid for them he declined, preferring to market his own handiwork. He would make up a "wagon load" of rawhide gear and go to rodeos, festivals and other gatherings seeking customers.

Incidentally, the words "buckaroo" and "vaquero" were largely used interchangeably in the California range country. The buckaroo was usually a black or white American and the vaquero of Spanish or Indian extraction.

Bill Goble, whose great-grandfather arrived in Tulare in 1872 and became the town's first doctor, has ridden the San Joaquin Valley and Sierra ever since he got his first horse at age 14, when he went to work on a ranch. At 16, he was breaking horses and at 17 worked as a mountain guide packing parties into the High Sierra. He's also been a reporter and night editor across the Valley in the golden days of newspapering, an embalmer and deputy coroner, publicist and backcountry ranger for more than 20 years. Today he collects Visalia-Walker saddles and rawhide work, including two Visalias that belonged to his old friend, the late Arnold Rojas.

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Light and Life

The art of Wyoming's Vandy Douglas

I grew up on a small ranch near Sheridan, Wyoming, in a home in which art, in many forms, was appreciated. My parents, Bob and Lee Douglas, were both artists. My father was a saddlemaker, and now restores vintage leather-working tools. My mother is a photographer, and weaves Navajo-style rugs and blankets. They encouraged our childhood artistic pursuits, from drawing and sculpting to leatherwork. My sister, Sara Hagel, became a leather craftsman, and makes fine horsehair mecates. I began a career as a silversmith, with skills learned from my dad at an early age.

Witches Knot

I painted this on a partially engraved copper disc. The subject is a nice, quiet mare turned out to foal in the hills, wearing witches knots in her mane. 6 inches.

As other aspects of my life changed, so did my artistic interests. Several years ago, my mom and I were discussing a painting, and I mentioned how intrigued I was by the medium. That discussion prompted my endeavors in oil painting, and characterizes my propensity to seek out activities that challenge my artistic side.

Horses have always been a part of my life. I never grow tired of observing, sketching, photographing or painting them. I enjoy the challenge of communicating in the medium of oil paint what I have witnessed in Wyoming's ranch country, and I aim to present each horse as an individual with its own personality and story. My experiences continually inspire my art while I experiment with the characteristics of oil paint, vibrant colors, textures, and new techniques and materials that keep my work fresh.

Red River Sketch

We travel to Texas every fall, and try to visit a different part of the state each year. We'd visited a good friend, bootmaker Punch Skelton, near Clarendon, Texas. His shop has this misty view of the nearby Red River. I completed this 5-by-7-inch sketch in about an hour as practice.

Pow Wow Summer

My silversmithing mentor, Victoria Adams, is Northern Cheyenne and has taken me to powwows, medicine bundle openings, and sun dances since I was in my teens. Powwows are so vibrant and joyful. I'm mesmerized by the outfits and styles every time. This gentleman was an outstanding dancer, and I wanted to capture his grace and presence. 12 by 12 inches.

Ghost
This is a detail of an 11-by-8-inch painting for another of our catalog covers.

Mountain Road Sketch
When we can, we enjoy camping in the Big Horn Mountains near our home. Shadows on the mountain road present great practice. I'm naturally inclined to "tighten up" while painting, putting in as much detail as I can, and sometimes overworking in the process. These quick sketches help me loosen up and work on capturing a scene in a limited amount of time.
8 by 6 inches.

Canyon Horse

I used copper as the support for this work, as I wanted it to shine through the paint to depict the canyon walls. This piece, created on stamped copper, was inspired by a scene encountered on a trip to Arizona. 6 by 6 inches.

Copper & Gold

I used to make my living as a silversmith. I engraved quite a bit then and have begun mixing the media of engraving and oil painting. This work is about 6 by 6 inches, with hand-engraved work on a copper sheet. I paint directly on the copper, and enjoy seeing a bit of the copper through the paint – it almost glows.

Fighting Flies

This pair of horses on the Crow Indian Reservation, near Lodge Grass, Montana, are fighting flies in the July heat. White horses are so fun to paint, I couldn't resist. 8 by 10 inches.

Heels Over Head

This painting features a good friend, Chad Donley, having a heck of a wreck. Luckily he and the horse walked off unscathed. A bit more action than I normally paint, but what fun! 24 by 36 inches.

Cruiser

This work depicts one of our horses, living a life of ease in retirement. Our horses provide consistent subjects for drawing practice, or a means of quick reference when I'm having trouble depicting a horse's anatomy. It is nice to have them close by. 10 by 8 inches.

SLO Steer

This is a detail of an 11-by-8-inch work for the cover of a catalog for our business, Sheridan Leather Outfitters.

Groundtie

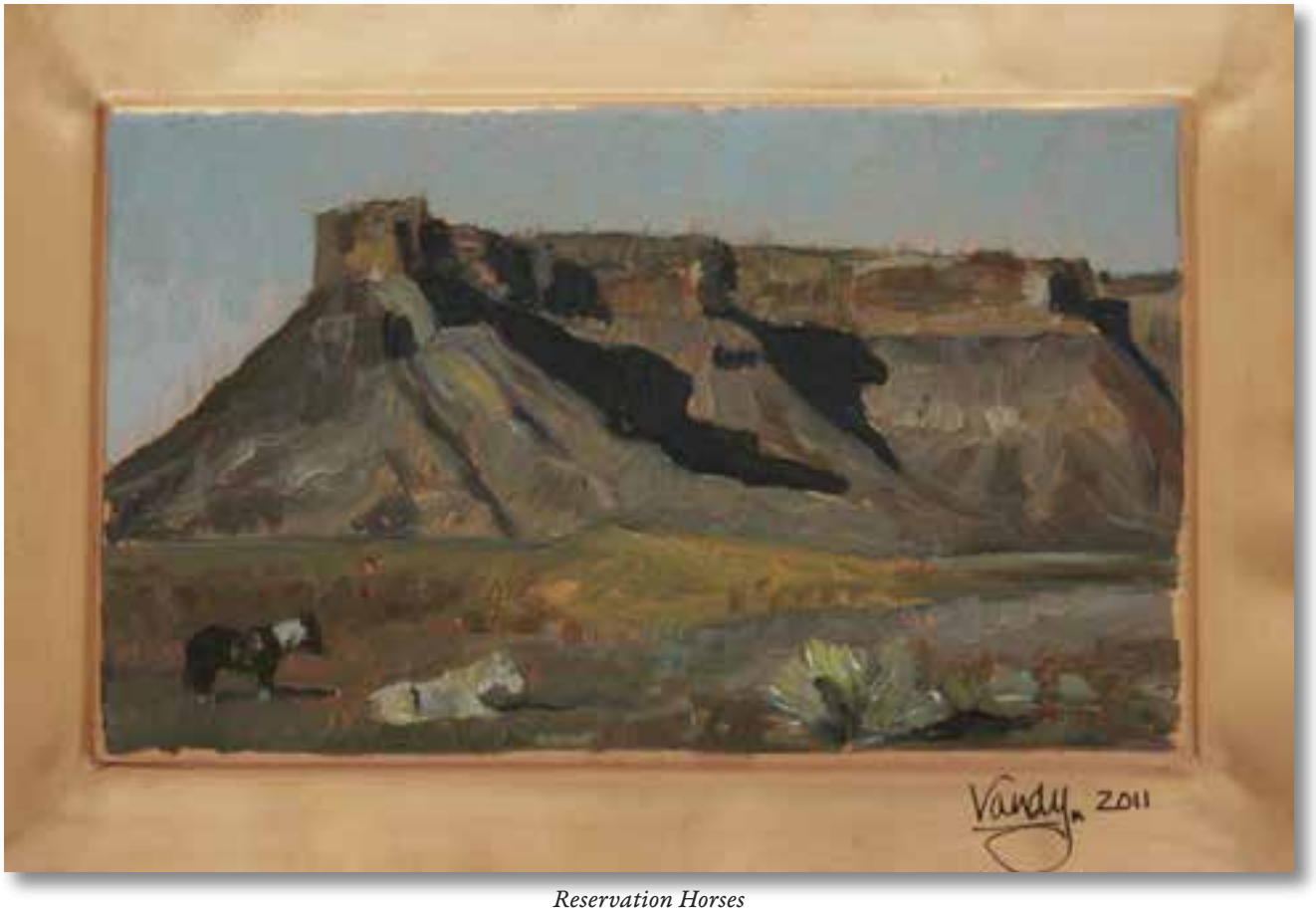
This horse belongs to my husband. "Taco" is a small horse with a lot of heart, and I've used him as a model many times. Here, he's waiting for Luke to take the ropes off a steer. He's doing his job by staying put. This 22-by-28-inch painting won Best of Show at the 2011 Trappings of Texas.

Peter's Pony

I completed this work on a pressed copper plate, painting on the raised section. It depicts a horse wintering on the grazing association, enjoying near-spring sunshine. 4 by 5 ½ inches.

Raven

This horse belongs to my good friend, bootmaker Thea Disney. Just as white horses captivate me, black horses are just as interesting. I painted the foreground with my palette knife to ensure the texture I wanted to convey didn't disappear, and I like the impressionistic bent to it.



Reservation Horses

We often travel to Arizona and always try to see as much of the state as we can in a short amount of time. These ponies are on the Navajo Reservation and created a perfect scene with the mesas, sagebrush and low-angle evening light. I pressed out a copper plate and painted on the raised section. 4 by 5 ½ inches.

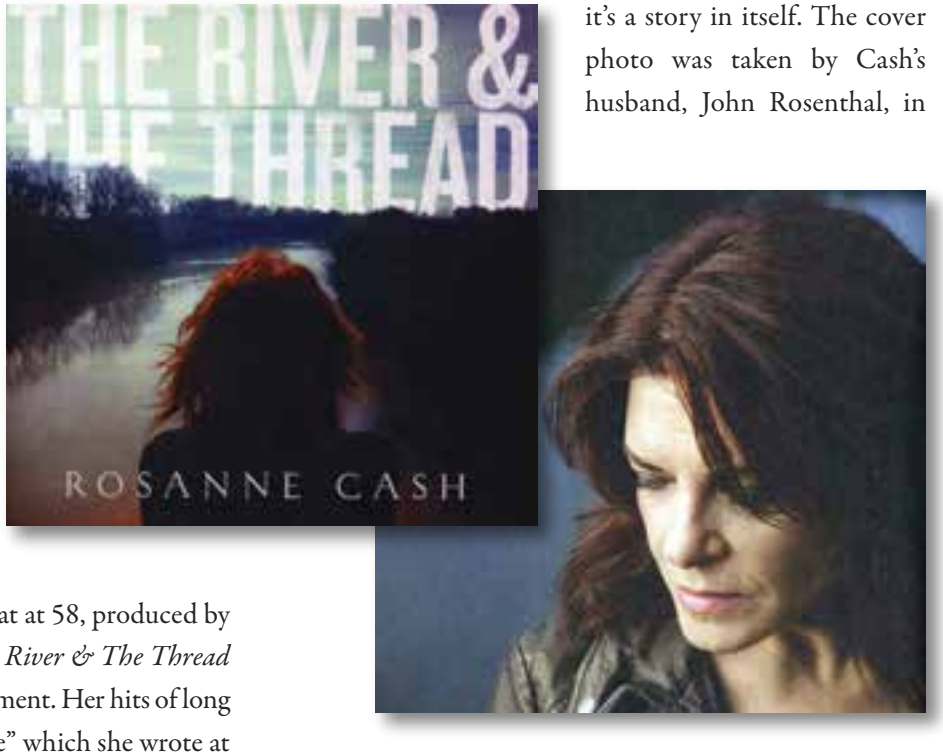
Vandy Douglas still lives near Sheridan, Wyoming. She's married to Luke Harris, with whom she owns Sheridan Leather Outfitters, a mail-order wholesale supply company that ships leather-crafting supplies worldwide.

The Road Trip List

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

#27, 28 & 29 – Rosanne Cash, Yo-Yo Ma, Stuart Duncan, Edgar Meyer, Chris Thile and Bing Crosby

The River & The Thread
Rosanne Cash
Bluenote.com



This column is about records that fit, playing while driving, so we aren't going to examine the journey Rosanne Cash has taken coming to terms with her relationship with her parents. She is the eldest daughter of country music's Johnny Cash and his first wife Vivian Liberto Cash Distin. What we will declare is that at 58, produced by her husband John Leventhal, *The River & The Thread* may be Roseanne Cash's finest moment. Her hits of long ago, "Blue Moon With Heartache" which she wrote at 23 and later "Seven Year Ache" established her as a true, individual talent. Over the years she produced important and substantial albums but *The River & The Thread* is, well, something else – something to be pondered and listened to and even treasured. So when I say these albums are great for listening to in the car. Take this one inside when you get home. It's that good. Even the cover of the album is more than just a cover; it's a story in itself. The cover photo was taken by Cash's husband, John Rosenthal, in December 2012 in Money, Mississippi; Roseanne is standing almost in silhouette on the Tallahatchie Bridge – yes that Tallahatchie Bridge. (Cash now sings Bobbie Gentry's "Ode to Billie Joe" in her live sets.) Roseanne Cash has created an album in which she actively engages the American South and in that her continued journey. It is her journey and her story to tell, no longer encumbered.

Who is Range Radio?

Ian Tyson
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Pat Green
George Strait
Stoney Larue
Neil Young
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Sons of the Pioneers
Miranda Lambert
Flying Burrito Brothers
Norah Jones
Dave Stamey
Gram Parsons
John Prine
Travis Tritt
Hank Williams Sr.
Jeff Bridges
Patsy Cline
Johnny Cash
Asleep At The Wheel
Chris Hillman
Emmylou Harris
Merle Haggard
Cody Canada
Kris Kristofferson
Willie Nelson
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In her song "World of Strange Design" she writes:

If Jesus came from Mississippi
If tears began to rhyme
I guess I'll start at the beginning
It's a world of strange design.

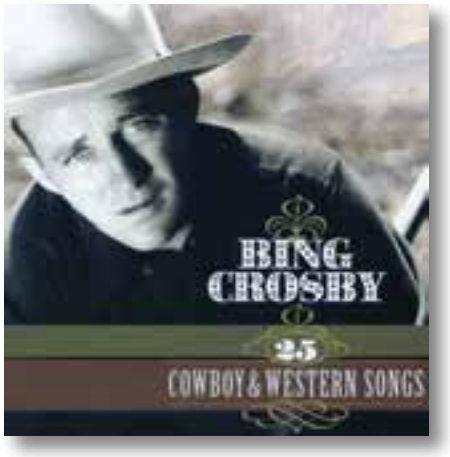
YouTube: http://youtu.be/qGKDjW8AF-M

The Goat Rodeo Sessions
Yo-Yo Ma, Stuart Duncan, Edgar Meyer, Chris Thile
Sonymasterworks.com

I was intrigued by the title but when I saw who was playing it was a no-brainer. It's always something when such diverse talent gets together to play – because they can and actually are allowed to – by labels and time constraints. So considering the talent involved I decided to determine what the title meant. Used to be there was a Webster's somewhere in the office, crammed in a shelf behind the copy paper. Lacking that – urbandictionary.com – defines "goat rodeo" as "a situation that order cannot be brought to (at) anytime" or "about the most polite term used by aviation people (and others in high-risk situations) to describe a scenario that requires about 100 things to go right at once if you intend to walk away from it" So, according to the liner notes, when the artists – Yo-Yo Ma, Edgar Meyer, Chris Thile (late of Nickel Creek and Punch Brothers) and Stuart Duncan ran across the term, they figured they had found the name for this undertaking of playing together music that was "composed and improvised, uptown and down home, funky and pastoral" – but in all uniquely American in sound – because they wanted to. Cello, fiddle, bass, Dobro and Chris Thile's mandolin fill the primarily instrumental album with this dream team's chance to blend bluegrass and classical capabilities. The record is a gem and underscores what true talent can accomplish when boundaries are removed. This, my friends, is American music at its best.

YouTube:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIVrCZ5sNwE&list=PL7C376C005BEA170E&feature=share

25 Cowboy & Western Songs
Bing Crosby
www.amazon.com



With the holidays just behind us, I must admit I am a sucker for Bing Crosby's version of "White Christmas" but I must admit I never really thought of him as a western/country singer – other than in those old "Road" pictures he did with Bob Hope. The truth is he was such an important artist of the last century it's not surprising he played an important role in the popularizing of western "moods and thematic music" as it was called. During the 1930s and

'40s, his influence was significant in attracting mainstream pop listeners to country recordings and making pop artist covers of soon-to-be-classic country songs one of the standbys of mid-century recording in America. Crosby recorded many western songs over his long career and this album, first released in 2006, contains many of them. The songs chosen reveal a little more playful side of the singer whose lifetime achievements set so many standards. It's easy to understand when you ask yourself: Who won the first Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award? Bing Crosby. Who introduced more songs on film nominated for the Best Song Oscar (14) than anyone? Bing Crosby. Who was the first multi-media superstar – records, radio, TV and movies? Bing Crosby. Beyond his fame and success, his unique voicings of these western classics may not be something that is played all the time, but will fill your heart with calm memories when tackling the road and needing a bit of nostalgia, bringing back a simpler, more orchestrated time.

Here are the lyrics to one of the happiest "riding" songs on the album – or anywhere, including those coconut hoof sounds, "Ridin' Down The Canyon" with words and music by Gene Autry and Smiley Burnett:

"Ridin' Down The Canyon"
When evening chores are over at our ranch house on the plain
And all I've got to do is lay around
I saddle up my pony and ride off down the trail
To watch the desert sun go down

Ridin' down the canyon to watch the sun go down
A picture that no artist e'er could paint
White faced cattle howlin' on the mountain side
Hear a coyote whining' for it's mate

Cactus plants are bloomin', sagebrush every where
Granite spires are standin' all around

I tell you folks it's heaven
To be ridin' down the trail
When the desert sun goes down
When the desert sun goes down

YouTube: http://youtu.be/ZWLU0umD6uU

A Western Moment

February 5, 1989, an estimated 26,000,000 homes tuned in to watch *Lonesome Dove*.

photograph by Bill Wittliff, 1988, courtesy the Wittliff Collections, Texas State University, www.thewittlifffcollections.txstate.edu

It just doesn't seem that long ago, does it?

Call me Chuck

Our wonderful West, like most places, is filled with fascinating people. One of its attractions as not only a region but as a way of life is that it is still a place where a handshake can trump a piece of paper. That kind of value-based life is something to not only admire but aspire to and is why, for many, the West is such an enduring piece of geography.

One meets people during the course of living within a place who simply stand out. Too few however end up on the list as being wondrous and honorable. So I was saddened recently to hear of the passing of Chuck Bailey. Many may not recognize the name but most in the West would recognize the brand of hats that Chuck's last name represented. Bailey Hats have long been a standard in the industry back to when Chuck's father started the business in Los Angeles in 1922, initially called the Pacific Harvest Hat Company before allowing the company to take his name.

photo by William Reynolds

Charles "Chuck" Bailey and Buck Brannaman, circa 1989

George S. Bailey saw the emerging need for the era to create a hat company that not only catered to the region's market, but one that also served the growing western wear market. He was an authentic American hat man and saw early on, Hollywood's leading men as global arbiters of taste and style and dedicated his life to providing them with fine quality hats and – as he called it – luxurious styling.

In the 1920s, L.A.'s film business accounted for nearly one-fifth of California's annual manufacturing business and while Bailey worked with the studios, he also catered directly to the needs of the region by outfitting southern California ranchers, businessmen, oil tycoons – along with the newest segment of the population – movie stars – with what the billboards said at the time – the "best hat possible".

George's son Chuck, worked in the factory as a

schoolboy and would later take over his father's business, running the company until his retirement and sale of the company in 1994.

I met Chuck Bailey in an earlier life. Back in the 1980s I was running a small advertising agency and was introduced to Mr. Bailey through the agency's founder. We had traveled to his factory in the far end of the San Fernando Valley, through some pretty dicey looking neighborhoods until we passed through a chain link gate topped off with some pretty impressive ribbon wire. As we parked I'm thinking, "all this for a hat factory?"

We stepped inside and were quickly taken on a tour of the factory and it became increasingly evident to me just how unique this handcrafted item of apparel really was. It took thirteen steps, all by hand, to build a cowboy hat. From the first forming of the fir hat body to the ultimate finishing, this was a business of craftsmen and care. So by the time we entered Mr. Bailey's office, he had me. I was introduced to Charles Bailey, a man with a smile as big Southern California. "Call me Chuck," he urged with a grin. It was something I would hear him say hundreds of times. This was the summer of 1986 and for the next fifteen years I worked with one of the finest men I had ever met. Charles "Chuck" Bailey was a giver as was his beloved wife Gwen who he had met while she was in nursing school. They fell in love, married in 1951, and spent a lifetime together helping everyone that needed it. As Chuck told me on many occasions, his life's greatest joy began when he married Gwen and the two of them participated in countless volunteer and charitable organizations. Chuck had an incredible way about him that always put people at ease – whether it was his smile or his earnestness to listen, being in the moment with whomever he was with. He had an uncanny knack of disarming anyone by showing them his ever present cowboy hat and saying, "Here try this on, you won't believe how great you'll look!" Hats were his calling cards, and kindness was his chief sales tool. After the birth of my oldest daughter, one of the first things that showed up at the house was a hat box from Bailey Hats carrying a little size 6, cowboy hat with the name "Laura Reynolds" stamped in gold on the sweatband. He never forgot her birthday, or our second daughter, Lexi's.

Our greatest blessings are the quality lives that come into our existence and broaden our view of humanity and its wonders. Chuck Bailey was one of those quality lives that appeared – not just in my life but in many others. Chuck passed away peacefully this past November at his home in Oregon at the age of 89 where he and Gwen had moved after the hat company sold in the early 90s. His beloved Gwen had died just two months earlier and he probably figured he needed to catch up with her, as she headed on up the trail. One can only imagine Chuck introducing himself to new friends along the way, "Call me Chuck." BR

Charles "Chuck" Bailey
1924 - 2013

FARE THEE WELL

Press Photo of Pete Seeger by Jennifer Almquist, taken in October, 1996

"This banjo surrounds hate and forces it to surrender."

Pete Seeger 1919-2014


PBR World Champion
J.B. Mauney knows Ariat
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