

Patagonia Regional Times



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SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF CANELO, ELGIN, PATAGONIA AND SONOITA SINCE 2009

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Residents Stress Transparency, Independent Monitoring for Hermosa



Photo by Dave Lumia

(From left) South32 External Affairs manager Simon Chavez, Santa Cruz County Manager Jesus Valdez, Santa Cruz County District 3 Supervisor John Fanning and Patagonia Mayor Andrea Wood listen as residents outline their priorities for a Community Protections and Benefits Agreement.

By Dave Lumia

The March 17 “Community Listening and Engagement Session” for the proposed South32 Hermosa Project Community Protection and Benefits Agreement (CPBA) brought out some 70 local residents and a litany of familiar concerns from the 16 community members who spoke.

The intent of the 90-minute meeting at Patagonia High School was to provide a forum for residents to address the signatories to the agreement—Santa Cruz County, the town of Patagonia, the city of Nogales and South32—and express their opinions on what should be included in it.

Representatives from the four signatories present at the meeting included Patagonia Mayor Andrea Wood, Santa Cruz County District 3 Supervisor John Fanning, Nogales Mayor Jorge Maldonado and Troy Kimball, Lead Communities for South32. Pat Risner, President of South32 Hermosa, was unable to attend due to illness.

Dean Slocum of Acorn International

moderated the meeting and explained that the CPBA— originally referred to as a “Good Neighbor Agreement”— would be a legally binding agreement between the four signatories. Its content would be arrived at by consensus, rather than a vote, of the signatories: “Let’s figure out a way to work together to come up with an answer that we can all live with.” He said the signatories have been meeting once a month for about a year, and the process could take years to complete.

A common concern among all the speakers was the impact of South32’s operations on the environment, ecosystems and lifestyle, but given the inevitability of the operation, much of the meeting’s dialogue focused on the substance of the CPBA and the process that goes into it.

“The reason people are a little nervous is there has not been transparency,” said Chuck Klingenstein of Patagonia, the first of 16 speakers. “I know you all are bound by some sort

See Meeting, p.15

Town May Cut Ties With PVFR

By Marion Vendituoli

The Town of Patagonia has taken steps that could end its standing relationship with the 100-year-old Patagonia Volunteer Fire and Rescue (PVFR) department.

Concerns about the threat of a major fire taking place in the town, especially after the devastation caused by recent fires in Hawaii and California, prompted Town officials to take a hard look at the Town’s firefighting resources.

“The Town Council wants to make sure citizens are protected,” Patagonia Town Manager Ron Robinson said.

The 39-member PVFR currently provides fire and emergency medical services to the Town under a one-year \$65,000 contract set to expire June 30.

Robinson said the lack of structure fire training on the part of PVFR volunteers worried Council members.

“[PVFR members] need to realize that even though they are volunteers, they need training,” he said. “We determined that we needed to create a Request for Proposal (RFP).”

On Feb. 21, the Town sent a detailed RFP to provide fire and emergency medical services to the Town from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026 to three local fire departments: PVFR, Sonoita Elgin Fire District (SEFD) and Rio Rico Fire District.

PVFR and SEFD submitted proposals to the Town before the March 31 deadline passed. Rio Rico Fire District did not respond.

The Town’s RFP notes in its opening section that the providing agency “will have a strong Board of Directors that provides capable business management oversight and visionary guidance for the Agency’s current and future

See Fire, p.2

Inaugural 'Daydreamer' Trail Run Draws 120 Participants



Photo by Shannon Dudley

Runners set off from the starting line near Patagonia Lumber Company.

By John Waldrop

120 runners participated in the first-ever ‘Daydreamer’ trail run event in Patagonia on March 1. Patagonia resident Heidi Rentz produced the weekend event, which included a fundraiser dinner benefiting the ‘Patagonia Recycles’ program. Over 180 people joined in the festivities in addition to

the runners.

Trail runners had three distance options: 10k, 30k and 50k. Runners’ ages ranged from 12 to 83. About 70 percent of the entrants were women.

Several local runners represented Patagonia. Duke Norton won the men’s 50k, Erin O’Mara took second

See Daydreamer, p.21

Patagonia Regional Times



MISSION STATEMENT

To be a reliable and engaging source of news for the communities of eastern Santa Cruz County—open to all views, focused on local issues, written and edited by local people, and providing a platform for community education and involvement.

WHO WE ARE

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Fire(Cont.)

operations...The successful Agency's Fire Chief will be selected by the Board of Directors and the Board and Chief together will select the other principal operating officers...The Chief will be a professional firefighter holding certifications in CPR and Certified Emergency Management with at least 7 years' experience leading firefighting and emergency medical service operations."

PVFR submitted a 13-page proposal to the Town even though PVFR's leadership structure and personnel do not meet at least two baseline prerequisites the Town's RFP is demanding. PVFR's fire chief is traditionally selected by the department's membership, not its Board of Directors, and PVFR Acting Fire Chief Zay Hartigan does not have the specific emergency management certifications the Town wants to see a Fire Chief hold. In addition, on March 16, the PVFR membership voted to remain member-governed, rather than changing to Board-governed, as the Town's RFP requires.

"It's been a contentious process," Hartigan said.

PVFR's proposal acknowledges the issue.

"We held a vote mid-March on these changes, but it included a very unpopular rider, and did not pass (24 nay, 13 yea)," reads the proposal. "Leadership has made it clear to the members that we must make these changes if we are to continue serving the Town. We have identified several members who will commit to taking either Structure Academy, EMT training, or the combined academy. The Acting Chief has committed to additional training and certifications as well."

Hartigan believes that PVFR can grow to provide the service that the Town is looking for.

"We feel over the next three to five years, with incremental increases in the budget, we will be able to advance to fill this gap," he said. PVFR's current annual budget is approximately \$155,000.

PVFR's proposal makes other arguments for the Town to continue to contract with PVFR for fire and emergency services, instead of SEFD or Rio Rico:

"While much of [SEFD and Rico Rico] staffs come from other communities and often must move on for any career advancement,

leading to turnover, our members have years, even decades, of service with our department. And many have generations of residence in our community. That familiarity with our Town's layout and citizens provide crucial resources on the many calls that are hard to locate. There are many calls where [SEFD's] ambulance relies on our members to guide them to the patient. While their staffs have higher certification than ours currently, we tend to have a greater pool of staff responding to calls and have plans to increase our certifications."

SEFD submitted a 52-page proposal to the Town of Patagonia after its board voted unanimously to throw their hat into the ring.

"I believe that SEFD is in a very good position to meet the requirements of the RFP both in terms of our members' qualifications and their training," SEFD Fire Chief Marc Meredith told the PRT. "We are very familiar with the community because we provide their ambulance transport already and have worked with PVFR for years. It's a community that's very important to us and very close to us. We think we can do a good job to take care of them."

When asked how the loss of the Town contract might impact PVFR, Meredith responded, "I honestly don't know what they'll do. It would certainly prove challenging for them. Change is difficult but the needs of communities evolve and we'll see what happens, but we're ready to help out if [the Town is] ready to have us."

If awarded the contract, SEFD would receive \$70,000 from the Town of Patagonia annually for providing fire and emergency services. SEFD, whose current annual budget is \$2.1 million, proposes to increase its staff so that there would be a minimum of five members on duty at all times to be better able to cover the additional area. SEFD also proposes keeping some apparatus in Patagonia.

It is at first glance difficult to see what the benefits of this arrangement would be for Sonoita/Elgin residents, who contribute the bulk of SEFD's funding through property taxes. SEFD would spend most of the income from a one-year, \$70,000 contract with the Town of Patagonia on having increased personnel on call. The district would be taking on additional responsibilities with-

out an increase in the district's tax base, and the potential dissolution of PVFR resulting from the loss of their contract with the Town of Patagonia would mean the loss of a valuable mutual aid partner for the Sonoita Elgin area.

PVFR's proposal addresses this issue, stating that, "If [PVFR] ceases to be a working department, that resource disappears from the county, and will negatively affect our neighbors' responses in their own districts, as well as in our town."

SEFD Chief Meredith said, "If I thought for a minute this would impact our ability to take care of our own district, we never would have submitted the proposal."

SEFD Board President Chris Johnson told the PRT that there would be advantages to expanding the coverage area for SEFD.

"We look at it as an opportunity to potentially increase our district, increase our tax base in areas that we basically already serve but that we get no revenue from," he said. "It's a potential gamble. Are there some downsides? Yes, there but there's also some potential upsides as well. A one-year contract is not a huge commitment, and we think we can perform in a way that doesn't harm our existing resources or minimally impacts our existing resources. That's why we thought we would go ahead."

"There's a pretty good opportunity that we could expand the district a little bit without taking on virtually any additional responsibilities," Johnson said, "because it's already areas that we cover."

Patagonia Manager Robinson said the Town would hold a public hearing if there were to be a change in the provider of fire and emergency services. He said that public discussion by the Town Council was not required before the RFP was sent out on Feb. 21, because it was an "administrative act."

PVFR will hold another meeting in June, at which time its membership will elect a permanent Fire Chief. If no one steps up to fill that position, Hartigan has indicated that he will continue as Chief. Three of the department's five board seats will be up for vote, as well.

Editor's note: The Town's current contract with PVFR, the RFP, and SEFD and PVFR's proposals are available to view at prtnews.org



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State Hits Developer With Cease and Desist Order



Photo by Dave Lumia

One of the unfinished homes in Coronado Ridge's 16-lot residential subdivision development in Patagonia.

By Dave Lumia

The Arizona Department of Real Estate has issued a cease-and-desist order against Coronado Ridge Development Corporation preventing the sale of any lots or parcels in the Patagonia Eastside Addition, a 16-lot residential subdivision that was approved by the town council in January 2019.

The order, dated Jan. 27, 2025, states that developer Martin Short of Carmel, Ind., failed to apply for or obtain a Subdivision Disclosure Report (Public Report) from the ADRE Commissioner prior to selling or offering for sale parcels within the subdivision, as required by state statute. Four parcels within the subdivision were sold in 2021, but Coronado Ridge still owns 19 parcels, on which it intends to build 16 homes.

James Knupp, deputy commissioner with the ADRE, said the Public Report requires the developer to provide 25 consumer disclosures relating to improvements installed by the subdivider, such as roads, sewage, trash collection, electricity and water.

"The subdivider will come to us with the disclosures, we ensure that it is complete, and then we would issue the Public Report," Knupp said.

The order includes an acknowledgment of wrongdoing by Short, who was assessed a \$1,000 civil penalty.

Short did not make himself available for an interview with the PRT to discuss the order or the future of the development, which is located on the northern end of Roadrunner Lane and east of Second Avenue, but he indicated by email that he intends to meet the ADRE requirements and move forward.

"We are not currently offering homes or lots for sale at this location," the email said. "However, it is our intention to now proceed with administrative filings (a new public report

application) with the AZ Department of Real Estate. Hopefully we will begin offering new single family homes sometime soon (16 single family homesites/homes may be available)."

The ADRE's Knupp said it could take "weeks or months" to compile the needed disclosures. One such disclosure would be a report from the Arizona Department of Water Resources demonstrating an adequate 100-year water supply or an exemption from the ADWR. It remains unclear whether Short would be successful in obtaining such a report, and he did not respond to the PRT's written questions regarding water adequacy.

"At this time we have no further information," he wrote.

In 2008, Patagonia adopted a Mandatory Adequacy Jurisdiction Ordinance, requiring that proposed subdivisions demonstrate an adequate 100-year water supply, as determined by the ADWR, prior to final plat approval. Patagonia is not included on the ADWR's most recent list of municipal water providers designated as having an assured or adequate water supply, which is dated May 3, 2024.

In response to a written request, Donna Calderon, water resources specialist associate with the ADWR, wrote: "The Town of Patagonia is not a designated water provider; therefore, a subdivision of six or more lots would need to get a water report from our Department to obtain a public report from the Arizona Department of Real Estate in order to sell lots."

David French, compliance program manager for the ADWR, wrote on March 20 that the department had not received an application from Coronado Ridge, "therefore no water supply analysis has been done."

Lonnie Goff, who lives within a couple of blocks of the subdivision

See Subdivision, p.18

Authors Discuss Cultural Resistance, Resilience



Photo by Nisa Talavera

Author Luiz Alberto Urrea (with microphone) responds to a question from the Border Chronicle's Melissa Del Bosque (right) at the Mar. 12 event.

By Lynn Davison

On March 12, renowned authors Luiz Alberto Urrea and Gary Paul Nabhan provided thought-provoking and often humorous stories of resistance and resilience in the borderlands to 100 guests at the Tin Shed Theater.

The event, hosted by Patagonia Creative Arts Association and Voices From the Border, included the recording of a podcast, which is now available at theborderchronicle.com. It was the fourth annual "Peek Behind the Curtain" podcast conceived by Voices From the Border and produced by the Border Chronicle.

The event was expanded this year to include drinks and dinner, and to also raise funds for two local nonprofits, Voices from the Border and the Patagonia Creative Arts Association.

Luiz Alberto Urrea is the much-celebrated author of 19 books, winning numerous awards for his fiction, poetry, and essays. Born in Tijuana to a Mexican father and American mother, Urrea is most recognized as a border writer, though he says, "I am more interested in bridges, not borders." He uses his dual-culture life experiences to explore greater themes of love, loss, and triumph. Urrea lives in Naperville, IL, where he is a distinguished professor of creative writing at the University of Illinois-Chicago.

Patagonia's Gary Paul Nabhan is an agricultural ecologist, ethnobotanist, ecumenical Franciscan brother, and author whose work has focused primarily on the interaction of biodiversity and cultural diversity in the arid binational Southwest. Considered a pioneer in the local food movement and the heirloom seed-saving movement. Nabhan has written over 30 books and contributed to many more

publications. A first-generation Lebanese American, Nabhan was raised in Gary, Indiana. He is married to cultural ecologist and indigenous health advocate Laurie Monti.

The conversation explored the role of resistance in the borderlands, structured around Teresita, a common character in both Nabhan's latest book, "Against the American Grain: a Borderlands History of Resistance," and Urrea's book, "The Hummingbird's Daughter." Both authors offered their interpretation of Teresita, a revered Mexican folk saint and healer who is credited with healing over 50,000 people. Teresita is based on Luiz Urrea's great aunt, Teresa Urrea.

While the conversation between the authors began with Teresita, it quickly expanded. Nabhan described "cultural resistance as a positive hope practiced over the past four centuries in the borderlands." He suggested "that indigenous writers, who bring strong connections to the land and to the mysticism embedded in their history and culture, are a powerful source for spreading messages of hope and resistance." Urrea encouraged the audience to "use your peripheral vision more, as everything is not direct. Living on the edge is where the vision is good and some fun can be had. We want to resist being divided as we will miss intimate contact with people different from us. America's immigrants have enriched America, not impoverished it."

Urrea is a jocular storyteller and vividly portrayed how his great aunt's life experiences, both good teachings from Yaqui medicine women and a bad near-death encounter, where she was abducted and assaulted, abandoned in a coma and rose again after

See Authors, p.21

Local Collaboration Creates Award-Winning Wines



Photo by Dave Lumia

Kati Spencer of Twisted Union was awarded a Growers Cup for best dessert wine for the 2022 vintage of Bake Sale.

By Dave Lumia

Remember the proverbial village that is so valuable in raising a child?

Turns out it's pretty handy for the winemaking industry too.

Case in point: two Elgin wineries that were among the big winners at the 2025 azcentral Arizona Wine Competition.

Los Milics came away with a 2025 Growers Cup for best rosé – Ita's 2024, a light rosé that is a blend of grenache,

tempranillo and vermentino grapes.

Twisted Union brought home a Growers Cup for best dessert wine with its 2022 Bake Sale—a blend of tempranillo, petit syrah and mourvedre.

Both wineries are relative newcomers on the scene, though quite different in scale of operations. Pavle and Ita Milic established their vineyard in Elgin in 2019 and opened their tasting room in 2022. Kati Spencer started Twisted Union in 2020. Los Milics grows its own grapes, has two vineyards totaling some 50 acres, a tasting room, a full-service restaurant and overnight accommodations in Elgin, as well as other tasting rooms in Scottsdale and Tucson. Twisted Union buys its grapes from other growers and have a mom-and-pop tasting room in Elgin.

One undeniably common denominator is how neither winemaker could have made it to this point without more than a little help from his and her friends and neighbors.

"There's a lot of collaboration that happens around here, and that's the beauty of this particular region," Spencer said.

Spencer had direct input from four other winemakers in the blending of Bake Sale. It started with tempranillo grapes grown by Brett Wagner and neutral grape spirits to arrest fermentation and fortify the wine. Dominic Burke and Jeni Davis helped through the middle stage, during which it was

decided to blend in some petit syrah and Mourvedre table wine to add complexity, deepen the color and give it more of a varietal flavor. Then, recognizing that the addition of the dry table wines had diluted the sugar and alcohol content, Spencer brought in the Big Kahuna: Karyl Wilhelm, founder of Wilhelm Family Vineyards in Sonoita.

"I kind of felt like I had to bring in the local expert on dessert wines," she said. "Karyl's been making dessert wines for 20 years, and this truly is one of her specialties."

Wilhelm suggested the addition of petit syrah concentrate to boost the sweetness and some additional neutral grape spirits to bring the alcohol content up to the 18-19 percent range.

"Karyl was willing to sit down with me and do the math and roll up her sleeves and come over here and help me through these different stages," Spencer said. "As a newer winemaker, a lot of this is familiar territory for me being around the industry, but not necessarily something I was ready to drive on my own, and I'm just so grateful that we had so much support from people in getting this wine to bottle. The fact that we turned around and won this Growers Cup, there's a lot of people that need to be acknowledged."

Milic expressed similar sentiments about his journey from Scottsdale-area restaurateur to **See Wine, p.14**

Planning Committee Sets April 29 Town Hall in Sonoita

By Ed Gaines, Gail Christmann, Aaron Gudenkauf and Kiyo Taylor, on behalf of the Sonoita/Elgin Preservation and Planning Committee

Many folks will recall the 2023 announcement of a Cuisine Tourism effort for Sonoita/Elgins. At a January 2024 community meeting at Elgin School over 150 residents showed up.

Over the next six months, a group of 73 residents kept meeting to learn more about the options available to Sonoita/Elgin. We lost some folks along the way, but the remaining participants voted to work with the County and explore some ideas that might give our community a little bit of control over future growth—so we don't feel like something else is being shoved down our throats.

Our group has continued to meet, learn, and debate about what would best serve the needs of our community while addressing the concerns of our community. The group as a whole was never particularly interested in the tourism focus but a constant reality in our discussions was that development can happen at any point in time. Just over the course of our meetings, the lot across from the Fairgrounds was bought and development started, Tia Nita's was sold and is under renovation, and the boutique store moved

into the Feed Store. And that huge land parcel between 82 and 83 is still up for sale.

We continued wrestling with this idea of how development is currently happening in our community and our community's inability to weigh in on what the community would like to see in the future. In August 2024 we decided to shift our focus to preservation and planning and began researching all of the prior community planning efforts—there have been quite a few over the years. Some were good as a whole, and some had great parts, but across all of them, there is a consistent theme of folks from Sonoita/Elgin wanting to preserve our community.

After months of deliberation, our group believes there is a way to make a framework that captures what our community wants to preserve and helps guide future growth.

When Santa Cruz County District 3 Supervisor John Fanning and County Manager Jesus Valdez attended our February 2025 meeting, we were able to express this to them directly.

Our goal is to ensure that the voices of local citizens remain at the forefront of decision making and that any proposed solutions align with the principles of responsible governance and community-driven development. We will continue to publish updates in the PRT and invite PRT reporters to attend all meetings to do independent reporting as well.

We also strongly encourage all community members to get involved. Whether by attending meetings, offering feedback, or reviewing the proposed plans as they take shape, participation will be key to ensuring that any initiative reflects the true priorities of our area. Whenever we have a larger update for the community,

we will schedule and advertise a town hall meeting.

And on that note, we'd like to invite the Sonoita/Elgin community to join us for a Town Hall meeting at the Fairgrounds (Pioneer Hall) on April 29, 2025, at 6:30 PM. We hope you'll be able to join us!

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Great Trees of Eastern Santa Cruz County: #1 in a Series



Photo by Vince Pinto

This massive Mexican blue oak is at least 150 years old.

The Mexican Blue Oak of Sonoita Creek

By Vince Pinto

My life has been shaped by trees. I grew up back East where a plethora of species towered above me. I gawked upwards at their immensity, climbed them when I could, watched as birds, insects, squirrels and other wildlife worked in their trunks, branches and foliage.

The oaks always stood out to me, many rising to improbable heights, with behemoth girths, covering the ground in acorns come autumn. Trees in general, and perhaps oaks in particular, helped me to cut my teeth as a young naturalist.

Fast forward from my youth to adulthood in the Sky Islands where, once again, I encountered oaks. Of the 13 types of oak recorded in Arizona, not a single species, or likely even a lone tree, can hold a candle to the sheer size of those eastern ones. But our local members of the genus *Quer-*

cus beguile me with other charms, no less intoxicating.

Having already admired countless individual oaks in the Sky Islands, I found myself exploring along Sonoita Creek, not long after Claudia and I moved to Santa Cruz County in 2008.

The usual riparian forest trees greeted me on my trek: Fremont cottonwood, Southwestern black willow, velvet ash. Nary an oak was to be found. This was not their purview. While Madrean woodland, with its oaks, junipers, and pines lay not too distant in the Patagonia and Santa Rita Mountains, Sonoita Creek was simply not the proper environment to support any *Quercus* specimens.

As I came to where a north-facing slope framed one side of the creek, my eyes were instantly drawn to the blue-green foliage of a partially hidden tree. At once I realized that I was wrong in my assumption. Here was a Mexican blue oak. A short walk brought me to

a mature tree that defied my experience of oaks in other parts of the Sky Islands, which are relatively short-statured, asymmetrical and wonderfully gnarled—nothing like their eastern counterparts. These qualities certainly applied to this oak, but in such a novel fashion that my jaw literally dropped.

The first thing that caught my attention was the size of the tree—not so much its height, though it approached 60 feet tall, which is respectable for our local species. The tree's crown spread perhaps 110 feet from side to side, making it far wider than tall and overall highly asymmetrical. It was, however, the girth of the trunk that completely captured my attention.

It is standard to measure the diameter of a tree trunk at chest height. Hence the term “diameter at breast height” or DBH. As a field biologist I had measured the DBH of countless trees over the course of my career, including ones far wider than this oak. Nonetheless, in the context of the Sky Islands and within the immediate purview of Mexican Blue Oak, I had never come across such a gargantuan trunk—about 4.5 feet DBH. Furthermore, the first 20 feet or so of the massive bole was almost perfectly horizontal! As it rose out of the ground just before a steep rise, it made a left-hand turn until it finally splayed up into multiple sub-trunks, like a giant squid menacing its tentacles in the

deep, abysmal brine. Nature's hammock, I thought.

Wasting no time, I approached the tree, lounging on its trunk foremost in my mind. Soon, however, I was frozen in place. A familiar buzz put me on high alert. There! About 25 feet high in a sub-trunk was a hole from which honey bees were noisily streaming to and fro. At an elevation of about 4,000 feet, this colony was undoubtedly “Africanized” and hence prone to aggression. I quickly moved away from the cavity side of the tree, which fortunately was sufficiently far from the prone trunk so as not to spoil my desire to laze.

Soon I lay face up on the ample trunk. Gazing up at its oval, blue-green leaves, a number of things struck me. First was the potential age of the tree. Surely this was a venerable elder given its size. True, the creek was about 40 yards away, offering the possibility that the oak's roots had found the water table, affording speedy growth. Still, oaks are not cottonwoods or willows which can attain great size with blinding rapidity—at least for a tree. I reckoned that this oak was at least 150 years old. Perhaps germinated back in the early or mid 1800's, “my” tree (for I immediately became proprietary over my new friend) had seen quite a bit over its many decades.

Back when it was young, Mexican

See Oak, p.11

Do you know a great tree?

Share it with us! Submit photos (or artwork!) and text about your favorite tree to prtadast@gmail.com. It can be any tree on public or private property in Eastern Santa Cruz County. (You don't have to disclose the tree's exact location unless you want to.) Tell us what makes the tree great: maybe it's the tree's size, shape or age; or its leaf color; or the animals and insects who inhabit it; or the special events or family traditions associated with it; or perhaps something more personal. Whatever it is, share it with us. Let's celebrate our area's natural splendor and heritage!

Where Memories Were Stored

A granddaughter recalls William 'Memo' Matus and the sheds that housed his collections



Photo by Cynthia Matus Morriss

William Matus's 'Shed #1' as it stands today in Patagonia. The Tombstone rose was removed because it had become overgrown and was weighing down the roof.

By Aimee Naegelin Varela

About 15 years ago, I had a writing assignment. The prompt only had four words: write about a room. How could I make a room into a good story? After thinking about all the interesting rooms I have been in or would like to see, I wrote about my grandfather's favorite storage shed in the backyard. My grandfather, William 'Memo' Matus, had been a father figure for me, as I lived with my grandparents growing up.

In writing about a room, I told a story about my grandfather and his character, resilience, and humor. This story made us laugh, and even tear up a bit, but most importantly, it made him proud. My grandfather passed away on February 15, 2025. He was in good health when I had read this story to him, but he told me I should read this at his funeral someday (and he reminded me to tell everyone he liked belt buckles).

Hidden behind thick privet hedges and guarded by a sturdy mulberry tree that juts from the earth like a clenched fist, the little house, with its tidy patio and mint green siding is unimposing. Facing a quaint, shady courtyard filled with daffodils, pansies, violets and petunias, one would never know that the house had once been part of company housing at the Trench Mine and had been sawed in half and brought into Patagonia on the back of a flat-bed pick-up more than 60 years ago. Now with its little additions, it fills the property and protects those within.

But behind the house, under ivy covered trees, lay the true riches: my grandfather's storage sheds. Sheds #1 and #2, as they are called, are the orig-

inals—built of wood with sturdy doors and tin roofs. Sheds #3 and #4 are manufactured metal structures that house the more recent collections of old furniture, records and out-of-style clothing—things the children left behind when they started their own lives. Shed #5, housing the frequently used items, is the newest and most modern. It is a collection of lockers covered with a plywood overhang that protects grandfather from the elements.

The collection of #1 through #5 is strangely serene, especially for a man who cannot see and desperately strives to maintain some type of independence as he experiences the world with his other senses. Here, he does not need his sight, or a walking stick to guide him. His hands lead the way and show him his tools, projects and his memories, which are stronger than the dark and the shadows that are constantly before his eyes.

Today I have been granted access into #1 and the admission fee is a promise to not move anything. I wind my way past the revolving clothesline with its damp towels soaking up the morning sun, past the stacks of metal milk crates, the rakes and shovels leaning against #4, and the steel vice mounted on an old railroad tie.

Branches of yellow Tombstone Rose, encouraged by the breeze, reach down from the lattice above me and snag my hair and protect the entrance to my grandfather's mecca. The narrow door of #1 stands before me with its chipped white paint. The vintage doorknob, its skeleton key long ago misplaced, is draped with strips of leather. I smile at yet another place my grandfather has found to store his treasures.

It is dark within but the shafts of sunlight from the two small, screened windows slice through the room as dust motes gently float in the dim light. The aroma of #1 is comforting, and I take a deep breath. The smell of oil-soaked wood somewhere in the room is strong, but combined with the Tombstone Rose scratching at the roof and the scent of old leather, it reminds me of my childhood.

The tack hanging on the back of the door—tangled reins, bridles and snaffle bits, recall Grandfather's days as a cowboy when he went on round-up herding cattle and ate his meals over a glowing campfire in a star-filled range. A shelf high upon the wall is lined with empty spray paint cans, a testament to his handiness and nostalgia as he once told me those were the first cans of spray paint ever made. They are like a handyman's trophies, reminding me that my grandfather has a gift and can make or fix anything.

The wood floor sounds hollow under my feet as I venture further. I step over wooden soda crates and spot several coffee cans filled with miscellaneous nails, screws, nuts and bolts. Grandfather's mantra is "save everything, you never know when you might need it." Proof of this, clearly is #1, with its piles of things he may never use, like the box filled with dozens of new left shoes purchased at the

estate sale of a neighbor who was an amputee.

I remember when he purchased that box of shoes. My grandmother just sighed and shook her head. I suppose that after years of witnessing such creative purchases that's about all you can do. Grandfather told us that, if he ever lost a leg, he'd be prepared. He was unfazed when we asked him what he would do with all those shoes if he lost his left leg, but he told us not to worry about it. I didn't have the heart to tell him the shoes weren't even his size.

A roll of chicken wire, this handyman's staple, is shoved against a window, diluting the light. It's set up like an ingenious booby-trap and is probably protecting a sacred box of original Roy Rogers western comic books. Years ago, my grandmother attempted a crackdown on grandfather's cache and dumped boxes of comics and other items before he discovered what was going on and swiftly put an end to it. My grandmother has not returned to #1 since then. But rumor has it, some of the comics survived and are protected safely somewhere in the depths of #1. The Declaration of Independence may be ensconced in several inches of protective glass, with armed guards watching over its guests, and the most technologically advanced security system money can buy, but that is no match for grandfather's two-by-four and chicken wire security system.

A large piece of mustard-colored foam is rolled up by the wall, a reminder of long-ago camping trips. I recall falling asleep on the mattress in a tarp-covered red wagon as I listened to Uncle Tommy play the mandolin

See Shed, p.22



Contributed Photo

Memo Matus as a young cowboy. This photo was taken about 1946 by Benjamin Rivera, who later became his brother-in-law.

JOHN L. MICHAEL
OCTOBER 3, 1944 - FEBRUARY 26, 2025



John L. Michael, of Tunnel Springs, Sonoita, and Chicago, passed away peacefully on February 26, 2025.

Born in Topeka, Kansas, his busy life took him from Kansas to the Northern suburbs of Chicago, Boston, London, New York City, back to Chicago, then to Tucson in 1992, and from Tucson to Sonoita in 1998.

John loved it here—running, daily walks, swimming, entertaining with friends, dinners at the many excellent restaurants we've enjoyed in the area



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over time.

He was also active in local, state and national politics. His first effort in Santa Cruz County was to join Annie McGreevy in fighting the Nogales Airport—a good battle, well-fought.

He also took up Pilates in Patagonia and, recently, weight training there as well.

John's many occupations were as a journalist for the Christian Science Monitor, a correspondent for UPI in London, a trade magazine producer, a VP at Leyland Brothers, a trader at the Chicago Board of Trade, and a consultant for Native American Tribes seeking government funds for health and housing.

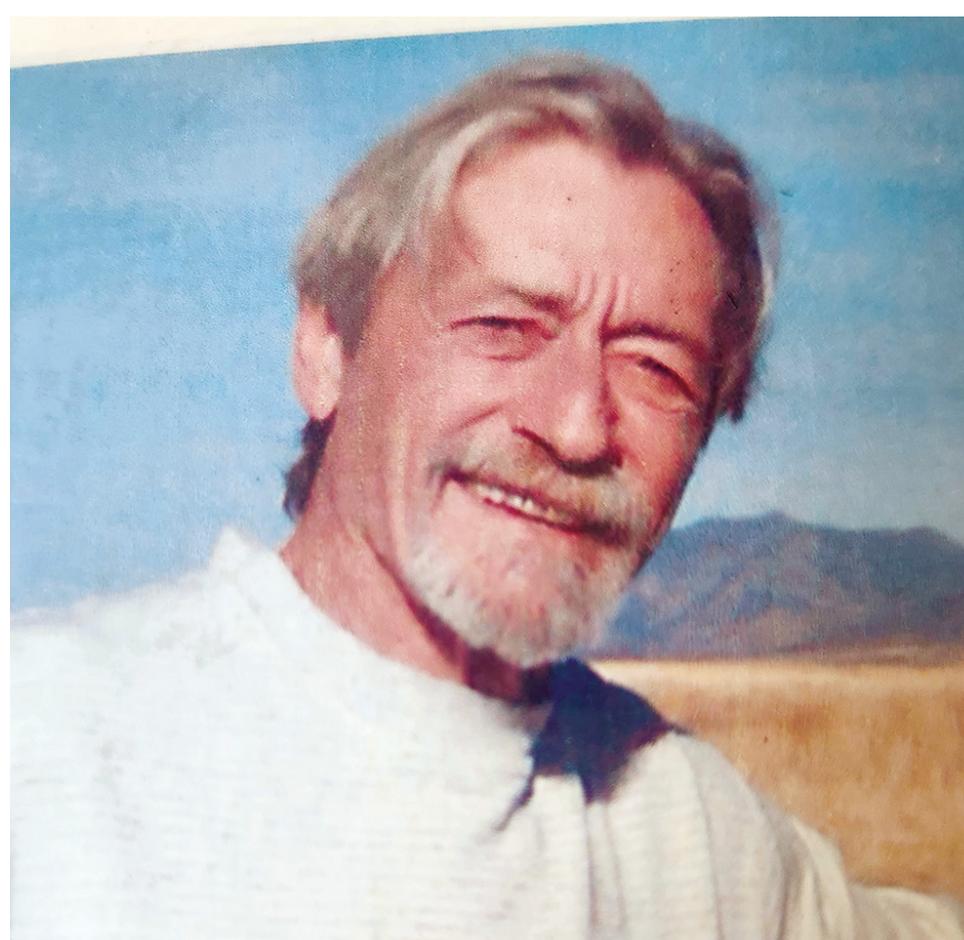
He is survived by his wife of 33 years, Vista Michael, his daughter Alexis Michael, son Callan Michael, sister Delores D'Arcy, and nephews Jim and Hamlet D'Arcy.

John was an avid reader and was immersed in the Early Medieval Balkans until the end.

Services were held in Chicago, Illinois on March 22. A Celebration of Life will be held in Sonoita sometime this spring.

Donations in his memory can be made to the Patagonia Regional Times, the Humane Society or any liberal political group or cause.

MICHAEL ROBERT SNYDER
SEPTEMBER 4, 1944 - MARCH 9, 2025



Michael was called home on March 9, 2025. He had been residing in a care facility in Tucson for over a year and his passing was sudden and unexpected.

Michael was born in Montana on September 4, 1944.

He graduated from W.F. West High School in Chehalis, Washington, on June 1, 1962. Michael graduated from Oregon State University in June 1968 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. He then served in the U.S. Air Force until 1973 and in the U.S. Army until 1974. Michael retired from Kaiser Permanente as an Internet Technician.

He was married to Barbara Snyder and they purchased their home on Lower Elgin Road, Elgin, Arizona, in 2003.

He and Barbara divorced in 2006, and Barbara passed sometime thereafter. Michael lived in his home on Lower Elgin Road until January 2024 and was a regular guest at Cunningham's Ranch House.

Michael was an avid reader and a lover of dogs. He enjoyed working on his antique cars and proudly owned a 1962 red Corvette. He also drove a 1977 blue Camaro which many in the Sonoita/Elgin area will remember.

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DRINKING PROBLEM



By Cassina Farley

I quit drinking a year and a half ago. At the time I was suffering from insomnia and every sort of anxiety known to man. During a 3am Google deep dive I came upon an article about how alcohol could be keeping me awake, so I poured out the vodka.

I'm not sure if it helped right away, but little by little I got hold of the anxiety and I began sleeping better.

It turns out I didn't miss the booze. The funny thing is other people did. At our Friday card night, I didn't order my usual vodka soda and there was a collective gasp. "Not drinking tonight?" No, I was not drinking tonight. I explained that I was giving it up in order to sleep better. It satisfied everyone that night but the next week I had the audacity to not order a vodka soda again. "Still not drinking?" "Nope." I said. "Oh," they said.

I've gotten the same treatment from everyone I have known ever since. For instance, I told my sister I wasn't drinking anymore because I found that I sleep better. To which she replied, "You're just not drinking enough." I suppose there is some logic there but with drinking that much comes a hangover, and back when I was doing my share of drinking, I

didn't handle the hangovers well.

To deal with the stress of the pandemic I drank more than usual and spent a fair amount of time wondering if it was a hangover or just Covid. During the lockdown I had myself convinced that I had contracted the virus only to remember that it could have been the half bottle of Jameson that I downed with one can of ginger ale.

To be honest, I'm not a good drinker. I am not good at it at all. I always overdid it, said stupid things I regretted, and, more often than not, hurt myself falling. I also had my dad's affliction of feeling "ten foot tall and bulletproof." I once tried to fight a grown man in a bar over an electric keyboard. It wasn't even my keyboard.

In the year-plus since I quit drinking, I discovered that when you don't drink at a party it makes others that do drink nervous. Perhaps I'll turn off the music and make everyone go home? Will my sobriety make it easier for me to bear witness to the number of rum and cokes you consume? Even worse, will I remember everything you said while you struggled to pull yourself out of the rose bush?

Here's the good news: I am perfectly fine with you drinking and having a good time. I don't care. I happen to be having a good time too. You can count on everything I say as being genuine and, as an added bonus, I won't throw up in your car on the way home. I may even give you a ride home. There is also a good chance I won't try to beat you up just moments after confessing my love to you.

For me, not drinking is good news. For all of you with doubts, please remember that I threw live skunks across my yard at 3am completely sober, proving that without alcohol anything is possible.

Cassina Farley can be contacted at cassinaandzachfarley@msn.com

A VISIT TO THE WITTNER



Photo by Ann Katzenbach

The Wittner Museum in Nogales also serves as a concert venue.

By Ann Katzenbach

In February I made a return visit to Patagonia. I lived in this wonderful area of Southern Arizona for only three years, but came to love the climate (mostly), the people and the strong sense of community.

There were obvious changes: more wine-makers, more mine-makers, a new home for Velvet Elvis and a new owner for Red Mountain Foods. The Visitor Center moved, the bakery closed, recycling was under control and there were bicycles everywhere.

I walked over to Paton's one morning and was delighted to see the new trails and the plans for the Patons' old home. Audubon has done great things with this bird sanctuary—a happy outcome for everyone—especially the birds and Patagonia's economy.

One remarkable change associated with Patagonia and not far away in Nogales, is the new museum that bears Paula Wittner's name.

When I lived in Patagonia, I sometimes went to Paula's studio on a Sunday afternoon to visit and look at her work. There were many paintings, far more than she would ever find buyers for, and they were full of interesting people wearing bright costumes in strange and exotic settings.

Paula gets up most days and goes to her studio and paints. This is how she explains her need to create: "My work ranges from memories to fantasies to homages. Some paintings spring from the canvas spontaneously while others have deliberate beginnings. I move through a painting like a traveler into the unknown, hoping for a benevolent experience. When the results of my wanderings truly touch another

person it is the greatest joy."

It's not necessary to understand the dynamics or story of each character or grouping, I often find myself making up a story to match the dreamlike landscapes and figures. Even without a plot, these colorful images are mesmerizing and now they are in one place on every wall and you can wander at will. I went with friends who were amazed at the quantity, quality and color. This art tickles your imagination.

The museum was created by Evan Kory, a Nogales native whose family purchased the old cigar factory on Morley Ave. Evan received a grant to convert the building into the current museum space. He is also a widely recognized pianist and the museum does double-duty as a concert venue. His dream is to revive the energy that was once a vital part of the Nogales nightlife and culture.

As I write this, I realize that the kind of federal funding that helped make the museum a reality is not likely to come again anytime soon. One hopes that the museum can be self-sustaining. Presently there is no charge to visit, but it is only open if you make an appointment, which I encourage everyone to do.

Better yet, keep up to date with the concert schedule and go sit in the audience and let the music take you on a journey through Paula's light-filled paintings.

If I still lived in Patagonia, that would be at the top of my to-do list.

The Wittner Museum is at 204 Morley Ave. To schedule a visit, go to somoslalinea@gmail.com.

Find events and performances on their website: Wittnermuseum.com.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Quiet Heroes

A day late and a dollar short, I belatedly must express a gratitude uncommon to everyday and ordinary pleasure at being alive, being healthy, being aware of the plenitude of life's riches.

Mine is a profound gratitude to the expertise, professionalism and emotional support given to me from our local Sonoita/Elgin Fire Dept's EMTs who found me doubled over on the ground behind the hay barn in surprising pain and approaching shock.

The team's competence and care went into action, my pain was subdued, the assessment made clear, and the approach of a medivac helicopter all completed within what felt like minutes. This was January 19.

Following emergency surgery, hospitalization, acute in-patient rehab and home care from which I'm recovering and living independently once again, my gratitude has not abated. Nor has

my humility in the face of those first responders whose response to my feeble "Thank you" while in their care was "Just doing our job." I fall on the word "just." No, far more than "just," as though mechanical, order-following, didactically trained performance was their claim to correct behavior! These people gave me a reassuring and comforting sense of caring, compassion, and personal investment in my condition.

So, with humility and gratitude, again I wish to thank, but make public my deepest appreciation to our local EMTs. We are fortunate to have them among us.

Additionally, I would be remiss if I didn't include all the kind friends and big-hearted neighbors who so readily offered to help caretake my animals (and me) while I had "gone flat." What gifts they are to me.

Susan Shields
Elgin, AZ

Bicycle Helmets

In my short two years of living in the beautiful town of Patagonia, I have observed several adults riding bicycles without helmets. They are usually very courteous and respectful of cars and people walking around the town.

Though I know helmets are not required, there is always a chance of accident and injury—mainly to the head region. Now, I'll admit that I'm often as hard-headed about certain issues as the next person, but I'll bet my head is not as hard as most of the roads in our region, paved or not. And yours is not either.

It takes very little speed on a bicycle to create enough momentum to produce a very serious injury to your head. And injuries can occur for so many reasons (rocks, bumps, potholes, pedestrians, cars, water, wind, distractions, etc.) that wearing a helmet seems like a no-brainer, which is what you could be, unfortunately, if you crash on your bike.

Second, you are not riding your bicycle in a vacuum. If you get injured, many other people, including your family, may become inadvertently entwined with your life. Bystanders, health workers, pedestrians, and the like may come to your aid, in one form or another. So, the cost to society as well as to yourself and your family can

be a lot.

A helmet greatly reduces the probability of a serious injury. And life, as well as bike riding, often comes down to probabilities.

Finally, and to me, most importantly, you are being observed. Sure other adults may be looking at your tanned legs, your snazzy bicycle, or your lustrous hair blowing in the breeze, but you are also being noticed by children. And even if you don't see them, they often see you. If only one child sees you riding your bike without a helmet, she may ask her parents why she has to wear a helmet. And all of us parents know how good kids are at asking tough questions.

But we are a community and what we do as individuals often directly or indirectly affects others in the area. It's often up to adults to lead by example. One great example that I've also observed are the many bicycle riders who come to our community. Invariably, they wear helmets. I'm sure their heads are no softer than yours.

So, I'm suggesting, not demanding or scolding, that you think seriously about riding your bike with a helmet. If you save just one other life, a child's or your own, then you have done a wonderful deed for the community of Patagonia. And we all thank you!

Joe Ciofalo
Patagonia

It is our objective as a community newspaper to present many views to our readers. The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the views of this publication. If you would like to contribute your opinion or commentary, please email your article or letter to editor@prtnews.org. We reserve the right to edit submissions for language, clarity, length and content.

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TOWN COUNCIL NOTES

By PRT Staff Reporters

March 12, 2025

Under New Business, the meeting shifted into a public hearing on the proposed rate increase for Town Water and Sewer services. (See sidebar).

T-Mobile representative Cameron Lehman presented a proposal to add wireless communication equipment on a utility pole at a ballfield at Patagonia High School. Council members were unhappy with the short notice of the proposal, and requested more information, detailed drawings, and a guarantee there would be no electromagnetic radiation emitted.

Council Member Francesca Claverie suggested a possible advantage of the project for lower-budget cellular users, since T-Mobile is one of the least expensive local providers of cell service, and the project might decrease the amount of dropped calls for T-Mobile subscribers. T-Mobile rep Lehman was asked to bring more information and plans for the project, to a Public Hearing on May 28.

An amendment of the previously discussed Community Specialist job description was explained by Mayor Wood, since some qualifications and responsibilities have been added. The revised job description was approved.

Council also discussed the part-time staff position for the Welcome Center in the Southern Pacific caboose. Town Manager Ron Robinson explained that South32 was funding this position, and that the 24 hours of open time per week would be split among three people, in 4-hour shifts over the six days a week the Center would be open. The position was approved.

March 26, 2025

Councilor Finch announced that the Planning and Development Committee would not be meeting on April 8 due to lack of Use Permit applications.

A budget study session was scheduled for April 2 at 6pm.

The United Methodist Community Church was granted use of the Town Park Gazebo for an Easter Sunrise Service.

Acting Patagonia Volunteer Fire and Rescue Chief Zay Hartigan requested the Town's permission for "defensive burning" for firebreaks to be held between Nov. 2025 to Jan. 2026 to protect the Town from fire being driven by prevailing winds up Sonoita Creek. The region of concern is a band from Costello Drive area north to the Geoffrey Platt trail and includes Audubon and TNC properties, private owners and ADOT right of way. A \$2.4 million grant is being obtained to further the work.

Hartigan said there's been light response from community volunteers for the firebreak work, and that there'll be a community Firewise presentation at Cady Hall, 6 pm on Monday April 14. The Mayor and Council requested that he return with a more fully developed Incident Action Plan for the burns.

Joe Ciofalo requested a vehicle guardrail be placed on Blabon Way between Franklin Ave. and Mapes Way. Councilors and Mayor raised questions about the exact location, lack of safety incidents in 15mph zones, the possibility that a steep erosion cut near the road needed other solutions, and the lack of specificity in the proposal. A study session to consider all the spots in town where roads might need safety enhancements was scheduled for Wednesday May 14 at 6 pm.

The Tucson Street Rods Club was given permission to use Quiroga Lane and the south side of Naugle Ave. for a car show on March 30 from 9am to 1pm.

Manager Robinson was authorized to work with landowners to draft US Forest Legacy conservation easements for three properties in the Sonoita/Harshaw Creek flood plain area. In consultation with Borderlands Restoration and Wildlife Corridors, the creation of these easements will help preserve the Town's water supply and enhance critical wildlife habitat.

The Town adopted a Fair Housing Policy, affirming the Town's commitment to the principle of fair housing. Additionally, the Resolution presents

several actions the Town will take to further the principle.

Roy and Julie Welter were granted a 2'-4" variance from the 5-foot side property line setback for a storage portion of an existing building that Roy is renovating. Todd Norton, neighboring property owner, added that he too will fireproof wooden surfaces of his adjacent building.

Two new Town job descriptions were approved: Town Clerk and Office Manager.

Summer Smith and Marilyn Miller were thanked for creating a Town of Patagonia Emergency Operations Manual. The manual lays out an action

See Council, p.18

Council Approves Rate Increases

By Sondra Porter

The Patagonia Town Council unanimously approved a resolution on March 12 that raises the base monthly water and sewer rates by 17%, effective in 30 days. The resolution includes additional rate increases each year for the next five years through 2030. This marks the first hike for water and sewer rates since 2016.

Before passing the measure, the council convened a public hearing. Town Manager Ron Robinson presented the rationale for arriving at this plan. "The situation in the Water and Waste Water Departments is that over the last nine years, we have dealt with about 29% inflation, we underpay our employees and we have done over \$2 million in projects," he said.

Robinson explained that the Town must balance its water and waste water accounts before they can apply for more grants to deal

with our aging systems.

"Even though [recent projects] have been reimbursable grants, in our audit they go against our cash on hand, so we ended up this month over \$1 million in negative cash on hand," he said.

Council member Steve Finch noted that Patagonia rates are still lower than the state average.

No one from the public spoke for or against the increase.

The rate increases for water and sewer incremental increases are as follows: 2025+17%, 2026+22%, 2027+17%, 2028=0%, 2029+4%, 2030+4%.

The yearly increases rather than a one-time increase were adopted because, as Robinson put it, "This is a better fit for the community." The rate increases will insure that there is sufficient revenue to cover costs of operations and build reserves for infrastructure emergencies.

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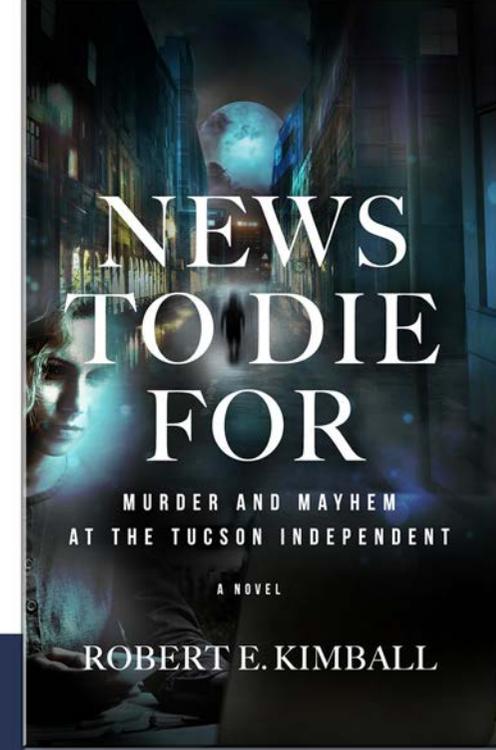
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 and at Amazon.com

Notes From SEFD

Rising Equipment Costs



Photo by Tricia Flaherty

SEFD's UTV is equipped for rescue operations.

By Eddie McArthur

Equipment cost, both to purchase and maintain, takes up a large portion of SEFD's annual budget. That is only getting worse with changes in the industry.

During the recent fires in Los Angeles more than 100 of the 183 firetrucks owned by the L.A. Fire Department were out of service for repairs. Consolidation of the industry and ongoing supply chain problems have led to drastic increases in price for new fire suppression equipment. This has in turn led to equipment being in use longer and longer, requiring more frequent and much more costly repairs, with equipment sitting idle all the while.

Equipment used in public safety roles necessarily has a higher benchmark for performance. Only properly trained and certified personnel can

work on repairs and maintenance, and in our rural location having trained mechanics come to us costs about \$150/hour. National standards suggest that equipment should be retired after ten years. Our small agency has only one piece of equipment under ten years of age.

The following apparatus comprises our fleet:

- A 2023 Polaris Ranger with trailer. This UTV is particularly useful for rescue operations in areas such as Gardner Canyon.
- A 2014 Command Vehicle Ram 2500.
- A 2004 Type 1 Engine with 2000 gallon water capacity and a 2016 Type 1 Engine with 1206 gallon capacity. These two engines are what one envisions when thinking "firetruck."

See SEFD, p.18

Oak (Cont.)

grizzlies probably walked past this great Blue Oak. This subspecies of *Ursus arctos* was present near Sonoita Creek even into the early 1900s. These bears might have scratched their backs against the tree's strong trunk, or splayed themselves over its prone form when the oak was older. Mexican wolves, also now locally vanished, and jaguars too, must have wandered nearby, given the rich riparian environment. I closed my eyes, envisioning that I was now *el tigre* himself, perched imperiously upon my oak—master of all I surveyed.

Certainly white-nosed coatis had been recent visitors here, as evidenced by the hackberry-laden scat plopped atop the trunk. Owl whitewash lay on the forest floor underneath the tree. A large, yellowish shelf fungus hung in a crevice not far from the honey bee cavity. It was a species I had never seen before. Other signs abounded, each drawing me into the constellation of lives that intertwined with this particular *Quercus ovata*.

Then my mind bolted to a sad reality. This tree was one of the last of its kind—an outlier in both age and geography. True, about eight other Mexican blue oaks adorned the north-facing slope for about a 100-yard stretch to the east. But none approached the size or age of this one.

Even more tellingly, over the years I have failed to find a single acorn produced by any of them, and certainly no seedling or saplings. This is clearly a tiny, senescent population that is doomed to perish. While relatively healthy stands of the species populate other sections of the Sky Islands, this one is emblematic of an alarming trend. Namely, that trees are in a wholesale retreat due to human-wrought climate change. Spawned during more favorable environmental conditions—perhaps when an intrepid acorn woodpecker or

Mexican jay ventured between mountain ranges, acorn in tow—these oaks, and my specific tree, now are in a wild nursing home. Unable to reproduce, they still add beauty and great ecological value to the scene.

Since meeting my oak—which I have dubbed 'Panthera,' after the genus of jaguars—I have returned many times. Soon, I plan to lounge with it for the better part of a day, deeply reveling in its life. It has already alerted me to the changes we humans are affecting on the region. Indeed, I have uncovered a good handful of expired Mexican blue oak trunks—either standing or, more often, lying ignominiously on the ground like so many gravestones—near Raven's Nest Nature Sanctuary. Having met their demise, they serve as vivid reminders to me of just how tenuous an existence our Sky Island trees live each day. How many droughts and searing summers are we away from seeing their wholesale retreat?

Ask people in other regions of the globe where humanity has already squandered this profound environmental birthright, this incalculable gift from the Earth. In the nation of Jordan, only about two percent of its original forest cover remains. They too once hosted brown or grizzly bears. They too once had wolves, even lions. Oaks are also a mainstay of their remnant forests. Those ex-forests were cut down, over-grazed and used for firewood. Tellingly, we are at about the same latitude as Jordan: 32 degrees North. Perhaps the eastward lean of my oak's trunk points directly towards that country—one we think of as a desert. This living sign is one none of us should ignore.

For now, all I can do is honor my oak. Admire the feel of its furrowed bark. Watch birds artfully navigate its tangled branches. Marvel at the life it supports and tell it how beautiful it is. Otherwise, I might just cover it in tears.

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PUHS Senior Spotlights

This month we begin our series of profiles of the PUHS senior class of 2025. Look for more profiles in the May issue of the PRT.



Sayra Miranda

By Lilly Weber

From being an outstanding friend, to excelling in her academics, Sayra Miranda is dedicated to everything she puts her mind to. She has successfully managed to balance her social life

while proudly wearing the title of our 2025 senior class valedictorian. Miranda reflects on her time at Patagonia Union High School fondly, stating that her favorite memories are those spent in class laughing with peers. She goes as far as saying that the highlight of her high school career was meeting some of her closest friends.

Miranda plays an important role in the PUHS community. She has spent two years participating in the school's yearbook club, and even joined the National Honors Society at the beginning of her senior year. She states that her favorite teachers during her time at Patagonia were Mr. and Mrs. Hayes, and that English and History have continuously been her favorite subjects. Miranda's valuable piece of advice to underclassmen is to "be yourself and do not slack off on your work."

After graduation, she plans to further her education at Pima Community College, studying to become a medical assistant. In ten years, she sees herself working in a medical office and owning her own house. Sayra Miranda will undoubtedly continue to succeed in her future endeavors, moving past anything that stands in her way.

By Johnathan Fields

Lizbeth Balderamma has participated in volleyball and yearbook at Patagonia. She's loved playing volleyball because it let her make memories with her friends and her little sister.

Lizbeth especially enjoyed her yearbook class because of her friends and she likes being artistic and designing new things.

During her time at Patagonia her favorite teachers have been Mrs. Hayes and Ms. Nellie because of how they made the learning experience.

Her favorite memories from high school are all the times she laughed with her friends, especially in physics class her junior year.

When Lizbeth graduates from Patagonia she plans to attend college with the goal to one day have a nice house and a good paying job. She is undecided about what she wants to pursue at college but she is sure that's what she wants to do.



Lizbeth Balderrama



Christopher Alexis Lopez

By DJ Castro

Christopher Alexis Lopez is a real mellow kid from the country south of Patagonia, Mexico, where it's not so easy to stay focused and drive yourself to get a good education.

Christopher heard about our school in Patagonia and knew it was going to be hard having to come from another country every morning and then going back home. But that didn't stop him from wanting him to come and get the education he wanted to get.

Another reason why Christopher has attended our school was because he heard that there was baseball and that was his sport since he was just a little one.

Christopher's purpose in coming to this school was to get an education and to learn things to help him in the work field so he could work hard towards his dreams.

He was a part of the baseball team and made a positive impact. He played two years of baseball and one year of basketball his last year to learn something new.

The teachers he would really talk to and ask for help were Mrs. Hayes and Mr. Cuevas. He enjoyed chatting with Mrs. Hayes for her unbelievable help she gives to all her students and he enjoyed talking to Mr. Cuevas because he was born and raised in Spanish culture like Christopher himself was. His favorite subjects were his electives, music and P.E.

Christopher had no other desire but to play baseball. That was his highlight and his most favorite memories he says he's made at our school.

After Christopher finishes high school he plans on going straight into the work force and making it to where he's always dreamed of, Tucson AZ, so he's still next to home.

Christopher has a good and positive mindset and tells people they should never be afraid to learn from everything and not be scared to fail.



Gabriel Nuñez

By Arihanna Pelayo

Gabriel Ivan Nuñez has been a student at Patagonia School since kindergarten. Since he has been here so long, he has created so many great

memories. During his time at PUHS, Gabe has played basketball for four years and is very proud of how much he has improved.

He says that the highlight of his time here was how much fun basketball was and how much his skills improved. A memory that he will never forget is the first time he went to the Williams Route 66 Holiday Basketball Tournament.

He also participated in Student Government for two years, soccer for three, and baseball for one year and helped make many memories for many others of his peers.

He states that his favorite classes are financial algebra and his weights class. His favorite teachers are Mrs. Hayes and Ms. Nelie.

After high school he plans to go to the Marines and become an automotive technician mechanic. Later on, he sees himself with a stable job, a nice house, and everything he could possibly want.

His advice to the underclassmen is "Don't be lazy, do the work, it's not that hard believe me."

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Arihanna Pelayo

By Lizbeth Balderrama

Arihanna Pelayo lives in Rio Rico AZ. She has been in Patagonia schools since she was in first grade.

Arihanna is a very funny girl. You would have a guaranteed laugh if she is with you.

Not only is she funny, she is also a really good friend and she is always ready to help you if she can. She is

always looking out for others.

I have known Arihanna since freshman year. Since that moment we became close. She has been a really good friend and she is always making me laugh a lot, even when I am having a bad day.

Arihanna has been in the yearbook for three years and she has been manager for basketball and volleyball for two years. We were together in volleyball and she was a pretty good manager and we had a lot of laughs.

Since we entered high school we have had so many funny moments. Classes were funnier and less boring because we were always laughing with Sayra, our other friend. She was also part of us and it was very funny. I will always remember Ari by how she was with me, by the funny person she always is. I know she will be great after high school and I hope to see her after we graduate.

Apart from her being a good friend she is also a very smart girl. You can always ask her for some help if you don't understand your work. She is a great artist. Anything she makes is really good. When she graduates she will be attending Pima Community College to finish her associates degree and then go to ASU to get her bachelors in Graphic Design.



Diego Carranza

By Sebastian Padilla

Diego Carranza is a Senior at Patagonia Union High School. Diego is an athletic and caring student. During his time in high school, he participated in basketball for four years, soccer for two years and baseball for one.

Diego's favorite teachers are Mrs. Hayes and Mr. Porter. His favorite subjects are Art and Weights.

As Diego leaves high school, his favorite memories are basketball, field trips and his freshman year baseball.

He says that the highlight of his four years was his time out on the basketball court.

Diego's plans for next year are to start ranching full time and breed horses. In ten years, Diego imagines himself with a family and having become a professional roper.

His advice for underclassmen? "Don't be lazy and listen to your teachers."



Alexis Fimbres

By Meghan Aguilar

Alexis Sofia Fimbres has made a lasting impression on those around her. Whether she is on the court, the field, or the classroom, Alexis has been a dedicated and respected member of the Patagonia High School community. Alexis is not just known as an athlete or student but as someone who has made the most out of her high school years.

If there's a sport at Patagonia High School, chances are Alexis has played it. She's been a valuable part of the school's athletic programs, thriving in various sports in her high school career.

On the basketball court, she played as a strong, skillful post, scoring points under the basket and being a reliable force for her team. In volleyball, she was a proficient middle, blocking and attacking with precision. She played softball one year as a shortstop and first baseman.

No matter what sport she was play-

ing, she was determined and passionate about the sports she played, and it was evident. She was a key player and an inspiration to her team.

Alexis also worked very hard in school. She enjoyed learning, and had a particular interest in financial algebra and art class, her two favorite subjects that challenged her in different ways. Financial algebra helped expand her skills for the future, while art gave her a way to be creative and express herself.

Being a student athlete is sometimes hard to find a balance, but Alexis managed to do it with a lot of determination and work ethic.

High school isn't about just academics and sports, it's about the memories that we make and the people that we meet along the way.

For Alexis, her favorite memories were traveling with the team while she and her best friends laughed and had fun going to games and tournaments.

One of the highlights of her basketball career was a trip to Williams along Route 66, where the team competed, having fun adventures on the road with her friends.

Besides the games and competitions, her favorite parts were the laughter and friendships she shared with her best friends, on and off the court.

As she's nearing graduation, she looks back on the moments of happiness and goofy times and cherishes them forever.

Alexis plans to attend Pima Medical Institute to get her CNA certificate, with the hopes of leveling up her certificate and advancing in the medical field.

In ten years, Alexis sees herself with a beautiful family and a stable job she's passionate about.

And if Alexis could give the underclassman any advice, it would be simple but significant. It would be "Just get the work done and over with."



Lilly Weber

By Nicholas Young

Lilly Weber, a Senior at PUHS, is near the end of her time as a high school student.

Lilly is an intelligent, considerate and dedicated student. Throughout high school, Lilly participated in FFA for

one year and in Yearbook her senior year. Lilly prides herself on her work and always puts in her best effort. As she concludes her time in high school, her favorite teachers are Mr. and Mrs. Hayes. Lilly says her favorite subjects are English and Art.

Lilly's favorite high school memory was all the time she spent in physics class her Junior year. She said, "This was my favorite memory because the teacher was funny and made the class enjoyable."

Her high school highlight is transferring to PUHS from a big school in Chandler, AZ. She said, "I feel like the students and teachers at Patagonia have helped me come out of my shell and gain more self-confidence."

Lilly's plans for next year are to either join the United States Coast Guard or go to Cochise Community College for her associate's degree in administrative justice.

In ten years she imagines herself working as law enforcement in the Coast Guard or as a criminal profiler for the FBI.

Her piece of advice for the underclassmen? "Stop yelling all the time and be nicer to Mrs. Hayes."

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Photo courtesy of Los Milics

Pavle Milic stands next to vats of his wine at his Elgin winery.

Wine (Cont.)

award-winning winemaker. It began when he started showcasing Arizona wines in his Scottsdale restaurant FnB, which led to a friendship with Todd and Kelly Bostock of Dos Cabezas.

"I remember Todd came in one day to have lunch, and I don't know why I couldn't just come out of the closet and say, 'Hey, I want to learn how to make wine. Can you teach me?' So the only thing that came out of my mouth was, 'Hey, how much does a barrel cost?'"

"He knew exactly what I was talking about and picked up on it. We made a deal that allowed me to rub elbows with him to create my own private label, but I didn't have to come out of pocket. It was basically, let me come and hang out with you, from pruning all the way up to the bottling, and I'll be able to get a better perspective and understanding of the whole cycle."

One thing led to another, and that first vintage of Los Milics Oliver's blossomed into a business partnership with Mo Garfinkle, the purchase of a vineyard in Elfrida, planting the vineyard in Elgin, and ultimately construction of the production facility, tasting room and casitas.

Milic, who spent four years working in the restaurant industry in Napa Valley, said he was struck during that time by the sense of camaraderie and common purpose: "Those people were intelligent enough to know that each one's success was everyone's success." He says that same spirit pervades Arizona winemaking.

"I stand on the shoulders of people like Todd and Kelly, Kent and Lisa Callaghan (Callaghan Vineyards), James Callahan (Rune Wines), Maynard (James Keenan, Caduceus Cellars), even though he's on the other side of the world in northern Arizona," Milic said. "All of them."

Spencer likens it to a family: "At times dysfunctional, but usually very

loving. I love being a part of this industry and this community, all these winemakers who are more than willing to share their knowledge."

While the Growers Cup awards were the cream of the crop for Sonoita-Elgin wineries in 2025, they were far from the only distinctions.

Los Milics also won Best of Class Orange for Norita's 2023; gold for Jules' 2023 vermentino; two silvers and four bronzes.

Twisted Union won Best of Class Sangiovese for its Charm School 2022; one silver; and one bronze.

Callaghan Vineyards won Best of Class Sparkling for its Barrett's 2023; four golds for its La Osa grenache 2019, Rhumb Line aglianico 2021, Rhumb Line aglianico 2022 and Tannat 2022; 10 silvers; and five bronzes.

Deep Sky Vineyard won Best of Class Grenache for its Stellar 2022, Best of Class Mourvedre/Monastrell for Supernova 2021 and Best of Class Viogner for Aurora 2023; three silvers; and one bronze.

Dos Cabezas won gold for its Meskeoli white blend 2023; six silvers; and five bronzes.

Spencer and Milic both acknowledged the increasingly stellar caliber of the competition and the growing quality of Arizona wines.

"It made me a little shaky to be standing among the people that I've admired for so long when we were waiting for them to announce (the winners)," Spencer said. "I'm not sure I can find a way to articulate how exciting this is for us."

Los Milics is no stranger to awards—it won the Governors Cup for best overall wine in 2024—but Milic understands their fickle nature: "I welcome the awards, I love it, I do celebrate it for like five minutes and then put it away and forget about it, because I also know how hard it is to do this, and I admire so many people and enjoy so many wines that were not on that list."

Local Teen Competes in Texas, Qualifies for Vegas Event



Photo courtesy of CSC Media

Addie Tomlinson turns back a cow in the finals of the World's Greatest Youth Horseman competition.

By Pat McNamara

Sonoita teen Addie Tomlinson and her mare Smooth Cat Voo (Barbie) continue to make progress in the world of quarter horse competitions.

February 14 to March 1 saw the duo in Ft. Worth, Texas at the Kalpowar Quarter Horses Celebration of Champions, where Addie competed in both youth and open events.

Addie's first event was the Non Pro Bridle class, open to both youth and adults. There were 98 entries in the class. Addie qualified in the top ten, advancing her to the finals where she won fifth place.

In her second event, Youth Cow Horse, Addie qualified for the finals and placed 13th out of 89 total entries.

"The big event was the World's Greatest Youth Horseman," said Kristin Tomlinson, Addie's mother. "In order to qualify, you had to compete in four separate events: herd work (cutting), reining, fence work (cow work down the fence) and steer stopping. All four of those scores combined for a composite score. Addie qualified in fifth place. The top 12 advanced to the finals."

In this event each contestant got one last down-the-fence run with the cow, which tacked on some extra points for the final score.

"[Addie's] cow basically just stopped when she was ending the run," Kristin said. "No fault of her own, just a dud of a cow. Nothing you

can do, her score was not great. With that, she ended the event in eighth in the world."

Coming in eighth was still a great accomplishment, as the top-12 finish qualified Addie for The Run for a Million, a competition to be held in August in Las Vegas. "This was huge for Addie!" Kristin said.

With Addie's latest achievements, Sonoita maintains its record of producing talented horsemen and horsewomen along with prize-winning quarter horses, putting this small community on the map as a nationally recognized area for quality bred quarter horses.



Photo Courtesy of CSC Media

Tomlinson rides Barbie in the cutting horse portion of the competition.

Glimpses Into Our Past

Curly Horse Ranch

By Alison Bunting

Does Curly Horse Ranch Rd., located on the east side of Highway 83, three miles north of the Sonoita Crossroads, get its name from a ranch where the American Bashkir Curly or North American Curly Horse was bred?

Curly Horse Ranch did exist, but as a guest ranch established by Marie "Mimi" Agatin Abbott. In 1937 Mimi purchased the Black Ranch, established in 1912 by Edward and Annie Black. [Tucson Citizen, 8/12/1958]. Mimi and her new husband, Samuel B. Hough, announced the establishment of Curly Horse Guest Ranch and their plans to build guest cottages for eight guests. [Arizona Daily Star, 6/3/1937].

Mimi was a divorcee from Minnesota, the daughter of a prominent Duluth attorney. Around 1936, she moved to Tucson where she worked as the southwestern representative for Marshall Field and Company, specializing

in interior decoration. Sam had lived in Tucson since the early 1930s, working as a mining engineer and salesman. He quickly became involved in Sonoita activities and in 1938 organized a horse show and fair at Curly Horse Ranch. Over 500 attended the event and more than 100 horses were shown. [Arizona Daily Star, 4/6/1938].

Although Mimi and Sam's marriage was short-lived, she carried on operating and expanding her guest ranch. In 1940 a private landing field was installed, and guest capacity was expanded to 12. [Arizona Daily Star, 2/23/1940]. "The unusual combination of classical music and good horses, 11 mountain ranges and orange chiffon pie, a flock of sheep and a private landing field [are] the novel offerings of the Curly Horse guest ranch." Mimi played the "excellent" piano music. [Arizona Daily Star, 2/21/1941].

In 1943 Mimi married Leonard "Doc" Klene, owner of the Starr King Hereford Ranch in Rain Valley. [No-

gales International, 12/31/1943].

Curly Horse Ranch was purchased by Olander "Ollie" Hammond in 1945. "Ollie Hammond, amiable Los Angeles steakhouse maestro and antique button collector, claims to feature in his trio of eateries the world's largest breakfast...and is as follows: 'A half dozen eggs, ham steak, a half loaf of bread toasted, potatoes, coffee till the pot runs dry.'" [Tucson Daily Citizen, 9/30/1949].

Ollie discontinued the guest ranch, focusing instead on raising Hereford cattle. He and his wife Eddie managed the ranch from California until the early 1970s when they moved to Sonoita. In 1956 the original ranch house building, constructed of railroad ties, burned. [Arizona Republic, 1/19/1956]. Ollie had been using that building as a guest house and museum. In his later years Ollie sold portions of the 360 acres that comprised the Curly Horse Ranch.

When Ollie died in 1992 the remaining 80 acres were offered for sale. [Tucson Citizen, 7/14/1992]. The land was eventually sold in smaller parcels and Curly Horse

Ranch exists today only as a named Santa Cruz County road.

And Curly horses were never bred at Curly Horse Ranch.

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Curly Horse Guest Ranch ad in Arizona Daily Star, 1941.

Alison Bunting can be contacted at alisbunting@gmail.com.

Meeting (Cont.)

of agreements and handshakes and all that, but that does not help the public. I served in public service for over 22 years, and I've never seen such a closed door on process."

Rio Rico resident Jay Thompson echoed those sentiments. "It's got to be real," he said. "CPBAs sound great, but they only work when we have two dialogues, are available, and understandable. We need enforcement, independent audits, community oversight boards and fines for non-compliance. It's a binding commitment to make sure all of us benefit and we leave this place a better place."

An offshoot of the transparency issue is a lack of trust in the data relating to South32's impact on the environment.

Klingenstein said there needs to be reporting to the public "that is unbi-

ased, thoughtful and verifiable. Clear lines of communications that are not scrubbed and sanitized. Disagreements must be transparent to the public to show credibility to the process and the outcomes."

Multiple speakers called for independent analysts to monitor and report on South32's environmental impact.

"I'm really uncomfortable with AD-EQ's (Arizona Department of Environmental Quality) use of data provided by South32 for the modeling that was used for the permit process," said Pam Lemke of Tubac. "This is a clear conflict of interest. This should be coming from independent scientists and researchers who are tasked with protecting the public."

Martha Fisher of Patagonia asked that financial guarantees be written into the agreement for environmental monitoring, habitat restoration and remediation needs.

"I request that funds be made available from South32 to sample, test and most importantly remediate our drinking water and air quality should they be degraded through their mining," she said. "Please ensure that you can independently monitor air and water quality and there is a process where the mine will guarantee remediation."

Lemke, Vanessa Register and Joni Starr all spoke of the need for stipulations regarding underground powerlines due to wildfire risks.

"High voltage wires should be placed underground to minimize the risk of fire during heat and high winds and to help members of our community continue to be able to afford and purchase homeowners insurance," Lemke said. "I would urge them to negotiate and insist that we get high-voltage wires underground as they come down off the mountain and in any residential and commercial areas."

Fanning said he was impressed by

the issues articulated by the community.

"I think there were some incredibly valid concerns," he said. "I was talking to (Mayor Wood) and I said not only is it important to hear what people are saying now, but once you think you have the CPBA, we need to make sure we have transparency, make sure that we inform and continue this process. Transparency over time can build trust, and that's what we need to focus on."

"It's important that we listen. One of the things that was pretty evident tonight was the fact that consistently people were saying we need to take a look at our local experts, outside experts and not just rely on one source of information."

South32's Kimball declined to discuss the substance of what was presented by the community. "I'm happy for the turnout," he said.

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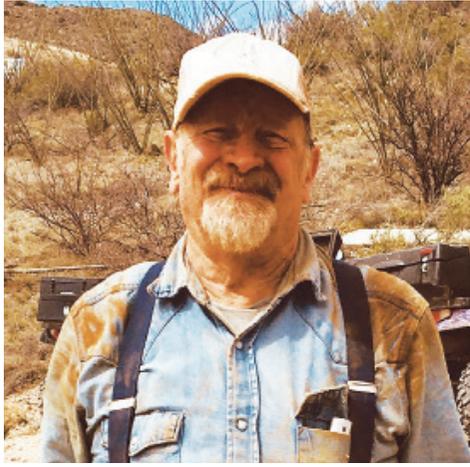
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LET'S GO GET STONES

Snakes on the Plains



By Keith Krizan

It is hard to see over the horizon when you spend your entire existence at ground level. It is even harder to get around without arms and legs. Throw in some really scurrilous posts from the book of Genesis and you have the makings for a tough life. It would help to get someone on your side to aid in your survival and that is exactly what the folks at Advocates for Snake Preservation do.

The acronym is ASP, and yes, that

had to be pointed out to me.

On Friday, March 7, ASP paid a visit to the monthly Potluck Presentation at the Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch of the National Audubon Society. The potlucks, given on the first Friday of the month from January through May, happen in the meeting room at Ranch headquarters, located beyond the Babacomari Ranch and just northwest of the Huachuca Mountains.

These are primarily educational affairs where everyone brings a covered dish, their favorite beverage and their rapt attention. After eating and socializing the attendees are presented with a college-level PowerPoint talk on the subject for that month. The lectures are always brief, very interesting and followed by a Q&A session. There is no test.

March's presenters were Melissa Amarello, the Executive Director, and Jeff Smith, the co-founder and treasurer of ASP. The outfit is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that

subsists on small donations from individuals. Melissa and Jeff are conservation biologists who met at the University of Arizona and joined forces to promote compassionate conservation. Melissa currently resides, and does her work, in Silver City, New Mexico. Jeff manages the Mule Shoe Preserve, northwest of Willcox.

Their collaboration grew out of work that they did together on field projects that studied how human land use impacted reptile habitats. Think golf courses and housing developments.

According to Melissa they started ASP in 2014 "to help wildlife in the face of habitat destruction," and "to show people what snakes are really like." Their method for snake education takes a multi-faceted approach. In addition to PowerPoint presentations, ASP has a website, produces videos for their You-



Photo by Keith Krizan

Conservation biologist/ASP executive director Melissa Amarello (left) talks snakes with a curious Elgin resident.

Tube channel, and posts on Instagram. Melissa also coordinates the production of a newsletter, 'The Buzz,' from which I learned that "Most female rattlesnakes who reach adulthood reproduce only every other year. They

See ASP, p.18

STARSTRUCK Awe and Serendipity



By Harold Meckler

I've written often about experiencing awe while looking at the stars. Of course, moments of awe have occurred at other times as well.

I remember once when I was a relatively new grandfather and had the opportunity to take my grandson to a park. My job was to catch him as he swept down the slide. Each time he approached I couldn't get over how he looked. It wasn't just his smile. His whole face was aglow. Again and again he climbed the steps and then barreled feet-first toward me. I'm glad he was too young to ask why I was crying. I'd just never seen such happiness before.

That's the wonder—the surge of emotion and adrenaline—of awe. I didn't think anything could come close to matching it. Until now. Until now, I'd never given serendipity—that

surprisingly fulfilling glimpse of the unexpected—much thought. On February 28—the night of the big planet alignment—I went outside to see how many of the seven planets I could find. The weather was not cooperative. I wound up just catching four: Mercury, Venus, Jupiter and Mars. What I didn't expect, however, was spotting a shimmering sliver, a half-ring actually, of a very faint waxing moon.

It quickly became my focus as it tried to stay away from the encroaching clouds. I would have never known it was there had I not been looking for Mercury just above the Western horizon. I don't think serendipity always precedes awe but, as I discovered that night, when it does it's just a perfect moment. The two together are unbeatable.

Each month I try to zero in on a specific celestial object or event that might provide a few minutes of redirection from everything else. Right now, I'm thinking just the opposite. My hero Yogi Berra once said that "you can observe a lot by just watching." As with all of his quotes, the simplicity of this one makes it all the more striking. This month, it'll be my mantra. I'm just going to watch and see what comes into view.

Now, I suppose celestial serendipity—with the right equipment—can take the form of spotting a comet or asteroid frightfully heading straight for us. But, seriously, the odds of that are so small as to make it—especially for the backyard astronomer—ridiculous. Rather, serendipity among the stars

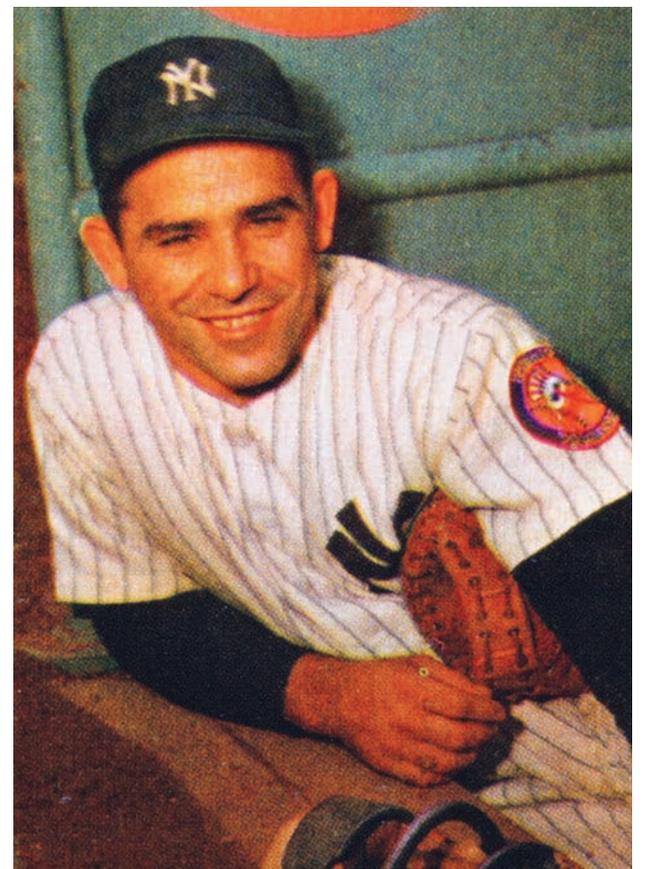
is a moment of purity, of possibility, that can carry one far beyond our homes and towns. And, right now, that's what I need.

I've gone out stargazing knowing that I'd soon be in awe of Saturn's rings, or the great Orion Nebula. But, there's no way to prepare, no way to influence the chance that something will serendipitously appear.

And, knowing that, I begin to understand and accept how much of everything is really out of one's control. That's the gift of serendipity. The unexpected can remind us of all the things we've tried to do to instill some structure into our lives. It's the unexpected, however, that always seems to laugh at how much stock we put into those efforts. None of that is to say that nothing matters. It just gives it perspective.

Each moment of serendipity tells me that the illusion of control can become the cause of so much disappointment. It was disappointing to not find all seven planets. However, the fleeting view of a barely visible moon more than made up the difference. I got the message. There's freedom in letting go of limitations.

This month, I suggest you don't look for anything special in the sky.

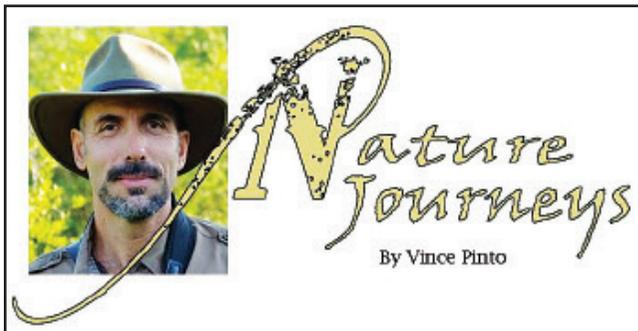


American baseball legend and philosopher Yogi Berra. His words transcended the game.

Sometimes, you just have to let it come to you, and allow yourself to be surprised, to admit that the wider your view, the better the opportunity to see something you would have otherwise missed. It's that way in the heavens, and it's that way here on the ground.

Sometimes, putting aside expectations and desires can open the door to a welcome visit by a moment of unanticipated joy.

Harold Meckler can be contacted at byakov54@gmail.com



Color Me April

Last month we looked at vision in various local species of wildlife. Given our own superb primate optics—capable of interpreting intricate colors—April is a perfect time to venture out into our local wilds seeking a plethora of natural tints. After a parched winter we all could use a few bright spots in our lives.

What better color to start with than red—a decidedly rare one during our colder months. True, our northern cardinals have brightened our darkest days, but this month they are joined by a number of other species, each fairly aflame. Watch for the return of both summer and hepatic tanagers from their tropical winter haunts. The male of the former species is a bright cherry red, while the latter lives up to its name with a more blood red (think liver) color. Each species has evolved to visually attract their drabber mates, risking increased predation in the process.

Meanwhile, keep track of our local ocotillos, as April is often their prime flowering month near Patagonia. This odd semi-succulent—it is not a cactus—generates bright red, tubular blossoms at the end of many of its stem tips. Their color serves to attract migrating and resident birds alike, particularly hummingbirds. A special treat is when birds, sporting reds or off-reds themselves, visit the flowers. I have witnessed northern cardinals, pyrrhuloxias, black-headed grosbeaks, Lucy's warblers and verdins all investigating the corollas of ocotillos in their search for nectar, pollen, and insects.

How about the blues? That's actually the apt name of a family of butterflies which contains a good number of Sky Island species. Perhaps

the most ubiquitous is the marine blue. This species often more than compensates for its tiny size by its sheer numerical abundance and vivid color, reminiscent of ocean blues. As mesquite trees—one of the marine blue's larval food sources—leaf out, watch for these little stunners. When one lands, you

might notice that the posterior edge of the under-wing has a fake "eyespot," intended to lure potentially fatal bird bites to the somewhat disposable hindwing and away from the head.

Also look for both Mexican jays and Woodhouse's scrub jays in oak-rich habitats, as they enter their breeding season and become more boisterous.

As with many blue-feathered birds, their color is owing to refraction of light through specialized feathers rather than true pigments.

For April whites, head to the Sonoran Desert, where mature giant saguaros offer large blossoms from the end of their stems. Casting their lot in spring, they time their flowers to coincide with bird migration and (especially) the return of nectar-feeding bats, both of which can pollinate the species.

Yellows enter in the picture via a seemingly improbable route this month, as drought-deciduous oaks begin to drop their leaves. In dry conditions, as we are now experiencing, species such as Emory and Arizona oaks are compelled to lose foliage in an effort to preserve their water balance. The most expedient way to do this is to drop leaves. In the process, they first "pull back" their chlorophyll, which normally lends the foliage its green color. This then exposes the underlying photosynthetic pigments, turning the leaves yellow—autumn in spring!

Orange gets in on the act in both the animal and plant kingdoms. Desert honeysuckles open their tubular orange flowers that, like ocotillo, have evolved to lure hummingbirds. It's a one-two punch that results in well-fed birds and pollinated plants. Keep a keen eye peeled at ground level or



Photo by Vince Pinto

A common raven at Raven's Nest Nature Sanctuary.

in the air for various hymenopterans, some of which bear orange as a warning coloration. Certain velvet ants—not actually ants, but instead wingless female wasps—possess this pattern, with orange serving as a sort of neon sign saying back off!

Failure to heed the signal can result in an extremely painful sting. I once had a velvet ant secretly climb up under my shirt. My yelp could be heard across several Sky Islands counties, while the resulting welt supplied me with a third nipple for several days.

We end with black—often not considered a flashy color. Like so many other things in life, however, the devil is in the details. Watch a common raven wheeling in the sky. Just as the sun hits it at a certain angle you may observe it magically turning white, as

the light mirrors off of its reflective dorsal plumage. Ravens, along with black-plumaged great-tailed grackles, bronzed cowbirds, phainopeplas, and others have black plumage that often display iridescence. Purple, bronze, and green colors may flash at you as the light dances off of their feathers, revealing that, unlike the song, black is not just black...though you still might want your baby back.

Vincent Pinto and his wife Claudia run RAVENS-WAY WILD JOURNEYS, 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: ravensnatureschool.org

What Is That?? Curios from the Patagonia Museum

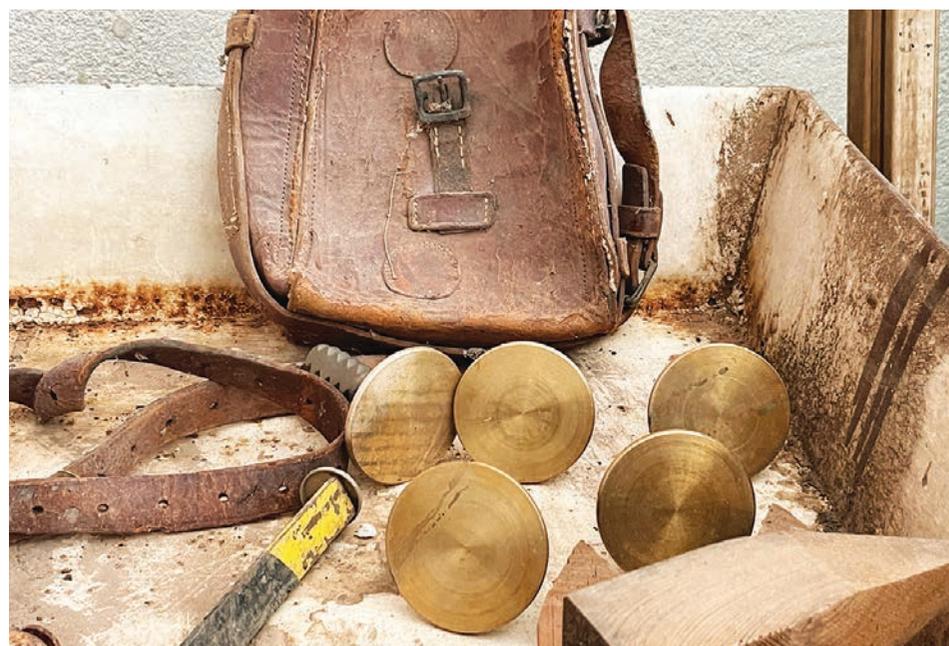


Photo by Linda Shore

Surveyor markers

By Tom Shore

Do you know who used the round brass items?

Surveyors used these long-lasting markers to define roads, property boundaries and elevations. They were

designed to be set in concrete and became widely used in the 1940s. The markers are part of an interesting assortment of surveying tools donated to the Museum as part of the Bob Lenon collection.



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SEFD (Cont.)

- A 2002 Type 3 Engine. This is an engine designed for fighting wildland fires. It is smaller, more maneuverable, and can also be used for structure and highway incidents when needed.
- A 2017 Type 6 Engine with 300 gallon water capacity and a 2017 Type 6 Engine. These two engines, designated "B" for brush, are very mobile, and designed for fighting grass fires and brush fires.
- A 2001 Tender with 4000 gallon capacity. The tender carries a large amount of water without which we would be hampered in fighting fires.
- Our three ambulances are all type 1, meaning a truck front with a specialized box on back. The upside of this arrangement is that either portion can be traded out for a newer piece of equipment without replacing the entire apparatus.

Ambulances are inspected and certified annually by the Arizona Department of Health Services. Type 1 Engines, Type 3 Engines and Tenders are inspected and certified annually by a qualified Emergency Vehicle Technician.

As you can imagine, equipment takes a beating on our rough roads, adding to ongoing maintenance issues. A new firetruck costs about \$1 million, and takes 24 to 36 months after ordering to arrive. A new ambulance runs \$350-500,000 depending on equipment. This past year SEFD had to replace a 30-year-old truck that simply quit working. A new truck was impossible, but we located a used vehicle in great shape.

SEFD is constantly aware of the need to maintain our equipment. A non-working truck or ambulance does nothing to serve our communities. We continue to maintain our equipment and train our operators in order to give you our best.

ASP (Cont.)

gestate for months, bear their young live, and care for them after birth." Females have even been observed to leave their babies in the care of other females while they take a break from a shared den.

To learn more about all kinds of snakes, and to see what snake sitting looks like, go to the Advocates for

Snake Preservation YouTube channel. To learn more about the work that Melissa and Jeff are doing, and to contribute to their efforts, contact Melissa at: mel@snakes.ngo. To see what else may be coming up at Appleton-Whittell visit their website at researchranch.audubon.org or call (505) 983-4609.

Keith Krizan can be contacted at therealkbkkbk@gmail.com.

Subdivision (Cont.)

and filed complaints with the ADRE and ADWR that led to investigation of Coronado Ridge, said he is hoping for a definitive resolution to the question of water adequacy for not only this subdivision, but future ones.

"If we do have a hundred-year water supply, then if you jump through the hoops, do the hydrology reports, soil reports, traffic reports, all the other stuff that goes in with it, you can build the subdivision," Goff said. "But without water, that thing is frozen."

Patagonia town manager Ron Robinson declined the PRT's request for comment on the situation, referring all inquiries to Short. In response to an email, Robinson said he was unaware of the cease-and-desist order until

being notified by the PRT.

The order does not preclude work being done on the properties. A workman, John Claude St. Onge, was on-site in mid-March and said he had been contracted for various tasks on two unfinished homes.

The stalled construction, abandoned building materials and six years of accumulated neglect have been an ongoing source of frustration for nearby residents.

"Martin's had that thing going for six, seven years now," said Patagonia vice mayor Michael Stabile. "It started out on a good note, and it's just stopped. Buildings are half-built, just sitting there. People who live over there have had to live with a lot of inconvenience."

ment Agency requires this plan to be in place for communities it helps.

The Use Permit request by Ralph Schmitt that would rehabilitate the interior of two large classrooms in a side building at the Patagonia Museum grounds into apartments has been temporarily withdrawn for modification and future resubmission.

Council (Cont.)

framework for response to crises such as fire, flood, wind and nonlethal spills of chemicals or other materials. It provides a framework for making and staffing an Operations Center, and for relevant preparedness, training, exercises, equipment and command systems. Federal Emergency Manage-



Focusing on the Landscape



Photo by Dave Brown

Beautiful scenery abounds in Southeast Arizona.

Living here in Southeast Arizona we are very fortunate to be surrounded by some incredible and diverse landscapes. Add the magnificent amount of birding and other wildlife viewing opportunities and it's easy to see why this part of the world is a photographer's dream come true.

For the most part, smartphone cameras do a pretty good job of shooting pics or videos. However, if you want to really capture the moment, shooting with a digital or mirrorless camera is the way to go. Once you figure out the different shooting programs, it gives you more flexibility and creativity while taking pictures.

Shooting with a mirrorless camera can be a little confusing or complex, especially if you are just getting into photography. Camera shooting settings can leave budding photographers so baffled that some end up shooting with the camera on "auto," which in my opinion takes away from the artistic capabilities of the camera and the person behind the lens.

A setting I use 90% of the time is "aperture priority" which allows for more creativity, as one can easily adjust the aperture and ISO along with exposure. Everything else—namely the shutter speed—is done automatically via the camera's sensor.

Because of the intense light that we have to deal with in our region, I am generally running between 100- 200 ISO. I usually lower the exposure meter by a stop. As light conditions decrease, it's easy to increase your ISO settings and exposure meter. For an all-around aperture setting I like 5.6, which for me provides a good depth of field. If I want to blur out the background of a subject I decrease this to F2 or F4. (Of course this depends on the lens.)

Finally, the nice thing with digital or mirrorless cameras is you are not burn-

ing through expensive film, allowing you to take numerous practice shots and adjust your settings for the day or subject. As the old cliché goes, practice makes perfect.

Update on AZGFD's Mearns quail data

Every year Arizona Game and Fish (AZGFD) places wing barrels along key routes to popular Mearns quail hunting areas, namely the San Rafael Valley. This year the data indicates that harvest numbers were low and the percentage of juvenile birds was high compared to the 2023/24 season, which means there was a much better hatch than in 2023.

If this is the case, did the intense hunting pressure during 2023/24 impact the Mearns population so badly that, although the stars should have been aligned for a good season in 2024/25, it was negatively impacted by the hunting pressure from the previous season?

Game and Fish suggests that hunting pressure does not impact game bird populations, but with 90% of the Mearns quail hunting in the US taking place in Southeast Arizona, perhaps at some point it does? The Department states that hunters gave up or, as the department calls it, "self regulated," which is the Department's justification for why limits don't need to be lowered.

As I've written in previous columns, some hunters feel differently about why the numbers were low. They argue that due to poor scenting conditions, along with above average seasonal temperatures, bird dogs had a rough time finding Mearns quail.

Until AZGFD comes up with a better way to accurately collect Mearns quail hunter data (via a stamp, for instance), questioning of the Department's methodology will likely continue.

LITTER IS PREVENTABLE!

PRCF Awards Grants to Local Nonprofits

News Release

The Patagonia Regional Community Fund (PRCF), in conjunction with its statewide partner, the Arizona Community Foundation (ACF), recently awarded grants totaling over \$25,000 to local nonprofits for the following purposes, benefiting our local community:

Borderlands Restoration Network to improve the composting toilet system at its Borderlands and Earth Care Center to better serve visitors and to highlight/demonstrate an easily sustainable, environmentally friendly technology that lessens the use of freshwater... or for such other uses as may be advisable given the recent dramatic reduction in the federal funding it receives.

Family Health Care Amigos (FHA) to upgrade the software it uses to collect information on the users of its services to more fully report to potential funding sources and increase the grants it receives so it can better serve local seniors who desperately need the incontinence supplies FHA provides.

Friends of Sonoita Creek to monitor water quality and depth in Harshaw Creek now that South32 is

pumping millions of gallons of water a day into it.

Patagonia Area Resource Alliance to spearhead a collaborative effort involving 16 conservation organizations to better coordinate their collective efforts to protect the vital natural resources of our special region.

Patagonia Creative Arts Assn. to continue its Learning Through the Arts enrichment program for local youths aged 5-17 in view of the lack of other such after school and summer programming in our community.

Patagonia Regional Aquatic Center to recruit, hire and train about 25 lifeguards to operate the Patagonia pool for a longer season now that the pool is heated.

Patagonia Youth Enrichment Center to continue to stock its resource room which makes needed school and daily living supplies available to our local youth.

PRCF was unable to fulfill additional grant requests of over \$40,000 because it lacked the funds. If you would like to help PRCF, ACF and our many local nonprofits provide important local services and projects, you can do so by making an online donation to PRCF at azfoundation.org/Patagonia, by sending a check made out to "PRCF" to PO Box 1085, Benson, AZ 85602, or by contacting Colleen Lulicucci at ciulicucci@azfoundation.org or 520-505-3678 to explore other ways to contribute.



Photo by Dave Lumia

Senior Johnny Fields connects on a single in the first inning. He would come around to score the Lobos' first run.

The Patagonia Lobos suffered a 9-3 loss to Duncan on Friday, March 28, and entered the month of April with a 1-7 record. Johnny Fields had two hits and scored once, Josh Woods scored twice, and D.J. Castro struck out six Duncan batters in four innings pitched, but Patagonia was done in by nine fielding errors. The Lobos return to action Saturday, April 5, at Ray. Their next home game is April 11 vs. San Manuel.



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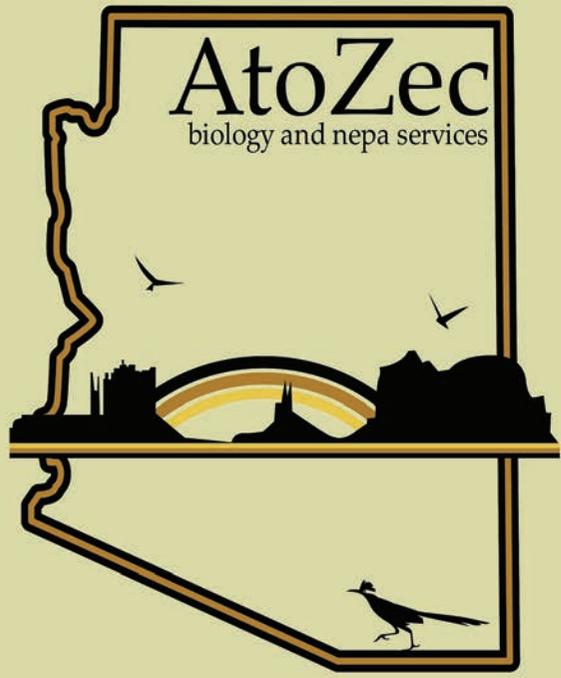


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- Naiz, Project Coordinator



Learn more



Word Search

Historic Area Mines

By Carrie White

Native Americans and Spaniards searched for minerals and ore centuries before today's operations. Can you locate some of our historic area mines? Spaces have been eliminated between names possessing more than one word.

K S P K C M J S
 D I Y M U J J T X I F M
 A N V U B X K Z N M O I I T
 C Q J S W V C N T I Q Q S D I E
 G B T V R N A O U Z Y U F K K U G R
 S I M J O J G I C O Q R K E R H I O
 O O K W R Y A P A R R N A J E T M S S T
 Z B N E P R P B E S O C R K P Y D H A C
 K G L P D M S C R H E R A Z A E Q V R A
 M A A A G S I B U Z F J R D D O B Y I C
 S H I I N V V R N G X J L U P G I D O F
 Z Y B V H D H A F A K S C W B B I T R X
 H K Z A N Z Y D D H F V U G R M V S E N
 V L A N B T Y F J M O N T E Z U M A N M
 D N H V O B O I G F Y P E D R F O F
 H B O K C N R L A S T C H A N C E L
 L E D U D D M A M M O T H R D V
 E E S F R K R O T C I V Z J
 G W Y R S A N R A M O N
 H J K W A H O M

Word Search

- | | | | |
|----------|------------|-----------|----------|
| Bland | Eureka | Mammoth | Solero |
| Bradford | HappyJack | Mohawk | SanRamon |
| Burro | Ivanhoe | Montezuma | |
| DragonZ | LastChance | Rosario | |

Stumped? See solution on page 23



Contributed Photo

Mountain Empire Rotary Club members distributed dictionaries to third grade students at Elgin School. Rotary District Governor Sue Archibald and MER Club Treasurer Chris Johnson distributed the books as part of the Rotary Dictionary Project. Archibald and Johnson also distributed dictionaries to third grade students at Patagonia Elementary School. The dictionaries are provided through funding from the MER Club's Patagonia-Sonoita Rotary Foundation.

Daydreamer (Cont.)

place overall in the women's 10k, Richard Gambino placed third in the men's 10k and Blaire Campbell placed fourth overall in the women's 30k. Charles Fleder, age 66, finished in 12th place in the men's 30k. 83-year-old Robert Brandt was the oldest runner in the event. 12-year-old Benji Kryz was the youngest runner.

Daydreamer sponsors provided music throughout the weekend at the Patagonia Lumber Company. Food trucks were available and "minimal waste" was the theme. Folks were asked to bring their own plates, flatware and cloth napkins. Volunteers from Patagonia Recycles hosted a dishwashing station.

A portion of each runner's entrance fee, plus the cover charge for music and proceeds from the donation jar at the dishwashing station generated a total of \$1,311 for Patagonia Recycles.

The Daydreamer was a celebration for coming together to share our community, its trails, and its commitment to recycling. We're looking forward to next year!



Photo by Shannon Dudley

12-year-old Benji Kryz of Patagonia was the youngest runner in the Daydreamer trail run.

Authors (Cont.)

three months, shaped her. The latter experience is thought to have activated Teresita's extraordinary healing powers, and established her reputation as a mystical figure, prolific healer and pillar of resistance. Urrea urged the audience to embrace Teresita's message to "take each other's hand and help each other always."

One of the techniques Urrea has used in many of his novels is the co-mingling of Mexican and English words. Melding the languages Urrea says "creates an understory of Spanish under the English. It helps the labels fall away."

Near the end of the evening, the dialogue between authors shifted back toward the resilience of people living in the borderlands and how their cultures and experiences have shaped their responses to dangerous times. Both Nabhan and Urrea re-emphasized the importance of valuing different perspectives, helping each other always, resisting the forces seeking to divide us, re-learning the connection of people to the land, and using our peripheral vision to see a better future. Nabhan noted how the tiny Town of Patagonia is, in many ways, an example of how these principles can work. Some audience members appeared to be making the leap to how the same principles had value in resisting the dark alternative being perpetrated by the current president of the United States.

In addition to Urrea and Nabhan, who generously shared their stories and insights, other major contributors to the evening included PCAA, who managed the inside/outside venue, in-

cluding food, drink, book signings and sales. PCCA board members and other volunteers made the whole evening work. The Quiroga women, including Susan as head chef, Tammie as chief bartender and Cassina as jefe of all, directed traffic. The food was tasty, the drinks scary good, and the festive ambience encouraged lively conversation among speakers and locals. Cassina quipped "one of our best skills is our ability to throw a well-decorated and lubricated party."

India Aubry from Voices initiated the idea for the expanded podcast celebration and developed the program in concert with the authors and moderators. India commented that she was particularly struck by the authors' focus on the role of humor in resistance. "The levity, joy, and humor seemed to resonate with the audience," she said.

The live podcast was produced by The Border Chronicle, an independent nonprofit news source covering the borderlands, and moderated by reporters Todd Miller and Melissa del Bosque. Sierra Club Borderlands has financially supported all four annual "Peek Behind the Curtain" podcasts. Gary Retherford provided overnight accommodations for Luiz and his wife Cinderella.

Congratulations to those who were fortunate enough to beat the event and to Voices From the Border and the Patagonia Creative Arts Association who will share the net proceeds of ticket sales for the event.

Whether you were there or not, check out the podcast on The Border Chronicle website. It is worth your time.



Photo by Cynthia Matus Morriss

Matus inventories his tools at his daughter Cindy's house in 2022.

Shed (Cont.)

and their friend Pancho jam on his accordion as my grandfather punctuated their songs with an occasional wolf howl or a grito. It's like I can smell the campfire, fresh tortillas, chorizo and cowboy coffee.

He has hoarded years of items that may never be used. I glimpse an old lampshade, and furniture in the very back that I can't reach. There are garden tools and boxes of horseshoes, pesticides and eight-track cassettes, and a car speaker attached to a thin rope.

The first time I saw Grandfather dragging that speaker across the grass I thought he'd lost his mind. But he explained that the back of the speaker had a magnet, and he was using it to pick up screws

and nails he had dropped. I was amazed at such a simple display of ingenuity. I vowed to try to be more patient the next time he told me it didn't feel like I was driving the speed limit or when I got scolded for handing him the wrong tool when he was fixing one of the cars, or that the meal I made was "just a little salty, but it's okay."

The barricades and detours in the room are more plentiful than a freeway improvement project and I am stuck in the middle of #1, contemplating everything he has collected. Now I know where I get it from—the urge to collect. It's inherited. I hope the realization helps to lessen the guilt I feel for the unorganized boxes that fill my garage.

This place is where the

mundane becomes artifact. This little cabinet of curiosities chronicles who my grandfather is: a pioneer, a cowboy, a miner, an inventor, a craftsman, a comic, and a father. It may not be the Louvre in Paris or the National Museum in Washington D.C., but its treasures are steeped in love and memory and are as emotionally valuable and educational as any rare sculpture or world-renowned painting.

I make my way out and close the door firmly behind me as I exit #1, kicking up dust that makes me sneeze. My grandfather, busy at #5, mumbles a quiet "Bless you mijita" and I smile again as the sounds of grandfather sorting nails in the morning reminds me I am home.

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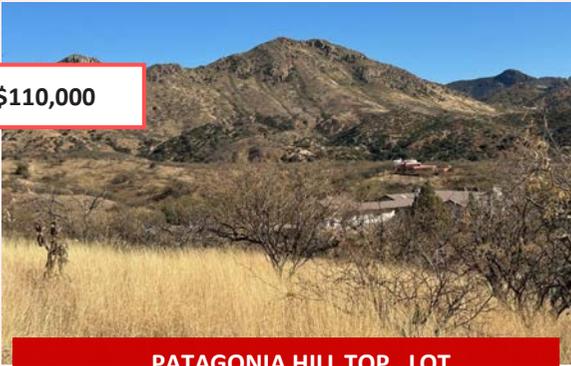


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