PVFR Works to Move on From Internal Strife

By Dottie Farrar

Members of the Patagonia Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company (PVFR) elected officers for a one-year term at their June 4 general meeting. Ike Isakson was re-elected as chief, a position he has held since 2016. “This will be my last year as Chief,” Ike Isakson said. “I’ll still be here, just not as Chief. This department is my life.”

Tim Regan, who has been with the department since 2019, was elected as Assistant Chief. Justin McEldowney was re-elected as Secretary/Treasurer. Zay Hartigan was elected as Fire Captain, Marc Meredith as Medical Chief, and Ariel Krzyz as Medical Captain.

The June election followed months of turmoil at PVFR, fueled by rumors, anger, and speculation concerning bylaws, board members, department officers, and perceived inappropriate behavior toward women.

Problems arose when some members of the department felt that there had been inadequate notification of the intent to nominate and elect Board members at the Sept. 4, 2022 general meeting. (General meetings are held each month on the Tuesday before the general meeting. At the November Board meeting, the Board decided to hold an election of department officers in January, 2023. This was an unusual move, according to Chief Isakson, as there had not been an election in 15 years, except for the one held after the passing of Chief John Ashcraft in 2016. The vote for department officers took place on Jan. 8, 2023. Chief Isakson was reelected, but later in January the Board voided the election. They were concerned that the bylaws had not been properly followed after objections were raised that some members should not have been allowed to vote. At the Feb. 28 Board meeting, however, “it was decided that in good faith everyone on the roster is a member, and that better records should be kept going forward to determine who meets the criteria to vote,” according to Herman.

“I do feel there was an effort to remove me from office,” Isakson said, referring to the push to void the January election. “This has taken a

See PVFR, p.15

Emergency Road Blocked by New Property Owner

A recently posted sign warns drivers that a long established route across private properties, used by residents when the Sonoita Creek floods, is no longer accessible.

By Marion Vendituoli

Residents living along Blue Haven Rd. in Patagonia are facing an unexpected challenge this monsoon season. Their long-established emergency route across private properties, used when the wash on Pennsylvania Ave. is impassable due to flooding, has been blocked by a property owner.

Nathan Hoeme, who recently bought 3.11 acres off Grey Hawk Trail, a private road that runs off Blue Haven, has closed off access on both ends of his property, effectively blocking a road that has historically enabled residents to avoid the Sonoita Creek wash when it floods. He posted a sign at the wash on Pennsylvania Ave. stating “All high-water access between Grey Hawk Lane and North Ave. is being decommissioned. Please make plans accordingly for the 2023 monsoon season and beyond.”

“People are pretty upset,” area resident Cholla Duir said. “Nobody feels that this is normal behavior for a small town.” Duir is concerned that in an emergency, people will be forced to try to drive through the flooded wash to seek help. “Somebody’s going to get hurt or killed crossing the creek,” Duir said.

Patagonia Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company Chief Ike Isakson has witnessed the water running in the wash higher than the height of a car. “It happens every year,” he said. “I don’t remember a year when the creek hasn’t flooded. And I can’t remember when [that route] was ever blocked. It was always open when the creek flooded.”

Patagonia Town Manager Ron Robinson noted that it can take up to 48 hours for floodwaters to recede in the event of a major storm.

The route that Hoeme has blocked off runs somewhat parallel to his northwestern property line. The property abuts land owned by Tucson Audubon, and there is a possibility that Hoeme’s gate on North Ave. may indeed have been placed on Audubon property, although this has not been confirmed.

Hoeme’s decision to block the route affects not only the 45 residents who lie on the far side of the wash, but also visitors to the Audubon Society’s Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve. “From what I know, and after talking with Nathan, we do not have an easement through the blocked emergency route,” wrote Luke Safford, Director of Engagement and Education for the Tucson Audubon Society. “We are
By Kat Crockett

For the past several years, residents of eastern Santa Cruz County have attempted to be heard by the County Board of Supervisors (BOS) on a host of proposals and actions benefiting South32 and its Hermosa mining project. The BOS has repeatedly disregarded public objections, concerns, and suggestions and instead have unanimously voted in favor of all of South32’s wishes without regard to expressed concerns on safety, health and environmental impacts—often with minimal transparency and little to no advance public notice.

Now, residents of Rio Rico have begun to experience the same frustration that we in eastern SCC have been experiencing for years. The supervisors appear united in their desire to bring jobs into the county, regardless of the cost and potential dangers to residents, miners, tourists, our fragile environment and overall quality of life.

Supervisor Manuel Ruiz has repeatedly commented during public discussions about the need to diversify SCC industry to give young people the opportunity to be successful and become voters, taxpayers and landowners. Supervisor Bruce Bracker, who represents the district where the mine is located, has gone on record stating, “The goal is to make sure that we see the long-term benefit of having mining in our community.” Supervisor Rudy Molera said he would like to see the community continue to grow, especially if it leads to new career options beyond the Border Patrol, local government, or the produce distribution warehouses. He wants to make it easier to “keep families together” by giving young people more educational and employment opportunities near where they grew up.

However, many voters, taxpayers, and landowners are increasingly opposed to the mine. Over the past several years, the west side of the County has remained fairly silent on South32 issues, leaving a small population on the east side to battle the big industrial giant supported by county officials. Now, though, South32’s plans are impacting the west side of the county, and generating an uproar by residents who are concerned about safety and health, environmental damage, traffic and lack of transparency by government officials and South32. Sound familiar?

It started last December, when the BOS approved a resolution promoting economic development and land use along the I-19 corridor in the new Rio Rico “vitality zone,” giving the appearance of paving the way for South32 to build their remote operating center and manganese processing plant there. In February, the County hosted a study session on amending the Zoning and Development Code to allow for major changes to existing land-use designations. The amendment, known as Article 31, was originally floated as a county-wide initiative for “specific zoning plan districts.” However, after public objections, the county decided to limit the code to only Rio Rico. In June this year the BOS unanimously adopted Article 31.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes, Andrew Jackson, a major landowner in the Rio Rico area, was working up a plan for mixed-use development of the 3,500 acres he owns on both sides of I-19, stretching from Ruby Road to Tumacacori. Jackson’s original proposal was submitted to the county in March, then resubmitted in May. A limited number of public notices were posted and mailed in mid-June, shortly before a community meeting scheduled for June 20, where Jackson presented his plan to a large group of Rio Rico residents. Many of the attendees only learned about the meeting through social media.

Jackson’s ambitious multi-use plan proposed to change land use classification of 18 parcels, currently identified as ranch and mixed use. Most of the crowd objected to the proposal. Many believed South32 was looming in the background.

Only two days later, the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) met to hear Jackson’s proposal at the county complex. During his presentation to the Commission, Jackson referenced a meeting he was invited to several years ago consisting of residents from Patagonia and Tumacacori. “We won’t support any mining on the trial area and change the land use with additional clarification. A July 8 story in the Arizona Daily Star quoted Supervisor Molera as saying, “If it’s going to be something that’s going to jeopardize our health and safety, I’m not going to want it…I will not allow our health and safety to be put in danger.” SCC County Manager Jesus Valdez was quoted in the same article as saying, “We won’t support any mining along the Santa Cruz River or near our residents.” Where was their concern for the environment and the communities when the County consistently ignored the concerns of residents from Patagonia and Sonoita? On July 31, after weeks of criticism from outraged local residents, Jackson abruptly withdrew his proposal and the BOS’s August 15 public hearing was canceled.

The west side of the county, where the majority of the county’s population resides, clearly has political leverage that we do not have here in eastern SCC. We can only hope that their influence will help the Supervisors finally sit up and pay some attention to the concerns of residents on our side of the Santa Ritas.
South32 Pushes Forward

South32’s Pat Risner updates the BOS in July on the progress of the Hermosa Project.

By Kat Crockett

Things have been moving quickly the last two months for the Hermosa Project. Of particular interest to residents of eastern Santa Cruz County are the federal government’s decision to fast track the permitting process for the mining operation in the Patagonia Mountains, resistance to the idea of locating a manganese processing plant and operations center in Rio Rico, the reevaluation of the project by parent company South32, and the potential for the company to sign a Good Neighbor Agreement.

Fast-41

In an interview with the PRT on July 7, Hermosa Project President Pat Risner discussed the expedited permitting of the project by the federal government. “We don’t need a NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] process to get started on our private land,” Risner said. “It’s really just some ancillary infrastructure to support the full development that impacts federal lands, not the initial mine development itself. However, this NEPA process is really important because long term, for the full development, we do have some impacts on federal land.”

Hermosa is the first mining project in the U.S. to be selected for fast tracking the permitting process by the federal government. “We don’t need a NEPA process to get started on our private land,” Risner said. “It’s really just some ancillary infrastructure to support the full development that impacts federal lands, not the initial mine development itself. However, this NEPA process is really important because long term, for the full development, we do have some impacts on federal land.”

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Risner pointed out that the expedited permitting could speed up the process for the development of the ‘Gas Line Route.’ The company is constructing the Cross Creek Connector (CCR), purportedly a temporary road for transport of construction materials, workers and ore, that will run from Harshaw Rd. to SR82. Opponents are concerned about the heavy traffic on narrow, rural roads north through Sonoita and south through the town of Patagonia. The Gas Line route would provide access from the mine to SR82 south of Patagonia, sending traffic towards Nogales. “Getting...that route as soon as possible is a priority for us, as well, and we believe that long term that route being the primary route for the bulk of the life of the mine,” Risner said. “It does address some of the concerns that have been raised by the community about traffic, so we are still committed to that.”

In response to Supervisor Bruce Bracker’s question at the July 18 Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors’ meeting about the safety of ore trucks traveling over public roads, Risner replied, “We will truck from the site to the production facility in ‘rotainers’ that are sealed. Even if they fall off the truck, they are essentially indetectable. They cannot bust open. So, this material never gets exposed to the environment. We will monitor community dust levels along those routes. We will have a baseline dust level prior to doing anything so we understand what it was before our activity. And we will have the community baseline health and hygiene information just like we do with our employees.”

South32 is currently estimating that it will be trucking manganese ore from the Hermosa mine for 60 years.

Manganese Processing Plant and Remote Operations Center

South32 plans to build a plant to produce battery grade manganese. During his presentation at the Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors (BOS) July 18 meeting, Risner said they were evaluating several potential locations for the facility but would prefer to locate it within Santa Cruz County to create local jobs and increase local supplier opportunities. He noted the facility would require approximately 150-250 acres.

South32 also plans to build a Remote Operating Center to allow employees to remotely monitor and operate the underground equipment at the Hermosa site. This facility “can enhance safety and productivity, reduce commuter traffic, and enable a more diverse See S32, p. 16

Step By Step

An Update on Patagonia Area Trails

Members of the Dirtbags volunteer trail work group take a break for a photo. “We don’t work fast, but we sure work cheap!” quipped one Dirtbagger.

By Robert Gay

The various trails in and around Patagonia have been given some love recently by several organizations, often aided by residents. Here’s a look at what’s been happening on the trails, and what may be coming in the future.

The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy (TNC)’s Geoffrey Platts Trail received a big dose of care this spring from a visiting group of roughly 100 Arizona Conservation Corps (AZCC) members. Coordinating with TNC’s Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve manager Aaron Mrotek, the Conservation Corps members have also worked on small trail rerouting projects, invasive species removal, and clearing for the Cemetery Trail. They report loving the work and education, and that AZCC will be back again this winter.

In other trails-related work by TNC, Mrotek reports that new trail mapping and signage has been designed and will be installed this fall at the preserve. Mrotek uses signage and the trails themselves to gently guide visitors without inadvertently encouraging foot traffic everywhere. Because it’s a preserve, the goal of the TNC trail system is to get people into nature, but not onto every square yard of it. Sometimes arriving at a good viewpoint is enough, and strategic bench placement is part of many local trails.

TNC’s maintenance of the Cemetery Trail was also aided this year by the Borderlands Earth Care Youth (BECY) group. BECY members began with an assessment of plants and wildlife they observed along the trail, since a core piece of their project-based ecological learning is wildlife awareness. Further work on the Cemetery Trail by the end of this year will reroute the climb from the flat portion up to the Cemetery fence. The new alignment will fix unduly steep steps and control erosion.

The Dirtbags

Patagonia’s Dirtbag group works all over the region. This year, they’ve exercised trail skills in the Wildlife Corridors network, including building a new half-mile loop called The Discovery Trail. Longtime Dirtbagger John Hughes reports that the team has also been working on two Patagonia Lake area trails, doing vegetation removal and erosion responses. Still other Dirtbagger projects included the Paul Baird Trail connecting the Paton Center to the Geoffreys Platts trail, and firewise clearing of undergrowth for the TNC property bordering Costello Street. Hughes reported that the group has been very busy over the past year and that a strong monsoon season this summer could produce another large vegetation year. The “baggers” welcome volunteers. Contact Hughes at birdwatcher.hughes@gmail.com.

Harshaw Rd.

Since the realignment of the Arizona Trail (AZT), Harshaw Rd. sees far fewer hikers. Still, for gravel bikers, Harshaw Rd. remains a gateway to many trails in Patagonia Mountains and the San Rafael Valley.

Where Harshaw Road encounters the Hermosa Project, South32 has installed a half-mile detour. The detour climbs the mine site’s main entry road toward a guardhouse at the ridge the project straddles, then drops back to Harshaw Rd. The detour includes a bike lane and is planned to last until October. South32 has declined to state their reasons for closing the road, but they do have the full cooperation of the County.

See Trails, p. 20
Inside Omphalos Winery
Elgin’s Newest Vineyard

By Dottie Farrar

Omphalos Winery, owned by Tom Messier and his wife, Teresa, is the latest winery to locate in the Elgin-Sonoita area, the 20th vineyard to be established in eastern Santa Cruz County.

The Messiers are currently making white, red, rosé, and fruit wines under their Omphalos label, and are offering their wines for tasting and sale at Second Saturday Sonoita at the COOP on Route 82 in Sonoita. “Come out and join us, say hello, and try our wines which we are sure you will enjoy,” said Messier. He is also pouring and selling Omphalos wines at wine festivals around the Southwest, and offers tasting by appointment at their new tasting room in Willcox.

Messier began his winemaking journey back in the 2000s after moving from Connecticut to Arizona. In their Arizona kitchen the couple began experimenting with making wine for science of winemaking, he enrolled in Yavapai College, in Clarkdale, AZ, obtaining a degree in enology and viticulture. While at the college he worked with students processing wine, poured wine at the Southwest Wine Center and worked for a time at a winery in Scottsdale.

In 2019 the Messiers became co-owners of their own winery which they named Omphalos. They chose the name because they were drawn to the ancient Greek Myth that “the Earth’s epicenter was found at the merging point of two soaring eagles dispatched by Zeus from opposite ends of the world. There the famous Omphalos Stone was laid to mark the center of all things. We have taken the story another step with modern GPS and have lightheartedly determined that the Omphalos Stone is on our property in Willcox,” said Messier.

Messier came to Elgin to work with James Callahan, owner of Rune Winery, whose wine is produced at Deep Sky Vineyard, owned by Kim and Philip Asmundson. Deep Sky serves as a custom crush facility for several local vineyards.

In addition to producing his own wine under the Omphalos label, Messier is now the assistant winemaker for both Rune and Deep Sky, as well as the cellar master, a term that refers to a person who supervises the making of wine, manages inventory, cellar cleanliness, the bottling, and offers the occasional tour. Messier especially enjoys using the state of the art, Italian made, machinery at Deep Sky. “I am extremely grateful to the Asmundsons and Callahan for all of their help and guidance,” Messier said.

This summer the Messiers are moving to their new home in Sonoita. Teresa Messier has been commuting between Mesa, where she works at the VA, and Elgin, where she helps with the winery and harvests on weekends. Future plans include opening a tasting room in Willcox and growing their own wines, an expensive capital commitment. Like many other local vintners Messier will, for now, continue to buy grapes from Southern Arizona wine growers.

In return for all the support from the Elgin-Sonoita community Messier said, “We would be happy to donate wine for a benefit, help other wineries when needed and work with students who need hours to complete degree requirements. And again come by Sonoita Second Saturday and meet us.” To make an appointment to visit their Willcox tasting room call 480-739-8447. More information can be found at OmphalosWinery.com

How Grapes Become Wine

By Dottie Farrar

Deep Sky Vineyard is a custom crush facility in Elgin that processes wine for Deep Sky, Rune, Autumn Sage, and Omphalos Wineries. Most of the larger wineries in southern Arizona process their own wines, but, for some, a custom crush facility makes economic sense, the necessary machinery being so expensive. “They bring the grapes, and they get them back bottled,” said Kim Asmundson, co-owner of Deep Sky Vineyards.

“We anticipate continuing as a custom crush,” Asmundson said. “The equipment is so expensive; we have a fabulous winemaker, top of the line equipment and capacity. We consider it a service to other vineyards, and for us, financially, it makes sense.”

From the beginning of harvest in August, and into October, vineyards truck their grapes to Deep Sky in white bins, 1,000 pounds to a bin. A forklift transfers the white bins to an elevator which carries them up and dumps the grapes into a de-stemmer machine. The stems will be composted, while the grapes and some juice are pumped into even larger white bins where fermentation takes place.

Rune, Deep Sky and Omphalos use naturally occurring yeast to ferment the grapes, as do 15% of the local wineries. The other wineries use a commercial fermenter, which allows greater control of the “taste.” Fermentation takes place in 14-20 days, as the yeast eats the sugar in the grapes. Sugar content goes down, alcohol goes up until finally sugar is zero. During this time, twice a day, Messier “punches it down,” using a punch tool to punch the skins down to the bottom of the bin. After fermentation, the bins contain mostly juice.

The bins are put back on the elevator and dumped into the press which squishes the grapes for about two hours. The resulting wine drips into the bottom of the press and is then pumped back into the bins. Next the wine is pumped into wooden barrels which have been sanitized by pressure washing, steaming at 180° for five minutes, and sprayed with ozone. Hooped, wooden barrels are used in fine wine making because they allow air to come in and the alcohol and water to evaporate out. The barrels are topped once a month to replace volume lost to evaporation. If during the barreling process a few barrels are less than full, perhaps half full, the wine in these barrels is pumped into kegs. Next, argon is added, forcing any remaining air out. The wine is then pumped back into barrels which have been sanitized, remaining there until bottling. The wines will age in barrels for around nine to ten months until bottling time, which begins in June at Deep Sky.

In the production room, the bottling process begins with the pumping of the wine from the barrels into large, stainless steel tanks. There are four large tanks at Deep Sky, each holding 1070 gallons, and one slightly smaller one.

The bottling machine resembles a giant expresso machine. Bottling is incredibly quick with 46 bottles a minute filled, corked, sealed and labeled. It takes six people to keep up with the speed of the machine. One person places the bottles on the conveyor belt, while a second person monitors the machine. Two people grab the filled bottles as they come off the machine and place them in the case boxes. Another labels the boxes. Next, the case boxes move to pallets, to be placed in a climate controlled room where the temperature and humidity are closely monitored, and the wines are tasted periodically to judge quality. It takes at least 18 months for red wines to be ready for the tasting rooms, while whites need a little less time. However, some reds will age for multiple years until they are deemed “just right.” Presently, there are 2018s in the climate controlled storage room and even a few cases of 2017s.
JAMES WEIR SUMNER
JANUARY 26, 1936 - MAY 9, 2023

This is a celebratory notice of the life that James Sumner had, and although he is no longer with us in person, he lives on through his influence on the lives of his family, his community, and his service to his country. He was confirmed in the Episcopal Church and later became an active member of the Methodist Church, serving where needed.

He loved the road trip and loved to fly. Travel was a joy to him and his greatest memories of his service in the U.S. Army was his opportunity to travel during his leave. He valued his service to his country, but made a point to learn about the countries where he was stationed in, traveled to, and served. His love of telling stories and ability to connect with people gave him the ability to fit in no matter where he went.

His service as an Officer of the Peace – what he preferred to call himself rather than a highway patrolman, or ranger, or police officer – was his love for helping others was clearly demonstrated throughout his career and were instrumental in the success and growth of his business.

He had an incredible journey and will be greatly missed by all.

His family and community will have the opportunity to honor his service to his country during an interment ceremony at 1300 South Buffalo Soldier Trail in Sierra Vista, Arizona, on Monday, August 7 at 11:00 a.m. (Please arrive by 10:40am.) Immediately following the ceremony, a lunch reception to celebrate his life will be held at VFW Post 9972 in Sierra Vista beginning at 11:30 a.m. Southern Arizona Memorial Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the Arizona Rangers State Museum or to the Arizona Rangers Sonoita Company.

Day of the Service
All funeral processions will need to arrive at the Veterans Cemetery’s Committal Service Staging area located near the Administration Building 30 minutes prior to the scheduled service. You will notice an electronic Marquee Sign on your right side. There is signage that will direct you to the staging area. An arrow will be on the ground of the right turn behind the Marquee, follow that line all the way around the administration building to the staging area stop sign. You will notice a COMMITTAL SERVICE Stop Sign. Park there in the road and a cemetery representative will meet you there. A cemetery representative will greet the funeral home director and family and verify any additional information.

NANCY STEWART CALHOUN
MAY 17, 1940 - MAY 27, 2023

Nancy Stewart Calhoun, a loving mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, passed away peacefully on May 27, 2023, in Norco, CA, at the age of 83 after a brave battle with T-Cell Lymphoma.

Born on May 17, 1940, in Detroit, MI, Nancy was known for her courageous, wise, and loving spirit, which she carried throughout her entire life.

Nancy was the proud business owner of Teamworx, a corporate consulting and training company. She completed her professional journey working at American Express having worked in training and development, where she gained invaluable experience that shaped her future endeavors. Her dedication and passion for helping others were clearly demonstrated throughout her career and were instrumental in the success and growth of her business.

She had a diverse array of interests and was an accomplished soprano who sang opera, bringing joy to those who had the pleasure of witnessing her stunning performances. At the age of 70, Nancy discovered her talent for writing poetry, and she went on to publish two books of poetry that touched the hearts of many readers. A lover of animals, Nancy was particularly passionate about her golden doodle, Dudley, who was a constant and loyal companion.

Nancy’s main focus and most significant source of pride were her beloved family members. In 1985 she married Thomas Calhoun, the love of her life, and they were married for 31 years until his death in 2016. She devoted herself to her loving children, Linda Bejenaru (Eugene), Laura Prior (Robert), David Stewart (Deanna), and Scott Stewart (JoAnn). Her caring and nurturing nature extended to her cherished grandchildren, Erin Camarda, Katie Bauer, Matthew Budde (Denae), Nate Prior (Samantha), Amy Alverson (Tedy), Lyndsey McCallister (Michael), Hyun-il Park, Claire Stewart, and Jonah Stewart. Nancy took great delight in her beautiful great-grandchildren, Alli-son Camarda, Daniel Camarda, Charlie Camarda, James Budde, Alyssa Budde, Fletcher Ebrahimi, Aaron Prior, and Isaac Prior.

Throughout her life, Nancy was a beacon of wisdom and love, graciously sharing her kindness, guidance, and affection with all those around her. She was not only a shining example for her family, but also a source of inspiration for everyone that had the privilege to know her. Her legacy as a successful businesswoman, dedicated mother, and talented artist will live on through the lives of those who knew and loved her.

Nancy’s life will be celebrated with fond memories and heartfelt appreciation for the lasting impact she has left on the lives of her cherished family members and the countless individuals she touched throughout her life. We remember Nancy as a courageous, wise, and loving soul who exemplified the very best in life and who will forever be deeply missed by those who were fortunate to have known her.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, Sept. 23 at 4pm at the Bend-erly-Kendall Opera House in Patagonia. All are invited. Anyone interested in participating please contact Christina Wilhelm for more information. Phone: 617-645-4239. Email: scfpaexec@gmail.com

PATAGONIA REGIONAL TIMES AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2023

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actively working to figure out how we might be able to change Nathan’s mind about blocking the route and how we can work with the Town of Patagonia and our neighbors to find a solution.”

Melissa Fratello, the Executive Director of Tucson Audubon, wrote to the PRT, “We are all keenly aware of the potential danger this situation poses for residents in Patagonia, as well as visitors to the Paton Center, and are attempting to work toward a solution. Unfortunately, given the abrupt and immediate decision made by Nathan Hoeme to restrict access so close to monsoon season, it is unlikely we can come to an agreement/compromise as quickly as we’d like to avoid folks potentially becoming stranded.”

Construction of a road across the Audubon property could resolve the issue, but this may not be possible due to conservation easements on the land there. Town Manager Robinson stated that seizing the road through Hoeme’s property by declaring it a prescriptive easement is not an option because the road was not used regularly for ten or more years, but only during flooding events. “There are zero other options,” Patagonia Town Council member Francesca Claverie said. Claverie, who lives off Blue Haven Rd. has met with other concerned residents searching for a safe solution to this issue. “It’s really stressful,” she said. Claverie pointed out that the historic emergency route also cuts across her parents’ property, but that they have no problems with residents using it.

Duir believes that the Town needs to do something. They “need to build another road,” she said. Robinson would like to see a bridge built over the wash and has been in contact with Senator Kyrsten Sinema’s office looking for funds.

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Robinson says he has approached South32 regarding funding construction of the bridge but has not yet received a response. In a recent interview with the PRT, Hermosa Project President Pat Risner denied any knowledge of the problem or of Robinson’s request for help with funding. “I’m not aware of the situation,” he said. “I’m not aware that we have been approached about a bridge.” Risner also denied that the dewatering plan at the Hermosa Project would increase the potential for Sonoita Creek flooding.

Even if the Town can secure funds to build a bridge across the wash, it would probably take two to three years to complete the project, leaving residents with no access to an emergency route in the interim.

“It is my hope that while the Town moves forward with plans to construct a bridge - a process that is likely to take years - we can come to some compromise that will temporarily allow access for residents through Mr. Hoeme’s property,” Fratello wrote, “though I am uncertain he will be amenable to that and understand that he is not obligated to do so.” When asked what PVFR would do in an emergency situation, Chief Isakson responded, “We will cut locks, whatever we have to do if there’s an emergency on the other side of the creek... We can commandeer any property during an emergency. If they stopped us from reaching an emergency and something happened, they would be liable.”

Hoeme declined to comment for this article.

This map shows the location of the newly blocked emergency route off of Grey Hawk Trail in Patagonia.
Patagonia Celebrates the 4th of July

Photos by Marion Vendituoli and Jamie Smith

Patagonia Celebrates the 4th of July

PCAA’S Summer Art Camp went off without a hitch during the month of June. Teaching artists helped campers make paper collages, marble mazes, ceramic birds and bowls. Ms. Tammie, a long time Summer Art Camp instructor led a class on homemade kites where kids learned how to sew on a sewing machine. The highlight of this year’s Camp was a trip to the Sonoita Creek where kids were given permission to trek through the water during the hottest part of June. Summer Camp ended with an art show at the Patagonia Museum and a BBQ potluck for friends and family on June 29.

Photo by Cassina Farley

Sonoita Fairgrounds
3142 S. Highway 83
Sonoita, AZ

Gates Open 10 am
Junior Rodeo - Noon
Main Performance - 2 pm

GCPRA Sanctioned Event

Come enjoy the
Steak Fry & Live Music
Sat. and Sun.
Starring Nightlife

For more information and to buy tickets visit
www.sonoitafairgrounds.com/labor-day

Kids’ Art on Display

Campers at the Patagonia Creative Arts Assn. Summer Camp created bird bells that were on display at the opening of the Camp’s art show.

By Cassina Farley

Photo by Cassina Farley
LIFE AMONG THE HUMANS

By Martin Levowitz

“They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war anymore.” Isaiah, 2:4. 700 B.C.

Could have fooled me!

For the past week or so, with the mercury north of 100 degrees, a small blue bird with bright orange epaulets (it is a grosbeak, I’ve been told) has spent its whole day, dawn to dusk, assaulting his reflection in the south-facing windows of our living room. He takes his own reflection for a foe/competitor and cannot stop attacking it. He’s really, really into it. I don’t know when he even eats. I’m pretty sure that if a gorgeous female grosbeak in her lingerie came waltzing by, our little macho feathered fool would be too occupied with his dumb war to even care.

There’s a touching, disheartening documentary on Netflix called Chimp Empire. We share most of our DNA with chimps; 98%. While capable of love and tenderness, the apes are very cognizant of who is in their clan, who is not. They hate and mistrust those who aren’t and do their best to murder them. The leader of each clan’s the toughest male, who with his friends and allies runs the show, while younger, tough-guy males, are always watching Number One. They yearn to dis and topple him. (Golly, they’re human, after all!)

The conflict in Ukraine is getting old. It’s easy to identify with those who lose their homes or lives, and to be horrified. I’ve always found Vlad Putin both unprincipled and mean. He is a small, corrupt, self-serving man, for whom justice and decency don’t count. (He poisons or imprisons those who don’t agree with him. That’s really rude!) Those videos of little Vladi strut ting down the long red carpet of some vaulted hall, with dozens of armed guards lining the way, is mythic in its arrogance, recalling Hitler, Mussolini... Trump.

While Vlad must take most of the blame for ruining Ukraine, the war did not begin ex-nihilo. For 20 years preceding it he made it pretty clear that he was not a NATO fan. He said he’d try to live with it, so long as NATO and The West steered clear of Ukraine and the other severed pieces of what once was Soviet. But we, The West, could not resist rubbing his nose in it. We funneled money and support to those within Ukraine who hoped (and fought) to gain democracy – as was their moral, though, perhaps, not strictly legal, right.

There wasn’t much doubt that the bear would react if we poked him. He needed to defend his turf and have his public think that he was tough – some sort of a modern-day Peter The Great or Sylvester Stallone, who circulated photos of himself without a shirt, astride a horse. Before the current war began, for well more than a month, El Puto massed artillery and troops along the border with Ukraine. “Invasion?” everybody said. “Oh, no, just war games.” We were told as we all dumbly sat there on our hands. We did not intervene at first because we wanted proxy war in which we could trash Putin’s army and economy while taking very little risk ourselves.

Now, both we and NATO keep sending cash and armaments to shore up poor Ukraine, as Putin mumbles about nuclear. But, like the rest of us, he knows that that was the end – for us and him. We know he has no decency but do count on his sanity. Yet, no one really knows how thin that is, especially if he gets sick of being ganged-up-on. While, in the meantime, poor Ukraine gets screwed; a sacrificial bone destroyed by larger, feuding dogs. We’ve played this game before, of course. Think Syria, Iraq and Vietnam, dot dot dot dot.

It’s been almost 3,000 years since there was talk of smelting down our swords and spears and cluster-bombs, converting them to ploughshares, spades and hoes. But will that era ever come? Nobody really knows. Biologists contend that conflict keeps a species strong. We grosbeaks, chimp s and humans sing our endless, bloody song. How come? Because The Other Guy Is always clearly wrong.

Martin Levowitz can be contacted at brighthoof@msn.com.

THE JOY OF ANIMOSITY

By Bob Brandt

After nearly four years of working with my colleagues on the Patagonia Recycling Task Force, it is with considerable disappointment that lately I see little evidence of recycling activity in and around Patagonia.

Created in early 2020 primarily to address the contamination that plagued the town’s drop off facility and just before Santa Cruz County removed the containers, the task force initially sponsored monthly drop off events in Patagonia but suspended them out of concern that the drop off events were competing with Recyclops’ efforts to establish a viable base of customers for its curbside pick-up program. That objective has not been achieved and, in fact, the company has lost most of the nearly 100 subscribers it had signed up in the early days of its roll-out. Since the task force was responsible for recruiting Recyclops, I feel particularly sad that it didn’t work out, both for the company and the community.

The possible reasons for Recyclops’ failure to thrive in this market are not hard to understand. The company raised its fees shortly after launching its service; drivers were at times unavailable to pick up; and customer service fell short of expectations. The final blow for many customers (our household still subscribes) came when the company tacked on a $12 per month surcharge early this year, the explanation for which was that costs had risen and the bump up was necessary for the company to survive.

As bleak as the recycling picture looks now, I am optimistic that things will improve in the near future. Although the task force has not met formally for several months, I have been in touch with the members informally and I have had recent discussions with Patagonia Mayor Andrea Wood and Manager Ron Robinson, both of whom would like to see a town-wide recycling program in operation. To their credit, they both had set aside time in their busy schedules to go with task force members to tour the Republic Services recycling center in Tucson. Unfortunately, the tour twice had to be cancelled and has yet to be rescheduled, but it’s an important step in understanding what really happens to recyclables once they are picked up at the curb.

In my view, there are several factors that favor the eventual implementation of a curbside recycling program for Patagonia. Not only does Mayor Wood believe it’s the town’s responsibility to provide the opportunity for its residents to recycle, but the town would save a lot on tipping fees at the landfill if it could divert the recyclables from the waste stream. The town also devotes considerable labor and equipment to garbage collection twice a week, double the service received by residents in most municipalities. If some of those resources could be devoted to curbside recycling, it could be a win-win for the residents, the town and the environment. The challenge, I believe, is finding the start-up funds to be able to shift some of those resources from collecting and burying garbage to collecting recyclables.

Over the years, we have seen described in the pages of this newspaper, the power of the generosity and ingenuity of Patagonians in response to many community needs. I am convinced that those traits, properly shepherded, will produce results in this instance as well, and I invite PRT readers to engage with me, the task force and others in the community who believe that, Greenpeace’s recent statement notwithstanding, burying so much of what we acquire but don’t consume is unsustainable, unsafe and unnecessary. Until zero waste is in our grasp, our mantra must be reduce, reuse, recycle.

Bob Brandt can be contacted at brandtwnb@gmail.com.
By Cassina Farley

On a recent trip north, I wandered into a gas station convenience store to buy a lottery ticket and a Gatorade. Upon entering the store, I noticed right away that the clerk behind the counter was a little off. He kept reminding the customer in front of me to “keep it cool.” Feeling the need to respond, I nervously said, “We made bottle rockets with baking soda and vinegar this summer.”

After my awkward statement I regained control of my Gatorade and got the hell out of there. I arrived back where Zach was and told him all about my harrowing ordeal with a potential domestic terrorist. He, of course, was amused.

A few days later I ventured out again to buy yet another lottery ticket. (1 billion dollars sounded pretty good) and saw the guy standing outside the convenience store chain smoking with a guy that looked like he may have helped with the bomb making. I kept driving until I found a Circle K. Upon entering the store, it was apparent right away that the clerk was having a heated conversation with someone on his telephone. Awkward, but not terrorist status. I worked my way up to the counter and waited while he yelled at his girlfriend. How did I know it was his girlfriend? I knew she was on speaker phone.

Imagine trying to ask for a lottery ticket while two people are having a heated phone conversation. Somehow, I managed to get a ticket and get out of there before becoming part of the conversation. I left there thinking this must be a town-wide thing – weirdos at every convenience store. As the lottery jackpot grew larger, I couldn’t help but want another ticket, so this time I sent Zach. Same order - one lottery ticket and an orange Gatorade. Zach purposely went to the Chevron on the corner so that he could witness Mr. Cheesy for himself and, according to Zach, he did not disappoint. Zach made his way to the counter and almost immediately our domestic terrorist friend handed Zach a pile of papers. Bewildered, Zach looked at the papers and realized they were schematics for a gun. The weirdo explained that he had just ordered a new one off the internet (off the internet!) because his old one had blown up. “Blown up” seemed to be a recurring theme.

Zach dropped the papers on the counter and exited the building. He may or may not have paid for the Gatorade. In the following days we debated about what was going on in this particular town. Was everyone on drugs? Perhaps. Was the guy at the Chevron really that scary? Was he serious about the bombs and guns? Does anyone at the corporate level know that Circle K employees have heated conversations on speaker phones during work hours? And more importantly, who the hell is doing the hiring at these places?

One thing is for certain. It gave me a new appreciation for our small-town markets and stores where the most you may get accosted with is gossip and compliments about your hair.

This summer’s road trip once again proved that on the 4th of July you need to be aware of what is going on in your neighbor’s home. Oh, and if you are wondering, I did win the lottery.

Cassina Farley can be contacted at cassinaandzachfarley@msn.com.

By Chuck and Sarah Klingenstein

In March, we wrote the Nogales International (NI) a letter, ‘Enough of South32’s Tokens,’ about our public officials bending over backwards to assist any form of development in our County. At that time it appeared the negative impacts would accrue to the east side of Santa Cruz County while the west may have thought it would benefit from South32’s largesse. But how quickly the script has changed, with the rapid approval process for the Patagonia Regional Times, only available if you ask for it. We have watched communities throughout the US west get bamboozled by development of all forms. Here’s what we DO know – citizens will always be behind the 8-ball when it comes to development at any cost.

In writing all the promises that developed communities throughout the US west get bamboozled by development of all forms. Here’s what we DO know – citizens will always be behind the 8-ball and need to organize and fight for their communities. It’s time to act:
• Join the newly formed opposition to the current proposal, SC County Advocates for Sustainable Development, active on Facebook. And do it right away. Things are happening fast.
• Support PARA with the LARGEST donation you can afford. They are currently the only group keeping an eye on the mining proposals around Patagonia.
• Support your local newspapers by subscribing. With our financial support they can cover meetings we can’t get to.
• Submit Public Records Requests to the County. Some critical information is only available if you ask for it.
• Tell our County Supervisors to get WITH ALL the promises that developers make.
• Consider a referendum, should the County decide to pass the Comprehensive Plan amendments and Rezoning. Both are legislative acts and may be subject to a citizen referendum.
• Finally, this development proposal on the West side, coupled with the events on the East side, should make us realize we are in this together.

Whether it is South32 or Barksdale or another large entity promising economic development with low to no impact, we are the ones left to feel the effects on ourselves and our communities.
By Stephanie Smith

Our built environment increasingly looks the same, no matter where you happen to be. We see the same big box retail stores, the same drive-through coffee shops, and the same gas stations on every corner. But some areas have managed to retain a unique feeling. Eastern Santa Cruz County is one of those areas. Our mix of minimally developed open space (ranches and vineyards, nature preserves, protected watersheds) and small communities with a village-like atmosphere make this area recognizably special to those who live and visit here. In urban planning we call this quality ‘community character.’ Many would agree that our area’s community character should be embraced and preserved, especially as it positively impacts our area’s community character. ‘Many would agree that our area’s community character should be embraced and preserved, especially as it positively impacts our area’s village community character in Sonoita and Patagonia.

Urban planners have developed various approaches to protect community character. The process begins with an assessment of an area’s ‘urban form.’ Urban form, according to the American Planning Association (APA), is characterized by the relationships among “streets, blocks, lots, buildings, and other man-made features.”

Intuitively we ‘read’ these relationships as we experience our built space, and take signals from them. Is there a place for me to gather on a nice day? Is it safe to walk on this sidewalk along a busy street? Do I feel a sense of history and heritage when I approach my town center?

It turns out that just a few of these relationships have an outsized effect on a community’s character. These key measures include “the heights and widths of buildings, the distances between the fronts of buildings and the edges of streets… and the variation in those heights, widths, and distances across the community.” While this sounds technical, the simple act of measuring these relationships gives urban planners a starting point to create design guidelines to ensure that community character remains intact while an area undergoes rapid change.

Design guidelines are a relatively common approach that communities take to guide building renovations and new development so that they fit well in their surroundings. Design guidelines typically include elements related to site planning, building scale and architectural character. These guidelines are adopted by a municipality and enforced through zoning or other ordinances.

Two examples illustrate how design guidelines are created and used:

Bisbee, AZ

Bisbee has successfully preserved its historic community character using design guidelines originally written in 1991. A former mining ‘company town’ founded in 1878, Bisbee started as a rough-and-tumble encampment, but as copper mining boomed in the early decades of the 20th century, the mine owner, Phelps Dodge Corporation, built a large number of commercial and institutional buildings (a hospital, library, YMCA gym, department store, large hotel and more). All were designed by prominent architects of the day, and were exhaustively executed. Today, many are still standing, and two districts in Bisbee are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The city created a Design Review Board to approve construction projects in these districts, following the 1991 guidelines. Fifty-five projects were reviewed by the Board in 2022. Developers are asked to “borrow ideas of style, proportion, scale, height, materials, etc. from adjacent buildings and then seek an honest contemporary solution to the design problem.” The design guidelines state that while “Bisbee’s old commercial buildings do not all look alike, they have common characteristics,” which are detailed in the document. For instance building facades typically include decorative brickwork, marble wainscoting, and double-hung windows. The guidelines even include recommendations on paint color.

PIONEERTOWN, CA

Pioneertown, in the California desert near Joshua Tree National Park, was created by a group of Hollywood actors and investors in 1946 as a cowboy-themed film set and fully functional town. Some of the businesses are still operating today on ‘Mane Street,’ including the Red Dog Saloon and a post office. And while the town ultimately failed as a viable film set, and languished for decades, the area has become popular over the past decade with millions of park visitors staying in vacation rentals nearby.

Pioneertown is unincorporated and under San Bernardino County control. The county is in the process of rezoning the area, removing the ‘Special Development’ designation which protected it from over development, and opening Pioneertown up to commercial development, including nightclubs and chain stores.

Local residents, concerned about the potential loss of Pioneertown’s unique character, organized to create the “Mane Street Overlay,” a proposal with legal power, that if enacted will encourage the development of small shops and restaurants consistent with Pioneertown’s historic character, and restrict chain stores. It also incorporates design guidelines for size, location and building materials. With broad community support, the plan will be considered by the county in public hearings this fall.

For us here in eastern Santa Cruz County, working collaboratively with our local governments to enact community character protections is a crucial first step as we navigate our area’s rapid changes. While some might view design guidelines as overstepping a commercial property owner’s rights, many have found that participating in a collective effort to maintain the cohesion, heritage and beauty of our public realm pays off in increased liveability, and a stronger tourism economy.

Stephanie Smith, who is building a home in Wildlife Haven, recently completed an Urban Planning master’s degree at University of Arizona.

THE LENDING SHED

a non-profit community project by
Family Health Care Amigos

Provides wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, shower benches, mobile commodes and much more, free of charge to residents of Patagonia, Elgin and Sonoita.

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**CONE OF DEVASTATION**

This graphic, based on a frame from a recent South32 promotional video, shows the potential extent of the Hermosa Project dewatering scheme.

By Robert Gay

This spring, I was delighted to learn of the Hobbs administration’s intention to revoke water-pumping permits for the Saudi operators looking to raise alfalfa in La Paz County. It was a very welcome bold stroke that sent a clear message to “big ag” about our water priorities in Arizona.

The dewatering scheme of Australian mining company South32 for its Hermosa Project in the Patagonia Mountains is also a massive pumping plan—up to 4,500 gallons per minute, or 197 million gallons a year. Of course, the flat lowlands of La Paz County are very different from the tumble of mountain and valley land we enjoy in the Sky Islands and de-watering a mine is very different than irrigating a crop. The scope and effects of South32’s dewatering need a little explanation.

When the company first publicized their plans, I couldn’t quite comprehend the magnitude of the dewatering plan. It was a scene from the company’s three-minute promotional video (tinyurl.com/2r3joeqp) on their strategy of water management that truly terrified me.

High-volume drawdown from wells creates what hydrologists call a “Cone of Depression,” a curving funnel that would be drier by massive 24/7 pumping, probably required for the life of the mine, now estimated at 60 years. In the South32 video, the funnel is shown as a blue mist, lying rather ephemeral over mountain terrain. A blue line spirals down to a drainage point right below the Hermosa Project. If wells were drilled to the bottom of the major deposits South32 seeks to mine, that drainage point could be more than 5,000 feet below the surface. With 5,100 feet above sea level being the approximate surface elevation of the Hermosa project, the bottom of the cone of depression can be visualized as roughly at sea level, around 4000 feet below the elevation of Patagonia. This is why the Cone of Depression is so extensive on the surface, so massive underground, and so terrifying when you figure out how much of the Patagonia Range north of the Mexico border could be impacted. I’d nickname the desiccated funnel the “Cone of Devastation.” South32’s promotional video gives the blue mist of the Cone three seconds of screen time, long enough for a frame capture, but not long enough to visualize its real-world extent. Knowing the territory, I was able to add a dozen place labels that show the perimeter of the area that the company proposes to dry out. At about seven miles in diameter, it covers around 47 square miles. That’s roughly 70 times the 450-acrepatented land area of the Hermosa project.

The perimeter of the Cone extends beyond the Coronado National Forest lands to include ranches like the Hale Ranch and private residences as well as a small vineyard, two historic settlements (Harshaw and Mowry) and their nearby graveyards. Over 90% of the proposed area of desiccation lies in Patagonia’s Designated Municipal Watershed (and yes, I’ve mapped them together.)

Sucking down all the water would be almost certain to dry up wells. It would also be very likely to dry up the dozens of seeps and springs now being mapped by Sky Island Alliance. It would be almost certain to kill the trees and other vegetation, which would promote wildfire, which could in turn promote erosion and possibly landslides. This spreading disaster would decimate the scenery and wildlife that the region’s growing — and sustainable — ecotourism industry depends on. When such a vast drawdown of groundwater gets to the surface, it would also decimate acreage now being grazed, whether in private ownership or BLM leases.

That haunting image of the cone is only the first half of the story. Downstream from the Hermosa Project, roughly six million gallons a day would pour down the generally rocky streambed of Harshaw Creek.

All that gallonage has to drop about a thousand feet from mine site to Town elevation, so it would quickly reach flat ground at the town. Near Sonoita Creek, the Town of Patagonia depends on two wells for its municipal supply, and they might be polluted if the groundwater rose substantially, or if flooding reached them. Built on a marsh, Patagonia is flood-prone already, as historic photos graphically show.

Present well levels in Town range from six to 40 feet. In one neighbor’s old hand-dug well near Fourth Ave. I was recently shown the water of this aquifer visible at 17 feet below ground surface. Directly, rather than through maps or data, I could see and feel the closeness of the aquifer to the surface, even smell it.

If local water levels increase because of aquifer absorption of mine-discharged water, and then a sizable monsoon storm adds a big slug of water, flooding in Patagonia would be almost certain. 60% of the town’s properties lie in the FEMA-designated 100-year flood zone, so a flood at or above the scale of 1938 or 1983 could disrupt the town’s water supply, cause major property damage and possibly loss of life. There could be ecological and flood effects downstream to the Lake and beyond. And we know that increasingly extreme weather — including both drought and precipitation “events” — is a primary feature of ongoing climate change.

These thoughts are not rocket science. The sheer scale of potential impacts from such massive drying and wetting is staggering. The mountains are at risk; Harshaw and Sonoita Creeks are at risk; the village of Patagonia is at risk. As now proposed, dewatering is a two-part catastrophe in the making.

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**LOCAL KNOWLEDGE**

By Dave Lumia

Let’s start at the beginning. As a newly minted resident of Sonoita, I’ve got no rightful claim of being considered a “local.” Hope to earn that distinction some day, but I realize it’s necessary treasure, or just random locals. Those who have mistaked and those who have mistaked and experienced those foibles about being down there? It’s supposed to make you forehead. At the risk of confessing to a how to spell it.

But I’m always up for learning, and I have learned plenty since my relocation from the big city (otherwise known as Mesa, Arizona) at the end of May. Let me amend that. Been learning about the local experience for the better part of nine years now, since first becoming a landowner down here, waiting for the time to build our (the Mrs. will be relocating shortly) retirement/forever home.

Example: That very first time we tried to camp out on the land — at the tippy-top of our “big hill.” Such was our introduction to The Winds of Sonoita. That EZ-Up canopy (the first of about eight that have been part of our camping adventures) lasted about two minutes before becoming a twisted, mangled wreck of metal and canvas (helped along slightly by my temper). At the risk of confessing to a federal crime, it was all I could do to dodge that thing into the back of the pickup and then into the dumpster behind the post office. (Yep, I might be the guy responsible for getting that lock put on the dumpster.)

Don’t even think about camping when the forecast says “gusty.” Local knowledge. Hard-earned. Like so much of what I’ve learned, by virtue of mistakes, I’m moving closer to the border? He wished me well, and so I’m moving on, chalking that up to his lack of local knowledge.

Sonoita. It’s not for everyone. And that’s a good thing.
South32’s Snake Oil

I’ve been listening to the positive reviews of what South32 will bring to the communities of Patagonia, Rio Rico and Santa Cruz County. This is a story often repeated in rural America. Jobs, opportunities for prosperity, better schools, and a reason to stay at home for the American dream. What needs to be considered is what is left when the mineral of the moment falls below a value that a multinational corporation finds profitable. Look to history, look at mining boom towns of Arizona and the west. What is the economic value of a mining economy after the minerals are no longer profitable or available?

History tells the story. The clean-up and the abandonment of mines and communities are left to the locals and taxpayers to cleanup and rebuild. How do you rebuild an economy that has sacrificed its livability for short term profits? Look at the long-term prosperity of our community. What is Patagonia without its water? What is Santa Cruz County without a clean environment?

Show Us the Ore Trucks

I live in Casas Arroyo just west of Sonoita and in Sun City, Oro Valley. We commute on State Highway 83, as do many others who come to recreate, along with residents of Sonoita, Elgin or Patagonia who go to Tucson for appointments and shopping, as you well know.

Along with countless others, we are afraid that we’ll be sharing this scenic highway with 30 trucks carrying the ore to Interstate 10. As time goes on we’ve been told there will be more trucks daily.

My point in reminding you of the above is that if South32 Hers-mosa would park one of these trucks in Patagonia near the train station, I believe we could deepen the reaction and aversion to sharing the roads with these behemoths.

Or perhaps in the next edition you could run a photograph of what we’re going to encounter in transit.

Thank you,
Jane Leonard
Sonoita

Harshaw Road Near Collapse

Our property is about a mile-and-a-half southeast of Patagonia on Harshaw Road. Harshaw Creek has a 90 degree bend at one point on our property and the bend is causing significant erosion under Harshaw Road. More than fifteen feet of creek bank have washed away and our barbed wire property fence is now suspended ten feet into the air. Two large mesquite trees that were helping to hold the creek wall together have been washed downstream. The erosion is at such a point now that it is cutting under the road bed. I am doubtful that the road will survive another monsoon season.

I have diligently reported the problem for the last three years to the county, and there have been no tangible results. One year county workers put stakes with fluorescent flags on them along the road, but those have been washed downstream as more of the creek bank eroded. Another year, they painted some pretty pink lines on the pavement and in the creek bed, but did nothing further. I’ve shown South32 pictures of the erosion, hoping that they would be motivated to keep the road open, since they drive their trucks up and down it all day long.

None of my actions have had any real effect, and it is only a matter of time before either the road washes out, or (worse), somebody drives their vehicle off the ten foot bank into the creek bed. You can see the damaged area yourself: it is about 50 meters north of the first cattle guard outside of Patagonia. Please be careful on Harshaw Road—it is on the verge of collapsing.

Jeff Buchanan
Patagonia

Ordinance Not Enforced

In 2008 the Town of Patagonia passed ordinance 15-5-8 requiring that all subdivisions require a 100 year water adequacy report from the Arizona Department of Water Resources before any construction can begin. The mayor should be asked as to why this ordinance was not enforced for the 23 unit housing development currently being built on Roadrunner Ave. Why this ordinance will not be enforced for the 60 lots to be developed above the school.

Our town ordinance, in compliance with Arizona state law, states that four or more lots/parcels divided on unimproved land is a subdivision. If the mayor refuses to accept this definition then it is incumbent upon her to solicit a legal opinion from our newly appointed town attorney.

Lonnie Goff
Patagonia

County Should Give More Notice

Thank you so much for your article by Marion Venditutti concerning the Santa Cruz County Board and staff and their actions.

It is so concerning the way they conduct business. Meetings that are not known to the public, making it difficult to interact with the citizens. I was a town selectman in Maine for three years. We had to notify our residents of meetings pertaining to town business, in various forms of media, at least 30 days in advance. Why all the secrecy?

We now have the inmates running the asylum.

Thank you again for the wake up call.

Bill Eckhardt
Rio Rico

History tells us mining devastates communities and leaves ghost towns. Patagonia and Santa Cruz County have been here before. Why do it again? Like winning the lottery or a Roadrunner cartoon. Those beating the drum for development leave with a pocket full of cash and no regard for what is left behind. Promises of prosperity and a better future have been heard many times in history.

In this world of large cities and populations looking for a breath of fresh air, Santa Cruz County offers relief and escape. A place to raise a family, retire, enjoy a clean environment, and enjoy those values which are becoming so rare in this world. Water, clean air, and open spaces are not what South32 is offering. We know this. The economy of Santa Cruz County can do better and be more prosperous, not by embracing a philosophy of the past. Reject those that sell snake oil and riches; embrace what we have, a reasonable economy, a good place to live, work, visit and enjoy; a special community.

Jonathan Smith
Patagonia

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JPI Jeanne Peterson Insurance Licensed Broker
- Medicare Advantage Plans
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Sanctuary at Sonoita Creek Campground
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Full-time position available for maintenance of a Sonoita property

Duties include overall care for lawns, trees, meadows, flower gardens, outdoor living areas, pool, bird feeders, horse paddocks, lawn sprinkler systems, some basic building maintenance and tasks, etc. Must have valid driver’s license. Starting pay of $30,000 to $35,000, depending on level of experience.

For details call Frank at 604-306-8440 or email frank@apachespringsranch.com
Santa Cruz County Solicits Public Comment on Three County Plans: Rio Rico Vitality District Master Plan, Housing Strategy, and Tourism Sector Plan

Santa Cruz County, Arizona is soliciting public comment through August 11 on three draft plans: the Rio Rico Vitality District Master Plan, a countywide housing strategy, and a Santa Cruz County Five-Year Tourism Sector Prosperity Plan. Plans are posted on the county website at https://santacruzco.az.gov/833/Plans-and-Reports. Plans and hard copies of the surveys for public comment are available at the county’s community development office at 2150 North Congress Drive.

**Rio Rico Vitality District Master Plan**

This draft plan creates a framework for a vibrant place for future retail, services and multi-family housing that accommodates the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors. The English/Spanish survey link to provide feedback is https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RioRico

**Housing Strategy**

The draft strategy identifies needs and guiding principles designed to address the lack of sufficient housing opportunities needed to support the county’s residents, workers and employers. The English/Spanish survey link to provide feedback is at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SCCHousing

**Santa Cruz County Tourism Sector Prosperity Plan**

This draft plan produced 12 quality seed project recommendations for county tourism, with associated financing strategies. The English/Spanish survey link to provide feedback is at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Tourism

Public comment will be taken through August 11. Comments will be compiled and posted along with the plans, which will go to the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors for consideration. If plans are approved, the county will pursue implementation strategies for their adoption.

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**El Condado de Santa Cruz Solicita Comentarios Públicos sobre Tres Planes del Condado: Plan Maestro de VITALIDAD para el Distrito de Rio Rico, Estrategia de Vivienda y Plan del Sector Turístico**

El Condado de Santa Cruz, Arizona, está solicitando comentarios públicos hasta el 11 de agosto sobre tres planes preliminares: el Plan Maestro para la Vitalidad del Distrito de Rio Rico, una estrategia de vivienda para todo el condado y un Plan a Cinco Años para la Prosperidad del Sector Turístico del Condado de Santa Cruz. Los planes están publicados en el sitio web del condado, https://santacruzco.az.gov/833/Plans-and-Reports. Planes y copias impresas de las encuestas para el comentario público están disponibles en la oficina de desarrollo comunitario del condado en 2150 North Congress Drive.

**Plan Maestro para la Vitalidad del Distrito de Rio Rico**

Este plan preliminar crea un marco para un lugar vibrante para futuros comercios, servicios y viviendas multifamiliares que se adaptan a las necesidades de residentes, empresas y visitantes. El enlace de la encuesta en inglés y español para enviar sus comentarios es https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RioRico

**Estrategia de Vivienda**

El borrador de la estrategia identifica las necesidades y los principios rectores diseñados para abordar la falta de oportunidades de vivienda necesarias para apoyar a los residentes, trabajadores y empresarios del condado. El enlace de la encuesta en inglés y español para enviar comentarios se encuentra en https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SCCHousing

**Plan de Prosperidad del Sector Turístico del Condado de Santa Cruz**

Este borrador de plan produjo 12 recomendaciones de proyectos semilla de calidad para el turismo del condado, con estrategias de financiación asociadas. El enlace de la encuesta en inglés y español para enviar comentarios se encuentra en https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Tourism

Se recibirán comentarios del público hasta el 11 de agosto. Los comentarios se recopilarán y publicarán junto con los planes, que se someterán a la consideración de la Junta de Supervisores del Condado de Santa Cruz. Si se aprueban los planes, el condado buscará estrategias de aplicación para su adopción.
**The Heat Is On**

Arizona is a state renowned for its soaring temperatures, particularly in June’s oven-like prelude to monsoon season as well as during our summer rainy season’s humid swelter. During these times Tucson and Phoenix regularly witness temperatures in the 100s. In Patagonia and other areas above 4,000 feet, the 90s generally prevail. This summer, however, has been a genuine game changer with perhaps a permanently moved goalpost when it comes to our climate. In June and through mid-July, daytime highs in and near Patagonia rarely stray from the 100s, an unprecedented and record-setting blister of heat.

Discussions of such heat waves often focus on humans. What about our native Sky Islands’ flora and fauna? How might they fare in such soaring temperatures and what could climate change have in store for our neck of the woods if such occurrences become increasingly commonplace?

Down in our deserts such climatic fare seems simply par for the course. Deserts are scorching furnaces amid our native Sky Islands’ flora and fauna. As these and other moisture-loving flora go, so too might many of the creatures that call this locally improbable habitat home.

In our grassy mesquite and oak woodlands the Montezuma quail could be a sacrificial species slain on the altar of human avarice and excess that has led to our planet’s profound climate change. Highly reliant upon abundant monsoon moisture, these smart-looking quail can easily experience diminishing numbers in a succession of heat waves, coupled with drought-driven wildfires that result in an increasingly parched and threadbare habitat. With literally no place to hide in terms of vegetative cover and with less to eat, these secretive gallinaceous birds may shrink even further into obscurity than they already appear to be.

Three distinct scenarios and three hypothetical paths to the near future, courtesy of human-induced climate change. Now, superimpose such impacts on every single species within our Sky Islands region — currently still renowned for its biodiversity. No doubt a good number of species will find a way out of the maze of impacts inherent with global warming. The coyotes and common ravens of the world may even thrive upon the struggles of other species. But what about the more sensitive species such as elegant trogon, jaguar, twin-spotted rattlesnake, Sonoran toad, Arizona sycamore, Mount Graham red squirrel, and various talus snails, to mention but a few? They may see serious declines, with some species even becoming extirpated altogether from our backyard. When the climate shifts so dramatically, such flora and fauna might not have time to evolve any meaningful adaptations to adjust to such abrupt shifts.

On top of all this, overlap the environmental impacts of industrial mining, overgrazing, depletion of aquifers due to human activity, increasing urbanization and habitat destruction, nonnative plant invasions... If our region is already at great risk of “death by a thousand cuts,” then surely climate change is the final and catastrophic beheading.

Vincent Pinto and his wife, Claudia, run RAVENS-WAY WILDLIFE JOURNEYS LLC, their Nature Adventure & Conservation organization devoted to protecting and promoting the unique biodiversity of the Sky Islands region. RWWJ offers a wide variety of private, custom-made courses, birding & biodiversity tours. Visit ravensnature-school.org

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**A ‘Desert Rat’ Takes Charge at Research Ranch**

Steve Prager is the new director of Audubon’s 8,000-acre Elgin ranch.

By Pat McNamara

As a young field biologist and educator not long out of university, Steve Prager started making annual visits to the Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch of the National Audubon Society (AWRR) in Elgin in 2011. Now, 12 years later, he’s the Research Ranch’s new boss.

Having grown up next to a wash in Phoenix, Prager, a self-described “desert rat,” developed an early interest in the desert flora and fauna as he wandered about his ‘wild’ neighborhood. As he grew older he watched much of that area get paved over due to the rapid growth of Phoenix. This sparked his interest in preserving rapidly disappearing wilderness, and so he entered ASU with a definite goal in mind.

Upon graduation in 2010, Prager did an internship with Arizona Fish and Game in the Gila River Native Fisheries Region Rio Salado program. Later, as a field biologist and educator, he ran an educational program for high school students in the area for Audubon Southwest.

Through this exposure to these students, Prager realized a desire to share his knowledge with others. This also spurred him to become a community organizer and engage the public in helping preserve the natural areas by removing invasive species and doing other beneficial research and fieldwork, such as bird surveys. “Hopefully those individuals will be inspired with conservation and take that inspiration home,” he said.

Prager’s fieldwork and research brought him each summer to the 8,000-acre AWRR, where he fell in love with Elgin. Earlier this year he became the director of this remote and beautiful part of Arizona.

“For me to be successful in this new role, I will need to look beyond myself and toward our neighbors, visitors, partners, volunteers, past leaders and all those who find inspiration on the AWRR,” Prager wrote in a reflective post on the Ranch’s website. “So, with the Huachuca Mountains on the horizon and scaled quail scurrying beneath my office window, I find myself humbled and honored by the opportunity to add myself to the potential of the AWRR. I look forward to everything we will achieve together.”

In his free time, Prager enjoys kayaking, rock climbing, searching for reptiles and playing acoustic guitar.

For more information about the AWRR, visit researchranch.audubon.org. The Research Ranch is located at 366 Research Ranch Road in Elgin.
PVFR (Cont.)

personal toll.” Some members of the department also felt that the vote was an effort on the part of the board to follow the bylaws. Bowdon, a member of the department for 23 years, and secretary-treasurer of the Board of Directors, resigned from the Board in January. Board Member Ivan Mingura also resigned.

Dan Goff, who had been with the department for five years, also resigned in January. He cited his dissatisfaction with the Board “for holding a meeting on a holiday weekend to propose nominations for the Board and for holding an election for PVFR officers in December, [as well as] “perceived inappropriate behavior of a Board member toward the partner of a firefighter and Board member, and the election of officers and the subsequent overturning of the election” as his reasons.

Goff is currently working with Santa Cruz County Search and Rescue and with the Benson Fire Department. “I would go back to Patagonia if things change,” he said in January. Goff said recently, “I miss it, the EMS, Emergency Medical Service. Time will tell.”

At the March General Meeting, Justin McEldowney and Michael Young were elected to the Board to fill the vacancies left by Bowdon and Mingura. Current PVFR Board members are President Bob Ollerton, Vice President Michael Young, Secretary-Treasurer Justin McEldowney, Eric Herman and Todd Norton, Public Representative.

A bylaw committee, composed of Chief Isakson, Marc Meredith, Johnny Lopez, Richard Connelly, and Aaron Schneider, was formed last February. The bylaws had been enacted in 1947, hadn’t been updated since, and were out of date. New bylaws were ratified at the May general meeting. “You’ve got to have bylaws,” Isakson said to the PRT. “They just have to be fair to everybody.”

Allegations of inappropriate comments to women also fueled discord in the organization. According to Herman, a Board member allegedly insulted a woman last October at a fundraising barbecue. Given an opportunity to apologize, he declined. Three months later, he did write a letter of apology, Herman said.

Jade DeForest, a PVFR volunteer, also felt that she had been on the receiving end of condescending remarks having been told by a board member that “women aren’t strong enough to lift” equipment, which she readily lifted. She reported that two other female volunteers had also been told they weren’t strong enough to lift rescue equipment, which again, they capable handled. Of the 35 members in the fire company, eight are women. In a recent interview, DeForest said that the turmoil over the last several months has hurt the department. “I am very concerned,” she said. “We don’t have enough personnel to respond to medical problems. People have backed off, saying ‘We don’t want to get involved in drama or problems.’”

The PVFR is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide fire protection and emergency response services to the Patagonia community. PVFR, an all-volunteer company for 99 years, responds to medical emergencies, motor vehicle accidents, rescue calls, and incidents involving hazardous materials as well as wildland fires and structure fires. The organization is funded by grants, donations, and by a $65,000 contract with the town of Patagonia for emergency services. The 38 members of the company are all volunteers, in contrast to the Sonoita Elgin Fire Department.

Although there have been recent rumors in Patagonia that the company is looking at morphing into a paid department, Chief Isakson said, “It’s not going to happen, probably not ever.” Assistant Chief Regan added, “A paid department will not happen in any of our lifetimes. It would be a complete waste of the taxpayers’ money.”

Past and present Board members Bob Ollerton, Todd Norton, and Ivan Mingura all declined to respond to requests from the PRT for comment.
Bearanoia

By Dave Brown

Like all pursuits, there are risks associated with your endeavors. I served five years as an infantryman/paratrooper in The Canadian Airborne Regiment, a nonstop adrenaline rush. When I turned 25, I decided that I was no longer invincible and left the army, taking my P.T.S.D., physical damage from over 100 parachute jumps, and an immense sense of situational awareness with me. Since then, my days are spent pursuing more gentle activities, namely fly fishing and bird hunting. The adrenaline rush is toned down, but situational awareness is usually there.

Spending a great deal of time with a fly rod in hand and around the Rocky Mountains, my biggest fear is getting mauled, and perhaps eaten, by a grizzly bear. Where Alberta, Montana and British Columbia all come together, there are plenty of bears, as this country is home to the largest population of grizzlies in the Lower 48. Spend enough time here and sooner or later an encounter or sighting is going to happen. It’s always on my mind when I’m fishing in remote areas.

A few years back, I was fishing on British Columbia’s Elk River. I had waded across the river and was walking through the heavy bankside brush when I came almost face-to-face with what was probably a two-year-old grizzly bear. The bear looked at me. Of course, I was looking at him, and we both abruptly parted ways. He headed into the brush, and I ran into, then across, the river back to my truck.

Since then, I have been more ‘bear aware’ while in the backcountry. The approach I take is letting potential bears know that I am in the area, by periodically blowing a whistle, yelling “Yo, bear” and making other noises that anyone listening would perhaps find amusing.

The idea is to give a bear enough intel that perhaps they should vacate the area. In case they don’t, my trusty can of bear spray is always close at hand. If I’m charged, my hopes are that the wind is blowing in the right direction, so the spray does not come back at me.

Here in Montana a lot of backcountry enthusiasts have taken to carrying 10mm handguns, as they are lighter than a heavy and cumbersome 44 magnum revolver. The logic is you can get off 15 shots as opposed to six. Some of my British Columbia guides carry Remington 870 12-gauge shotguns loaded with slugs and buckshot when roaming the back country with skittish clients in tow. Of course, the guide’s bear stories en route to the fishing venue may add to the skittish feelings, perhaps intentionally.

Lately I have been scouting out the fishing potential on a ranch in north central Montana. The river that flows through it is a well-known grizzly corridor that runs east out of the Rocky Mountain Front Range. My time is spent walking and fishing the river. The potential for encountering a grizzly is always in the back of my mind.

On one occasion, after rigging my fly rod up, I began walking downriver, going through my bear protocol of blowing my whistle, yelling, and pulling out my bear spray while walking through thick brush.

The fishing was good, so I began to put thoughts of bears on the back burner. A hard fighting rainbow trout readily ate my grasshopper pattern fly and I tussled with a nice brown trout. After releasing him, I noticed a large grey-brown animal moving along on the far bank. “Oh, [expletive]” and “I’m dead” came to mind, until what I thought was a bear turned out to be a massive Anatolian sheepdog, who swam over to greet me. His collar tag indicated that ‘Brutus’ was appropriately named. I texted the ranch manager asking if the dog was his, which he was.

As I began the hike back to the truck with Brutus by my side, I laughed at myself. Perhaps I was being a little too paranoid. Then I thought of the fishing guide that three years ago stepped into the bankside willows only to be mauled by a sow grizzly with cubs. That was only seven miles upstream from my Brutus encounter. Maybe being paranoid is not so bad after all.

Dave Brown can be contacted at dave@davebrownoutfitters.com.

S32 (Cont.)

workforce. It can also help us deliver on our target of hiring 80% of our employees from Santa Cruz County,” Risner said in a letter sent to the Tucson Sentinel posted on July 22.

After strenuous community objections were raised to the development of property owned by Rio Rico resident Andrew Jackson along I-19 in Rio Rico, potentially a location for both the remote operating center and the manganese plant. (See related article on p. 2), Jackson withdrew his development proposal on July 31.

Risner has stated that although South32 would like to locate the operating center and the manganese plant in Santa Cruz County, the company has other options. In his presentation to the BOS on July 18 he said, “If there is a desire for these facilities not to be in Santa Cruz County, we can look for other alternatives in southern Arizona.”

Good Neighbor Agreement

Risner was asked by the PRT if South32 would be willing to sign a Good Neighbor Agreement with the Town of Patagonia and the County. A good neighbor agreement (GNA) is a legally binding contract that holds corporations accountable for their environmental conduct. South32 has been discussing the creation of a GNA with its Community Advisory Council. “It’s on the agenda,” said Risner. “It is something we are interested in pursuing and that we think is important.”

Carolyn Shafer, a member of the Advisory Council and President of the watchdog group PARA, concurred that the GNA was essential. “It is important because there must be oversight of proposed industrialized mining activity and mining company accountability to the community to avoid short sighted destruction of natural resources in pursuit of corporate profit,” she told the PRT.

Hermosa Value Lowered

On July 24, South32 announced in its quarterly report that it would take a $1.3 billion “impairment charge” on the Hermosa project. Impairment charge is an accounting term used to describe a drastic reduction or loss in recoverable value of an asset and can occur because of a change in legal or economic circumstances, or as the result of a casualty loss from unforeseen hazards.

“The rising costs of construction materials, COVID-19 delays and greater than expected dewatering costs all contributed to the drop, according to South32’s latest quarterly report,” reported the Tucson Sentinel. “After the cut, the total carrying value of the project stands at just over $1 billion.”
The Rescue of ‘Spooky’ Old RR Depot
A Patagonia Community Church Initiative
By Linda Jade Fong and Bonnie Quirin

One newspaper article referred to the “spooky look” of the empty Gothic building in Patagonia that had served as the railroad depot. The Southern Pacific RR had torn up the last of its Benson-Nogales tracks in 1962, leaving the abandoned depot, once the heart of the Benson-Nogales tracks in 1962, leaving the “spooky look” of the empty Gothic building in Patagonia.

Its rescue and new life began to take shape in the mid-1960s through the initiative of Patagonia Community Church member Harold Thuber and pastor Rev. Charles Madinger. A look into the archives for celebrating the church’s centennial this year, 2023, has uncovered an interesting process. Thuber, a prominent Sonoita rancher and PCC church trustee, bought the Depot in May 1965 for $10.00. Then, on December 6 that year, he donated it to the church “to assist . . . in the accomplishment of its religious and benevolent purposes.”

That same day, the church transferred the depot building to the Rotary Club as a community project for the club, with the provision that if the building was not developed by the club and utilized as such, the property would revert to the church. Thuber and Rev. Madinger were co-Rotarians. In fact the pastor was president of the local Rotary Club, and they shared a passion for providing services to the town and its youth.

The Depot was moved 40 feet east to a new foundation out of the way of the highway. An article states, “After the move, there was not a door jammed, and the only missing windows were those already broken. They don’t build them now like they used to.” [The Border Vidette, 7/8/1922].

Probable location of the drilling site on Babacomari ranch lands. Thanks to Bill Schock for guiding the author, using coordinates obtained from the Arizona Oil and Gas Conservation Commission.

Furthermore, “The ‘main ballroom,’” he explains climbing the five steps to the floor of the freight room, “is too fair size room.’”

Contributed Photo

The Elgin Oil Well
By Alison Bunting

“More than 500 residents of Santa Cruz County attended the official ‘spudding in’ of... the first well of the Nogales Oil and Gas Company, at Elgin, Sunday. By their presence, the large crowd... gave evidence of the fact that they have faith in the extended and favorable reports regarding the oil bearing possibilities of the company’s holdings...From daylight Sunday morning... the roads leading to Elgin were dotted with automobiles climbing over the mountain roads, resembling a trail of black ants... More than 150 automobiles...were parked about the field...” [The Border Vidette, 9/17/1921].

Lee W. Mix was a prominent Nogales leader who had served as mayor (1913-1916) and was the first chief of the volunteer fire department. He was involved in mining and owned a great deal of property in the area. [Nogales International, 10/29/1932]

Nogales Oil and Gas had secured a mineral rights lease for the 33,792 acres of the former Babacomari land grant, owned by Dr. E. B. Perrin. Funds raised from the sale of stock financed the drilling operations. A contract with Western Pacific Drilling specified that Nogales Oil and Gas would pay half of the drilling expenses up to $25,000, and then Western Pacific would pay the balance. If a strike of oil in commercial quantities occurred, Western Pacific would have the rights to half of the oil lease acreage. [Letter from L.W. Mix to Major A.L.P. Johnson, 8/21/1922].

Drilling continued throughout 1922 and by early 1923 had reached an oil shale bed at a depth of 1,050 feet. [Casa Grande Dispatch, 2/22/1923].

In April 1923, when drilling had reached a depth of 1,100 ft., drilling ceased when Nogales Oil and Gas sued Western Pacific for breach of contract. [Tucson Citizen, 4/23/1923]. A settlement reached a few months later gave Nogales Oil and Gas title to all equipment, and they contracted directly with Western Pacific’s head driller, E.R. Cady to continue exploratory drilling. [Border Vidette, 7/21/1923].

Before work could resume, tools left in the well had to be retrieved. Then the drilling bit was dropped in the well, and a blizzard left two feet of snow on the ground. By the end of 1923 Capt. Mix noted “We have three months yet before we can possibly forfeit our big lease ... and we will keep at it [if] it is possible to do so.” [Letter from L.W. Mix to Major A.L.P. Johnson, 12/25/1923].

Apparently, Nogales Oil and Gas was unable to continue. In 1925, when Oklahoma driller J. E. Waldron took over, with funding from local investors, the drilling depth was at 1,174 ft. Waldron noted: “I figure we will have to go approximately 3,000 to 3,500 feet but expect to get gas at from 2,100 to 2,200 feet.” [Arizona Daily Star, 1/4/1925]. Finding no further news reports of the Elgin oil well it appears that the drilling was abandoned.

Note: Many thanks to Marina Smith, granddaughter of L.W. Mix, who shared some of Captain Mix’s letters that provided a first-hand account of the oil exploration activities.

Alison Bunting can be contacted at alibunting@gmail.com

Glimpses Into Our Past
The Rescue of ‘Spooky’ Old RR Depot
A Patagonia Community Church Initiative
By Alison Bunting and Bonnie Quirin

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Patagonia resident Mary McKay remembers flipping pancakes as a child with her father.

See Depot, p. 20

Ad published in the Tucson Citizen, January 7, 1923
LET'S GO GET STONES

Project Walkway
By Keith Krizan

This spring, my wife set me on a task. She built an 8’ x 8’ box in front of our porch and challenged me to fill it with more or less level field stones. I conceived a simple design, a wine glass, an homage to the Sonoita Viticultural Area that has been newly publicized on our state highways, and proceeded to lay down stones to make a flat surface to walk upon.

Stone laying, or masonry, has long existed. Lost to the mists of time is the name of the ancestor that first placed a stone upon a stone for reasons that are also lost to time.

As we gradually transformed to farmers, some 10,000 to 12,000 years ago, in the Fertile Crescent of the Zagros Mountains on the border between Iraq and Iran, somebody felt it necessary to move stones around. Was it to clear fields for crops and create stone walls as pens for recently domesticated goats? Was it for the purpose of stepping stones to get around wet areas in irrigated fields? Or could it just be that someone’s wife wanted a neater entryway into the animal skin tent and, after all, the stones were just laying around? My own guess would be the construction of granaries that became the storehouses for the produce meant to sustain the group through the upcoming winter.

Neither is it for the sake of stepping stones to get around. The actual work of setting stones is contemplative. I begin focused and alert on the shady, west side of the house in the cool morning air, but soon I am breaking for water, sitting on the porch in a camp chair looking out over the golden grass fields that run up to my view of the Santa Ritas. It’s all a little hazy and lazy and gentle on my eyes.

The first thing that I smile about is my own conception of permanence. Mountains seem permanent until you acknowledge the presence of invertebrate fossils at the 5,000’ elevation. They were laid down on a seabed millions of years ago where they changed from sedimentary rock into metamorphic and were later thrust up by the action of tectonic plate collision.

On the other end of the scale is the experience I had as a teen when I took my one and only trip to Europe. The great stone cathedrals, I was impressed by the impressions left by the thousands of feet made over hundreds of years into the solid granite steps.

You can observe a similar thing in the foot holds, made by bare feet, that run up the sides of the volcanic ash cliffs where the Mimbres people made their homes in the Gila Cliff Dwellings of New Mexico.

Hard stone, like hard feelings, yields eventually, but it takes time.

Still, I am driven by my desire to create something of a lasting nature, knowing full well the temporary nature of mountains.

By noon my shadowed workplace is giving way to the full, blazing sun. I am kneeling, so my head is the first to get baked by the hot rays.

When I stop and sit for water again, my thoughts wander to the future. What will it be like for humans when an AI program will be able to look at photos of the rocks that you have to assemble and decide what rocks should be used in which way to come up with a choice of designs?

I am certain that parts of this work can be done now by computer. Take a picture of your rocks with a ruler, to show the sizes, and a program can digitize then rotate them to see what best fits together. The human chore is reduced to the gathering of the rocks, now pixels, to be used. Will this still result in a satisfying experience for people?

Oh well, at least it will be level. Keith Krizan can be contacted at therealkbk@gmail.com

STARSTRIUCK

Discovering Truths

By Harold Meckler

Everyone wants to have 20/20 vision. Sometimes, we need glasses to make it happen, but the bottom line is that we want to see everything clearly. We also appreciate having 20/20 hind sight so that whatever it was that has gone wrong can be righted in the future. One can certainly argue, though, that seeing things as they are in the present or as they were in the past can be rather painful. But being purposefully nearsighted or, perhaps purposely blinded, only serves those who would choose fiction over truth.

So, if it’s truth we’re after, the reality is that we only see about 5% of what is in the universe. NASA reports that about 68% of everything is something called dark energy, and about 27% consists of dark matter. We can’t see either of these, although years of scientific study have confirmed not just their existence, but also the rough percentages of each. Dark energy is what is driving the accelerating expansion of the universe. Not only is the universe getting bigger, but it’s getting bigger faster than ever. Dark matter appears to be what is holding everything together. It doesn’t absorb light, so it remains invisible.

Imagine if you looked outside your window and were only able to see 5% of what was in your front yard. You’d want to see more. Imagine telling a group of kids that for every prize they found during a search at a local park, there were still nine more waiting for them. How can anyone be satisfied with knowing that so much is still unknown?

In July, after about 20 years of planning, the European Space Agency (with input from NASA) sent the Euclid space telescope on its way to a perch one million miles from Earth where it will use its infrared and visible light cameras to create a map of the universe that may finally bring us closer to understanding dark energy and dark matter. This map will include a catalog of possibly 1.5 billion galaxies. By the end of its six-year-run, Euclid may be able to provide answers to some of the fundamental questions about how the universe formed and how it will continue to evolve.

None of this fact-finding comes cheap—the final cost was approximately $1.5 billion—but, how does one put a dollar amount on the value of discovery, even when there is so much work to be done right on our own planet? It’s a question that must be continuously revisited, especially now that climate change has become so destructive and such an existential threat.

I do not know the answer. I will, however, continue to look at the wonders of the sky that, thankfully, are visible to us. At the same time, I hope that we somehow find a way to fix the planet as we continue to search for the things that have been hidden from us.

The first thing that I smile about is that we somehow find a way to fix the planet as we continue to search for the things that have been hidden from us.

For the next several months Saturn will be a great sight in the southeastern sky. The current tilt of the giant planet will reduce our view of its rings, but they’re certainly still there in all their glory.

The Webb telescope has recently taken incredible images of Saturn. It has also photographed exciting views of Saturn’s moon Enceladus, an icy world with an underground ocean that vigorously spews geysers into space. These plumes contain all of the elements for life: carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, sulfur and phosphorus, though no evidence of life on Enceladus has been uncovered.

It all goes back to what we can see and what we can’t. The Webb telescope will soon take an extended look at Enceladus. Who knows what it will find. Just as with Euclid, the geniuses among us have created tools to help us learn more, to shed more light on the unknown, to discover more truths.

So, I’ll look at Saturn and think about Enceladus and choose to believe that our desire for knowledge and truth can and will be used to stop the devastating effects of a changing climate here at home.
Kiyo Taylor
Sky Island Silversmith

By Pat McNamara

One need not look too far in our Sky Island area to find creative and very talented artists. One of them is Elgin-based Kiyo Taylor, whose exquisite silverwork and jewelry have garnered return customers from all over the world.

A difficult family situation spurred Taylor, a Colorado native, to drop out of high school. However, a special program afforded her the opportunity to finish her education if she lived on a reservation in Navajo country and studied there.

She moved in with a Navajo family of silversmiths, whose home had no indoor plumbing or central heat. Under the family’s tutelage she learned her craft, which she continued with several weeks at an engraving school.

Taylor enrolled at Prescott College in Arizona to further her studies, but soon became disenchanted. With a youthful sense of adventure, and an interest in range management, Taylor and a friend left Prescott in 1988 to explore southern Arizona on a self-funded, seven-month journey.

They were on a mission to “reconnaissance the area for the future Arizona trail,” says Taylor. Part of their time was spent at the Sonoita Fairgrounds for some rest and relaxation.

Taylor settled in this area in 1990, doing odd jobs on ranches, cleaning houses and working at the original Steak Out Restaurant before it went up in flames. All the while, she worked to perfect her silversmith craft, gradually building a name for herself by spending many a weekend on the road, selling her work at the National Finals Rodeo and other large horse shows and sales.

For a couple of years, starting in 2003, Taylor had a studio in Sonoita. Now, with a loyal clientele from all over the world, she has been able to buy a house in Elgin.

Except for a couple of days a week at an outside job in Sierra Vista to “get out of the house and socialize,” Taylor is content to create and market her jewelry and belt buckles online full-time. All of her inventory is her own designs. She specializes in the southwestern genre, with her creations featuring mostly horses, cowboys and nature.

Taylor’s business, Horsecamp Design Studio, can be seen online at kiyotaylorsilverwork.com. She is on Facebook and Instagram as “HorsecampDesignStudio.”

The well-being of the Patagonia Mountains and Sonoita Creek Watershed is tied to our economic prosperity and health.

It is the source of our drinking water, clean air, and the biological wealth that drives our regional nature-based restorative economy.

There must be oversight of proposed industrialized mining activity and mining company accountability to the community to avoid short-sighted destruction of natural resources in pursuit of corporate profits.

PatagoniaAlliance.org
Want to tour the Hermosa Project?

The South32 Hermosa Project public tour season is back. Join us to learn more about this critical minerals project in the Patagonia Mountains. Ask questions, discover how our team is uniquely designing for sustainability, and get a guided view of the site from our project overlook.

Weather permitting, public tours take place the first Friday of each month and continue until monsoon season. Send your inquiry to askhermosa@south32.net. Tours fill quickly, and capacity is limited.

depot (cont.)

in the kitchen for a Rotary pancake breakfast.

One proposed civic use described in the Memorandum was as a “recreation facility for students during non-school hours. . . to [provide] activities [that] would serve to reduce misconduct arising from idle time and offer a Patagonia project which would reflect credit to the town.”

In 1974, the Rotary Club paid the church the sum of $1.00 with the church agreeing to disclaim any interest in the depot building. The church understood that the Rotary Club would sell the building to the Town of Patagonia.

This bit of history might bring a smile to your face the next time you go to the Town Office to pay your utility bill or attend a Town Council meeting.

Whether it’s providing the first Patagonia high school location back in the 1920s or a venue in Thurber Hall for traveling high aerial acts in the 1960s, the 100-year-old history of the Patagonia Community UMC Church continues to reveal colorful connections to the life of this area.

Depot (Cont.)

The Town Hall in Patagonia, built in 1904, was saved from demolition by the Patagonia Community Church and the local Rotary Club in 1965. It became the Patagonia Town Hall in 1974.
**What Is That??**

*Curios From the Patagonia Museum*

This item is on loan to the Patagonia Museum from the Arizona Geological Survey. It is a rock splitter. Prospectors and miners could examine the interior surfaces of the ore specimens with this tool. Age unknown.

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**The Santa Cruz Foundation For The Performing Arts**

*Benderly-Kendall Opera House, 344 Naugle Ave., Patagonia, AZ*

**August/September Schedule**

**August 4: 8p.m. & August 6: 7p.m. Music: SabroSON! + Film: “Chavela” - A Summer Series Combo Event**

SCFPA and the Patagonia Creative Arts Association invite you to enjoy a special two-part event - a presentation of the 2017 documentary “Chavela” at 8 on Friday, August 4 and a concert featuring SabroSON! on Sunday, August 6 at 7. Both events will be held in the Opera House Courtyard. Buy your tickets online at the special combo price of $20. If you can’t join us for both, individual tickets ($5 for the movie and $20 for the concert) will be available at the gate.

**August 18: 8p.m. & August 20: 7p.m. Music: The Tucson Modern Jazz Quartet + Film: “Possibilities” - A Summer Series Combo Event**

SCFPA and the Patagonia Creative Arts Association invite you to enjoy a special two-part event - a presentation of the Herbie Hancock documentary “Possibilities” at 8 on Friday, August 18 followed by concert featuring the Tucson Modern Jazz Quartet on Sunday, August 20 at 7. Both events will be held in the Opera House Courtyard. Buy your tickets online at the special combo price of $20. If you can’t join us for both, individual tickets ($5 for the movie and $20 for the concert) will be available at the gate.

*Visit www.scfpapresents.org for more information*

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**THE TIN SHED THEATER**

**FEBRUARY 2023 SCHEDULE**

**AUG 19, 3p.m. “A Peek Behind the Curtain: The Making of a Podcast” Hosted by The Sierra Club and Voices From the Border. Award winning journalists Todd Miller and Melissa Del Bosque interview artist/researcher David Taylor before a live audience. The interview and audience questions to be a future “Border Chronicle” podcast. Free**

**SEPT 16, 7p.m. “An Intimate Evening of Live Music with Liz and Pete” Hosted PCAA and Voices From the Border Liz Cerepanyn and Peter Dalton Ronstadt join musical forces to explore material old and new. Liz’s heartfelt voice with Pete’s haunting harmonies and rich guitar arrangements captivate the mind and tug at the heart. Cash bar and Tapas 6pm Cash bar and Tapas 6pm Concert p.m. $20 in advance, $25 at the door.**

*Dates and Times Subject to Change*

*If you would be interested in sponsoring upcoming events, please contact Cassina Farley at 520-394-9369.*

Visit www.patagoniacreativearts.org or 394-9369 for more information.

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**SPECIAL INTERESTS**

- **Lunch for Seniors**: Fresh-cooked meals. In-house dining only 11:30a.m. - 12:30p.m. Patagonia Senior Center.
- **Sr. Citizens of Patagonia Van Service**: Transportation, Mon - Fri for seniors & disabled by appointment only. Info: 520-394-2494.
- **The Natures Conservancy’s Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve**: Wed. - Sun. 6:30a.m. - 4p.m. Thursday - 7p.m. 387 McKown Ave., Patagonia Contact Dave at 207-249-8302.
- **Overeaters Anonymous**: to find a meeting go to www.oasouthernaz.org. Contact Adrienne H. for more info 520-404-3490.

**MEETINGS**

- **Patagonia Methodist Community Church**: Fridays at 7p.m. 387 McKown Ave., Patagonia Contact Dave at 207-249-8302.
- **Patagonia Town Council**: Meets 2nd & 4th Weds. of the month. 6p.m. Public invited. CDC Guidelines will be followed.
- **Rotary Club**: 2nd & 4th Thurs. 5:30p.m. has moved online. Info: Sue 520-990-4648.
- **Senior Citizens of Patagonia’s Board of Directors**: 2nd Mon. 3p.m. at the Senior Center.

**CHURCH SERVICES**

- **Patagonia Community United Methodist Church**: Meets via Zoom. Contact BER Anderson at andeap@msn.com, 520-508-860-0173 for more info.
- **St. Therese of Lisieux Catholic Church**: Patagonia 222 Third Ave., T, Th, Fri 9 a.m. (Oct - AUGUST/SEPTEMBER, 8 a.m. AUGUST/SEPTEMBER - Sept.), Sat 5:30p.m., Sun 10:30a.m.
- **Our Lady of The Angels Mission**: Wed 9:00a.m., Sun 8:00a.m. in Sonoita 520-394-2954
- **Sonoita Hills Community Church**: 52 Elgin Rd., Elgin Sunday Service: 10a.m.
- **Sonoita Bible Church**: 3174 N. Hwy 83, Sonoita Service: 10:30a.m. Youth Group: 2nd & 4th Wed.
- **VINE Christian Church**: 3107 Hwy 83, Sonoita. Sunday Service: 10:30a.m. Cafe, 10:30a.m. service.
- **St. Andrews Episcopal Church**: 969 W. County 222 Third Ave., T, Th, Fri 9 a.m. (Oct - AUGUST/SEPTEMBER, 8 a.m. AUGUST/SEPTEMBER - Sept.), Sun 8:00a.m. in Sonoita 520-394-2954
- **Canelo Cowboy Church**: 14 McCarthy Lane, Elgin 520-604-6990. Sunday Service: 8:30a.m. Sunday School: 10a.m.
- **Patagonia Community United Methodist Church**: Sunday service 10a.m Call/email church office for info. 520-394-2274 patagoniaumc@gmail.com
- **TerraSol**

**Sponsorship**

- **We Would Like to Thank TerraSol for its Generous Sponsorship of the PRT**

The Patagonia Regional Times is able to offer its many services to Eastern Santa Cruz County thanks to the support of sponsorships and donations. Our sponsors support coverage of local news and events and encourage discussion of important topics in our community. Interested in becoming a sponsor? Want to learn more? Contact Patrick at prtads@gmail.com.
Email prtasted@gmail.com with any event or updates you would like listed.

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prtads@gmail.com

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Email prtasted@gmail.com with any event or updates you would like listed.

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2 Bedroom 2 Bath 2 Story Home
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Patagonia, Arizona

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To sign up for home delivery or for more information, contact
prtbookkeeper@gmail.com

KPUP Broadcast Schedule
Summer / Fall 2023

Mon: 5pm to 6pm: Swing Hour
7pm to 8pm: eTown repeat of Saturday’s show
Tues: 10am to 12pm: World Jazz with Mark Berg
7pm to 9pm: Jazz and Blues with Fred Hansen
Wed: 5pm to 6pm: Swing Hour
7pm to 10pm: Sean Alexander show
Thurs: 7pm to 10pm: Possibility Explorers, “Celebrating Mushkil Gusha, the Remover of All Difficulties.” Hosted by Graves
Fri: 7pm to 9pm: Hook’s Sunken Roadhouse
Sat: 12pm to 1pm: eTown - “Educate, entertain and inspire listeners through music and conversation”
Sun: 10am: Patagonia Union Community Methodist Church service
6pm to 8pm: Acoustic Cafe. A bit of country, rock, blues, folk, pop
8pm to 10pm: Folk Alley “Folk Music Radio from WKSU-FM in Kent, OH

Daily Shows: Best of the Oldies: 1pm to 2pm/ BirdNote: 6am and 10am/ Growing Native with Petey Mesquity: MWF at 7am, Sunday at noon/ Feature Story News (FSN.com) Mon – Fri. 8am, 12pm and 6pm, Sat. 8am & 6pm, Sun. at 8am Patagonia Weather Forecast: Every odd hour.
TO OUR CLIENTS, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

As of July 15, 2023 our Sonoita office is closed.
The Real Estate business has changed dramatically in the last few years and our agents can now do most of their work at home. We will continue to be available in our Patagonia office 6 days a week and by appointment. Stop by and say hi!

Jean Miller
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Laura Jean Miller, Owner, Designated Broker
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