

The Journal of the American West

Ranch & Reata

Volume 4.5 \$15.00



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FRONT GATE



photo courtesy Ritch Rand

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Cover image: A little drink for two working coddogs, "Tex" (left) and the black/brindle is "Mac." They are both Black Mouth Cur coddogs. Photo by Kathy McCraine.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Back to Pendleton

By A.J. Mangum

On a fall afternoon in the mid-1980s, I was unpacking a suitcase in a fourth-floor room of Bloss Hall, a nondescript dormitory on the edge of the Oregon State University campus. I'd just arrived from my family's ranch in Central Oregon, and I was wearing cowboy boots that had seen better days.

My roommate, a New Jersey transplant, arrived and introduced himself. He noticed the boots right away, not so much because of their deteriorating condition, but more because they were *cowboy boots*, footwear he'd never encountered in Teaneck. Still holding a double armload of boxes, he stared at my boots and asked, "So, what's the deal with those?"

An explanation – perhaps a justification? – of my disintegrating boots segued into a conversation about the ranch country east of the Cascades. My roommate's family had moved to the Portland suburbs only recently, and he'd not yet ventured east of the mountains that divided Oregon geographically, climatically and culturally. As far as he knew, all of Oregon was green,

wet and Birkenstocked. I might as well have been describing another planet.

I had on hand a photo taken during a branding at a ranch neighboring ours. In the photo, a horseback cowboy sent a loop sailing toward a calf on the move. My roommate studied the photo intently. "This still goes on?" he asked, incredulous. "Where can I go to see this?"

Brandings aren't exactly tourist-friendly, so I suggested he might want to go to a rodeo, maybe the Pendleton Round-Up. He'd never heard of the famed rodeo, and in fact had never contemplated the existence of *any* rodeo, much less the prospect of buying a ticket to see one.

Pendleton, though, he'd heard of.

Before leaving New Jersey, he told me, friends had insisted that, once he was settled in Oregon, he needed to travel to Pendleton, not in search of cowboy culture, but rather wool goods. "You gotta go to Pendleton," they told me. Supposed to be the best wool blankets in



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photo by A.J. Mangum

An ornate entrance gate leads to the Pendleton Round-Up grounds, and a long list of memories.

the world,” he proclaimed.

I remember marveling at both the reach of the Pendleton name – New Jersey seemed a world away, much as Central Oregon must have seemed to my roommate – and the notion that the town’s identity could have such strong connotations outside the themes of horses, cattle, wheat and rodeo. Suddenly I was the incredulous one.

Decades after that dorm-room conversation, Pendleton’s reach has extended further. These days, you’ll find the Pendleton name on a popular brand of whiskey. Pendleton wool, the commodity that so fascinated my college roommate, has broadened its market, perhaps thanks to growing consumer interest in artisanal authenticity (hipsters from Seattle to Brooklyn deserve at least a brief shout-out). And, of course, the Round-Up’s status as one of the West’s most iconic cultural events, not to mention one of the best-known and most colorful professional rodeos, has only strengthened with time.

For me, though, Pendleton has always had a special meaning. I grew up showing horses throughout the Pacific Northwest. Each summer of competition began with a show held at Pendleton, not inside the rodeo arena, but at a modest indoor arena in the shadow of the famed venue.

The name “Pendleton” conjures for me scenes of early morning departures from our ranch, a vanload of horses behind us as we traveled eastward through the Columbia River Gorge on I-84; quiet arrivals at the empty Round-Up grounds (we were, habitually, the first to show up, the last to leave); and boyhood adventures along the banks of the Umatilla River (which runs behind the grounds), among the stagecoaches

and wagons kept on hand for the Happy Canyon Indian Pageant (held next to the fairgrounds), and in the nosebleed seats of the empty and (theoretically) off-limits Round-Up grandstands.

In my “mind movie” of Pendleton, a warm June wind kicks up grit from the fairgrounds’ gravel parking area as I ride my horse toward the rodeo arena, where – courtesy of a conveniently unlocked gate – I’ll exercise the gelding on the dirt track circling the Round-Up’s famed grass infield. The movie continues: As evening turns to night, the fairgrounds fill with new arrivals; the next morning, the commotion of the horse show’s earliest hours – hooves clip-clopping on pavement, the anxious whinnying of horses away from home, the erratic crackling of an uncooperative PA system – form a soundtrack I can still conjure easily. This was *my* Pendleton.

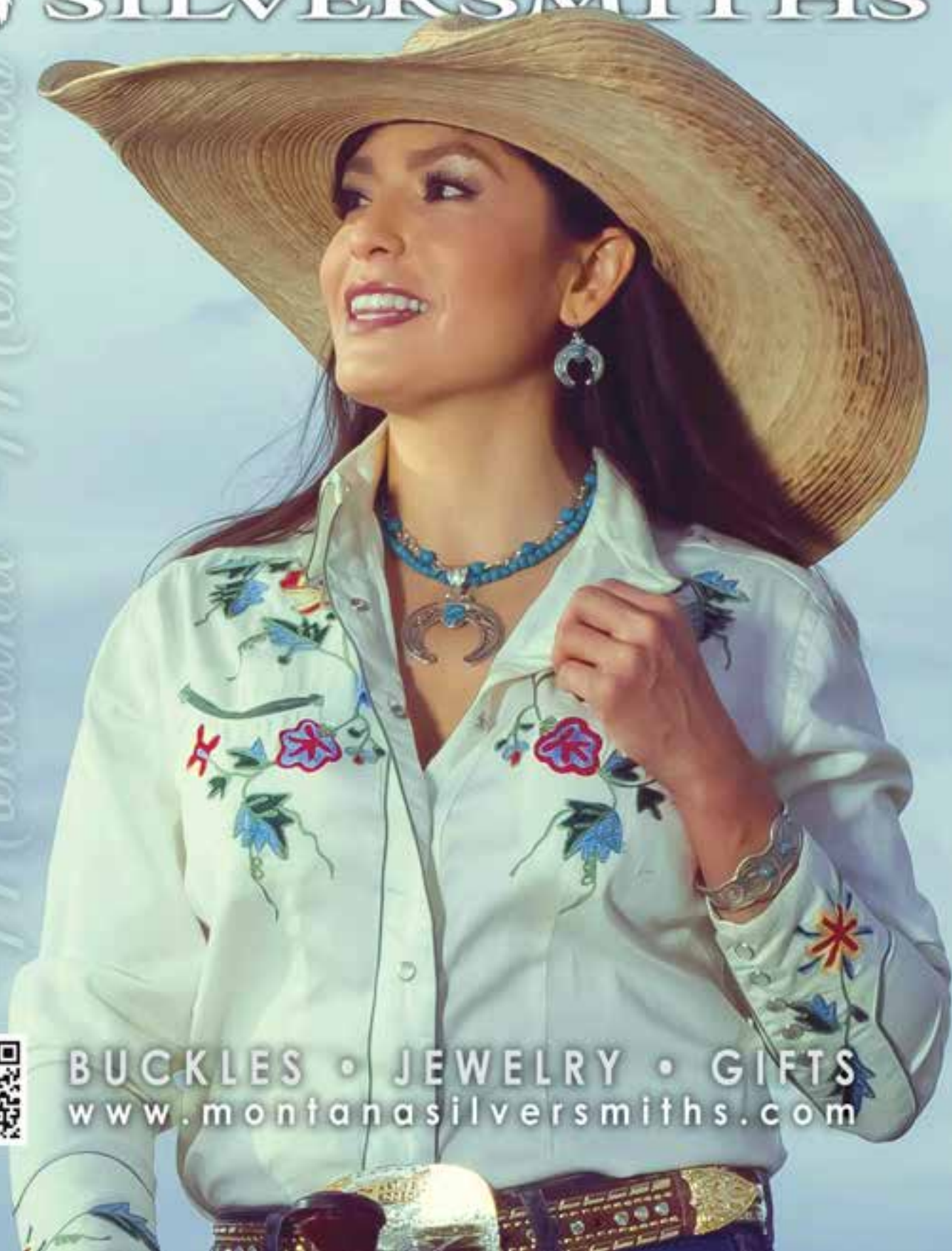
It was only in later years, writing for equestrian magazines, when I became well-acquainted with other aspects of the place: the rodeo itself, which I never



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attended in my youth, and its perennial top competitors; the event's transformative effect on Pendleton's otherwise sleepy farm-town culture; and the Round-Up's rich history, most notably the 1911 battle for saddle-bronc honors among white cowboy John Spain, African-American cowboy George Fletcher, and Nez Perce cowboy Jackson Sundown. (Ken Kesey, author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, co-authored with fellow Merry Prankster Ken Babbs *Last Go Round: A Real Western*, a fictionalized account of the three-way showdown.) As I became better-versed in historic and contemporary Pendleton lore, my memories of my horse-show days at the Round-Up grounds seemed to shrink in importance, to become a very minor subplot in a much larger story. It was a loss I mourned.

Around four years ago, decades after I'd last set foot in Pendleton, I found myself traveling westward on I-84, on a road trip from Colorado Springs to Seattle. I have a thing for nostalgia (can you tell?), so just west of the Blue Mountains, I succumbed to impulse and exited toward Pendleton's city center, unsure of what I hoped to rediscover.

I have to admit, the town itself was largely unrecognizable. The Round-Up grounds had been the setting for the entirety of my Pendleton experience, apart from the occasional meal at the nearby Dairy Queen. Pendleton itself – the town – remained unfamiliar turf.

Still, it's not that big a place. I drove along what looked to be the main drag and, soon enough, the familiar grandstands came into view. I found the fairgrounds' entrance, thanks in part to a familiar landmark – the DQ.

I parked and made my way on foot past the fairgrounds' ornate gate. The familiar show barn was still in place, as was the indoor arena and the adjacent rows of outdoor stalls. Out of sight: the scores of Happy Canyon stagecoaches and wagons.

The grounds were empty, just as they would've been on any day we'd have arrived with a load of show horses. Memories flooded back, aided by that familiar aloneness and the coincidental sensory experience of a warm wind kicking up grit from the gravel lot. As I soaked in the moment, *my* Pendleton again became a dominant storyline, one complemented, rather than overwhelmed, by the Round-Up.

I had to be in Seattle by evening, so I returned to the freeway, traveling the route we would've taken home from each of those Pendleton horse shows. I-84 parallels the Columbia and, as I drove, I was filled with a familiar awe at the river's size and power. The river and other landmarks awakened additional memories about those many round trips to Pendleton, about special horses, about family. Measured in years, those experiences seemed so far away, yet the memories were stronger than they'd been in years.





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Interesting Things and Stories from Out West

STETSON TO CELEBRATE 150TH ANNIVERSARY

There are few brands that can be cited as so iconic that they are considered generic to their category. In our genre, a Stetson is understood and accepted as the generic term for a cowboy hat. In 2015, this iconic brand will celebrate its



150th Anniversary. Today it is certainly more than just a maker of western headwear, but its history is the stuff of the American Dream.

In 1865, a young man, John B. Stetson, while on a trip out west in search of gold had designed a hat with superior water repellent qualities to protect himself. He had a head start,

being the son of a hat maker. And it was in the design of this first, primitive, wide brim hat that the “Boss of the Plains” was born. He would return home to the east and with \$60 borrowed from his sister, bought the tools, materials and rented a small room in Philadelphia. A year later the “Boss of the Plains” would become a huge hit in the hat business and he was on his way. By the early twentieth century, Stetson had created the largest hat factory in the world.

1965 Stetson marked Stetson’s 100th anniversary and the company published a little booklet titled, *The Stetson Century* that humbly celebrated the company’s world wide success stating, “It’s possible to say without too great exaggeration that America grew up under a Stetson and that there can be but few corners of the globe where the name Stetson is not known and honored.”

Today, Stetson is gearing up for its 150th birthday





in 2015. To celebrate, the iconic brand is rolling out a year of events and products. The brand will revive archival hat styles through a commemorative collection including anniversary belt buckles and boot styles commemorating the milestone anniversary. To communicate the various events and collections, Stetson

will launch an interactive microsite for consumers to navigate the brand's rich history along with information regarding a series of partnered events across music, sports, and lifestyle. To learn more about Stetson, its legacy, and its diversity of products, visit www.stetson.com





A CUT ABOVE BUCKLES

This latest design by A Cut Above Buckles features a new border stone setting and hand-engraved and “frosted” background, completely handmade and custom. The raised inked letters, logo, berry dot border, and other features create a multi-dimensional look crafted with heavy gauge, durable German silver, copper, and jeweler’s bronze designed to exceed our “guarantee for life.” Customers can work with their designers to create their own custom buckle using A Cut Above’s new border stone settings and combination backgrounds, for yourself or for your next big event. This and

all the buckles from A Cut Above Buckles are guaranteed for life, but built to last for generations – “to cherish the hard work, the memory, and the win.” Also available in precious metals and stones. www.acutabove.com

HATS, AND MORE HATS

The Vaquero from Baldwin’s

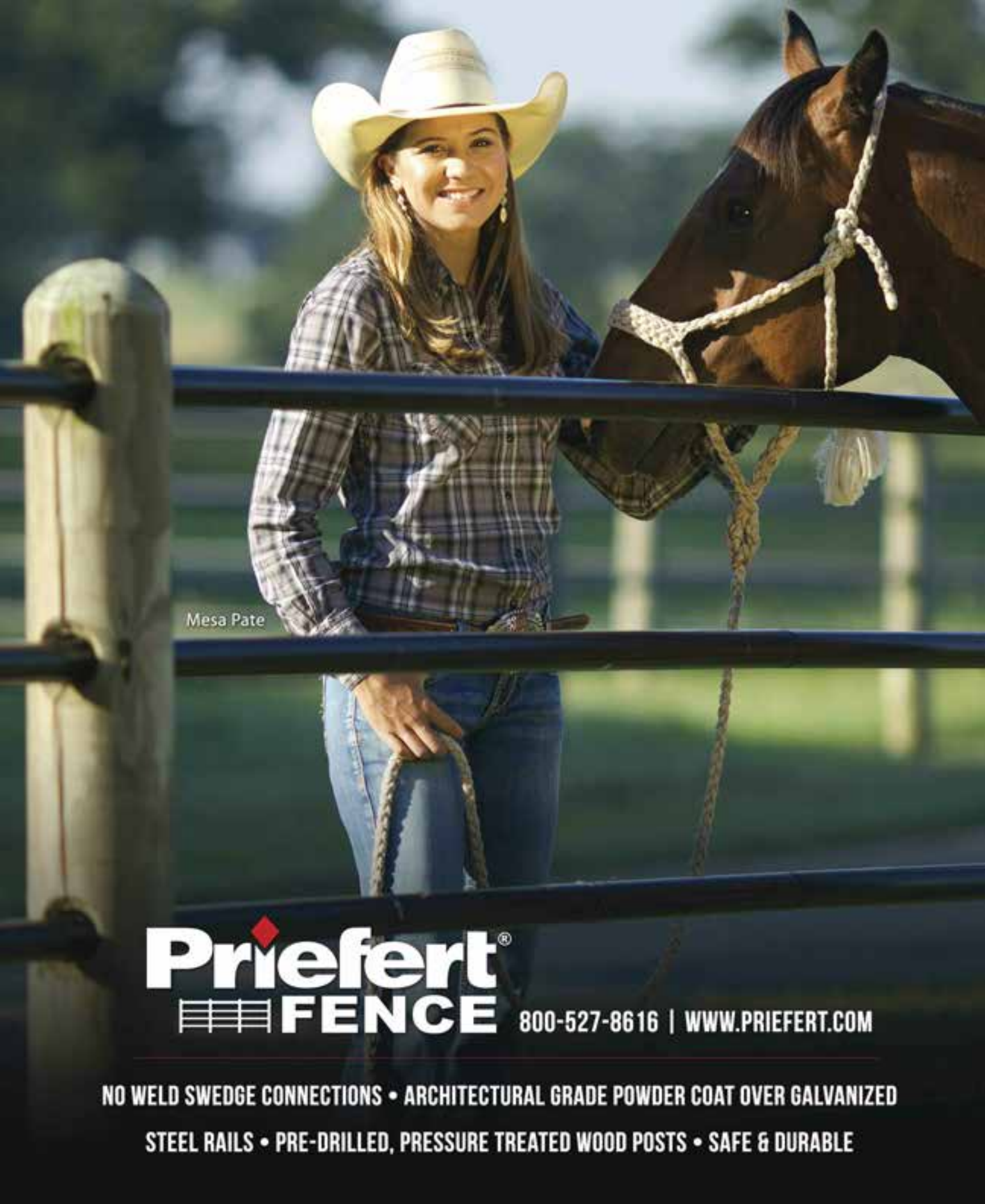
Baldwin Hats new model, “Vaquero” is designed with a telescope crown and a flat brim of up to 5 inches as worn by buckaroo-types in the Great Basin and throughout the Pacific Slope



region of the West. The Great Basin is an area on the east side of the Cascade Mountains of Oregon and the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California. It covers about 10,000 square miles eastward through Oregon, Nevada and into Utah. The hat celebrates the first Mexican and Spanish Vaqueros that worked the big ranches of the area in the early and mid-1800s.



Sometimes a pencil roll is put on the back half of the brim and the cowboy wants to see that pencil roll above the brim as they look in a mirror. Stylistically, if the brim is up three quarters of an inch in the back, it has to come down equal distance in front. When looked at from the side, the edge of the brim is to be a straight line from the back of the brim on through to the front. See this style and many others from Gene Baldwin from Baldwin’s Hat & Boot Company in Sisters Oregon. www.baldwinhats.com.



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Montecristi Hats

“Material, construction and style.” That describes the unique workmanship of Montecristi Hats. Starting with the material, one can’t make a silk purse out



of a sow’s ear. For this season the makers at Montecristi have acquired a limited selection of wide brimmed fur felt hat bodies – capable up to 6” – of the finest and purest beaver. These are bodies that would be excellent for Old West and modern Western styles and perfect for a wide brimmed fedora. Montecristi is known for their superb choice of fine hat

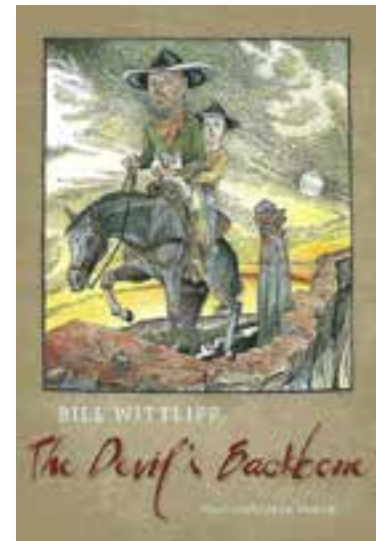


bands, beading and jeweled buckle sets. The shop is currently producing their spring collection of similar Panama hat bodies. Maybe not a full 6”, but they will be wide. And – here’s a special offer not to be missed: If you buy a fur this season, you will be eligible for their “Customer of Record” sale in March featuring 25% off all hats and bands. Learn more at www.montecristihats.com

BILL WITTLIFF IS BACK!

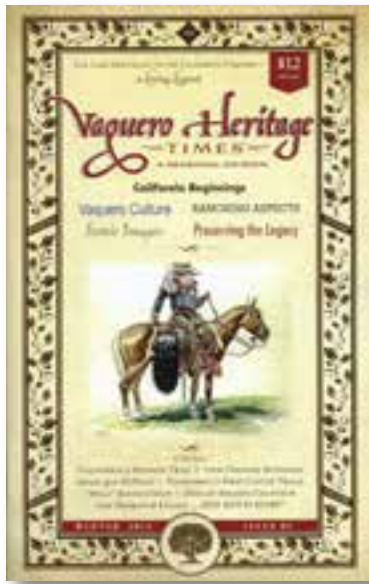
Set in wild and woolly Texas and Mexico in the 1880s, this engrossing tale of a boy’s search for his missing Momma is as full of colorful characters, folk wit and wisdom, and unexpected turns of events as the great American quest novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. *The Devil’s Backbone*, first in a trilogy by Wittliff Collections founder and storyteller Bill Wittliff, is an imaginatively layered narrative told by “Papa” recounting the spirited tale of himself as a runaway boy searching for his missing Momma – who has fled their homestead on her horse, Precious, to escape his vicious Daddy, Old Karl. Papa’s twisting trail draws him ever nearer to a mysterious cave that haunts his dreams – an actual place he discovers in the canyons of the snaking ridges of the Devil’s Backbone – but will he find his Momma before Old Karl finds him?

Wittliff has conjured a rogue’s gallery to thwart and aid Papa on his journey as Wittliff grew up listening to stories and memories like these told by his own family, and in this woolly yarn colored with a cast of lively characters, sly humor, folk wit and wisdom, and regional myth, he weaves a story on the level of a mythic quest. Jack Unruh’s wondrous illustrations help to transport the reader to a time and place where the lyrically surreal wavers in and out of the chillingly real. Published by the University of Texas Press. www.utpress.utexas.edu





VAQUERO HERITAGE TIMES

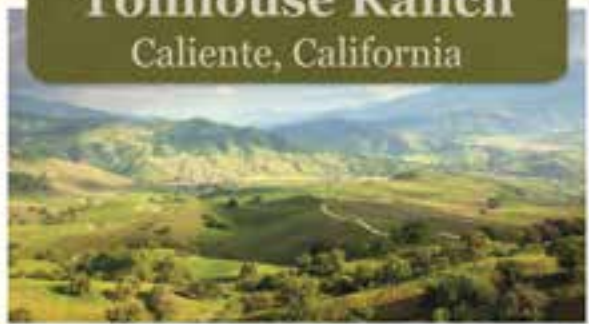


This lovely little “seasonal” publication is a passionate celebration of the early California traditions – the Mission Trail, Festive Rancho era, Cattle Barons, Vaqueros and Buckaroos. Experience the origins, cultures, lifestyles and legacy of California’s vaquero style! Every other year, the publication’s publisher and founder, Jane Merrill, creates “Vaquero Heritage Days” in the lovely California Mission town of San Juan Bautista, north of Salinas. The weekend event helps support the town’s historic mission and the ways and gear of the vaquero. To learn more, www.vaqueroheritagetimes.com



Tollhouse Ranch

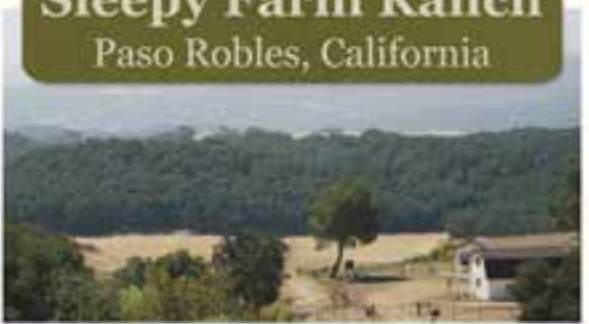
Caliente, California




Encompassing 14,945± acres, the expansive Tollhouse Ranch is situated in Caliente, California, approximately 30 minutes from Bakersfield. Presently under Williamson Act Contract and utilized as a working cattle ranch, Tollhouse Ranch is complemented by two ranch houses, four barns, an equipment storage building and other out buildings. Water is supplied via stock and domestic wells and springs. Sale subject to Conservation Easement. \$7,475,000

Sleepy Farm Ranch

Paso Robles, California



Situated in Paso Robles, the heart of Central Coast Wine Country, in the area known as the Templeton Gap, Sleepy Farm Ranch is a 382± acre ranch overflowing with possibilities. Featuring soils ideal for almonds, grapes, pasture and grain, Sleepy Farm Ranch boasts 80± farmable acres. Enveloped by vineyards and wineries, Sleepy Farm Ranch is complemented by a main home, barns, numerous outbuildings and corrals. \$4,850,000



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ARTIST WILLIAM MATTHEWS DOCUMENTARY SCREENS AT DENVER FILM FESTIVAL

Director Amie Knox's film *William Matthews: Drawn To Paint* was shown at the 37th Starz Denver Film Festival this past November. Two issues ago we spent some quality time with Willy and this film celebrates the uniqueness of this very talented and beloved westerner. The film's subject is described on the festival website "...as a keen observer of the changing West, Willy Matthews has managed to poetically document the cowboys of Nevada's Great Basin region, as well as the stunning landscapes they inhabit. Willy's great gift is that not only can he capture the particular spirit of a place with a minimalist's eye, but that he forms intensely human connections with many of his most evocative characters and subjects."

William Matthews: Drawn to Paint follows Willy as he prepares for his latest museum show, revisits some of his favorite subjects, and reflects on the world of Western art and our continuing fascination with the West in the 21st century. The film's showing dovetailed the opening of his one-man exhibit, "William Matthews: Trespassing" at the Denver Art Museum from November 23 – May 17, 2015. www.williammatthewsstudio.com



photo by Brad Bartholomew

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TIME PASSES



Remember: It's been 35 years since Debra Winger hit the screen as Sissy in *Urban Cowboy*.
Just thought you should know.

WESTERN STYLE WITH ASHLEY RIGGS

The West at Home

Like other aspects of the American Cowboy, western-style home interiors have long captured the attention of decorators and homemakers alike. Western inspired home goods have taken on a luxe attitude recently and interpreted in a more modern way; the overall appeal is the warm, nature-focused, inherently American look. My favorite ways to apply this look in your home is with as many hand-woven Navajo rugs you can get your hands on and maybe a Longhorn skull or pair of horns to mount simply on your wall. Tibetan lamb, reminiscent of a pair of woolies can be a pillow, rug, or directly upholstered and add luxuriousness to “Rustic Chic.” I also love displaying collections of Fred Harvey-era Navajo and Zuni jewelry to add a pop of turquoise in the mix. Western art is a must, along with stacks of art and photography books.



photo by Fryd Frydenahl



Metallic cow skulls mounted on a rustic, grayed barn wood wall perfectly mixes rustic with glam.

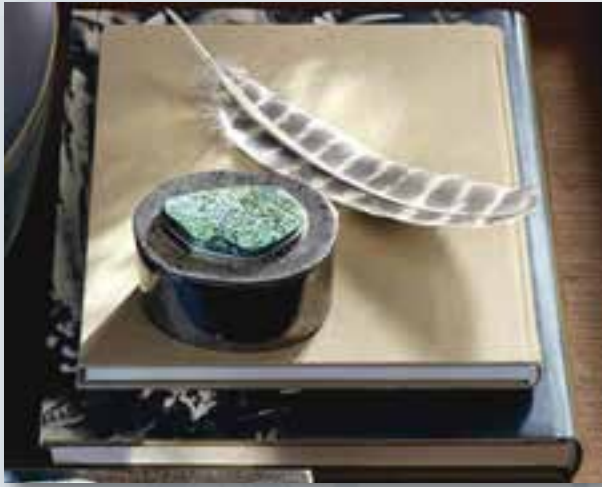
But, what makes a true western/ranch house to me is a humble, well-kept home. A special bridle or *bosal* hanging on the wall – maybe that a friend made for you or proudly earned at a show. A woodstove in the corner, with a pile of wood you chopped yourself. The mudroom sits with crusts of mud, barn coats, mate-less cotton, roper gloves, and maybe a faint smell of calf milk replacer. It is a less glamorous look, but one all the more endearing because of its honesty.

Our apartment is proof that a taste of the west can be found anywhere, including downtown Manhattan. Hats hang in our “mudroom” – which consists of two hooks. Our boots, easily at hand. Cow syringes and horseshoe nails are replaced with Metro-subway cards and tailors’ chalk, but they are, after all, tools of the trade in this part of the world!

Most importantly it is a warm, homey place with our family close and the dog at our feet. Happy New Year folks!

Follow Ashley on Pinterest at [Ashley_e_riggs](#) and on Tumblr at [nynv-ashleyriggs.tumblr.com](#)

Some favorites...



The Ralph Lauren Joella box adds a nice hint of turquoise and silver to a side-table.



A hair on cowhide makes this classic x-ottoman instantly



Ready for a Jordan Valley winter, this Tibetan Sheepskin chair



The beams and use of wood in this bedroom reminds me of a barn interior, layered rugs add warmth.



A cozy woodstove...



The personification of American style in this guest cabin at the RRL ranch. I love the all the silver concho belts and stacks of old Pendleton/Beacon blankets. So cozy!

COWBOY GANG SHIRTS CELEBRATES PANIOLO HERITAGE

Walking through a traditional Vaquero roping competition, or local rodeo, or weekend cutting, or even a barrel racing competition or small town jackpot roping, most any casual observer would see a varied selection and wide range of “Cowboy” western wear. Everything from basic solid colored button-down shirts to striped patterned shirts. But, colorful Hawaiian print, long sleeve, snap button, cowboy style shirts? Who knew?



The roots of present day “Paniolo Cowboy” shirts can be traced back to the time of King Kamehameha the great. Hawaiian print Paniolo shirts have evolved from the basic checkered – 16-square “Palaka” fabric, introduced to the Hawaiian Islands by explorers to the island shores. Originally a pattern type in England for the sailors, it was seen as plain and therefore cheap and available to the Paniolos. These Hawaiian cowboys also made their shirts from the available

Palaka fabric out of necessity. It is not a fabric made for money or excitement, but to endure the hardships of dangerous work and appeal to the eyes of Paniolos burnt by the sun and hands hardened by long hours in the saddle, chasing wild cattle and managing extremely rough terrain. The Cowboy Gang has taken cowboy and Hawaiian and put them in a creative blender and come up with a beautiful shirt that is 100% American made, that you can wear to rope and ride or go to town in. www.thecowboygang.com



CRIB NOTES – CROSS BELL RANCH

Not all working ranch houses were austere. E.C. Mullendore and his brother started a family dynasty with the opening of the Cherokee Strip in 1893. The family is heading into the fifth generation, but the ranch house they built in 1926 (old by Oklahoma standards) is a testament to the ever-changing heritage of ranching.

The house was built in the midst of a ranch that spread over more than 100,000 acres. The ranch complex is like a small town. The three-story main house, formal and foursquare, dominates the scene. The main house, the blacksmith shop with its upstairs bunkhouse, the foreman’s house, and the smokehouse all are built of the same yellow sandstone quarried on the ranch and common throughout this part of Oklahoma. Nearly 150 horse-drawn wagonloads of rock were needed to build the main house alone.



Finishing off the cluster of active buildings are the stables, barns, corrals, and – an unusual addition to a ranch – a grain elevator. These functional buildings are made of corrugated tin and steel frame, but they blend naturally with the finish and texture of the more formal stone structures.

The ranch house began grandly, and it has been expanded over the years, always with careful attention to detail and Western heritage. Originally the house had two front porches; the one upstairs was an open-air sleeping porch. From the start, when this sizable house stood out on the prairie, the family took great care in the architecture. From the piles of cut rocks, the masons selected a number of unusual geologic forms – petrified swirls and pillow-like mounds, shapes molded in the ancient past as mud and sand flowed and were compressed. Today these eye-catching stones pepper the main façade of the house.



Stone for the magnificent three-story house of Oklahoma's Cross Bell Ranch came from the ranch itself. In the initial design, both the first and second stories had open porches; the upper ones were sleeping porches. The ranch's proud brand, displayed throughout the house, appears prominently in the illuminated brand over the front door.

Tradition lurks everywhere on the ranch. Ranches like this one must be largely self-sufficient; the ranch blacksmith



Even the pool takes the shape of the ranch's cross and bell brand.

hammered out the big iron hinges seen throughout the main structures. The cross and bell brand – purchased by the family along with a herd of Mexican cattle over a hundred years ago – appears everywhere. As at some nineteenth-century ranches, the emblem appears right over the front door, translated now into electric lights. Over the living room fireplace (and at the stone-walled horse stables) the stones press outward from the matrix to create the cross and bell. The wallpaper and even the shape of the swimming pool echo the brand.

The living room comes closest to a traditional ranch room, with a rock fireplace and hearth at one end and a wood plank ceiling. All four walls are covered with an engaging mural, tooled in linoleum and hand tinted by Craig

OF NOTE |

Sheppard in 1943. The mural depicts a lively panorama of cowboy life against a backdrop of dry mesas and cactus – a scene inspired more by movie westerns than by the grassland of northeastern Oklahoma visible out the front door. Real ranch life and Hollywood ranch life seem to live comfortably side-by-side.

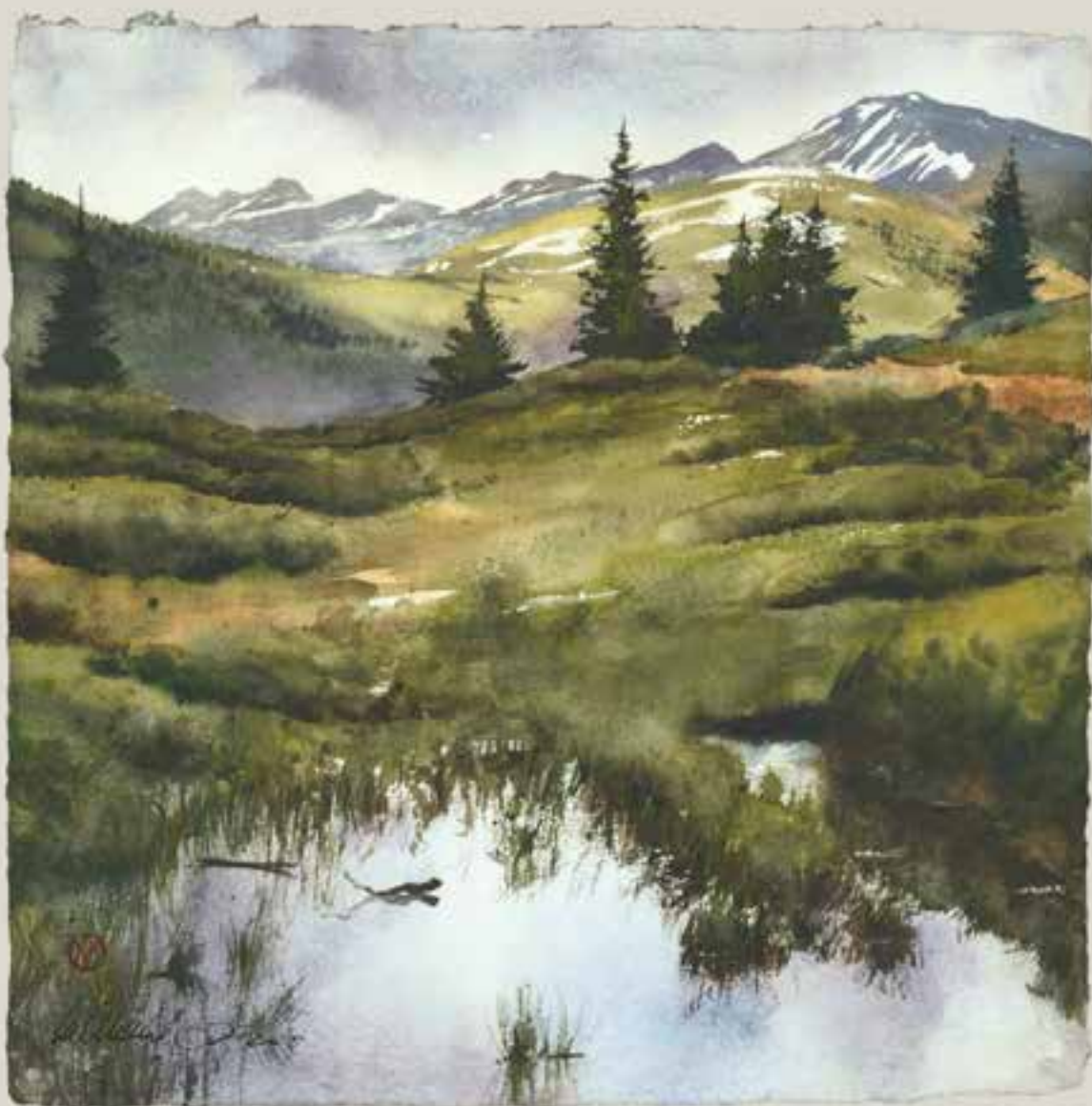
The living room offers a modernized version of the kind of rustic, hand-hewn lodge room seen at Woolaroc or at Will Rogers’ ranch in the 1920s. Here are the wagon-wheel chandeliers, dripping with ornamental spurs, and the rock fireplace. The green, red, and white curtains are a modernized version of colors and patterns from Indian blankets. A coffee table in the shape of the state of Oklahoma, panhandle and all, sits in front of the couch. This is a house well aware of the ranch heritage. It keeps changing, but as it changes it continually updates the Western style.



The wood-paneled, plank-ceilinged living room is a celebration of the iconic ranch house, from the stone fireplace to the wagon-wheel chandeliers draped in spurs and surmounted by faux-gas lamps. Western-themed

Text by Alan Hess, photography by Alan Weintraub/From the book *Rancho Deluxe*. Courtesy Chronicle Books. Used by permission.

An advertisement for NR Hunt Studio Custom Belts & Buckles. The ad features three different belt designs. The top belt is labeled 'Manzanita' and features a large, ornate silver buckle and a silver tip. The middle belt is labeled 'Sycamore' and features a large, white, curved buckle and a white tip. The bottom belt is labeled 'Piñon' and features a large, ornate silver buckle and a silver tip. The text 'NR Hunt Studio Custom Belts & Buckles' is prominently displayed at the top. Below the belts, there is text: 'Sterling Silver, 3/4 inch buckle set. (shown actual size) Handstained, Handstitched 1 1/4 inch Harness Leather Ranger Belt'. At the bottom, there is a website URL 'http://www.nrhunt.com', the text 'by appointment Sedona Arizona', and a phone number '1-888-501-7807'. The text 'THE SEDONA RANGER return of a western classic' is also visible.



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DESTINATIONS

Lake Tahoe

By Donna Stegman

Winter in the mountains always brings me back to my childhood, the earthy smell of pine and cedar and the faint whiff of wood smoke that always lingers in the air. Snowball fights and sledding until you can't feel your fingers or toes anymore and your mother yelling for you to come inside to warm up. I live less than 30 minutes from the sandy beaches and majestic mountaintops of Lake Tahoe, but I never seem to venture "up the hill" unless I'm taking out-of-town guest for a visit. It's not that I don't want to, but life is busy and time slips through our fingers – but not this year. I was bound and determined to vacation in my own backyard and experience it first hand as a tourist, one of our greatest natural wonders, Lake Tahoe, in the heart of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

The pristine waters of Tahoe would rival any colors I've seen in the Caribbean ocean, crystal clear turquoise and aquamarine waves gently lap at the beaches and granite boulders that surround the lake. But that's where the similarity ends; the water of this alpine lake is cold, really cold. If I stand in the water in August for more than a few minutes my



feet start to ache from the icy temperature. Lake Tahoe and its little communities straddle the California-Nevada border, flanked on all sides by the epic mountain terrain of the Sierra Nevada range. The numbers alone are thrilling, on average the mountains see over 400 inches of powder but still boasts 340 sunshine filled days a year. Skiing is king in Tahoe come the winter months and with 18 ski resorts located inside the Tahoe bowl, it was no surprise when *The New York Times* and *Travel & Leisure* magazine named Lake Tahoe "Best Ski Destination of the Year" in 2013. For many years "The Lake" was known for its earthy hippy-esque lifestyle, but Tahoe has stepped up its game over the past 10 years giving its high-end brothers in

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Slide your laptop or iPad into this handsome leather case and you'll discover "old school meets new school." The Colorado Pullman Case (shown) is a limited edition using Argentinian Steerhide, American Bison straps and a handle crafted from American Hickory with an Elk-antler grip and Deer-antler end-caps. Other styles available. US Made, we ship world-wide.

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Colorado some real competition. With completion of the much-anticipated Ritz-Carlton Resort Hotel and Spa crowning the North shore and the expansion of the highly acclaimed Village at Northstar, with its high-end boutiques and amazing French Alps architecture, famous chefs came running from San Francisco and New York to set up shop. My husband and I drove up for a lazy 3-day weekend, to see for ourselves how Tahoe has stepped up to be *the* ski destination of choice.

Northstar ski resort is a picturesque 10-minute drive outside of Truckee, California, which is a quaint historic town that, at one time, was just a simple railway stop for travelers heading west to San Francisco. This little crossroads town is notable for reaching some of the coldest winter temperatures in the continental US and for its haunted past, being the last stop for the infamous and tragic story of the Donner Party. We always stop in Truckee for a little lunch and light shopping before cresting over the hill into Tahoe. Cottonwood's restaurant is a local favorite; a rustic little cabin festooned with old long board wooden skis and antique sleds that serves up some of the best soups and sandwiches I have ever had.



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Our car strains as it climbs the precipitous mile and a half driveway that leads to the castle in the sky, the new Ritz-Carlton Hotel & Spa. This is basecamp for our quiet weekend getaway. She's a breathtaking sight, perched mid-mountain with sweeping views of the Martis Valley and camouflaged by the surrounding dense forest. The lobby (which the resort refers to as the living room) is cavernous with little arrangements of couches, chairs and coffee tables arranged artfully around mammoth fireplaces. These charming public spaces are populated by patrons chatting, eating and even playing games. With 3-story picture windows overlooking the valley to the east and the ski slopes to the west, you'll want to snuggle up in one of the overstuffed chairs and just watch the snow fly. The rooms are wonderful, fireplaces and little sitting areas make it feel so warm and inviting I just needed a book and some room service and I could have been happy never leaving our suite.



From the lobby you can catch the gondola for an express ride high above the snowy slopes into the heart of Northstar Village. This is our family's ski resort of choice. With its French feel and abundance of old world stone work all topped

with steep pitched roofs, there is a certain fairytale feel to it...did I also mention the entire center smells like fresh baked sugar waffles? The centerpiece of the village is a delightful ice skating rink housed under a million twinkle lights which make for fantastic people-watching – my favorite sport. High-end shops and diverse eateries circle the adorable little village with everything from unique European kitchen goods to furs and a do-it-yourself candle making shop.

I don't ski anymore – I leave that to my husband – but I do love to shop. This is a one-stop resort, we had grandiose plans to drive into Tahoe City and snoop around, but we never left our mountain hide-away. While my partner in crime skied, I checked out the pool at our hotel, which sits just feet from one of the ski runs. I was skeptical about swimming in 40 degrees; but the pool is kept at a lovely toasty temperature to accommodate even the perpetually cold, like me.

Before my other half returned, I had time to take a guided tour of the kitchens and indulge in the gourmet s'mores being roasted on the sun deck over an open fire. Everyday at 4:30 the staff rolls out, which they have cleverly dubbed, "The Marshmology Cart" complete with soft squishy freshly made marshmallows, graham crackers and assorted chocolates. I found that this is not just a kid thing, giddy adults stood with roasting sticks in hand, waiting for a spot next to the fire. I was told that caramel marshmallows are the biggest hit.

Man can't live on s'mores alone, so we chose to dine in-house at the stylish Manzanita restaurant. It's a slick, yet comfortable setting, perched slope side accented with double-sided fireplaces and an open kitchen. Seasonally inspired dishes with regional mountain influence such as trout with bacon relish and wine braised short ribs are just a few items featured on their menu that changes with the seasons. The Village has a plethora of restaurants that'll appeal to every taste, if you're craving BBQ, Spanish Tapas, sushi or Italian you're in luck – all of this is just an 8-minute gondola ride away, no driving required.



The next morning we wandered downstairs to the little coffee counter and took our goodies to the heated patio. Apparently all the other guests were late sleepers because we were the only souls sipping coffee downstairs. It was absolutely amazing – quiet, serene and with a peaceful solitude you just don't get to experience often anymore. Snow has that magical ability to absorb all sound, but with the dappled light shining through the tall pines gracing our table, we felt like the only people on the mountain.



Lake Tahoe has come a long way from its colorful past; once a mecca for hippy-ski bums at south shore and Marilyn Monroe and the Rat Pack swilling martinis on the north shore. Today Tahoe is a family rich outdoor destination. Every winter sport conceivable is at your fingertips and the accommodations and restaurants are winning a laundry list of awards. You don't need to be a skier to take in this winter wonderland, it has something for everyone and it's all wrapped up in the natural splendor of Lake Tahoe. Watch out Colorado!

Contact Donna at dstegman@aol.com.



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PLANNING YOUR TRIP

WHERE TO HITCH YOUR HORSE

The Ritz-Carlton at Northstar Ski Resort: It's impressive, it's luxurious and it's damn convenient. You're not going to find accommodations as impressive this side of San Francisco. Be sure to stop at the concierge desk for the "what to do" packet, it's pages of ideas and phone numbers. If you bring the kids, have them join in the fun capper called "find the bear" which ends in a trip to the prize basket.

Tahoe has numerous hotel options that have varied price tags, but don't forget about VRBO.com that boasts over 8,000 rental home/cabin options; many even welcome your furry friends. www.ritzcarlton.com/laketahoe - www.VRBO.com

A BIT OF SPORT

You have a huge list of ski resorts to choose from, but under my advice of always "ask a local" I'm giving you my picks.

NORTHSTAR SKI RESORT: It's got all the runs anyone could want, from beginner to advanced/intermediate. Long runs and great bars and restaurants from mountaintop to village and always enough room to feel alone, even on a busy day.

Plus, who wouldn't love the ski valet at the Ritz – just ski up and a valet takes your gear for a quick cleaning and will even warm up your boots and gloves before your return to the slopes. They also have the best onsite children's program. www.northstarcalifornia.com

SQUAW VALLEY USA: It's the largest ski area in the country with over 270 runs, you can ski here for 3 days and never hit the same run twice. This was the site of the 1960 winter Olympics and many of the relics are still there, including the ice skating rink that now anyone can show off what they got. If you like a challenge, this resort is for you. Squaw had the biggest

and badest black diamond runs in the U.S., this is serious stuff and not for sissys. www.squawalpine.com

ALL REVED UP

If you're like me and prefer to have others do the heavy lifting when it comes to outdoor fun, then you gotta try snowmobiling or dog sleds. This is a real adrenaline rush. Tahoe has some of the best backcountry views in the world and seeing them with a trained guide is a safety must. Most offer 1- to 2-hour tours for reasonable fees. Tahoe Snowmobile Tours: (530) 550-8133. Wilderness Adventure Dog Sleds: (530) 550-8133

DELIGHTFUL DAY TRIPS

The *New York Times* has listed the 75-mile drive around Lake Tahoe as one of the most beautiful drives in the US. The rugged landscape that surrounds the Lake can be best viewed from the window of a car. Stop in the little hamlets that dot the highway for a leisurely lunch or a cone full of homemade ice cream. The road can become congested on the weekend, so try to pencil this in during the week for a more enjoyable experience. Be sure to look for the house that they used for The Godfather!

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

SNOWFEST: Is a weeklong festival that celebrates all things winter. Activities abound in every nook and cranny of Northshore. Parades, carnivals, sledding, snowball fights and snow sculpture competitions round out the festivities, it's great fun for the whole family. Be sure to check out the night torch skiing and fireworks display at Squaw Valley, it's the highlight of the celebration. This year it kicks-off on February 27th 2015. www.tahoefest.com



LARRY BITTERMAN AND OLD FRONTIER CLOTHING COMPANY CELEBRATES 25 YEARS.

For the last 25 years, former attorney turned clothing designer Larry Bitterman has enjoyed his passion for creating classic, western inspired apparel. The Old Frontier Clothing Company was born in 1989 with Larry's desire to see a "renaissance of romance" – and design - return to western fashion. His research and development led him to classic, historically correct designs and his now famous

take on the classic frock coat has influenced western and mainstream designers. Always the marketer, Mr. Bitterman created glossy, permission-giving catalogs that showed his apparel in both authentic and contemporary settings.

During this early period of OFC's development, it was helped and spurred along by the rise of interest in the Single Action Shooting Society – as well as the rise in popularity of country music to a broader demographic in the 1990s – including significant celebrity interest because of his line's authenticity. In addition, he found great success at shows and events all over the West including National Finals Rodeo, Cheyenne Frontier Days and National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada.

Today, some twenty-five years later, Mr.

Bitterman continues his mission of making quality, historically correct western apparel that works well with broadly diverse fashion tastes. This year he has announced that he will be dropping the word "Old" from his company's name and looks to the next twenty-five years to enhance his "renaissance of romance" with the continuing saga of The Frontier Clothing Company. See more at www.oldfrontier.com



TOP FIFTY RANCHES GETAWAYS

If you are looking for a superb ranch vacation – your one-stop is Top 50 Ranches (top50ranches.com). Jody Dahl and her crew have put together an adventure of a website. 50 of the best places set to give you the ultimate western vacation. Each issue we will share some information on one of the ranches recommended by Top 50.



Jody

The Devil's Thumb Ranch Tabernash, Colorado



Devil's Thumb Ranch Resort & Spa is a highly regarded and environmentally friendly year-round ranch resort and spa offering rustically upscale accommodations, fine dining and an array of winter and summer outdoor and wilderness recreation



activities. Since 1938, guests have enjoyed the restorative and relaxing features of the Ranch for their quick getaways, vacations, corporate retreats, family reunions and weddings.

They're located in the Colorado Rocky Mountains, 65 miles west of Denver, and 10 minutes from Winter Park. The Ranch encompasses 6000 acres at the foot of the Continental Divide in the beautiful Ranch Creek Valley of Grand County.

photos by



When folks say “Colorado get-away” – *this* is what they mean...

Sweeping meadows, meandering creeks, the rustle of pine boughs. You sink deep into a leather armchair in front of the crackling fire and wonder why you’ve not been here before – or how soon until you can come back. The drive from Denver was easy and man, is this wine good. Since 1938, cowboys and poets and ranchers and city folk and Nordic skiers have escaped to Devil’s Thumb Ranch Resort & Spa. Something about the way the Continental Divide looks down on the unfettered land draws people. Or maybe it’s the spa treatments? Find out more at www.top50ranches.com



PINTO RANCH LAUNCHES LUXURY MEN’S BOOT LINE FROM OLD GRINGO



Houston-based Pinto Ranch Fine Western Wear, is known for high-end western apparel, fine hats, accessories and the largest inventory of handmade cowboy boots in the U.S. This December, Pinto Ranch is proud to introduce a new handmade boot offering with the exclusive collection debut of Benchmark by Old Gringo.

“Traditionally, we’ve carried a large assortment of Old Gringo boots for ladies and only select styles for men. Now we’re able to offer high-quality exotic men’s boots under the well-known Old Gringo brand,” says Mike Burchett, Merchandise Manager of Pinto Ranch.

Benchmark by Old Gringo represents a new standard in handmade, all-leather cowboy boots at a very competitive price. With this new collection, Old Gringo honors the heritage and skill

of old world boot manufacturing, while introducing new, exotic materials and modern designs. Extensive time and resources were committed to finding the finest leathers and exotic skins from around the world. The Pinto Ranch selection offers 21 styles ranging from \$545 to \$1,495, including smooth leathers and full-quill ostrich, lizard and caiman crocodile exotic skins in both cowboy (13" tops) and roper (10" tops with rounded toe) boots.

Pinto Ranch Fine Western Wear is a tribute to the great ranches of the American West and the spirit of that lifestyle. See more at www.pintoranch.com



HIGH NOON SHOW & AUCTION CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

January 2015 marks the 25th anniversary of the annual High Noon Show & Auction event in Mesa, Arizona. Consisting of a 2-day western antique dealer show, and a live Saturday evening auction, the event is the winter “must-attend” for anyone interested in Western Americana. This past year, Brian Lebel and his wife (owners of the venerable Old West Show & Auction), purchased the High Noon event, which is now known as “Brian Lebel’s High Noon Show & Auction.” The Lebels are dedicated to continuing the High Noon tradition of showcasing outstanding show dealers and exceptional auction items. As always, the event will remain in Mesa, every January.

Brian is best known as the producer of the Cody Old West Show & Auction, the annual summer Western Americana collecting event, held every June. Now, with the addition of Brian Lebel’s High Noon Show & Auction to his holdings, Brian has formed a new company: Old West Events. Old West Events is the new home to both Brian Lebel’s High Noon Show & Auction in January, and also the Old West Show & Auction in June.

Old West Events is proud to be the single best source for buyers, sellers, dealers, collectors, and enthusiasts of the arts and antiquities of the American West. Join them for the 25th annual High Noon Show & Auction in Mesa, Arizona this coming January 24-25, 2015, and also at the 26th annual Old West Show & Auction, June 6-7, 2015 at the Will Rogers Memorial Center in Fort Worth. Below you will find details on some of the highlights of the upcoming High Noon Auction, as well as details about where, when and how to join in the festivities.

Western Americana Auction

January 24, 2015 at 5pm

Over 350 Historic and Important Lots
Cowboy • Indian • Western

at the Phoenix Marriott Mesa, Mesa, AZ

32

Featuring Tom Horn’s last Winchester along with numerous other items from the estate of C.B. Irwin; Charlie Russell’s letter to his friend, Harry Carey, from the Carey Family Trust; an extensive collection of Roy Rogers and Dale Evans Museum memorabilia from the estate of noted collector Al Vendegna; spurs and bits from the Casa Grande, Arizona collector Dick Powell; and the most complete and impressive collection of antique poker chips known to exist.

AUCTION PREVIEW:

Thursday, Jan 22–Saturday, Jan 24

CATALOG:

Full-color, collectible catalog available: \$30/US \$45/Foreign
www.oldwestevents.com or 480-779-WEST (9378)

BIDDING:

In-person, online, phone and absentee.
See our website or call for details.



Tom Horn’s Winchester Model 1894, .30-30
This is the gun that Tom Horn was carrying the night he was arrested for the murder of Willie Nickell, the legendary crime he may or may not have committed. (est. \$125,000–\$175,000)



Friend Carey
 at the H wagon last year when I sat
 there was your biggest treasure on your
 ranch that present no cash at the old
 Spanish bandits but a plaid of your own
 for once better a yard you were less and
 buried what you couldn't swallow but not
 leaving the rest of the fox you couldn't
 locate the ~~fox~~ track in these days
 of death there were times when it got
 in your corner you told me you were
 going to organize a small band of trusted
 boys horses and to prospecting I hope
 you raised the cash we got your return
 with but wishes to you and yours
 from me and mine your friend W. Russell

Charles M. Russell illustrated letter
 to his good friend, Harry Carey.
 (est. \$90,000–\$115,000)



J.W. Hampton, CAA, Oil on
 Canvas (est. \$6,000–7,000)



Elk Dewclaw Necklace
 Worn by Half Moon
 (est. \$25,000–35,000)



Steve McQueen's "Magnificent Seven" Prop Shotgun
 (est. \$12,000–14,000)



N. Porter Silver and Gold
 Parade Saddle & Spurs
 (est. \$40,000–50,000)

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Navajo Yei Rug, c 1920s (est. \$3,500–4,500)



Plains Beaded Men's Warshirt, c. 1880s
(est. \$35,000–45,000)



Chief Lelooska Totem Pole
(est. \$2,000–3,000)



Demuth Zinc Cigar Store Indian
(est. \$20,000–25,000)



Gustav Dentzel Carousel
Horse, c. 1905
(est. \$16,000–19,000)



John Moyers,
Oil on Canvas
(est. \$30,000–40,000)



Bruce Greene, CAA,
Bronze
(est. \$4,500–5,500)



Maynard Dixon,
Mixed Media on Paper,
(est. \$10,000–15,000)



Extensive
Antique Poker
Chip Collection,
c. 1880-90s
(est. \$70,000–90,000)



Cy Compton's Wild West
Buermann Spurs
(est. \$4,000–6,000)



Dale Evans'
"This is Your Life"
14k Charm Bracelet
(est. \$12,000–16,000)



Western Americana Antique Show

January 24-25, 2015

150 dealers in authentic western art, artifacts,
apparel, jewelry, home decor and more.

Buy. Sell. Trade.

General Admission Schedule*

Saturday, January 24: 9am – 4:30pm

Sunday, January 25: 9am – 3pm

\$10/day, under 12 free

* Early Admission: Friday, Jan 23

at the Mesa Convention Center, Mesa, AZ



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BY HAND AND HEART

Portrait of a Saddlemaker

Hamley & Company saddlemaker Justin Thorson shares his thoughts on his art form.



Introduction & Photographs by Scott Ripley

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My father had a penchant for guns, cowboy lore and western music. Growing up, my brother and I became well-acquainted with revolvers, were in awe of the Cheyenne Frontier Days, and rode into some of the most remote sections of Yellowstone National Park. My childhood experiences included meeting Johnny Cash – courtesy of one of my dad’s buddies, a radio DJ who moonlighted emceeing concerts – and photographing Roy Rogers, who’d come to town



Hamley & Company saddlemaker Justin Thorson, Pendleton, Oregon.

to promote a line of clothing produced by our local knitting mill. Shooting photos at Hamley & Company, in downtown Pendleton, Oregon, I felt right at home surrounded by leather goods, rows of saddles, and cowboy art, as western music played in the background.

A clothing, boot, hat and saddle shop, Hamley’s is nearly as iconic as the Pendleton Round-Up, held at the fairgrounds just a mile down Court Street. The fabulous Hamley Steakhouse is adjacent to the store, and the



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Cowboy Boots



www.twistedxboots.com



Available at Fine Western Retailers

historic Slickfork Saloon and Cattle Baron room are upstairs, but it's at the rear of the store where Hamley's revered saddles are built.

The saddle shop, filled with the aroma of leather and the tools of the saddlemaking trade, is the workspace for Justin Thorson. Using diffused strobes and two camera bodies with remote triggers, a method that offered the necessary mobility to shoot a saddlemaker at work, I photographed Justin as he shifted from delicate floral carving to major adjustments in a saddle's architecture.

A lean, soft-spoken Montana native, Justin comes from a rodeo family in Butte, and built saddles in Three Forks before coming to Pendleton to work under the Hamley brand. Here, Justin shares his thoughts on saddlemaking, the concept of quality craftsmanship, and the progression of his trade.



Thorson at work in Hamley's saddle shop.

What does the concept of craftsmanship mean to you? How do you define the term?

I think of craftsmanship as the beauty of building something with your own two hands, and doing it in a way that raises the bar in quality, design and functionality.



Hamley's has long been part of the ranching and rodeo culture, and enjoys a long association with the Pendleton Round-Up, held a mile from Hamley's Pendleton storefront.

How would you describe the moment of inspiration when it comes to building a saddle? How does an idea – be it an order a customer has placed, or a rough concept – become an example of artistic expression?

Inspiration comes at different times for me. Sometimes I'm immediately drawn to an idea before the first cut is made, and I visualize a floral pattern design or a unique way to tie in a geometric pattern. Other times it comes when I begin to see the saddle take shape, but either way my artistic expression shows through in the end result. There have been times when I have hit a wall in the beginning stages of a saddle, where it seems I get in my own way, thinking too much about how I should design it. I find in those times, the less I "think" about it and the more I allow my mind to free up, the better the end result will be. And that's when saddlemaking can be a lot of fun – when you can allow all of those ideas to take shape naturally.

How do you balance form and function in making a saddle? Or, if "balance" isn't the right term, how do you

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Refugio Road - \$3,200,000

Return to the romance of early California, when the Dons built beautiful, thick walled, adobe ranchos for their families. Rancho de Colores replicates the authenticity of the Valley's golden age with it's gated enclosures and privacy wall surrounding a one-of-a-kind masterpiece on 10 private, gated acres. Each of the rooms is a work of art and craftsmanship with state-of-the-art appliances and modern components such as forced-air heating and air-conditioning. Outside you'll regale your friends and family with a sparkling pool and lush gardens and entertaining area with built-in BBQ oven. There is also an attached guest apartment and wine cellar, a detached guest cottage and artist studio as well as a (6) stall adobe style barn with a separate matching adobe office, tack and storage annex. For your RV and other equipment there is a huge 3 bay detached storage building with roll-up doors. There is a boutique vineyard with 400 vines and fenced and irrigated pastures and sand arena for your horses. As a bonus, you have your own private well.



Casey Avenue - \$1,750,000

Back in the Tuscan Sun with this unique Tuscan inspired villa on 10 flat acres with uncompromising sweeping views of the Santa Ynez and San Raphael Mtn. ranges. As well as some of the Valley's finest horse ranches and vineyards. This home features venetian plaster, maple hardwood floors, granite counter tops in the kitchen, bar area and office. 1800 sf Great Room with 16ft ceilings and open loft and 4 fireplaces. The front garden is landscaped with a welcoming lawn that runs to the edge of a featured waterfall, cascading into a 10k gallon pond, with flowering trees and bushes. A large sandstone covered porch leads to a salt water pool. A barn with four stalls, tack room and work room, New 3-rail wood and wire fenced & cross fenced pastures and paddocks, private well, plus a 1200sf unfinished annex or art studio. Whether you're a horse enthusiast, the Valley's next great wine grower or simply want to enjoy the quiet and privacy of this stunning property...you'll wonder what took you so long.



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infuse a saddle with both functionality and aesthetics?

In this industry, you're dealing with folks who generally can see the form with just a quick glance, and the function within a few rides on horseback, so you must combine both or you won't succeed in this business. Functionality must come first. Without it, you aren't building a saddle that anyone wants to buy. On the other hand, no one wants to buy an ugly saddle, either, no matter how well it might fit him or his horse. In the beginning, function must be your focus. There is a balance that must be found in each saddle, depending on how the buyer will use the saddle.

How have contemporary saddlemakers brought forward the traditions of past generations of craftsmen? How have you seen saddlemaking advance as a craft?

I have always looked at myself as a student of saddlemaking. I think that anyone who respects this tradition and honors its history will always be a lifelong student of the craft. The evolution of the saddle itself is something that is still continuing today, following along with the changes that have been bred into horses over the years. As much as the traditions of past saddlemakers are important, so is continuing to evolve this tradition in a way that honors our past while forging ahead. I do believe there is a shift to accommodate the needs of today's customers, particularly fitting saddles to horses and riders.

What does it mean to a saddlemaker to work with Hamley's, and to have your work be a part of that tradition?

I grew up in the rodeo arena, with parents who competed, so I learned at a young age who and what Hamley's was, and what they represented. I remember being around nine or 10 and sitting at a bench in the back room of a brand inspector's office, where a fella had

a small saddle and tack repair business. I flipped through old magazines and saw advertisements for Hamley's. To think back on those days and my beginnings in saddlemaking, then my progression through the years...I can honestly say to sit here in this shop, where Duff Severe, Jim Ellison, Bill Knight and the like have worked, still gives me goosebumps. To know my name will go on a list of guys who cut their teeth in this company is an honor.



True craftsmanship, Thorson says, "raises the bar in quality, design and functionality."

Who were your mentors as you learned the craft of saddlemaking? And how did each influence your work? Can that influence still be seen?

I have had many mentors through the years, from Dale and Norma Moore, who gave me my first taste of saddlemaking and patted me on the back upon completion of my first saddle, to Cary Schwarz, a true craftsman who I've watched create art before my eyes. I worked with Jimmy Cleveland, from Texas, who taught me more about straight lines and finish work than anyone. Most recently, Nancy Petersen showed me a true artisan's way of building a top-notch rodeo saddle. There have been countless others who, through chance

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“Sometimes I’m immediately drawn to an idea before the first cut is made...” Thorson says. “Other times it comes when I begin to see the saddle take shape.”

encounters, relayed tidbits of information that were invaluable. All show through in any saddle I build now, and will hopefully lead to others saying one day, “That’s a Justin Thorson saddle. You can just tell.”

What do you think it means to a horseman or cowboy to have a custom saddle built? What does that represent?



The Hamley maker’s mark.

I think it means different things to different people. To some cowboys, it is a status symbol, a way of showing who they are and the work they do and how proud they are to do it. To others it is simply a tool. Those people know the value in a quality saddle. They need it to stand up to hard use, rugged terrain and bad weather so they can get a job done.



Scott Ripley is a photographer based in Portland, Oregon. Visit www.ranchandreata.com to learn more about the Hamley tradition in a film produced and shot by Ripley.

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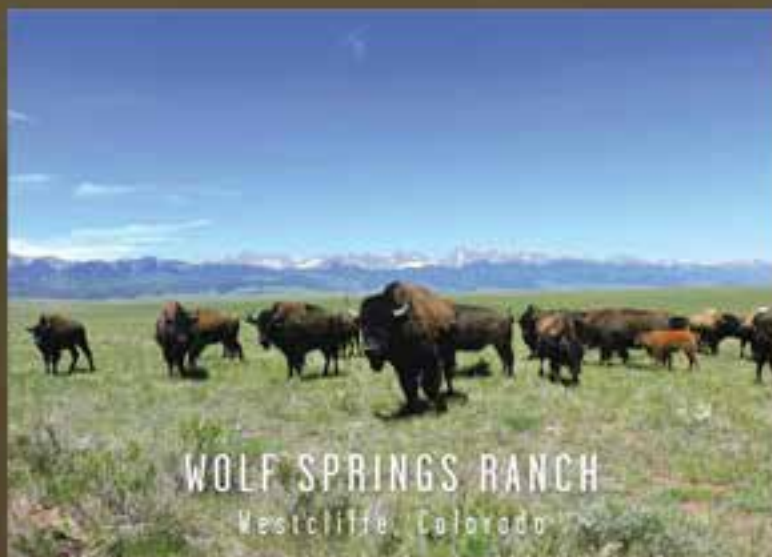
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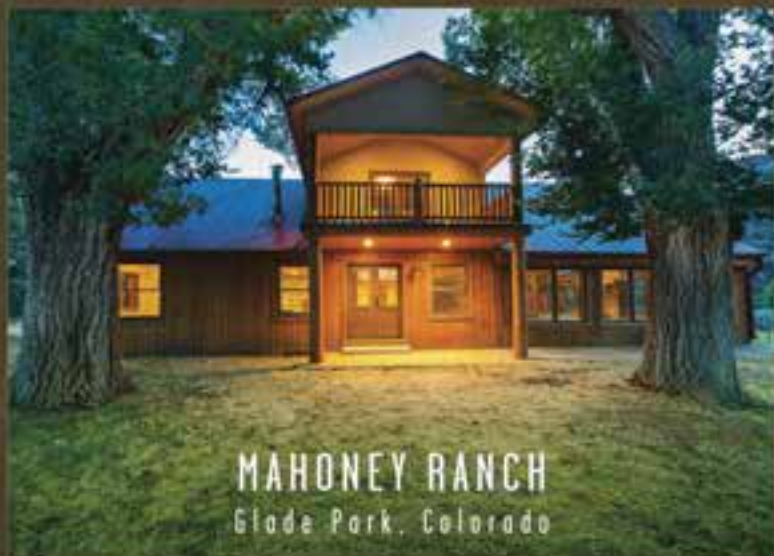
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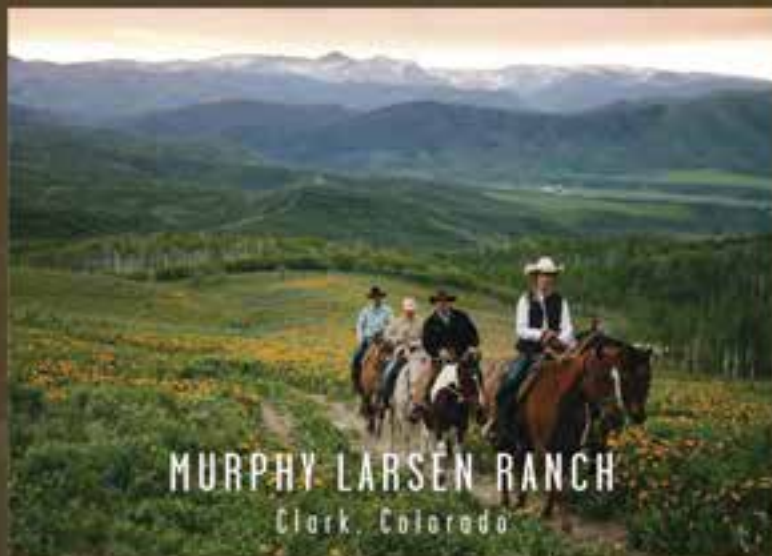
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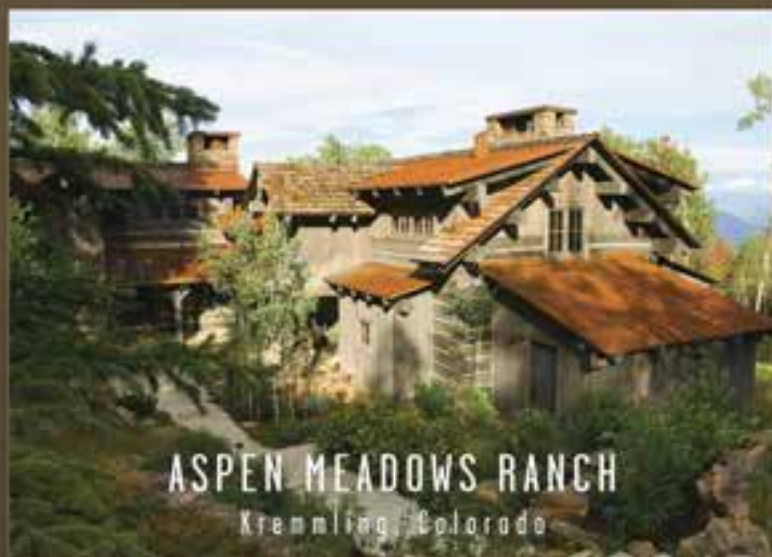
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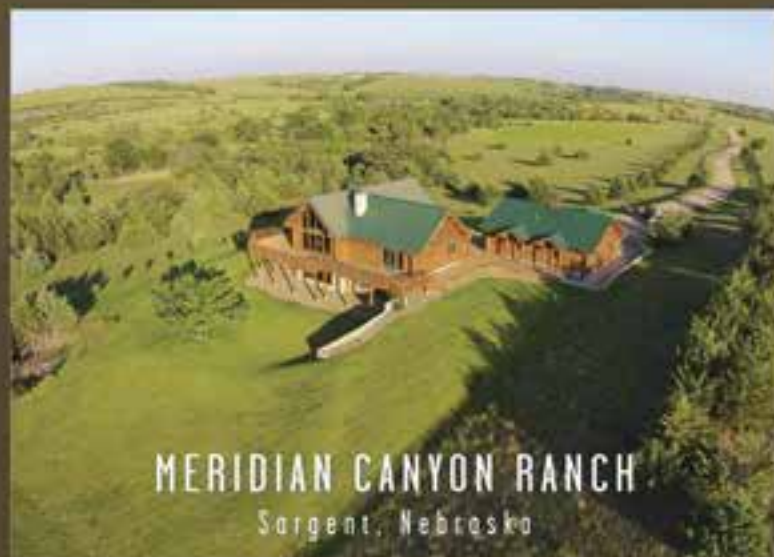


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Part of the Grand River Ranch shared community which offers an assortment of amenities including equestrian center, two fishing camps, sporting clays range and guest lodge, the 176-acre Aspen Meadows Ranch is unique to itself with privacy, creek, ponds and beveled log home and barn in a beautiful alpine setting. \$7,000,000. Ron Morris, 970.535.0881



MERIDIAN CANYON RANCH
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Tucked into magnificent canyons and located six miles northwest of the village of Quemado, this 9,000+ total acre ranch varies in terrain with rolling hills, deep canyons, and high mesas. Home to world-class elk, mule deer, bobcat and antelope, La Mesa Vista Ranch is truly a sportsman's and wildlife lover's paradise. \$3,300,000. Ron Morris, 970.535.0881



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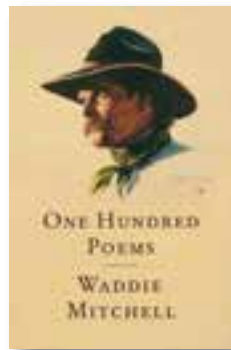
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Waddie Mitchell
www.westernjubilee.com

One would be hard pressed to think of another face than Waddie Mitchell's when the term "cowboy poet" is mentioned. In his 65 years, this Elko County, Nevada buckaroo has entertained and championed the enduring art of story telling and the spoken word of the West. In this wonderfully designed volume – with cover art from Willy Matthews and book design by Hans Teensma; publisher Scott O'Malley has given us "poems a plenty" from the man who even wrote a poem describing the West for the 2002 Winter Olympic Arts Festival and helped create the now thirty-year old National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in his home town of Elko, Nevada. Here is one of Waddie's one-hundred.



The Rawhide Braider

By Waddie Mitchell

"Under two, over two, lay, pull, again
This will be a new quirt when I get to the end
And will dress up the saddle of some lucky friend
Under two, over two, lay, pull, again"

He sat in the shade of the barn every Sunday
As he had for more years than I'd been
Scrapin' hair off a hide he had skinned, stretched
and dried
To cut braiding strings narrow and thin

With his practiced eye and the skill of a craftsman
For usable art he would strive
His advice to the world always moving so fast was
"Slow down, no one gets out alive
Slow down, no one gets out alive"

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“Under four, over two, lay, pull, again
 This’ll turn out so nice it’ll hang in the den
 When I give it to some ol’ time buckaroo friend
 Under four, over two, lay, pull, again”

I spent most my Sundays in his school of life
 While he’d share of things that he knew
 And I found lots of guys I had long idolized
 Learned their rawhiding under him too

Prepare the hide well, keep your blade razor sharp
 Temper the strings almost dry
 Take time to lay each rawhide plait tight and straight
 And, build something that’s worthy of pride
 Make something that’s worthy of pride

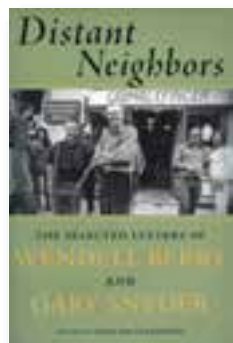
“Under two, over one, lay, pull, again
 This’ll be a reata when I reach the end
 But, only as good as what I have put in
 Under two, over one, lay, pull, again
 Under two, over one, lay, pull, again”

50

**Distant Neighbors: The Selected Letters of
 Wendell Berry and Gary Snyder**

Edited by Chad Wriglesworth
www.counterpointpress.com

Wendell Berry is no stranger to these pages. As a journal involved with the horse and cow culture, and the responsible stewardship of ranching families; Berry’s vision of a sustainable and respected planet is essential to



the continuation of the agricultural heritage in the American West.

So what happens when two counterculture types converse? In the late 1960s, environmental activist and writer Gary Snyder had just published his first book of essays, *Earth House Hold*. A few years before, Berry was living in Port Royal, Kentucky, and had just published *Long-Legged House*. They had never met yet ultimately found each other and, starting in 1973, exchanged hundreds of letters – most of them now part of numerous university collections around the country. This book gives a vivid picture of the two working through things and generally being enlightened – agreeing and disagreeing on such subjects as family, community and the health and future of the planet. Faith, reason, intent – values of a people and of a nation – subjects that leave the reader affected by the complexity of their relationship, the subtlety of their arguments, and the grace of a true friendship.

The book carries detailed footnotes along with an introduction by the book’s editor, Chad Wriglesworth – helpfully introducing us to the two letter writers – especially nice for those unknowing of these two huge personalities. An interesting thing, I found myself longing for the days of receiving a long hand-written letter and even its anticipation if I knew an answer to a letter sent would be forthcoming. Beyond the charm of the process, the content of the letters is compelling – questions and thoughts on water, land, wilderness, animals and our diminishing proximity as a people to the importance of natural things. An important and thoughtful read by two of the best friends this planet ever had.



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In the fall of 2012, rock music’s true over-achiever, Neil Young, released his memoir/sort-of-auto-biography, which – as we stated in the review of that book in Volume 3.2 – was in essence a nice sit-down chat with his fans. It was wonderfully rambling and plain spoken – very Youngian in approach. In his new, sort-of follow-up to *Peace*, *Special Deluxe* is more about his passion for all things vintage and four-wheeled and how they fit into his life, than add-on kernels about his musical life. When they



do appear – comments on everything from early Canadian bands to CSNY and Crazy Horse – they are more like change found in the back seat – a nice surprise. The book traces his life through his cars – lots of junkers and fixer-uppers that he felt had potential. There is something similar about song-writing here. He finds “good bones” – in this case of a great old car – and then fixes, changes or discards them. The book has a treasure of little colored drawings of some of his favorite vehicles. “I trace them first and then do the watercolor work,” he says of them.

The book travels around and progresses to discussions and viewpoints on various fuels and their influence in hurting the planets through emissions – from gas to bio-diesel to electric cars – Young bounces all around but comes to as optimistic a conclusion as one could expect here. “Global warming is a threat like no other,” he writes. “Slow moving and deadly – Miss Pegi (his ethanol burning Lincoln) needs all the help she can get. This is the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel age. We have a long way to go, but we’re going to make it. Henry Ford had wanted to build both electric cars and cars powered by American farmers. That was a dream he started. I am still living the dream.” This book is a trip in itself.

*When the dream came,
I held my breath with my eyes closed.*
– “On The Way Home”



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THE COOK HOUSE

Swayze's Fried Catfish



By Kathy McCraine

54

My husband, Swayze, came to Arizona with webs on his feet, having been born and raised in Louisiana. Once he got used to the grass only being green for a short spell in the spring and during the monsoon season – if we have one – he adapted well and came to love ranching out here.

He still misses the water, though – those big lakes and rivers, as well as the Gulf, where you can fish to your heart's content. His dream ever since he came to Arizona was to have a catfish pond at our 7 Up Ranch.

Our cabin sits in the pines, on the edge of a meadow where we run our saddle horses. Out in the middle of it is a big dirt tank (we don't call them ponds here) with a big elm tree on its bank. The more Swayze got to looking at that tank, the more he had visions of spending lazy summer afternoons under that tree fishing off the bank. Never mind that this particular tank has never held water. It's beautiful when it rains, but when it doesn't, it's a dust bowl.

Nonetheless, Swayze was convinced he could fix



photos by Kathy McCraine

Swayze and his faithful cow dog, Loupy.

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that, so a few years ago when it dried up, he spent \$3,500 to line the bottom of it with plastic and waited for the rains to come. Eventually it rained and filled. Then he went to a fish hatchery in Camp Verde and spent another \$750 to stock it with baby catfish and bass. We had a couple of wet years, and the fish grew big enough to catch and throw back.



Swayze's Fried Catfish

Sunday afternoons you could find him with his faithful cow dog, Loupy, out fishing at the tank. Loupy is a black Catahoula/Border Collie mix with one white paw and a tail that furls over his back like a flag. His full name is Loup-Garou, the French word for the legendary werewolf of Cajun folklore. When Louisiana children misbehaved or wouldn't go to bed, their parents would tell them the *loup-garou* was lurking in the swamps and

would get them. The version of the creature that famous Cajun folk artist George Rodrigue painted had spookily piercing, amber eyes and bore a startling resemblance to our Loupy, thus his name.

The only problem with having Loupy as a fishing partner is he never quite caught on to the program. He's a bundle of pent-up energy when he hasn't got any cows to work, so to entertain him, we started playing fetch with bouncing "pinky balls," which he attacks ferociously, then refuses to give back without a tug-of-war, all part of the game.

So, every time Swayze threw his fishing line out in the water with its red cork looking just like a smaller version of his ball, Loupy went bananas, barking and running up and down the bank. He hates water, so he never dove in after the cork, but he sure scared all the fish away.

And that's not the end of this woeful story. The next year, the rains didn't come, and the tank began to shrink to a murky mudhole. Obviously the liner wasn't doing its job. For a while we weren't sure if there were any fish survivors, but a gangly-legged grey heron took up residence next to what was left of the water. Loupy hates big birds as much as he hates water, and he took on the responsibility of trying to run it off, racing around the meadow and barking up at the sky. In the end, I think the heron feasted on every last fish, then left the country.

This summer the tank went totally dry when the monsoons started late, so there's no question about the fate of the fish. Fortunately, you can always buy catfish in the supermarket, even in Arizona, so Swayze still gets to fry up a mess of them now and then. He cooks them outside in a large pot on a gas burner. Indoors, you can cook them in a deep fryer.

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Swayze's Fried Catfish

- 3 pounds catfish filets
- 1 12-ounce box Zatarain's Fish Fry
- 2 tablespoons cayenne pepper, or to taste
- ½ tablespoon black pepper
- ½ tablespoon garlic powder
- 1-2 cups milk
- Enough oil for deep frying, depending on size of pot

Check to be sure all bone and skin have been removed from the filets, then rinse in water. If the filets are large, slice crosswise down the backbone to make two thinner slices. Place Fish Fry in a bowl and mix in


the other dry ingredients. Dip the filets in milk, then drain well and place in gallon-size plastic bags, 3 or 4 to a bag. Add the fish fry mixture to the bags, and roll or shake to coat. Heat about 6 inches of oil in a large pot to 390-400 degrees. Using a long-handled slotted spoon or strainer, drop the fish in the oil and cook in batches, making sure no filets stick together as you drop them in. Do not let the oil temperature fall below 350 degrees. Fry until the fish are golden brown and float to the surface. The darker brown they are, the crisper they will be, but do not overcook. Remove with the slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Serve with tartar sauce and Cajun cocktail sauce.




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

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Cowboy Crossings

The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum brings together some of the West's most respected artists and artisans.

By A.J. Mangum

Oklahoma City's National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum hosted the fourth annual Cowboy Crossings event the weekend of October 11. The show again featured concurrent exhibitions by the Traditional Cowboy Arts Association and the Cowboy Artists of America; it was the 16th show for TCAA, and the 49th for CAA.

The CAA show featured 100 paintings and sculptures by 24 active and emeritus members; more than \$1 million in work from the CAA show sold during the Cowboy Crossings weekend. CAA member R.S. Riddick received the Anne Marion Best of Show Award, the Ray Swanson Memorial Award for best communication of a moment in time, and the Stetson CAA Award for best overall exhibition; the Tucson, Arizona, artist also took home a gold medal for water soluble work, a silver medal in the oils category, and a silver medal in the category of drawing and other media.

Other CAA award winners included John Coleman of Prescott, Arizona (gold medal, drawing and other media; gold medal, sculpture); Grant Redden of Hilliard, Wyoming (gold medal, oil); Martin Grelle of Clifton, Texas (Buyers' Choice Award; silver medal, water soluble); and Paul Moore of Norman, Oklahoma (silver medal, sculpture).

Paintings, drawings and sculptures exhibited in the show offered an incredible blend of traditional, contemporary, and even experimental western art.

In New Mexico painter Tim Cox's 20 x 30-inch oil, *If These Walls Could Talk*, a cowboy rides past a cavernous ranch building, abandoned long ago and falling from its rock foundation. The image has an intriguing three-dimensional quality demanding repeated study; the building teeters toward the frame, as if its weathered lumber might soon drop from the canvas to the gallery floor.

Texas artist Bruce Greene's monumental sculpture *Wall Street from a Saddle Seat* offers a contemporary take on the American West. The piece depicts a horseback cowboy, spectacles perched at the end of his nose, checking stock quotes on a smartphone as his mount snags a quick bite of grass.

Arizona painter R.S. Riddick's *Midnight Arbuckle*, a 25½ x 44-inch gouache, depicts a group of cowboys gathered under the stars, perhaps awaiting other riders as they prepare for a late-night departure. Foreground lighting and the glow of lanterns from within the nearby cook tent create a sense of the erasure of conventional notions of time in a cowboy's workday.

In Oklahoma sculptor Paul Moore's *Death and the*



photos courtesy National Cowboy Museum

Two Ravens, CAA Gold Medal winner for sculpture, by John Coleman.



If These Walls Could Talk, by Tim Cox.

Young Warrior, an 8¾ x 20½ x 10½-inch bronze, a cloaked, skeletal figure leans over the body of a young Indian. The figure holds one hand to the side of its head, the other on its knee, a combination of gestures that shield its identity while suggesting both a sense of grief and perhaps a promise of comfort for a departing spirit.

In the lead-up to the show, outgoing CAA president Martin Grelle led a remembrance of emeritus member Jack Swanson, who passed away just a month prior to the Cowboy Crossings event, and welcomed CAA's incoming president, sculptor Bill Nebeker of Prescott, Arizona.

The group also welcomed a new member, painter

Teal Blake. Blake, who divides his time between Texas and his native Montana, is a past recipient of the Joe Beeler CAA Foundation Award, and of the Phippen Museum Western Art Show's Best of Show Award. (Blake also created the editorial vignettes found in *Ranch & Reata* features and columns.)

The TCAA exhibition featured 48 works by 14 active and emeritus members, who include some of the world's most respected saddlemakers, bit and spur makers, rawhide braiders and western silversmiths. Forty-six of the exhibited pieces, with a total value of \$440,265, sold on the show's opening weekend.

Works exhibited in the TCAA show are meant to

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- PRIX DE WEST INVITATIONAL ART EXHIBITION AND SALE, OPENING WEEKEND, JUNE 12-13, 2015
- SMALL WORKS, GREAT WONDERS WINTER ART SALE, NOVEMBER 13, 2015



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www.nationalcowboymuseum.org

Schedule subject to change

represent bold experiments in crafting “functional art,” pieces that elevate working equipment to the level of fine art. Examples abounded.

Idaho saddlemaker Rick Bean paid tribute to California saddlemaking traditions with a saddle he dubbed *Branded Visalia*. He built the piece, featuring a series of pyrographic vignettes, on an original, refurbished Visalia tree.



Saddle featuring handcarved roses and handsculpted sterling silver pistols, by Rick Bean.

Washington silversmith and TCAA emeritus member Mark Drain built for the exhibition a buckle of 14- and 18-karat green, red and yellow gold overlaid on sterling silver with a filigreed background.

Drain’s fellow silversmith, Albertan Scott Hardy, collaborated with Texas bit and spur maker Wilson



Buckle of 14- and 18-karat gold overlaid on sterling silver, by Mark Drain.

Capron and Idaho saddlemaker Cary Schwarz to create a bridle featuring a Capron bit, a Schwarz headstall (made with 12 hand-stitches per inch) and Hardy’s silver and gold conchas.

Argentine rawhide braider Pablo Lozano created a two-tone browband headstall lined with hand-sewn leather. The piece features 20-plait round rawhide braiding and the *trenza patria* flat braid. Drain



Ray of Memories, CAA Silver Medal winner for sculpture, by Paul Moore.



Offerings to the Spirit in the Falls, the CAA Buyers' Choice Award winner, by Martin Grelle.



Lakota Legacy, by Stetson CAA Award winner R.S. Riddick.

collaborated on the project, creating three sets of sterling silver buckles, tips and conchas.

Ernie Marsh's Californio-inspired spurs featured 19-point rowels, ornate strap buttons, and filigreed and sculpted heel bands with silver inlays and a hand-filed twist pattern.

TCAA, which does not present awards to its members, named its 2014-2015 fellowship recipients:

Idaho saddlemaker Conley Walker and Arizona silversmith Beau Compton. Each will receive \$12,000 in funding to pursue a year of one-on-one mentoring with TCAA craftsmen. Alberta saddlemaker Steve Mason earned TCAA's 2013-2014 fellowship. To date, TCAA has awarded more than \$120,000 to student craftsmen.

The group also welcomed three new members: Texas saddlemaker Troy West, Alberta bit and spur



California-style spurs with filigreed, sculpted heel bands, by Ernie Marsh.

maker Richard Brooks, and Idaho bit and spur maker Brian Hochstrat. Hochstrat and Idaho rawhide braider Bret Haskett were winners of TCAA's 2014 Emerging Artists Competition, held at the High Noon Western Americana Show in Mesa, Arizona, last January.

Just prior to the show, outgoing TCAA president and Wyoming bit and spur maker Ernie Marsh welcomed the group's incoming president, Montana rawhide braider Nate Wald.

A noticeable increase in Cowboy Crossings' attendance was attributed by the museum to a reinvention of the weekend event. In addition to a presentation by historian Griff Durham on the origins of the stock saddle, the lead-up to Cowboy Crossings' opening night included autograph sessions by CAA and

TCAA artists, as well as "quick draw" demonstrations, in which show attendees could watch painters Jason Rich and Bruce Greene, sculptor Jason Scull, saddlemakers Rick Bean and Cary Schwarz, and bit and spur maker Wilson Capron create designs and artwork from scratch. Following the evening's sale of exhibited works, the Oklahoma band Lower 40 opened for Texas singer-songwriter Wade Bowen.

"The 2014 Cowboy Crossings will surely be remembered as a successful opening weekend," said the museum's president, Steven Karr. "We could not be more pleased by the increase in attendance and attention these two important artistic groups generated. We look forward to thousands of guests enjoying their works through the holidays." The



Cowboy Crossings exhibition remains in place at the museum through January 4.

The 2015 Cowboy Crossings is scheduled for October 9-10, and will again be held at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. It will feature TCAA's 17th annual exhibition, and CAA's 50th show. Learn more at www.nationalcowboymuseum.org, www.cowboyartistsofamerica.com or www.tcowboyarts.org.



Pablo Lozano's two-tone browband headstall, featuring sterling silver conchas, buckles and tips by Mark Drain.



S-shanked bit with sculpted steel vines and 14-karat gold flowers, by Wilson Capron.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvNUM9OYzIg>
Learn more about the Cowboy Crossings show in this video from the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.



A.J. Mangum is the editor of *Ranch & Reata* and the author of the non-fiction collection *Undiscovered Country: Dispatches from the American West*.

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A Poet and Dreamer

Writer and musician Andy Wilkinson pursues truth through art.

By Hal Cannon

Poets and dreamers, the only true realists,
live in the future, they do not imagine it,
seeing tomorrow with yesterday's sorrowings,
seeing tomorrow as here-and-now's borrowings,
seeing the present as future's own history.

Poets and dreamers, the only true realists,
know that the gift is the ultimate mystery,
knowing a gift not in motion is powerless,
knowing no gift can be taken for profiting,
knowing no gift can be subject to ownership.

Poets and dreamers who live on El Llano know
what is the gift but the mother-lode aquifer?

— “Mining the Mother Lode,” by Andy Wilkinson

Andy Wilkinson is as close to being a Renaissance man as any artist I know. How many artists truly believe it's their obligation to use their art to tell the truth about the past, help society deal with the present, and pave the way for the future? As a novelist, archivist, teacher, playwright, poet, songwriter and cowboy singer, Wilkinson blows past the nostalgic and predictable.

In the world of cowboy music, poetry and art, we have awards to recognize our own. Sometimes, artists in

our ranks earn recognition in larger arenas. The West Texas Walk of Fame in Lubbock recently inducted Wilkinson, an honor he shares with Buddy Holly, Waylon Jennings, Jimmy Dale Gilmore, Butch Hancock, Lloyd Maines, Barry Corbin, Tanya Tucker, Terry Allen, Roy Orbison, Joe Ely, Bob Wills and a host of other luminaries.

Like Wilkinson, most of the Walk of Fame inductees come from Lubbock, and most are musicians. It begs the question: how can a city of less than a quarter-million people, and barely over a hundred years old, have raised so many talented musical folks? And folks, by the way, who are loyal to their hometown.

West Texans have a variety of answers: there is not much else to do in this big flat plain; the wind blows through people's souls; maybe it's the water, the old aquifer stuff from a million years ago.

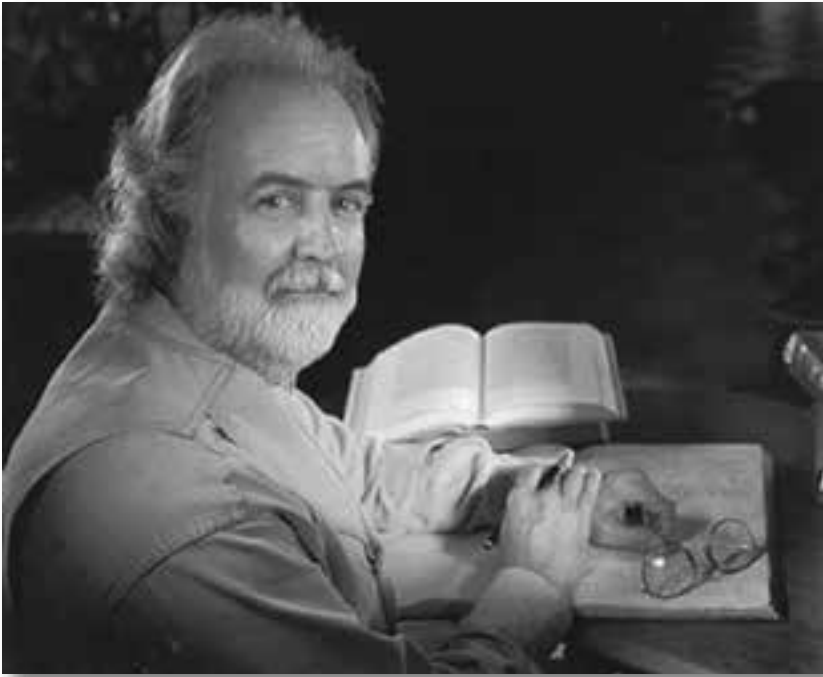
Wilkinson quotes his distant great uncle, Charlie Goodnight: “People of the Plains will have to solve the problems of the people of the East, because on the Plains the eye must see a great long distance and such seeing makes the mind active.” Wilkinson believes that Lubbock is still a frontier town and on the frontier, “you have to depend on people who are not like you.” Diversity makes for creativity.

In fact, Wilkinson sees the combination of necessity and diversity as fundamental to the invention



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Texas writer and musician Andy Wilkinson.

of cowboy music, born on trail drives after the Civil War. A mind-boggling variety of men found themselves in dangerous circumstances and learned to gauge one another based on their skills and their willingness to work together, rather than by the color of skin, the languages they spoke, or where they were born.

Wilkinson didn't know he was looking for a frontier creative community until he met Buck Ramsey at the first Cowboy Symposium in Lubbock. Soon after, he accompanied Buck to the Elko Gathering and recognized his tribe. In the process, he learned that finding artistic soulmates is as important to creativity as diversity.

Wilkinson grew up just outside Lubbock, where his father worked at a cottonseed oil mill. He attended high school in Lubbock and then, at age 20, married his sweetheart. He worked in a grocery store and enrolled at Texas Tech. His father-in-law happened to

be the chief of police and suggested Andy apply as a night cop and make enough money attend the university during the day.

Surprisingly, Wilkinson found police work fascinating. Plunged into a world of pimps, whores, gamblers and murderers, he learned that, "It's not the gun that holds power in the job." Rather, it's being an observer. "You know the good people, the bad people, where to go. And the power of that knowledge is intoxicating. As a cop you are never part of things, you are apart from things. It's great preparation for being an artist." After rising quickly in the ranks, Wilkinson realized the job breeds obsession. The biggest danger is not getting shot so much as becoming

an alcoholic, losing your family, or committing suicide.

Wilkinson quit and started a second career as a commodity broker. All the time, he was playing music in the basement; increasingly, he yearned to devote more time to his art. He remembers when he finally told his business colleagues that he was going to quit and become a songwriter. His partners in New York and Los Angeles looked at him like he was crazy. But his fellow businessmen in Lubbock took him aside and said they would do the same if they only had the nerve. It endeared him, even more, to his hometown.

In 1985 he won the coveted new folk award at the Kerrville Folk Festival. The rest is history. By now he's written several albums of great songs about cowpunchers and any other subject that captures his eclectic fascination. He's authored stage plays, he's currently working on a novel, and he's hankering to paint.

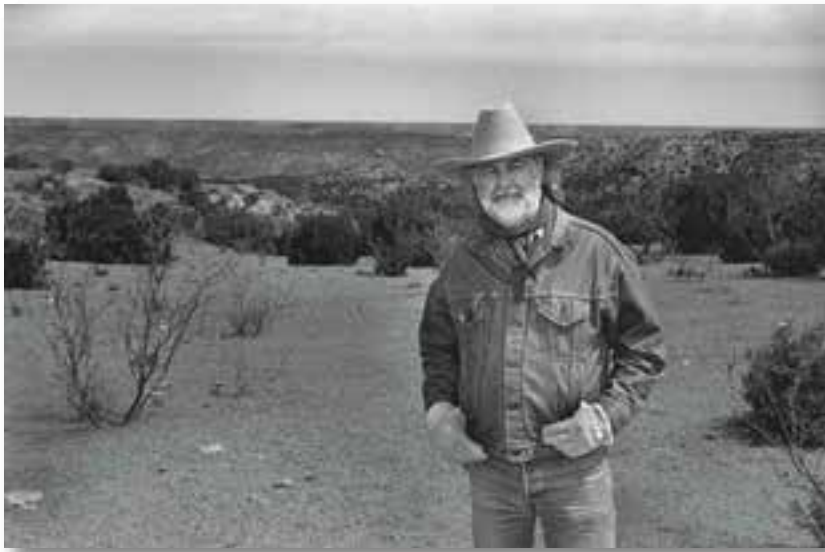
He also holds one of the most unusual jobs on

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Wilkinson against the backdrop of Palo Duro Canyon, in the Texas Panhandle.

earth, artist in residence for the Southwest Collection at Texas Tech, charged with collecting significant archival collections. He recently brokered a deal for the complete archives of the Kerrville Folk Festival. He interviews all sorts of people, from old cowpunchers to musical luminaries, and he makes up the job as he goes along. Texas Tech makes him feel valued for supporting and preserving art forms he loves.

On the side, he teaches songwriting at the university. He plays music and records studio albums with his kids. He sees great promise in young musicians and has nurtured several. He tours with Andy Hedges, a young and great cowboy songster. Yet, he is generally critical of the contemporary folk music scene, where he says the musicianship is unsurpassed but the content is weak. Few of today’s songwriters examine social issues; fewer still are learning about and

performing the traditional songs that are the foundation of the folk tradition.

He is equally critical of the current cowboy poetry and music scene. “There are damn few songs and poems that reflect this place and its real people and culture,” he says. “Instead, we hear a lot of superficial and nostalgic stuff, much that is looking backwards, hoping to find something better than the present and certainly not as scary as the future.”

Andy Wilkinson is not a pessimist. He believes that art will prevail. Part of the problem, he suggests, is that cowboy audiences do not discriminate. There is almost no critical study of the art form.

“Critical review is healthy to any art,” he contends. “Without it, we won’t advance.”



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGi49zubFG8>

Watch Andy Wilkinson and friends perform “No Depression.”

Hal Cannon is a folklorist and musician living in Utah.

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Each Face Has the West Etched into It

A photographer continues his 30-year quest to document the poets of the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering.

By Rod Miller

Photographs by Kevin Martini-Fuller

It's unlikely a photographer other than Kevin Martini-Fuller has looked through a viewfinder to see more cowboys looking back at him. Since 1985, he's created nearly 15,000 portraits of cowboys, immortalizing the faces of some 1,000 participants at the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada. Many subjects have sat for Martini-Fuller portraits on numerous occasions, and at least 20, perhaps as many as 30, of those poets have been photographed by Martini-Fuller 30 times over the history of the Gathering.

It's worth noting that the word "cowboy" is as important as "poet" when talking about the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering. There, you won't see wannabe waddies decked out in costume chaps and spurs and gaudy shirts spouting rhyming jokes as a lark. The quality of the poetry is an important consideration. And genuine cowboy credentials, past or present, are essential criteria in the selection process at Elko. So if the faces in Martini-Fuller's portraits appear carved by dust and wind, etched by sun and snow, it's the result of ranch work rather than makeup, lighting and digital enhancement.

The faces are, in a word, honest.

The portraits attempt to capture that honesty through a process that's simple, but not necessarily easy. "Each year I create a location studio, with lights and a backdrop, in the Elko Convention Center," Martini-Fuller says. "When a person presents themselves to me I give them the simplest of directions. The challenge for me is to be aware, to look for and recognize the moment with my subjects when they give themselves to me."

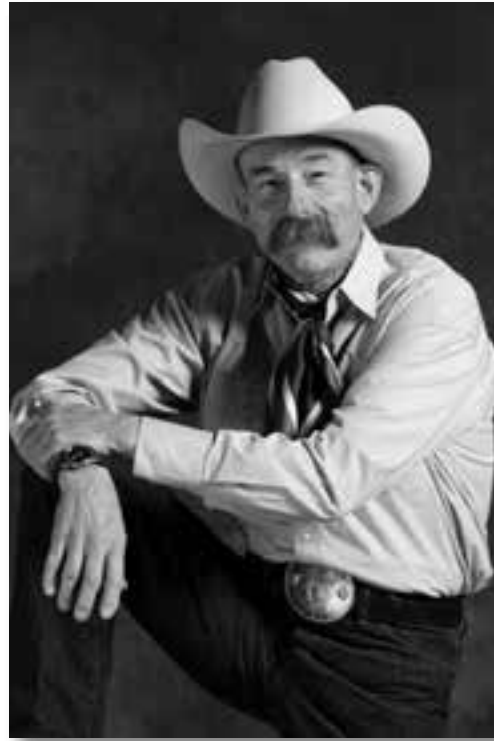
Martini-Fuller's decades-long quest to capture images of cowboy poets started on Europe's Iberian Peninsula.

"In the fall of 1983 I was invited to Spain to teach two workshops. While there I made portraits of people I met on the street," the photographer says. "I wanted to continue making portraits and felt I needed a situation where I could make many portraits in a short amount of time." A radio report about the first Cowboy Poetry Gathering caught his attention. "I decided that was exactly the situation I was looking for."

Hal Cannon, one of the founders of the Gathering and first director of the Western Folklife Center, now enters the picture. Martini-Fuller says, "I contacted Hal,



Yvonne Hollenbeck



Baxter Black



Joel Nelson



Doris Daley



Rusty McCall

proposing that if he allowed me space in the convention center to set up lights and a backdrop, I would make portraits of all the participants and provide the Western Folklife Center a complete set of the work for publicity and promotional purposes. He accepted my proposal and I made 72 portraits during the second Cowboy Poetry Gathering.”

Cannon had reasons of his own for accepting the offer. “Those first years we had no budget for anything. When Kevin offered to come take portraits we jumped at the chance.” But the value of the relationship has proved greater than could have been imagined with *any* budget, Cannon says. “This 30-year-plus unfolding of people’s lives in photographic images is immeasurably valuable as an ethnographic study, as a major art exploration, and as a record of what I think will be seen historically as an important cultural movement. The payoff has been absolutely wonderful in the same ways that meaningful art is truly the gift that keeps giving.”

The project has paid off for Martini-Fuller, as well. “Over time the faces and the personalities drew me in,” he says. “Each January I look forward to the trip to Elko – sort of a cleansing of the soul, to experience the endless space and meet up with the special people I have come to know.”

Cannon adds, “I have a deep admiration for Kevin and his mild-mannered way that belies the discipline it has taken to gather these portraits year after year. Over the years he has made powerful friendships with people. He is always cordial, respectful and generous with his images. Kevin has been part of the team.”

Martini-Fuller’s portraits of cowboy poets have been used by the Western Folklife Center in many ways – on posters, in advertising and publicity campaigns, in program guides, in displays and exhibits, and more. But the faces he has captured in his portraits have also been seen by people who have never heard of the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering, or even of cowboy poetry.

“I have a traveling exhibit, *Portraits and Poems*, that was designed for public spaces and can be shipped



Buck Ramsey



Gail Steiger



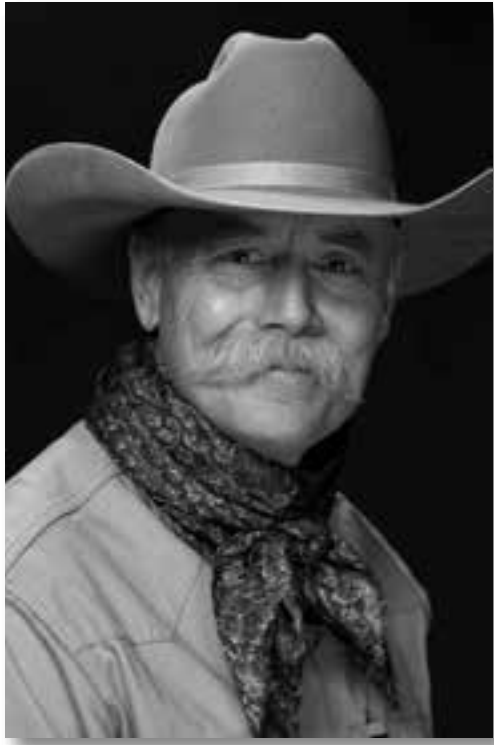
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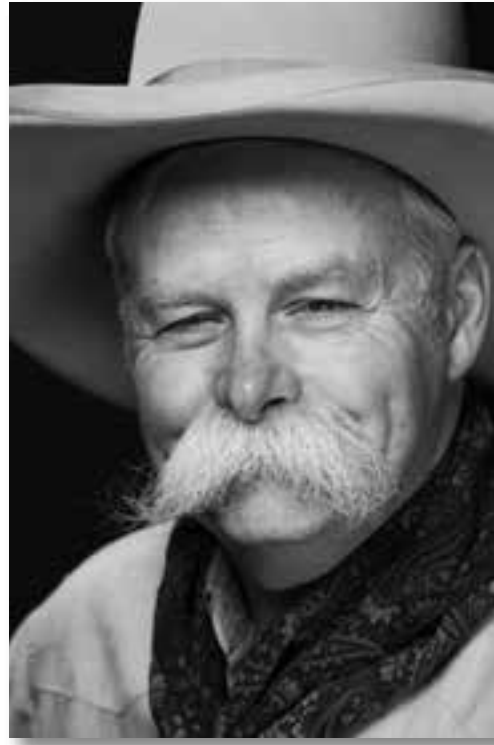
Wally McRae



Henry Real Bird



Randy Rieman



Bimbo Cheney



Paul Zarzycki



Waddie Mitchell



anywhere,” he says. “This exhibit has been shown mostly in the East.” And, lately, “East” has stretched across the Atlantic Ocean to include Labruguière, a small French town near Toulouse, in the south of France.

There, *Festival a Ciel Ouvert*, or *Festival of Open Sky*, brings art out of museums and galleries and into the streets. In earlier festivals – held since 2007 – oversized reproductions of artistic images were posted on exterior walls around the town. In 2014, festival organizers took a different approach. Mabel Odessey, festival coordinator, explains:

“This year I took responsibility for the festival and gave it a new concept. The work was concentrated on the main road in the historic center of the village. On the one hand, Rue Jean Jaures is a street that is suffering from dwindling commerce and neglect. On the other hand, it boasts medieval architecture, and covers a market space dating from the 1200s. Instead of hanging the images high on walls, the empty shop fronts were transformed into picture frames. Rather than gloomy empty windows, visitors saw some larger-than-life portraits of cowboy poets and their poetry.”

Inside each storefront, one of Martini-Fuller’s portraits was displayed alongside a translation of one of that poet’s poems. “I had considerable help from friends to translate the poems, so the mostly French audience could understand them,” Odessey says. But the portraits proved most dramatic. “Each face has the West etched into it by the fierce winds and weather that those men and women work in.”

The 2014 festival, according to Odessey, pleased the public as well as merchants along Rue Jean Jaures. “The installation transformed the main street and its visitors, making people pause, look and think,” she says. “The businesses working on the street were delighted to have the art to look at, and the tone of the street has gone from depressed to joyful.”

While the French connection may be a climactic moment in Martini-Fuller’s campaign to chronicle the Cowboy Poetry Gathering in portraits, it’s not the conclusion. He expects to spend more time in Elko looking through a lens and seeing cowboy poets looking back at him. “This project will continue,” he says, “as long as I am able to make it happen.”



Rod Miller is a writer based in Utah, and a frequent contributor to *Ranch & Reata*.

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Four Dreamers on a Western Landscape

By Tom Russell

Nothing happens unless first a dream.

— Carl Sandburg

I Santa Fe Crossing the Mojave

All around the water tank

Waiting for a train

A thousand miles away from home

Sleeping in the rain...

Waiting for a Train

Jimmie Rodgers

82

Chuck Steiner weighed in at nearly three hundred pounds. Bison-like. His face was shielded by a mouse-grey beard, which drooped down and splayed out over his gut. He didn't walk, no, he *rolled* toward an unseen spot on the horizon, or the corner of a honkytonk, where he'd turn and prop himself up against the wall, then slide down into his throne. Ready to face the world.

Chuck was there to hear real country music. If the band played anything Chuck didn't consider *true country* he'd raise up a fleshy index finger and declare: *Das is not da reel cow-n-tree music! No! No! No!* He'd shout in broken English and shake his huge head back and forth

in rank disgust. Others shook their heads in unison.

Chuck liked most country music recorded between 1925 and 1965. Jimmy Rodgers, The Carter Family, Hank Williams, Lefty Frizzell, Porter Wagoner, Johnny Cash, Merle Haggard, Buck Owens, George Jones. And all the early cowboy music – Tex Ritter, Carl Sprague and such. Chuck was quick to remark that Carl Sprague's "When the Work's All Done This Fall" sold 900,000 copies in 1925. Chuck declared that after the late 1970s country music went all to hell and became disposable pop trash. I generally agreed with him.

This story begins in the West. *West Switzerland*. Chuck Steiner was the man behind the biggest country music radio show in Switzerland. He created the set lists and pulled the music from his personal, extensive collection of LPs and rare 78s. He never spoke on the air. He sat propped in a corner passing the producer the music. They were handed over like sacred gold platters.

A fellow named Christoph Schweigler did the talking, with a deep, resonant voice. Chuck kept the music pure and he's credited with creating the audience

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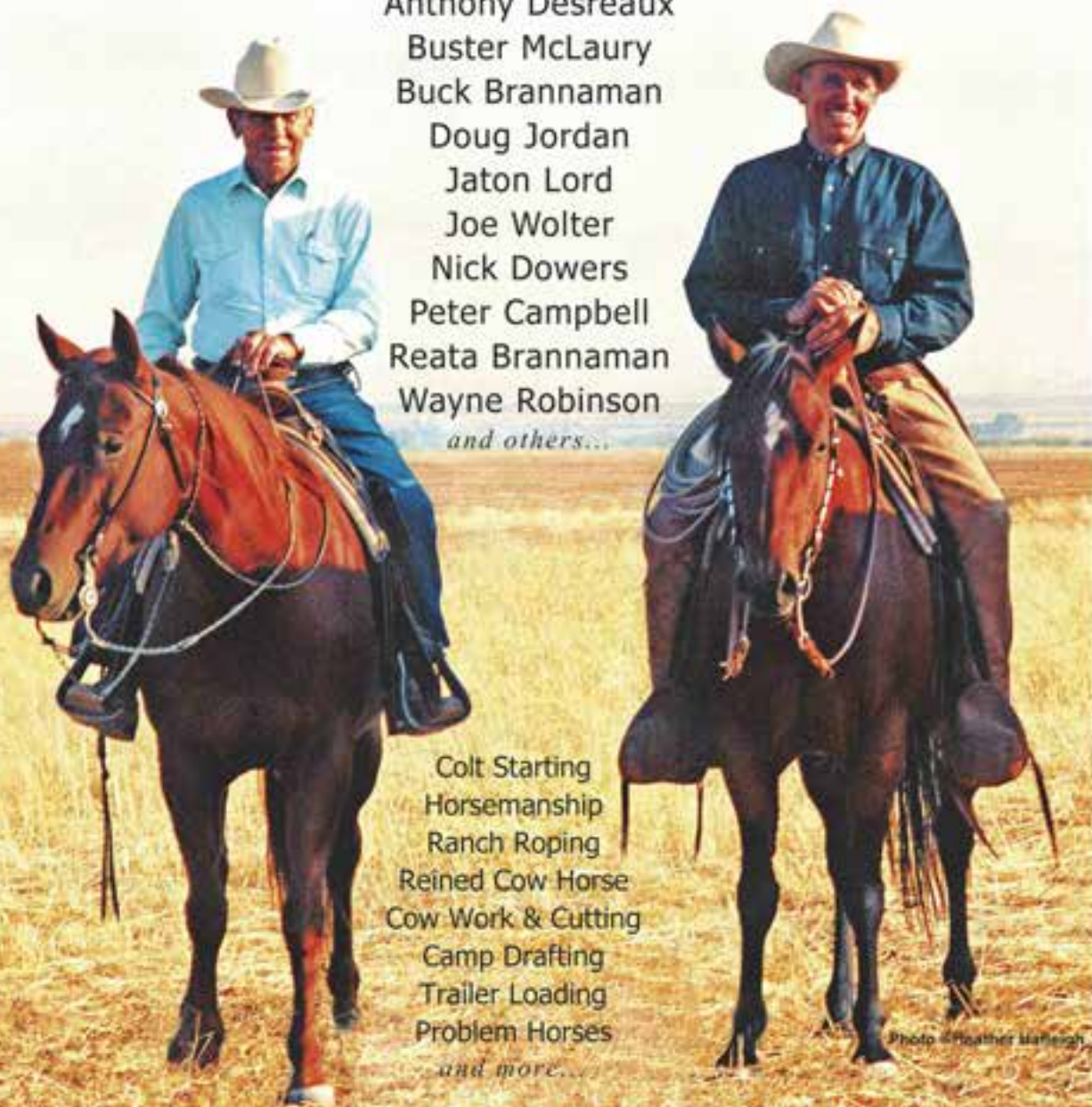
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for country music in Switzerland. This is no small matter, since Switzerland hosts at least five major country music festivals a year.

Chuck travelled with a driver-sidekick named Markus. Markus was a smaller version of Chuck. Probably weighed around 250. A quiet, round guy, proud to be Chuck's best friend. He nodded assent to each of Chuck's violent pronouncements on country music. He was a country *yes man* and he could fit behind a steering wheel.

Chuck and Markus enjoyed two passions – country music and trains. On weekends they repaired to a shed outside of Basel where they kept an elaborate model train setup. Here, far away from the ignorant, philistine, pop country crowds, they blasted *da reel cow-n tree music*, donned engineer caps, and ran their little trains through the miniature wild west. Dreamers.

Their favorite model train was the finely painted Santa Fe Freight train. Twenty box cars long. The boys fiddled with their train setup as Jimmie Rodgers spun around on an old 78 record, yodeling about life on the rails and in the hobo jungles.

What's this have to do with our American West? Plenty. The West was created, sanctified, and then mythologized by dreamers, and Chuck and Marcus had one gnawing, unfulfilled dream. They wanted to see a real Santa Fe Freight train crossing a real Western environment, like the Mojave Desert. They were obsessed with this vision.

As the years went on Chuck grew fatter, less healthy, and disgruntled with the state of modern country music. He was bitter. He gave up his job providing music for the weekly country music show on Swiss National Radio and spent hours and hours in the



train shed, pulling switches and muttering. He was running the little trains too fast. There were unnecessary derailments. Markus was alarmed.

Markus decided the thing to do was go for the big one and splurge. Use their savings fly to California and photograph the great Santa Fe Freight trains crossing the Mojave Desert. They could explore lost canyons, culverts, and old trestles where the Santa Fe engines might suddenly appear. God and Jimmie Rodgers would smile down from heaven.

One rainy May morning, thirty years ago, Chuck and Markus flew out of Zurich airport bound for Los Angeles International. They landed and picked up a rental car and, undeterred by jet lag and lack of sleep for 24 hours, they drove east towards the Mojave Desert.

Somewhere outside of L.A. they stopped and bought water, diet-Pepsi, potato chips, Ritz crackers, cheese spread, peanut butter, Oreo cookies, baloney sandwiches, and other vital American supplies. Maybe a map or two and an extra gas can. The vast Western Desert beckoned.

Did they cross the San Andreas Fault to see the historical Joshua Tree? Did they climb through the Tehachapi, San Gabriel or San Bernardino Mountains? Likely they had to. Did they see a Chuckwalla, a Fringe-Toed Lizard, Kangaroo Rat or Gila Monster? I never



found out those details. They aimed toward a designated point, out on an isolated freight train line.

They stopped up on Cajon Pass, 3777 feet up, between the San Bernardino and San Gabriel Mountains, in the Mojave Desert. The boys located the rail lines and a strategic point on a back desert road. They sat inside their rental car to wait, cameras ready.

Chuck Steiner owned a Nikon camera with a giant zoom lens, and he loaded the thing and settled it on the dashboard, aiming it out at the freight train tracks. I assume they kept the car running with the air conditioner on. Maybe not. They would have run out of gas.

Can you imagine two obese Swiss men stranded, forced to crawl across the Mojave Desert in 110-degree heat? Gruesome. They wouldn't last long, I reckon. They spent the night in the high desert pass, and all the

next morning. The car was filling up with empty water bottles and cookie wrappers. Trains passed by – nothing but Union Pacific's and Amtrak passenger trains. Not what the boys were after.

Finally, on the verge of giving up, they saw it. The great red and yellow diesel engine rolling down the line. A Santa Fe Freight train. Crossing the Mojave.

Chuck was ready. He fired off fifty frames. They laughed and ate baloney sandwiches and cookies. But they weren't finished. They decided to forge on to Canyon Diablo, Arizona, a ghost town on the Navajo Nation, then drive eastward to Abo Canyon, New Mexico, and Thoreau, New Mexico. Chuck carried extensive notes on isolated freight lines.

They were gone two weeks and went through mountains of potato chips and fifty rolls of film, then flew back to Zurich on a night flight.

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I ran into the boys about two weeks later at a concert I was performing in a little dude ranch called *The Pony Ranch*, in Biel, Switzerland. Chuck was propped up in the corner of the bar, back on his throne, his dignity restored. By the look on his mug I could tell he wanted to show me something. There was color in his jowls.

He motioned me over to sit down. He pulled a 5 by 7 inch postcard out of his Swiss army bag. He presented to me as a gift. On the backside of the card, upper left hand corner, it read:

Four views of Santa Fe Freight Trains: Crossing Cajon Pass, Abo Canyon, Canyon Diablo, and The Continental Divide, near Thoreau, New Mexico.
(Copyright: Charles "Chuck" Steiner, Basel, Switzerland. 1988.)

His hands were wrapped contentedly across his gut as he watched me study at the card. He shook his head up and down and closed his eyes over the memory. Markus sat beside him, eyes closed in concert with his friend. They were back in Cajon Pass or Abo Canyon, cookie crumbs rolling down their contented faces.



Vintage 4-panel, Chuck Steiner postcard image from 1988 showing the “charm of rail travel.”



It didn't matter now that modern country was a false-hearted imitation of the real thing. *Civilization be damned.* The boys had been to the top of the mountain and tracked down their great white buffalo. In the American West.

That night I sang a set of train songs from the 40s to the 1960s. Chuck held up his finger and I could read his lips:

Ya! Das was da reel cow-n-tree-muse-sic! Yah! Yah!

And that was the last time I saw the boys. I'd like to think they're over in that shed near Basel tonight, listening to Jimmie Rodgers, Johnny Cash, and Hank Williams. Moving those little Santa Fe freight trains across a desert that has become deeply real in their imaginations. Two characters bent over their model Western landscape. Yodeling softly. Lost in a diesel dream.

II Gunsmoke in Tucson

I was just a kid listening to my Uncle George's record prayer, while the great vinyl wheel spun 'round it's holy prayers...and the steel guitars in those Telecaster bars of San Joaquin towns...

Mesabi, Tom Russell

I'm in between films.

George Malloy Jr.

My Uncle George Malloy was the saloon piano player in the movie *Gunsmoke in Tucson*. You might have missed it. It was a hay-burner western shot on the backlots of Hollywood and released in 1958. Forest Tucker played the lead. The plot was basic B-Western, with a strong dash of the Old Testament. Two brothers witness the hanging of their father and they're forced to grow up alone in the Wild West. One becomes an outlaw. The other a Sheriff. You



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know the rest. Good and evil. Cain and Abel. Black hat verses white hat. Mule-shoe morality on a tight budget. Drive-in movie fare for Wichita Falls and Big Spring.

Some of the characters' names: *Slick Kirby*, *Clem Haney*, *John Brazos*, and *Notches Pole*. The moviemakers found my uncle on a union musician's list in Los Angeles. He'd been playing gigs in theater lobbies. In those days, when a movie opened, maybe a big musical, they hired a piano player to perform in the lobby, drumming up interest in the coming attraction.



Uncle George Malloy – Theater Lobby, L.A. 1938

I have an old press photo of my uncle from the 1938. He's dressed in a suit and tie and black and white dress shoes, perched in front of an upright piano in a theater lobby in Los Angeles. A poster to his right states that *Boy Meets Girl* is now showing. That was a 1938 *screwball comedy* (as they called it) with Jimmy Cagney and Pat O'Brian.

My uncle was employed to hype the coming feature: Irving Berlin's *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, starring Ethel Merman, Alice Faye and Don Ameche. The poster on top the piano reads: *this is not Irving Berlin's piano, but these are his memorable tunes. Don't miss the picture.*

My Uncle sat there and pounded out Irving Berlin classics. The film, *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, traced the history of jazz from ragtime through swing – following the story of a kid who scandalizes his family by playing ragtime instead of *serious music*. And here was my classically trained uncle playing in a theater lobby. A gig's a gig.

From theater lobbies to the big screen! *Gunsmoke in Tucson* called for a piano player to perform in a saloon scene while the gunfire blazed and the dance hall girls high-kicked the *Can Can*. My uncle knew he'd handle the job. He could sight read, had a great ear, and possessed a special Western piano trick he'd learned from the comedic pianist Victor Borge. My uncle could *shoot the keys*. He was ready to pull this trick out of his war bag.

Shooting the keys is of a Jerry Lee Lewis type piano-move which involves sliding the index finger down the keyboard, hitting all the white keys (usually the right hand down the treble side). At the end of the slide you cock your hand like a gun and shoot the final note with your index finger. Right in time. It's show biz. It's Western.

They dressed uncle George up like a saloon pimp, with derby hat, calico shirt, and sleeve garters. No cigar that I recall. My uncle said he shot the keys several times on camera, but they cut that part out of the film. They thought he was stealing the scene. That was my Uncle's final film. His part lasted about thirty seconds.

Fast forward – fifty years later. Uncle George is bent over a vodka tonic in Malachy's Bar, on 72nd street in



Manhattan. I asked him about his West Coast cowboy movie career. He winced.

"I'm in between films," he said.

That was it. Then he sideswiped me with a sardonic look. A Jack Benny quarter-smirk with a raised eyebrow. *Anymore Hollywood questions?*

Here was the gunfighter pianist in winter. The keyboard wizard who could shoot the keys and break your heart with Chopin's *Heroic Polonaise in A flat*. One of our greatest American pianists. At least that's the way I saw it. He was a travelling musician, born in the West, conquering the world, and that's the life I wanted.

Uncle George, born in California in 1920, had become a New York character. An ex-patriot from *The Coast*, as he called California. At age 86 his life was revealed in nippy, verbal fragments, if he cared to talk at all. He was one of the guys at the end of the bar. One of the loners content to sit in the shadows and observe.

He played piano for vocal lessons, backed up a Gilbert and Sullivan Troupe for years, and did the occasional gig in opera piano bars. A large brandy snifter served as a tip jar. Malachy's Bar was his local hangout. His water hole.

In Malachy's nobody asked about your past, or your job, or where the ten-dollar bills came from. Nobody remembered *Gunsmoke in Tucson*. Old New York bars harbored taciturn compatriots of late afternoon oblivion. The boys knew your name, maybe, or your nickname, and the talk was kept basic, anecdotal, and humorous. No heroes or braggarts. No lights. No cameras. Little action. Just snippets and shards of the usual small talk, which went along with *the usual drink*.

"George, guy at the end of the bar just bought you a drink."

Bang. A wet napkin and a speed-rack vodka tonic shoved across the bar. A slow nod of thanks. Another ten

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minutes of contemplation. You return the favor and send the other guy, or old gal, a drink. Afternoon shadows move across dusty shades. The night bartender comes on. The clink of glass on glass. A hand tapping a cigarette ash into a tray. Back when you could *smoke* in bars. Back when people left you alone. Before the world got all snotty and politically correct.

Drinkers would show up daily for twenty years, then one day their place in the corner was vacant. Few questions asked. Two weeks later a new character arrives. It's a New York play written to protect shielded histories. There's seldom a great exit line. *See you tomorrow*, or an implied *maybe never see you again*.



Malachy's regulars were stagehands, novelists, accountants and street sweepers. And the pianist who played in *Gunsmoke in Tucson*.

In between films.

Uncle George didn't show up one afternoon at Malachy's. Odd, but not unusual. At age 86 he was slowing down. Crossing 72nd street in the middle of the block, plodding slowly in a ragged diagonal line, honked at by Cab drivers and rich SUV dames. George was shuffling as modern times came speeding toward him.

An old antelope limping at the back of the herd. Enter the hyenas. The New York streets and alleys conform to a Darwinian code.

Yeah, back in Malachy's they say *old age is a bitch*. Old folks fall down in the bathtub or shower and hit the head or break their hip and begin their slow descent back into the earth. Rest homes, hospitals, care facilities. Lights out. Paradise. Eternity. The drug companies, insurance agents, and quack doctors are waiting to take a huge slice of the old-age pie. Maybe they can sell a hip replacement or new knee before the old guy or gal croaks.

When my Uncle George fell they didn't find him for a day and a half. He was lying deep in the clutter of his rent-controlled apartment on 72nd street. He'd been living there fifty years.

He was ambulated to Roosevelt Hospital where he agreed, or was harassed into, a questionable eight-hour operation to possibly fix something that was pressing on his spine. He was conned, as the social workers moved his papers from drawer to drawer. The bills piled up. Was this anyway to treat the guy who played in *Gunsmoke in Tucson*? Where was the musician's union now?

The operation was a success, as they say, but the patient never got out of bed again. I was there when they wheeled him back from surgery. He'd survived. Barely. We gave him two weeks to live. He was resigned. The eight-hour operation had fixed his back, but exhausted his resolve to put his slippers back on. Roll the credits. Exit the gunfighter.

Back in Malachy's, around happy hour, the regulars eyed his empty stool. *George ain't been in for a few days*. Silence. *Give me a double*.

He didn't end up in that full-care facility in Queens, where the doctors wanted to dump him. No. The old



saloon piano player escaped back to the West. Trouble rides a fast horse. He was craving good Mexican food. He kept talking to me about *The Red Onion* in Inglewood, California, where he grew up. They had *the best tamales in the world*. I didn't have the heart to tell him that *The Red Onion* had been closed for forty years.

My sisters had flown in from the West, rescued him, and decided it was best to move Uncle George to Ogden, Utah, where my brother-in-law ran a senior care facility. George could spend his final weeks near family, that sort of thing. They could get him take-out Mexican food. I could sneak him a vodka tonic.

They flew him first class and wheeled him into a facility on the edge of Ogden. Fourth room from the parking lot. He never looked out the window. Never got out of bed. A funny thing happened, though. Uncle George didn't die. He survived fourteen months on chocolate milkshakes, root beer floats, and crossword puzzles.

He could finish four crosswords a day – starting with *The New York Times* down to the local rag. Then he'd work on a few *word puzzlers*. He adapted. Hell, he *flourished*. Sometimes I flew over and we'd listen to music all day – two road musicians chatting about life in the trenches.

My older sister, Nan, flew back to New York with her husband Andy and cleaned out George's apartment on 72nd and Broadway. Piles of dirty laundry, bookcases crammed full of music scores, crossword puzzle books, and an old refrigerator full of

what we used to call *TV Dinners*. A huge black Steinway piano dominated the tiny living room.

Uncle George had been in this same apartment a half century. Alone. The paint was peeling off the walls and the radiators clattered all night. He was renting it four hundred a month and the owners couldn't wait for him to pass on. The location was worth a mint in rent. The vultures were ready to move in, refurbish the joint and jack the rent up to three grand a month. Or higher.

My sister dug into the closets and underneath the clothes and, as the family archeologist, began to unearth clues of George's life in the music business. A momentous career we'd never known much about.

Uncle George was a professional pianist, as I've indicated. An "accompanist." After his film career he'd traveled the world backing up the great classical singers:



Todd Duncan, Camilla Williams, Roberta Peters, Eileen Farrell. *Giants*. He'd been to Australia, Africa, Japan, Egypt, Australia and the Philippines. The tour books were scattered about. The scrapbooks. The maps lined with red ink marking the concert trails. Can you imagine the cocktail receptions? Lord.

He'd brought back picture slides, exotic matchbooks, and a camel saddle. He collected hotel stationary from every hotel stop, and sent letters out on these exotic scraps for years and years. At Christmas he sent each of us four kids a check for fifty bucks, inside a piece of stationary from a hotel in Chicago, Tokyo, or Casa Blanca.

There were stacks of photos. Movie star Jeanette MacDonald signed a photo: *To My Buddy*. (My Uncle's nickname was "Bud.") Affairs with film starlets? We'll never know. There were letters from Nelson Eddy and other stars.

There was a hand-tinted photo of my uncle and my mother mounted horseback at Seminole Hot Springs, near Malibu, in the early 1930s. I showed him the photo – his cryptic remark: *The Hot Springs was run by my*



Uncle George Malloy horseback, Seminole Hot Springs, 1930s. Marjorie Malloy on right.

uncle Vern and aunt Anna...some movie actress used to go there to dry out...maybe it was Myrna Loy. End of story.

When he was near dying we began to realize his

"place" in American music. It was more than *GunsSmoke in Tucson*. He told my sister:

I was in the "Al Jolson Story," but I ended upon the cutting room floor. Al only came on the set once. I played the Hammond organ in "Unchained Melody," but I don't know if it made it into the movie."

There was more.

George had performed at the White House during the Eisenhower administration. He'd been on the Johnny Carson and Mike Douglas TV shows. Then came a whopper. Uncle George was at the March on Washington in August, 1963, the most historic civil rights march in history, and the largest demonstration ever held in Washington D.C. 250,000 people attended.

He was sitting a row behind Marlon Brando, Burt Lancaster, and Judy Garland. Eileen Farrell was supposed to sing the "Star Spangled Banner," but she was caught up in traffic.

The eyes of the Nation looked down and landed on Uncle George. It was the bottom of the ninth in American history, and the coach went to the bullpen and went with my uncle. He was ready. Of course he knew the song by heart.

He was escorted to the stage to backup Camilla Williams who'd replaced Eileen Farrell. Uncle George pounded out the old warhorse, the "Star Spangled Banner," like it had never been played before. At least I assume he did. I don't know if he tried to shoot the keys. Not appropriate, I would guess. Then came Bob Dylan and "Blowin' in the Wind," and finally Martin Luther King.

In those last days in Ogden, Utah, we pieced together the anecdotes, the photos, the scrapbooks, and the tour maps, until he finally closed his eyes and moved on. It reminded me of that Guy Clark song, "Desperados Waiting for a Train," with the lines:



*Then one day I looked up and he's turnin' 80
He's got brown tobacco stains all down his chin
to me he's one of the heroes of this country,
so why's he all dressed up like them old men?*

Maybe someday they'll dig up the edited film outtakes from *Gunsmoke in Tucson* and the world can see him shooting the keys. For now you can go on *You-Tube* and see him playing behind Larry Adler, the greatest harmonica player who ever lived. Yes, Uncle George on the edge of history. Happy to serve. The guy at the end of the bar at Malachy's. The piano player in *Gunsmoke in Tucson*.

Don't bother him. He's *in between films*.

III Sharks and Mules

I think they call it progress, Tom.

Johnny Bean

*You can't say civilization don't advance ...
in every war they kill you in a new way.*

Will Rogers,


The New York Times, Dec. 23, 1929

There's a *for sale* sign on Johnny Bean's horse ranch. I drove by there last week. A sad note. The sale of Johnny Bean's place marks a major blow to ranching and farming in our part of El Paso. The City government, in league with fast talking developers, rolled in a Trojan Horse they named *Smart Growth*. In fact the steed should be nicknamed *Ignorant Devastation* – developers selling cheap houses to middle and lower class Mexican families, then mortgaging the folks up to their eyeballs for the rest of their life, as the houses fall apart.


The ugly development surrounded Johnny Bean's horse ranch. A major truck route to Mexico was bulldozed through. Cheap catalogue houses lined up alongside the


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highway with backyards cluttered with with broken trampolines, deflated swimming pools, overturned swing sets, and the requisite one-eyed pit bull. A man around here is now as tough, or stupid, as his yard dog.

Then cometh the “smart growth” strip malls with cheap pizza, fake burgers, and dollar stores. Will Rogers would have tossed out a witty remark for this savage decline, but thank God he ain’t around to observe the disaster.

A few years back, when this *smart growth* began, I called up Johnny Bean. I asked him what the hell we could do about it all. Johnny was in his early 80s at the time. I could hear him breathing heavily. Thinking. Then he spat out: *I think they call it progress, Tom.* That was it. He hung up.

Johnny Bean died a while back. One day I walked into my local Postal Annex store, where I ship my paintings. It’s owned by a fine cowboy and muleteer named Pete, and his wife Lettie. Pete knew Johnny Bean and told me a notable story Johnny had once shared with him. A mule story.

Johnny had served as a muleskinner during WW II and was in a crew aboard a ship hauling three hundred mules to Burma. The ship was torpedoed and sunk by a



“A String of Mules” by the author

German U-Boat. Johnny Bean and the crew escaped into lifeboats and survived three days before rescue. The mules were turned loose into the open sea.

The men sat in the lifeboats that first day watching as sharks went after the mules. A scene that would stay in your mind forever. An unnerving vision beyond any dark Peckinpah movie. Beyond *Jaws*. I’m tempted to turn it into a metaphor for El Paso *progress*, but I’ll let that rest. Certain scenes defy the triviality of metaphoric tricks.

Pete and Lettie then shared with me Johnny Bean’s obituary, which was posted on the wall of their store. I think it’s worthy of including here, a short chronicle of a remarkable life in the West. Consider this:

The Obituary:

Johnny W. Bean, age 94, died peacefully at his home in Canutillo on Feb 12th. He was born 08/28/1918 at Crawfordville, Ark. He left home at age 17 and joined the US Army. He served in the US Cavalry and fought in the Burma Campaign in WW II.





While in route to Burma with a shipload of 400 mules, his ship was sunk by a German U-Boat. Johnny and his shipmates survived in lifeboats for 3 days until, they were rescued by the Indian Navy. While serving in Burma, Johnny and his fellow soldiers were supplied by airdrops and mule trains.

At times when the US planes couldn't make food drops due to bad weather or combat with Japanese aircraft, Johnny and his comrades butchered and ate mule meat. When the war was over, Johnnie returned to Texas where he worked as a cowboy and horse breaker on several large Texas-New Mexico ranches.

At one time he showed the famous QH stallion, "Sugar Bars." He became an excellent saddle maker and eventually developed a large horse boarding facility and equine surgery facility in El Paso.

For many years he also owned and managed a saddle repair and tack shop in Ruidoso. Mr. Bean was recognized as an icon in the horse business. His Ruidoso shop was a gathering place for racehorse owners, jockeys, and trainers from all over the US. A memorial service will be scheduled at Sunland Park Race Track on a date to be announced.

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The author, living a Western life.

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And how to end this essay of four characters on a Western landscape? I'll set a scenario. Years ago I performed in a joint in Munich, Germany, called The Oklahoma Saloon. A loud dive. Tequila shots were delivered to the stage on the back of a model train coal car. The train ran from the bar and around the walls of the club, and carried drinks to the band. The drinks were needed to survive the gig. Trust me.

In my imagination, now, all the characters mentioned in this essay are in a bar in the Great Beyond. Chuck Steiner and Markus are the bartenders, sending

drinks up to the stage on a Santa Fe model train.

Johnny Bean is up there singing: "I'm The Man Who Rode the Mule Around the World," the old folksong, and he's backed up by my Uncle George on the piano, who shoots the keys after each chorus. Chuck Steiner keeps yelling, *Yah! Das is da reel cow-n-tree music!* You get the picture.

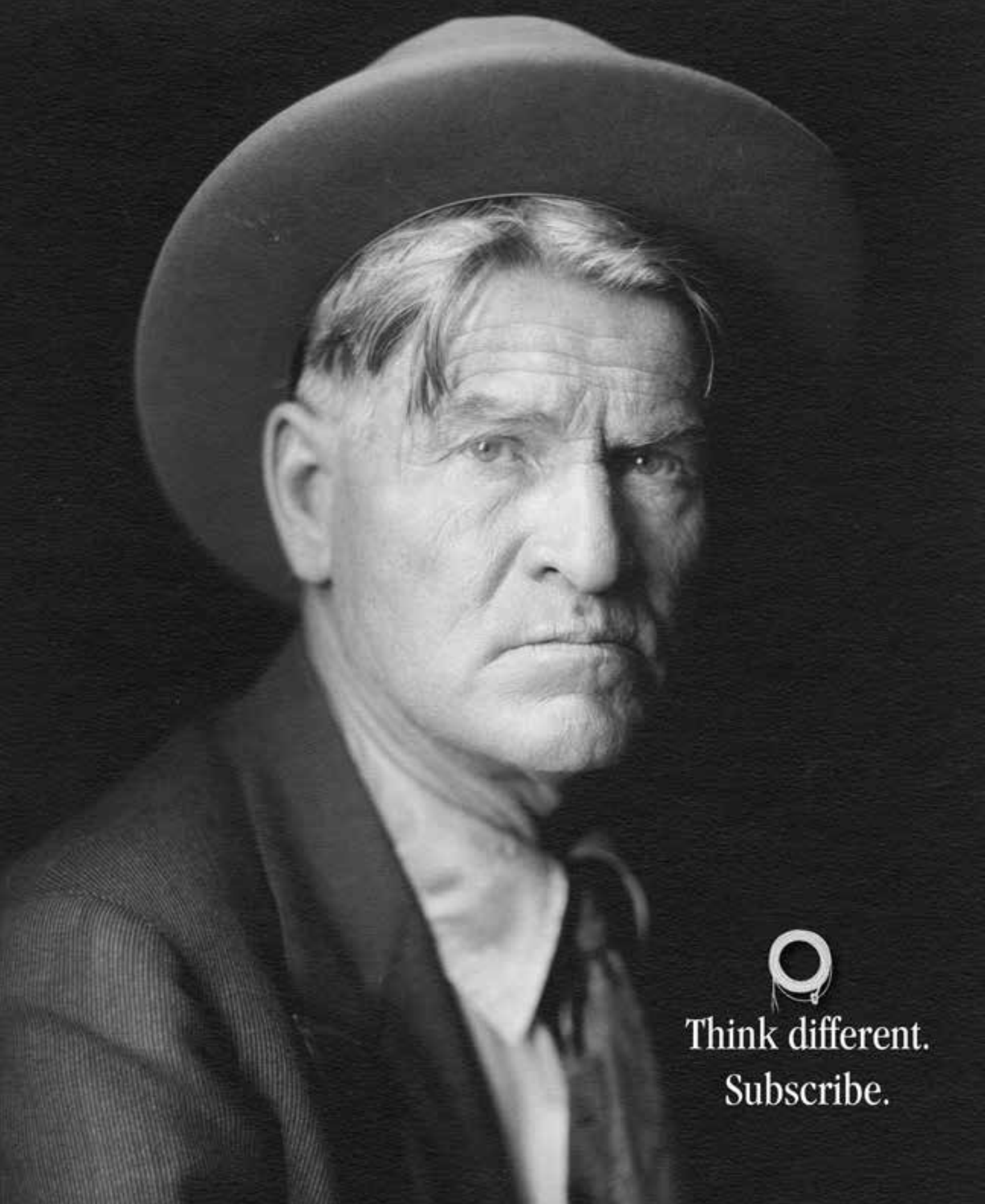
Four characters on an eternal Western landscape. Dreamers. *Nothing happens unless first a dream...* Carl Sandburg said that.



Tom Russell's "folk opera" on the Cowboy West: *The Rose of Roscrae* will be released in March. He will perform parts of it at the Elko National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in late January. His records, books, and art may be accessed at: www.tomrussell.com

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The Bone in the Box

By Pete Healey, APF

Once upon a time long ago about 50 million years, give or take a couple of months, there lived the “Dawn Horse” Eohippus. He was a little fellow about 10 inches tall and he had four-toed front feet and three-toed hind feet. Eohippus lived in the forests and was a browser. About 26 million years ago to about 7 million years ago, give or take a few weeks, the climate became dryer and the forest turned into prairies. Eohippus in turn evolved into a grazer and the modern day Equus. He became larger and the limbs longer, the foot became streamlined and lost all but the middle toe which was encased in a hoof; the Coffin Bone.

The name “Coffin Bone” originated around 1720. The exact root of the nomenclature is unclear. The word Coffin originates from the French and means “Little Basket.” Since the bone sits inside the hoof capsule this would make a good reference. Another scenario could be the finding of skulls and hooves in the burial places of the Indo-European people of the Copper Ages to the Middle Ages. These people found the horse very spiritual and had many rituals, which included burying the hooves with the remains of a person.

The Coffin Bone is more properly referred to as the Pedal Bone or the Distal or Third Phalanx (P3). The bones of the pastern and foot of the horse are like one of our human fingers except for the Navicular Bone, which is farther up in the hand on the human.

The Coffin Bone is the foundation of the foot and without its health the entire horse is in jeopardy. The main role of the hoof is to protect this bone and this is why it is so important to have a dense mechanically sound foot. This bone is very light and porous and small in size when compared to the rest of the foot. The rim of the bone is sharp and not designed to bear weight. Although the bone is supported by the Extensor and Deep Flexor Tendons and various ligaments, its main suspension in the hoof capsule is from the lamina. This is why laminitis is so detrimental, because it is the subsequent bone destruction from the lack of suspension of the lamina and not the lamina itself that kills the horse.

Often during the pre purchase exam of a horse the foot is radiographed at various angles to determine the health of the bone but often overlooked is the angle of the bone itself, at what angle it sits in the capsule and how big it is. The Bone Angle is a big deal because the angle of the bone plus the angle between the bone and the ground or what is termed the Palmar Angle make up the angle of the hoof. This palmar angle is comprised of the mass of the digital cushion and frog and the height of the heels. Most horse breeds have a healthy hoof angle of 53 – 55 degrees. This is a combination of a 50-degree bone angle and 3 – 5 degrees of palmar angle. What if a horse needed a 55-degree hoof angle to be sound and his bone angle was only 43 degrees? He would have to have 12 degrees of palmar angle to suffice the needs of the foot. By the way, rasping the wall back to make the hoof 55 degrees doesn't work because you haven't changed the angle of the bone inside.

These low bone angle feet are quite prominent in performance horses that have lameness issues. The low bone angle combined with the industry standard of a flat shoe leads to biomechanical failure of the foot and a variety of problems from Navicular disease to torn suspensory ligaments. If I were buying a horse, I would darn sure want to know this as it might have an effect on the longevity of the horse. The angle of the Coffin Bone might not put him in ‘The Grave’ but it could have a grave impact on his performance. www.balancedbreakover.com





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Eastern Portraits of the West

Artist Tom Quinn walks the metaphorical high-wire.

By Jameson Parker

Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet...

– “The Ballad of East and West” by Rudyard Kipling

Of course, when Rudyard Kipling wrote the above he was looking at the world through 19th century glasses, and now East and West have run slap up against each other in ways no one could have anticipated a hundred years ago, ways that would have been both incomprehensible and alarming to the British Empire. China holds America's debt, and practically every product we use other than our saddles is made somewhere in the Orient. But amidst the doom and gloom, East and West have also met in ways that have greatly enriched us. Consider Tom Quinn.

Quinn's art is exclusively of western wildlife: a bison looking at a greater Canada goose; a mountain lion watching a covey of Hungarian partridge; a sharpshin on its prey, a just-killed flicker; a wolf chasing a redtail hawk off a freshly killed field mouse; a pronghorn looking up, startled by a merlin in flight. This juxtaposition of species is no accident. It's the result of a lifelong hunter's close and accurate observation of wildlife from the Pacific to the Dakotas, but despite the iconic symbols of the West, there is something eerily and compellingly Oriental about this art, a delicacy and simplicity we associate with calligraphy.

Tom Quinn did not get off to a smooth and auspicious start as an artist. His adolescence was marked by brawling, poaching and jail time, but like many a gifted man before him, Quinn was lucky enough to run into one of those educators we should all have in our lives. Quinn had just been released from jail, and the dean of the College of Marin called him into his office to tell him he was going to be expelled. But he told Quinn that before they kicked him out, they wanted him to take a psychological test. It turned out to be a sequence of seven tests, and the one constant that ran through them all was an artistic streak. The dean persuaded Quinn to take a charcoal drawing class.

“Something clicked,” Quinn says. “I went from being on the front page of the paper for fighting, to being on the front page for getting good grades and being on the dean's list.”

He also went from being thrown in jail to being accepted by the prestigious Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles, one of the toughest and most demanding art schools anywhere in the world. Of the 40 young men and women who were accepted with Quinn, only four managed to graduate. One was Quinn.

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Red Tail Hawk, watercolor on paper, 12 1/2 x 20 1/2 inches. © 2014-2015 Thomas Quinn, courtesy Gerald Peters Gallery

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Chamisa Possibilities

Another was his wife, gifted Western landscape artist Jeri Nichols Quinn.

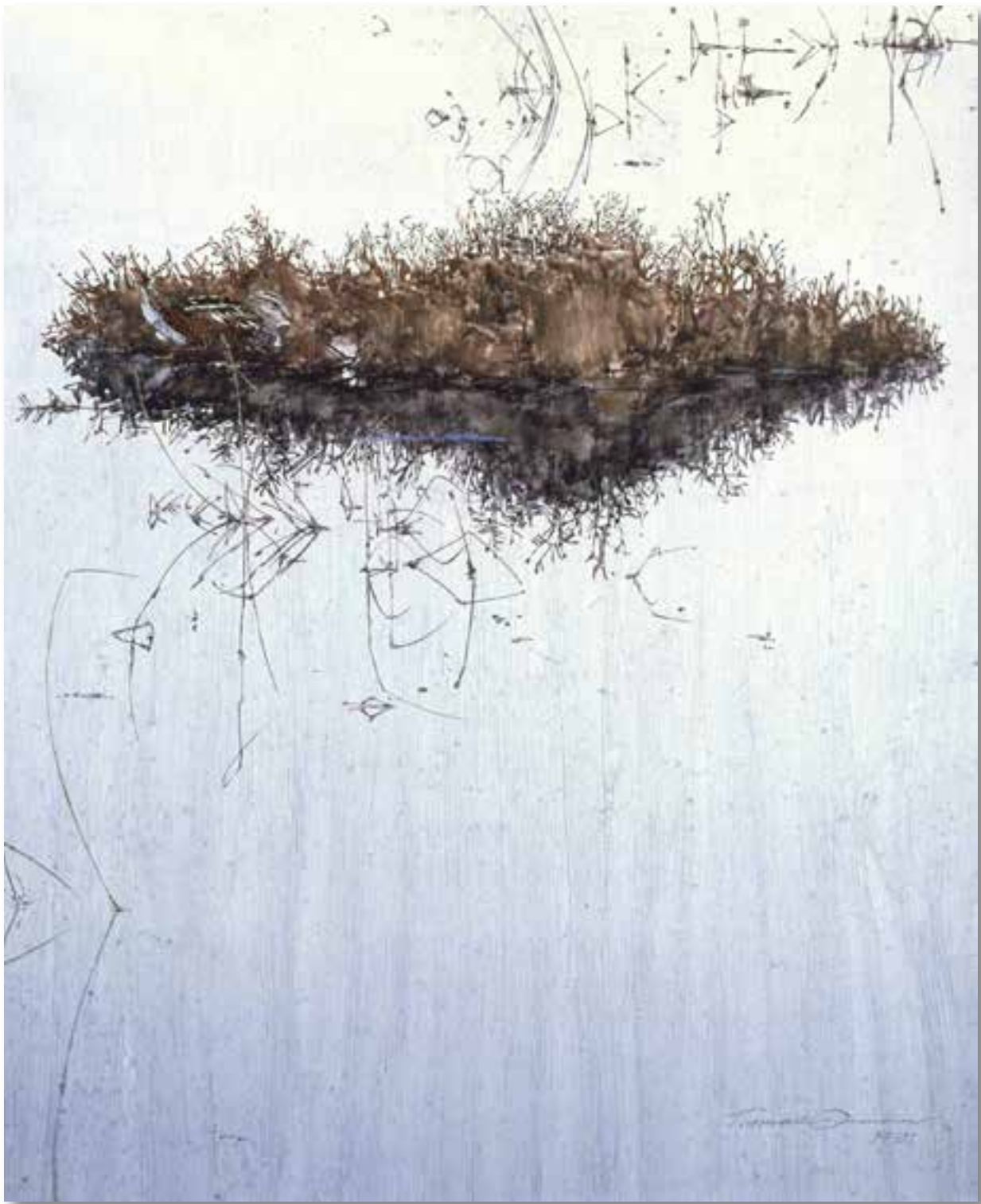
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 “I wanted to be an illustrator and painter,” Tom Quinn says. “All the great illustrators were and are great artists. Norman Rockwell always thought of himself as an illustrator, but he was a great artist. In fact, when Rockwell’s painting *The Connoisseur*, a portrait of an older gentleman looking at a Jackson Pollock, was displayed, Willem de Kooning looked at it for a long time and then he pointed at the Pollock Rockwell had painted and said, ‘Inch by inch, it’s better than Jackson.’ It takes a great artist to do that.”

Quinn’s studio is an old bakery he converted himself, with an appealing clutter of sketches and studies and books on the walls, a drafting table under the window that looks out on the marshy beginnings of Tomales Bay, and a Labrador retriever sleeping on a dog

bed in the corner.

“I had to be in Los Angeles to start at the Art Center on a Wednesday, so I was going to drive down on Tuesday, but someone suggested I stop at the de Young Museum in San Francisco to look at an exhibit called *The Art Treasures of China*,” Quinn recalls. “I already had all these heroes, Winslow Homer, Whistler, Degas, Velásquez, Sir Peter Scott, and I wanted to paint like them, especially Degas, in a very masculine style. So I thought I’d stop at the museum for an hour or so and then get back on the road. I ended up staying until they threw me out. I had to drive through the night to make it to school on time. I’d never seen anything like it. I didn’t realize at the time that I was being influenced, but I was charmed, persuaded by the delicacy, the use of negative space.”

But before he could put any of those principles into



Resting Snipe



Change in Fortunes

his own work he had to earn a living. He and Jeri moved to New York, where they both went to work as illustrators, Tom doing covers for everything from *Saturday Evening Post* to *Car and Driver* to *Field and Stream*. They had a son and bought a house in Connecticut. They were young, they were successful, they were living the American dream, so of course disaster struck.

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 "I got sick," Quinn says. "The doctors couldn't figure out what it was and they never did figure it out. I still don't know exactly – some kind of liver disease – but I was in the hospital for a year. I nearly died a couple of times."

Even dying, the brawler still remained.

"At one point a priest came in to give me the rite of extreme unction, but I got into an argument with him about birth control and the doctrine of papal infallibility," Quinn says. "I told him I'd take up those issues with Christ when I saw him, and when I added that I'd always liked Christ, but I liked Thomas Jefferson too, the priest walked out on me."

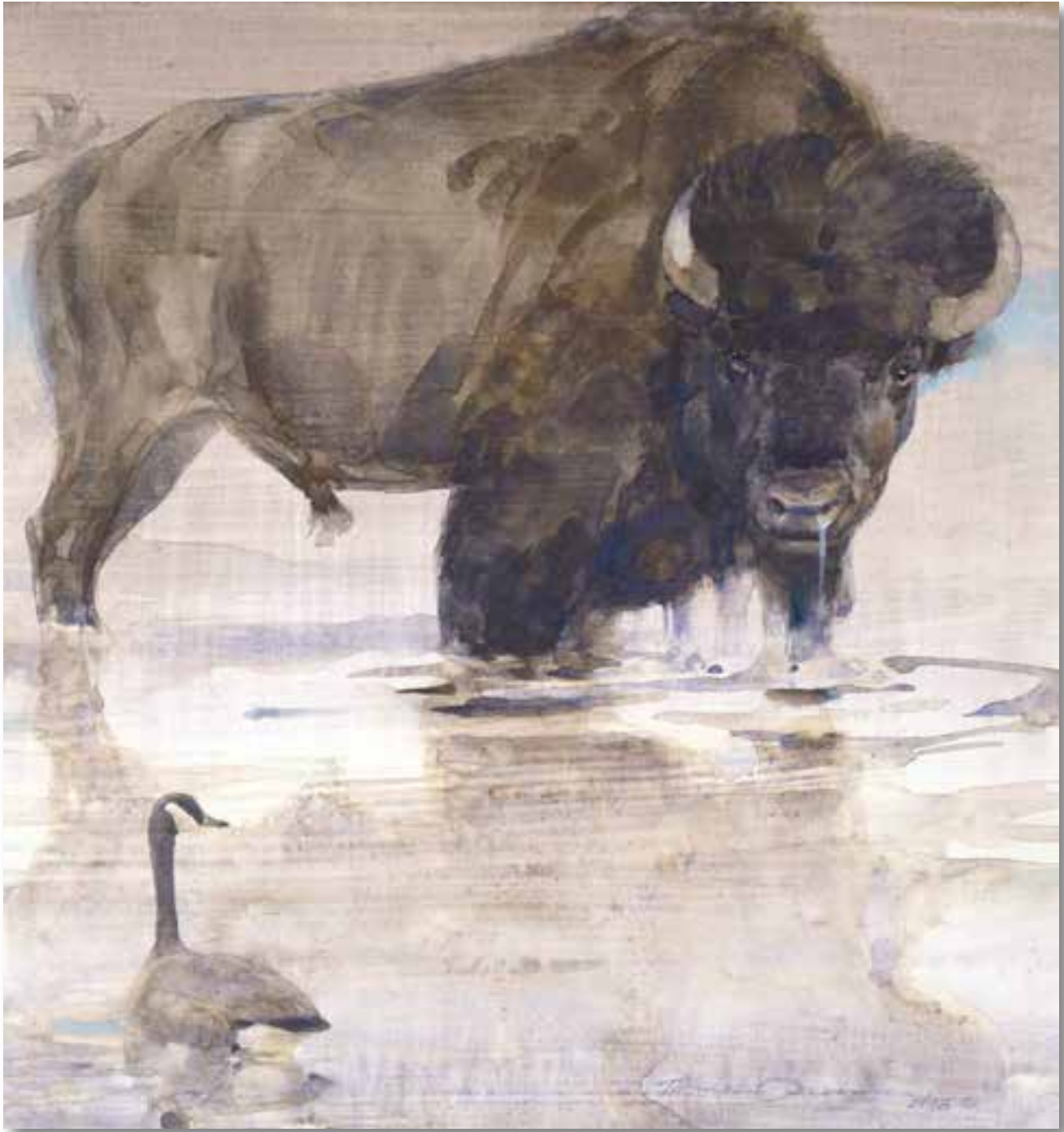
He was so sick that Jeri had to finish his magazine assignments for him, a testimony to her own talent.

When Quinn finally recovered enough to

recuperate at home, he painted a pair of greater Canada geese on a pond on his property, and that act of painting something for himself, as opposed to an assignment, released a memory of *The Art Treasures of China*. He quit illustrating, sold the house in Connecticut, and moved his wife and son into a "glorified duck blind" on the California coast at Point Reyes. "I went from making a living," Quinn says, "to subsistence living." He also switched from oil to watercolor.

Actor and artist Buck Taylor once described painting with watercolors as working on the high-wire without a net: "Painting with oil is like deep-water ocean fishing," he says. "It takes time and patience and energy. Watercolor is like fly-fishing. It's a feel thing, and you have to know exactly when to set the hook. I like the quickness and difficulty of it."

Historians Will and Ariel Durant, writing about Chinese painting, have said, "The skill of execution, as distinct from the power of perception, feeling and imagination, lies – in Chinese painting – almost entirely in accuracy and delicacy of line. The painter must observe with patient care, possess intense feeling under strict control, conceive his purpose clearly, and then,



Water Rights



Summer Passing

without the possibility of correction, transfer to the silk, with a few continuous and easeful strokes, his representative imagination.”

With watercolors, there is no margin for error, no

going back to fix mistakes. It’s a risk thing, a thing Quinn himself has described as, “...playing hardball.” He cites as an example the great Japanese samurai Miyamoto Musashi, author of *The Book of Five Rings*,



Sharpshin with Flicker

“...the greatest swordsman on earth, who killed 60 men in singlehanded combat and then quit to paint instead, finding that more challenging.”

What Quinn achieves with his art is an illusion. Instead of filling every inch with detail, he uses a brushstroke of suggestion that causes the viewer’s eye to fill in the rest. That use of negative space also focuses the viewer on the subject so totally that secondary images unexpectedly emerge like hidden treasures: an almost abstract work suddenly reveals itself to be reeds and a hidden snipe; a portrait of a

mountain lion at rest is just that until, gradually, you follow the cat’s majestic gaze to discover a hummingbird, and not just any hummingbird, but very specifically a rufous hummingbird.

That specificity is another hallmark of Quinn’s genius. Each animal he paints is a unique individual, subtly different from any other of that species, and each hint of background is true for that animal, so that looking at his work, you are seeing the panorama of the American West as it still is, in hidden, unpopulated places.



Jameson Parker is the author of the memoir *An Accidental Cowboy*. He lives in California.



A VISIT WITH BUCK BRANNAMAN

Grosskopf, Grosskopf and Askew win 2014 Wrangler Pro-Am Roping!



photos by jenny Coxon/Unaphot805.com



Brannaman PRO-AM *Vaquero* ROPING



It's a great headline – a mom and her 11 year-old son – along with pro Billy Askew won our second pro-Am Vaquero Roping this past October. Staci Grosskopf and young Sterling Grosskopf, along with horseman Billy Askew did a super job – as did all the teams in the top eight. It was a grand weekend and we certainly hope you can join us next year, October 23, 24 and 25 in Santa Ynez. We paid to 8th place and distributed over \$50,000 in winnings, making this the best-paying ranch roping in the country. There was no shortage of action and our photographer Jenny Coxon caught some pretty magic moments – some of which we share with you here along with the winning teams. We will have more images on brannaman.com and also



on Jenny's site, www.unaphoto805.com. We thank our wonderful sponsors and everyone who attended. I want to give a special thank you to our two judges, Bob Douglas and Herb French, for their truly professional handling of both arenas. We hope to see you there next year!



2014 Wrangler Pro-Am Roping

Teams 1 – 8

Team Member	Team Member	Pro
1. Staci Grosskopf	Sterling Grosskopf	Billy Askew
2. Roy Pelkey	Christian Clews	Dwight Hill
3. Shamus Haws	Caleb Munns	Scott Grosskopf
4. Logan Ferry	Easton Burkhart	Billy Askew
5. Paul Erickson	Cody Hill	Caleb French
6. Scott McCullough	Pat Boyle	Dan Locke
7. Roy Pelkey	Randy Huber	Bobby Gordon
8. Sterling Grosskopf	Dick Grosskopf	Buck Brannaman



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THE HEN HOUSE

“Wherever the Wind Blows”



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

It started out as a normal Saturday morning in the Hen House, complete with a big breakfast and copious amounts of coffee, when Nevada dragged her boyfriend, Levi out for a day of antiquing; despite his rather obvious lack of enthusiasm.

Three antique stores, and thousands of piles of junk later, Levi trudged along with a supportive “oh that’s neat!” to every random antique potato masher and other oddity that Nevada picked up and found interesting and useful. But then she saw it – its rusty exterior picking up rays of the Autumn Montana sun, beckoning

her closer like a bug to a light bulb. What is “it” you might ask? ... well, it’s what we now call “The Coop.”

The “1951 Kit Trailer,” with its faded turquoise lighting bolt paint job (we’re pretty sure it’s original)

you could say, “had us at hello.” The little fixer upper was small but had great potential.

Levi legitimately thought his girlfriend had gone off the deep end with her newfound love. But this love for antique trailers was slightly genetic. We’re gonna take a quick detour here for a minute to explain.



For the first 9 years of Nevada’s parent’s marriage



“BC” (Before Children), they gallivanted around the country, saddles in tow, in a Boler trailer that was lovingly named “The Septic Tank.” This little wagon was their house on wheels, which allowed them to travel wherever they wished. This was the beginning of their love for travel, which was indubitably (Nevada and Reata are arguing whether or not that is a word) passed down to their children.

Levi managed to pry Nevada’s fingers from the rusted door handle on the little tin trailer, and convince her to head home. He hopefully thought the trailer was in the past. As soon as Nevada got home, she ran to her other antique loving roommates; Reata and Hannah, and blurted out the exciting news of her find. Reata’s boyfriend rolled his eyes and laughed at the girl’s excitement over a tiny tin can. Much to Levi and Catlin’s (Reata’s boyfriend) dismay, Reata’s response was a simple...“I have cash, lets see if we can make a deal.” Catlin’s friend and band partner, Travis, also thought we were nuts, but in an awesome way, and came with us to try to cut a deal on our little wagon. About 20 minutes and a wad of cash later, we were the proud new owners of “The Coop.”

With Catlin’s assistance, we managed to get the trailer home in one piece, in tow of Reata’s quite large dodge pickup; you can only imagine the looks we got driving

home with that rig behind us. There was a moment of near panic when it seemed the little coop was too high for the garage by an inch. But after deflating the tires, we managed to squeeze it in and crisis was averted.

So the boys weren’t too excited about our purchase at first...But when the carpentry and “man stuff” came into play, it was like kids in a candy store! And we assure you we didn’t stop them from wanting

to work on our little house on wheels!

With a new/old barn wood floor, (that we got for free!) barn wood trim, and a new interior paint job, the little Coop was looking mighty fine and much

better than its former state. Randomly, Nevada’s ridiculously talented cousin Nathan (its genetic), stopped by for a visit on his trek westward, just so happens Nathan is an amazing wood carver/espresso making/banjo playing/fire fighter that wanted to do some wood carving inside our trailer; argue we did not.

Though we still have quite a ways to go, our little winter project is coming along nicely and in our reconstruction of it, we’re making sure to in put a piece of each of our personalities.

So the moral of the story is – impulse shopping is sometimes the best kind! And even though it’s just a tiny tin can, the memories we are going to create in it on travels ahead make it just as good as a mansion on a hill – and a lot easier to clean!



The Black Place

A new book of art and photography offers a rare look at one of the Southwest's most intriguing landscapes.

Excerpted from *The Black Place – Two Seasons*, published by the Museum of New Mexico Press.

Photographs by Walter W. Nelson
Text by Walter W. Nelson and Douglas Preston

While living in New York City in the late 1970s and early '80s, I began my journey into the fine arts – photography, painting and sculpture. A strong part of my evolutionary development as an artist came from reading about the lives of artists, especially Georgia O'Keeffe. Her journey of discovery to the Southwest and her transformation as an artist there guided me to New Mexico in 1982. I started a visual quest to locate some of the areas in which O'Keeffe painted. After spending considerable time photographing and painting in these areas, I went in search of the most mystical of her locations: the mysterious landscape she called the Black Place. This is where she painted some of her greatest landscape paintings, a place that transformed her vision as an artist. After much searching, I found the Black Place in the remote badlands of the Navajo Indian Reservation and was able to locate the exact formations she painted.

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Today the Black Place remains a remote and uninhabited landscape known only to a few. It is one of the harshest places in the lower 48 states – bitterly cold in winter, baking hot in summer, devoid of life, swept by ferocious winds, receiving less than four inches of rain a year.

The title of my book, *The Black Place – Two Seasons*, comes from the fact that there are only two visual seasons in the Black Place. The first, spring–summer–fall, reveals a landscape of sun, wind and heat. And then there is winter, when snow, sculpted by violent winds sweeping across earth, transforms the black formations into something otherworldly and utterly beyond words.

In the past 20 years I have returned to the Black Place more than 30 times, sometimes spending days on end photographing in large-format 8 x 10 black-and-white and in digital color. Color in this black-and-white landscape adds to the mystical beauty and austerity of the landforms. These photographs, in addition to their own vision, give the viewer the opportunity to connect to this place that was so central to Georgia O'Keeffe's growth as an artist, and they illuminate her stark, uncompromising vision.

When one enters into the Black Place, one walks slowly in a meditative awareness looking for the gifts that lie within – these I give to you.

— Walter W. Nelson



O'Keefe's Ghost

By Douglas Preston

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In 1947, a paleontologist from the American Museum of Natural History, Edwin H. Colbert, discovered a remarkable dinosaur graveyard on Ghost Ranch, only two miles from Georgia O'Keeffe's house. It was the largest concentration of complete dinosaur skeletons ever found in the New World, and they were uncovered in the very red hills that O'Keeffe loved to paint. She was fascinated by the discovery and became close friends with Colbert. She often visited the site to watch the scientists at work, and she questioned Colbert closely about what life was like millions of years ago, when Ghost Ranch was a swampy, tropical environment.

Dozens of blocks of stone containing the dinosaur

bones were packed in wooden crates and shipped back to the museum in New York. One of those blocks ended up forgotten in the museum's basement and sat there gathering dust until 2006, when a curious graduate student chiseled it open to see what was inside. It revealed not a fossilized dinosaur but a rare and fabulous new species of archosaur, a fleet reptile about the size of a dog, dating back 200 million years. Paleontologists at the museum named it *Effigia okeeffeae*, "O'Keeffe's ghost." She is the only artist, to my knowledge, who has had a fossil named after her. I think she would be pleased.

The most remarkable landscape Georgia O'Keeffe ever painted was the Black Place, a remote, windswept,



lifeless range of hills and gullies on the Navajo Indian Reservation. Orville Cox, a cowboy at Ghost Ranch, probably introduced her to the Black Place in 1935 or 1936. She didn't realize that it was already one of the most important geological and paleontological localities in America. She knew only that she had discovered a landscape of enormous significance to her own artistic vision.

Over the succeeding four decades, she visited the Black Place many times. These trips resulted in an extraordinary outpouring of brilliant work – drawings, pastels and oils – that included some of the greatest landscape paintings ever done by an American artist.

Her last visit to the Black Place occurred in the mid-1970s, when she was almost 90 years old, half-blind, enfeebled and requiring assistance. This gives an idea of just how much this place meant to her.

The Black Place has a history dating back 66 million years, to the time when the Chicxulub asteroid slammed into Earth and caused the mass extinction of the dinosaurs. This event opened up a brave new world of evolutionary possibility for the tiny, rodent-like mammals that scurried about the feet of the dinosaurs. The Black Place formed right after this cataclysm, at the very dawn of the Age of Mammals. It is part of what geologists call the Nacimiento Formation, named after



a nearby mountain range. It comprises the richest fossil beds of early mammals ever found on Earth.

Sixty million years ago, the Black Place was a huge, stately forest of magnolias, figs and other flowering trees, growing in a hot and humid environment. It probably looked something like the virgin forests and swamps of Mississippi and Alabama. The forested plains were crisscrossed with enormous rivers, some as big as the Mississippi, which flowed from the north and east, carrying along sediments from the newborn Rocky Mountains.

From time to time, while the future Black Place was being formed from layers of sediment, a string of nearby volcanoes would pop off. These eruptions rained ash on the Black Place. The rivers also carried ash from these

eruptions, spreading it across the land in layers of black, slippery clay. For 10 million years, ash, mud, clay and sand formed a layer cake of sediment thousands of feet thick.

Around 50 million years ago, a change took place. The area started uplifting. It would eventually rise from only a few hundred feet above sea level to its present altitude of 7,000 feet. This uplift triggered massive erosion. The layers deposited over the previous 10 million years started to wash away. This went on at a slow pace for millions of years. When the last ice age ended and the Southwest dried out, the erosion increased. The Black Place as it appears today was stripped open and exposed only in the last 10,000 years. It is a young landscape composed of 60-million-year-old rocks.





Why does the Black Place look like it does? The black color itself comes not from carbon or coal but from the volcanic ash that once covered the land. The oxidation of iron and manganese in the ash created intense blacks and browns. The green layers come from ash colored by small amounts of copper. The stark white areas are the remains of the ancient riverbeds themselves, which deposited layers of clean quartz sand amid the black. Various minerals in the ash deposits also caused the purple, reddish and yellowish bands. The highest layer, a bright yellow sandstone intermixed with pebbles, was an ancient riverbed, with the color caused once again by the oxidation of trace amounts of iron in the sand.

This is the landscape that inspired the photographs taken by Walter W. Nelson over a period of 30 years. While Nelson originally found the Black Place by following in O’Keeffe’s footsteps, these photographs are not a documentation of O’Keeffe’s work or an attempt to re-create her vision. These photographs, veering from the surreal to the abstract, capture a different but equally valid spirit of the Black Place. This is what makes the Black Place unique. Artists, scientists and photographers have all carried away from this landscape their own profound revelations, all different and yet all true. There is no place like it in America.









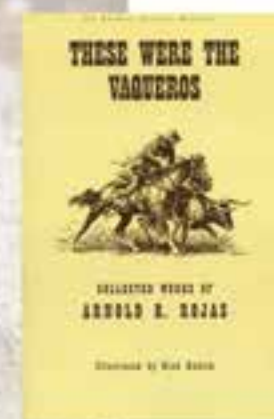
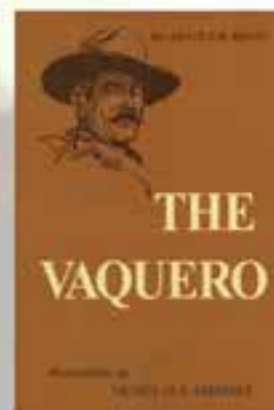
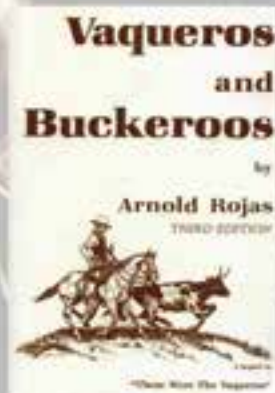
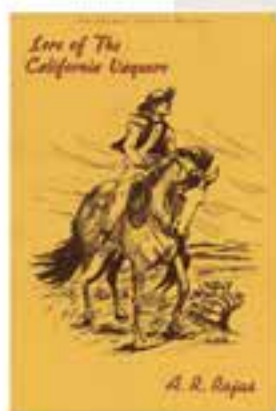






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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Everything in the Song is True

A New York filmmaker chronicles the lives of four western artists.



By Emily Esterson

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Every August for the past 20 years, a group of men have gathered on the Quinlan Ranch, in the mountains near Chama, New Mexico, for a trail ride called simply the Men's Ride. Among the men returning for the 2014 ride were New York filmmakers Douglas Morrione and Nick Goldfarb, for whom the event represented the endpoint of a documentary project about four westerners and their shared commitment to preserving the West's legacy through poetry,

music and art.

The film, *Everything in the Song is True*, directed by Morrione and produced by Goldfarb, was modeled loosely after the Errol Morris film *Fast, Cheap and Out of Control*, which profiles four unique characters and weaves together a broader narrative about life and passion.

Morrione's film got its start more than three years ago, around a Men's Ride campfire, when poet and musician Gary McMahan recited



photos courtesy Douglas Morrione

Director Douglas Morrione at work on *Everything in the Song is True*.



Trick rider Brice Chapman was one of four subjects profiled in the documentary.

for nearly 50 riveted listeners the eight-minute poem “A Cowboyin’ Day.”

When McMahan finished, Morrione turned to the man next to him (it happened to be Tony Mark, producer of the Oscar-winning film *The Hurt Locker*) and said, “Someone should make a movie about this.”

Morrione had been working in sports television, but had begun to delve into reality programming, a genre he considered tortuous; he’d just completed work on a pilot about a family who removed dog manure from Long Island lawns.

Inspired by McMahan’s campfire performance and armed with encouragement from Tony Mark and other Men’s Ride participants, Morrione launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise money for a move from New York to his grandfather’s house in Raton, New Mexico, which would become his headquarters for an ambitious documentary project.

Having tapped McMahan for leads on three additional subjects – rancher, singer and sculptor Jeff Nourse; trick roper Brice Chapman; and quilter and poet Yvonne Hollenbeck – Morrione hit the road to film some 1,900 hours of interviews and other footage. Morrione traveled thousands of miles in a 1993 Ford Taurus so prone to breakdown that the filmmaker became a proficient enough mechanic to fix the car with no tools other than his Leatherman.

Morrione says his subjects were initially hesitant to talk about themselves on film, but he prevailed. “You spend enough time with people,”

he explains, “and they start sharing.” In fact, Morrione made lasting friendships with McMahan, Nourse, Chapman and Hollenbeck.

“If you hang out with someone long enough, eventually they trust you,” Morrione says. “They started to see the connections I was drawing among the characters. Brice asked me, ‘This woman, Yvonne, in South Dakota, what’s her story? I heard her husband was a national champion calf roper.’ I also showed them a lot of footage along the way.”

Over the course of the project, Morrione returned intermittently to New York for editing gigs, got married, had a baby...and moved to Dubai. He also went deeply into debt – at one point, he had a \$23,000 American Express balance and no income with which to pay it – before being bailed out by an oil-rich rancher.

Still, Morrione believed in his film. His raw footage had great characters, and the kind of drama one would



expect in recording three years of four subjects' lives. When Chapman's trick horse colicked and died, Morrione flew from New York to Colorado to interview the horseman, who understandably struggled to control his emotions during filming.

"Animals were unexpected characters in the film," Morrione says. "I'd be filming at sunrise and sunset, and the family dog or cat or horse was always there doing something, so I started filming them, too."

Morrione knew his documentary wouldn't fit the formulas that dictate much of what now appears on television and in theaters. When he discussed the project with network producers, it became clear he was at work on a high-stakes film.

"They'd ask, 'Is the rancher character going to get the cows home before winter?' or 'Are they going to be able to sell the beef this year?' 'Is the trick roper getting too old?'" Morrione recalls. "They wanted to know the story arc in the same way that formulaic television has been fed to people in the past two decades." *Everything in the Song is True* would be broader, about the characters themselves, their ways of life and their legacies, "as opposed to these short narrative arcs with weak payoffs."

With the documentary now ready for the festival circuit, where its makers hope it will be picked up for distribution, Morrione says the greatest surprise in the filmmaking process is how close he became with his subjects.



The film got its start around the campfire of the "Men's Ride" on New Mexico's Quinlan Ranch.

"I would consider them family," he says. "And that made it easier to make the film, and made it easier to not worry about whether someone was going to buy it."



<http://vimeo.com/85924921>

Watch the trailer for *Everything in the Song is True*, featuring musician Gary McMahan, artist Jeff Nourse, trick roper Brice Chapman, and poet Yvonne Hollenbeck.



Emily Esterson is a writer living in New Mexico.

Road Trip List

Ronstadt, Wolf, and Browne

It sounds like a legal firm and those three names could legally say that they are amongst the most influential artists in popular music – specifically the California sound from the late '60s and '70s.

Duets

Linda Ronstadt

Rhino Records

Rhino is highly skilled at the “Re-issue” and this one – a compilation that features Linda Ronstadt recordings with everyone from Frank Sinatra to Don Henley from the late '70s and early '80s – is a show-stopper. Lest we forget that Ms. Ronstadt can no longer sing due to difficulties of Parkinson's disease, but it didn't stop the savvy singer from creating a mix from previous recordings that became a huge hit on its release and a Ronstadt chart topper. Something she hasn't had for almost twenty-five years. Of the record, she told Randy Lewis of the *LA Times*, “It's so much fun,” she said, “so much

better than just singing by yourself. It's like a journey, or a road trip, which isn't so much fun if you go by yourself. You have somebody to

share the load with. The thing I like about singing duets is that I get things out of my voice I never get singing by



myself. Singing with Aaron Neville, he pulled stuff out of my voice I never could have gotten, because if he's providing XYZ, I have to put in ABC, and usually I don't have to put in ABC," she said. "I was surprised to find myself making all these sounds – it was like a ride at Disneyland, and each one is real different from the other, a different ticket. I learned how to do things with my voice I'd never have learned otherwise."

The album moves from the tracks with the likes of Ann Savoy through country pairings with Dolly Parton – on the folk-country standard “I Never Will Marry” –

Emmylou Harris, Carl Jackson and Laurie Lewis into her Southern California country-rock collaborations with Don Henley, J.D. Souther and James Taylor to her pop-soul tinged work with New Orleans singer Neville and R&B star James Ingram. It wraps up with with Bette Midler and Frank Sinatra. An astounding work.

Treasures Left Behind: Remembering Kate Wolf

Various Artists

Red House Records

This is another tribute album celebrating the work of singer songwriter Kate Wolf. During the '70s and '80s, Ms. Wolf recorded ten solo albums that contained some true standards of the era – songs that musicians today continue to record and cover – “Here in California,” “Love Still Remains,” “Across the Great Divide,” “Unfinished Life,” and “Give Yourself to Love” many recorded by the likes of Nanci Griffith, Lucinda Williams and Emmylou Harris.



She was born in San Francisco in 1942 and started a career in folk music with her band Wildwood Flower. She was beginning to get national attention with her very California sound until her untimely death from leukemia in 1986.

Kate Wolf’s music is celebrated each year toward the end of June at the Kate Wolf Memorial Music Festival, held



at Black Oak Ranch in Laytonville, California. Several thousand guests attend this outdoor festival, which is regularly headlined by popular folk musicians such as Nina Gerber and Greg Brown. The festival traditionally closes with Wolf’s song, “Give Yourself to Love.”

Her friend and later band member, singer Nina Gerber put together this charming tribute that rings of the sound of Northern California afternoons, on the way to a Renaissance Faire or some other equally rural distraction. Artists singing on the record include Lucinda Williams, Utah Phillips, Kathy Mattea, Nanci Griffith and Rosalie Sorrels among others. Something for your next drive to Big Sur.

Standing In The Breach

Jackson Browne

Inside Recordings

Jackson Browne delivers one of his most thoughtful albums in his new release *Standing In The Breach*. With writing that brings back the mood and guitar sound reminiscent of his 1974 release, *Late For The Sky*, this record is a reflective look at the country’s state – both



political and environmental – topics Browne has never been afraid to weigh in on. And in this very comfortable folk-rock album, he continues his fight for humanity and the planet.

A brim tip to a past moment is his song “Leaving Winslow” in which he summarizes



some of his frustrations with government and environmental concerns – things he has sung about his entire career. In his hit “Take it Easy” written with Glenn Frey, we recall he was “standing on a corner/in Winslow, Arizona/and such a fine sight to see/It’s a



girl, my Lord/in a flatbed Ford/slowin’ down to take a look at me.” In “Leaving Winslow” he sings, “Station to station, coast to coast/Not that much of anything in mind/No expectations, way less than most/But I wanted to see Winslow one more time.”

Jackson Browne is 66 years old but the songs on *Breach* do not betray his continued commitment to fight for what he believes. He may know everything might not be fixed in his lifetime but on he fights. There’s a kick starting moment in his song “Which Side” when he asks which side are we on in the fight to save the planet, reminiscent of Pete Seeger singing Florence Reece’s 1931 Union song of mine workers fighting to unionize, “Which Side Are You On?” asking all assembled about making a commitment in life. In *Standing In The Breach*, it is the contemporary listener, Jackson Browne is asking as well to believe in the “C” word and take a stand. This is one of his best efforts. A memorable record.



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A Western Moment



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This lovely slotted, saddle string concho was made by Nevada Watt, one of our Hen House writers. Nevada started doing silver in high school with the inspiration and help of her parents, Jeremiah and Colleen Watt. Today, Nevada attends Montana State University and sells her wonderful silver and silk scarves on her website, www.nevadawatt.com



TWO WRAPS AND A HOOEY

Remembering David

*Sweet bird of youth, no easy keeper
Flown with the seasons all too soon.*

— Tom Russell



David Raymond Stoecklein 1949 – 2104

We lost a big one recently. A big one in that photographer David Stoecklein had a huge effect on the collective “we” in the west. The west had no greater champion in its consistently loving depiction than in David’s work. His love of the west – it’s people, vistas and general vibe, was always in his work. Whether he was doing commercial

work for some gigantic client like Chevrolet, Coke, Eddie Bauer or Budweiser or working on one of his image series that would sooner than later appear in a book or a magazine, David seemed to be everywhere.

Photographers can be focused on getting the shot and David was no exception, but he made it look so easy even though he told me many times that certain, rather



spontaneous looking images took many hours or even days to set up. He could wait. Wait for the light, the snow or the rain to be just right. He had patience in his art.

One of his most memorable and popular images – *Hero of the Storm* – shows a horseback cowboy, with a rescued newborn calf across his saddle, navigating through a blinding snowstorm. The only light is from a lantern the cowboy is carrying as he and the calf huddle against the cold. It is an unforgettable image, yet one of many David designed and executed.

Beyond his own work, David gave photography clinics and workshops as he believed in sharing his knowledge openly and broadly. David was a giver and friend to everyone he met. His family above all, was his pride and he will live on the hearts of his family and friends as well as in the legacy of his incredible body of work. It will be very hard to not see that smile of his every time he passed through on an assignment or just to say hi. He left us too soon and we wish him peace. Fare thee well, David. Fare thee well. BR



photo by David Stoecklein

David’s thoughtful approach to his imagery could always lead us to a great story. Here is a photo of two of the late Bill Dorrance’s saddle. David’s caption follows. “Bill Dorrance was a legendary California horseman and rancher. Bill won the saddle on the left, which was made by G.S. Garcia, in the Hackamore Class at the Salinas Rodeo in 1948; he rode it until he died in 1999. The saddle on the right is one of the first of seven Hamley saddles that were made on this particular Wade tree.”



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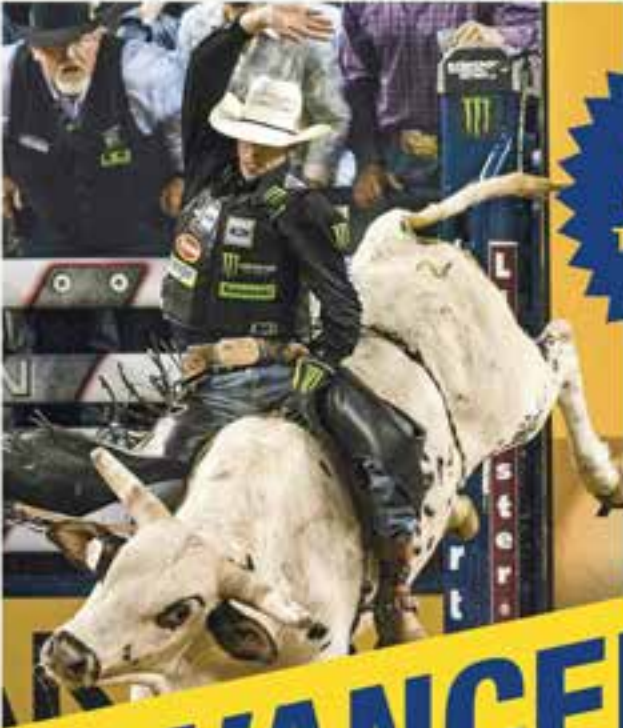
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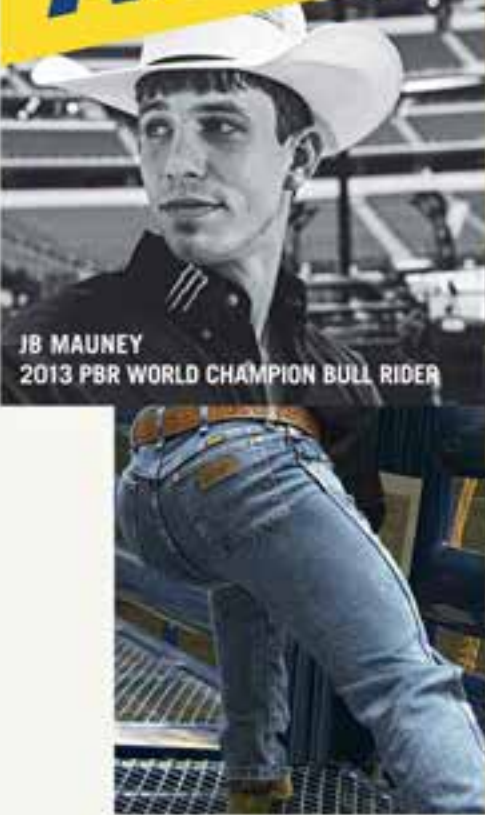
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