

Patagonia Regional Times



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Hamish patiently waits for Patagonia librarian Jade DeForest to dispense a treat. | Photo by Carrie White

Calling all canines

The Patagonia Pup-lick Library welcomes you

By Carrie White

*Town time for Hamish!
I love town time. All my friends. All those people.
And the library . . . I love the library. That's where my buddy Jade lives.
That's where I get treats. Top drawer.
Maybe I'll see a friend.
Maybe I'll make a friend.
Life is good.
I love town time.*

Hamish, Scottish for James, is one of more than 200 four-legged Friends of the Patagonia Library. While mom Brenda Pentland checks out books, Hamish checks out people and other dogs, receiving non-returnable treats dispensed by library staff and paid for by pack leader Jade DeForest. "I love animals. I love dogs," said DeForest, the mother of four rescues.

Hired by the library 4 ½ years

ago, DeForest recounts how the whole thing got started.

"I would see people come in here and tie their dogs up outside," DeForest said. "I thought 'this is crazy.'"

Posing the question of dog inclusion to then library director Laura Wenzel, DeForest found no resistance.

"More and more people started coming to the library because they could bring their dogs," DeForest said.

What started as dog visits escalated to a dog photo gallery posted on the library's west wall. There's a "dog-of-the-month" picture profile. And perhaps — future state — a Patagonia Library dog calendar.

It should be noted that some dogs forget to tell their humans when they will be visiting the library. They just, well, end up there on their own.

"The first time it happened it was this white fluffy dog that just

showed up at the front door," DeForest said. Thinking the owner was around the corner, the pup was granted access and given a snack. At some point DeForest realized "Mom" wasn't coming. A phone call quickly got to the problem — an open gate.

"A lot of these dogs (visiting the library) are rescues," DeForest said. Which means they're scared. Quickly, though, the furbies learn to trust.

"We had one dog that came in here ... he was so frightened. He would shake violently. He wouldn't make eye contact." Sitting on the floor, DeForest tempted Henry with the library's signature treat — Organic Chicken Jerky Sticks from Sprouts. He relented. "He went from that, to barking, to come in" on walks down Duquesne Street.

DeForest smiles while recounting the transformation.

See **LIBRARY DOGS**, p. 18

Customers vent frustrations with Sonoita Valley Water Company

By Dave Lumia

Lingering concerns over water shutdowns, billing problems and poor customer service prompted a town-hall style meeting of Sonoita Valley Water Co. customers on July 9.

The meeting at the Sonoita Fairgrounds was attended by about 15 people, including attorney Steve Wene, representing the water company.

Sonoita Valley Water serves 71 customers and has three wells — one each in Papago Springs, Los Encinos and downtown Sonoita along the Highway 82 corridor. The Papago Springs well has been a persistent issue for the company and a root cause for many of the complaints voiced at the July meeting.

Lack of water capacity in the Papago Springs well forces the company to occasionally haul water from its downtown well to service Papago customers. That necessitates shutting down the system to fill the water truck, and the cost of hauling the water -- \$400 a load for 300-400 gallons — is passed along to customers through a surcharge that goes directly to the hauling company, not Sonoita Valley Water.

"Instead of fixing the Papago Springs well, they have been trying to band-aid it for years," said Kelly Bostock, who owns and operates Dos Cabezas Wine Works and Pronghorn Pizza and a small bed and breakfast on the Highway 82 strip with her husband, Todd.

Wene, who is the brother of water company owner Gary Wene, explained

that Sonoita Valley Water users are paying two surcharges, one that occurs only when the company is forced to haul water and a second one for servicing a \$396,000 loan for improvements to replace failing equipment. (Approximately \$92,000 of the improvements were grant funded.)

Wene said the surcharges range from \$30 to \$54 a month, but one attendee, who declined to be named, reported a \$160 surcharge on his most recent bill of \$480.

Several meeting attendees questioned the wisdom of paying \$400 a load to a commercial water hauler when there is at least one local business that could do it for a fraction of the cost. But Wene said later that the local business in question is not certi-

fied for transporting potable water.

Wene said the Papago Springs issues date to the original buildout of the development in the 1980s.

"They couldn't have picked a worse place to dig a well, right on top of bedrock," he said. "The Papago well doesn't run dry because of anything mechanical. There's no water there, it's like trying to get water out of a rock."

Dos Cabezas installed a water storage tank for the winery/restaurant side of their operation a few years ago because of the "unpredictability" of water service. "You can't flush the toilet, you can't wash the dishes, customers can't use the bathroom," Kelly Bostock said. During harvest season (late summer),

See **SONOITA WATER**, p. 19

Patagonia Regional Times

MISSION STATEMENT

To be a reliable source of news for the communities of eastern Santa Cruz County – open to all views, focused on local issues, grounded in community perspectives and needs, and providing a platform for community education and engagement.

WHO WE ARE

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PATAGONIA REGIONAL TIMES

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Letter to the Editor

Remembering Ernesto Portillo and his favorite town

It has been brought to my attention that some citizens of Patagonia are not aware that my husband, Ernesto Villalobos Portillo, passed away last Nov. 2 in Tucson. He loved our weekend home for more than 30 years, in this quaint little town of Patagonia, so very much. He loved it so much that many years ago he bought burial plots in the cemetery up on the hill that has beautiful sights beyond Patagonia and into México, where he was born. Ernesto served in the Arizona National Guard for seven years and left as a Staff Sergeant E6. Therefore, he was given a military burial. He must have loved to be buried in his favorite Town of Patagonia.

Julieta Bustamante Portillo
Tucson



* Luckily for my fiancé, she had enuf time to think things over and decided neither I nor Patagonia would be in her future.

Ahhhh — the memories ... the good, the bad and the ugly, and this, of course, is neither the appropriate time nor place to recount more stories. Enough to say I will miss Pete! He meant a great deal to me. I'm glad that I was able to pass some time with him in Tucson not so very long ago. I was in town working on my East Santa Cruz County docutale project, but I made a point of reconnecting with Pete at his memory-care home, where he was well taken care of. I know that I surprised him when I showed up unannounced. While Alzheimer's is an extremely cruel disease, Pete and I were still able to spend some quality time — shared a few chuckles and even a few tears.

Pete is now at peace, joining his folks along with special ranching friends like the Hales of Harshaw, the Sharps of the San Rafael Cattle Co., and more.

Godspeed, Pete!

Brock Fuller
New Mexico

Pete Robbins: One of a kind

A sad goodbye to Pete and the Robbins family legacy ... the Little Outfit Ranch in the San Rafael Valley.

My friendship with Pete extends back many years, and while our interests diverged way back when, I have very fond memories when we had been closer.

From our trip to New Orleans to promote "Alicia Sub" — Pete's submarine project named for his only daughter — not long after Katrina clobbered the city; to riding the ranch land with my sons on Pete's personal armored personnel carrier; to sipping some champagne at the Mountain Oyster Club for my engagement party* (when it was on Stone Ave., waaay back when).

Social Security solution

The health of Social Security is important to the health of everyone in the Patagonia area. We all share in a stable and healthy solution. This problem will have a solution in which we all participate. The balanced solution includes removing the income cap for paying payroll tax. Raise the retirement age. Remove the income ceiling for paying payroll taxes. Adjust up payroll taxpaying immigrant numbers. Raise future benefits. Provide a universal, basic income floor. Make all income subject to payroll taxes. Expand the base for payroll taxation to cover more forms of compensation. The solution is visible and doable. The balance can be set. We all benefit doing it together.

Larry Spears
Sonoita

Patagonia Regional Times

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The PRT is seeking a Managing Editor who

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Hermosa Mine approval sets dangerous precedent for country

Guest Opinion



By Adelita Grijalva

My constituents have made it clear that the recent federal approval of the Hermosa Mine Project poses serious risks to natural resources, public health and the local economy in Patagonia and Santa Cruz County. I previously urged the U.S. Forest Service to extend the public review and comment period on this complex and controversial mining project so community members could have enough time to provide meaningful feedback. Unfortunately, the agency proceeded in approving the submitted plan. Not only will this project have lasting consequences for the surrounding communities, but the rushed approval process also sets a dangerous precedent for how large-scale mining projects are reviewed and approved across the country.

The Hermosa Mine is the first critical minerals project in the nation to move through the federal FAST-41 permitting framework, making it a testing ground for how mining projects are approved across the country. The Forest Service's fast-track approval of this project — despite several unre-

solved questions about the mine's public health and environmental impacts — establishes a dangerous precedent that prioritizes speed over science and expediency over meaningful public participation. Communities should not be testing grounds for a sped-up permitting process, and South32's Hermosa project should not become the model for weakening environmental review under the banner of critical minerals development.

The concerns that my constituents have raised throughout this process — including effects on groundwater, public health, wildlife, and compliance with the Coronado National Forest Plan — remain unresolved.

This remarkable area attracts birders, hikers, hunters and campers from across the United States and around the world, making ecotourism a significant and vital aspect of the local economy. The mining operation threatens this critical economic mainstay.

The Forest Service provides South 32 a total of 24 "exceptions" to the Coronado Forest Plan to accommodate the company's mining plans. The Forest Plan is not just a list of suggestions: it lays out critical standards to protect forest health and resilience, wildlife, recreation and other uses of our public lands.

One of the exceptions, for example, allows South32 to destroy wetlands that the Plan acknowledges as essential to Forest health. According to the agency's own analysis, the mine operations' groundwater pumping would dry 12 Forest springs and streams. How could this possibly be acceptable? The Forest Service should require South32 to meet the Coronado Plan's well-reasoned and scientific standards instead of carving out special exceptions whenever compliance is inconvenient.

South 32 wants to discharge treated mining process water into Goldbaum Canyon, Mowry Wash South and

Harshaw Creek, which flows through the Town of Patagonia. Although South32 revised portions of its proposal, including alternative water discharge locations, important questions remain about how treated mine water could affect downstream water quality and nearby communities. Preliminary tests already found antimony, a toxic heavy metal, in Harshaw Creek at levels beyond state and federal health standards. If the mine was operating, its discharges also would contain sulfites and traces of the metals its processes extract — lead, zinc, manganese and silver.

Also concerning is the company's proposal to conduct water quality testing downstream from the mine, instead of at its discharge point. Nearby residents deserve to know that their surface water and groundwater will be safe.

These concerns are not new. In 2020 and 2021, the Town of Patagonia formally requested that the Coronado National Forest conduct a comprehensive groundwater study of the Patagonia Mountains because of the potential impacts of the Hermosa Mine.

My dad, Congressman Raúl M. Grijalva, supported those requests. Despite repeated calls from local leaders, that study was not conducted. Moving forward without this fundamental scientific analysis leaves significant uncertainty about how the project could affect groundwater supplies and undermines confidence in the environmental review.

Many mines such as the proposed Hermosa Mine also emit dangerous substances to the air from ore processing, blasting, excavating, windblown tailings, haul-road dust and truck and heavy equipment diesel fumes. These emissions can seriously impair public health.

Community advocacy organizations including Patagonia Area Resource

Alliance (PARA) have been critical of the Forest Service's responses to these concerns, stating that the federal documents do not quantify the total air emissions of the proposed mining operations or analyze their cumulative impacts.

The Forest Service's approval will allow South32 to construct a new 138-kilovolt electric transmission line through seven miles of pristine Forest land to reach the mine. In addition, the company wants to build 4.7 miles of new "primary access road" through the Forest.

Together, these projects would fragment wildlife habitat, increase wildfire danger through the proposed transmission line, and threaten the habitat of endangered species such as jaguars and Mexican spotted owls.

To make matters worse, South32 wants to dump mine tailings that contain pollutants on more than 225 acres of Forest Service land. It remains unclear whether South32 has the legal authority to do so.

The Forest Service has not evaluated the cumulative environmental impacts of these proposals, instead considering each in isolation. The bottom line is that the Forest Service should never have allowed this project to move forward until the input of affected communities, Tribal leaders, and local residents were fully addressed. My constituents — and future generations of Southern Arizonans — deserve nothing less. Unfortunately, the flawed approval process for the Hermosa Mine is just a preview of what is to come in other parts of the country if there are not serious reforms to FAST-41.

Democrat Adelita Grijalva is in her first term as U.S. Representative for Arizona District 7, which stretches along the U.S.-Mexico border and includes Santa Cruz County.

100th anniversary of Lon Parker's death commemorated by Border Patrol, family and friends

By Carrie White

When William Llonzo "Lon" Parker was killed on July 25, 1926, he was the seventh U.S. Border Patrol Inspector to die in the line of duty since the agency's founding in 1924.

Parker, 34, left behind a wife, Georgia Eaton, but no children. Having survived the frontlines of World War I as a member of the 89th Infantry Division, 340th Field Artillery, Battery A, Parker died from a smuggler's bullet in the back in his own county. The site of the killing was the Huachuca Mountains, about 2½ miles from the Wills Ranch.

A memorial to Parker, who was nicknamed "Skinny," was erected in 2008 near Bartel Springs and Korn Canyon by the U.S. Border Patrol. It's a large

boulder embedded with a commemorative plaque, the metal taken from the Copper Queen Mine in Bisbee.

Marking the spot of the ambush will be a reinstalled post bearing Parker's name with the date of his End of His Watch. Duane Dotson, a member of the Green Valley Hiking Club, found the marker, which had fallen from its original post and has since been refurbished.

A hike is planned for this fall for the marker's reinstallation, with stories recounting Parker's life and death shared along the way. Jim Grasky, a border patrol inspector from 1972 to 1996, will be part of that trek. He also had a hand in organizing the ceremony

See LON PARKER, p. 17



BP officers pay tribute to Lon Parker at a July 25 ceremony in the Huachuca Mountains on the 100th anniversary of his murder. | Photo by Carrie White

Family Health Care Amigos transitions to expanded office, new leadership

By Dave Lumia

New chapters are being written in the story of Family Health Care Amigos, but the mission and the message remain the same.

The nonprofit operates The Lending Shed, which provides adult incontinence supplies for residents of Santa Cruz and Cochise counties and loans durable medical equipment for short-term use, all at no charge.

“Our mission is, if you have a need for our services, we will work as quickly as we can to meet your needs,” said Linda Huffstetler-Dearing, president emerita whose 10-year term as president of the Board of Directors expired in August.

“Maybe there’s a whole bunch of people who don’t know what we do, that our services are free. We’re here, we care. If you have a problem, we don’t say ‘we’re sorry, we don’t do that.’”

Huffstetler-Dearing, 75, of Patagonia suffers from low vision and will be dialing back on many of her day-to-day administrative duties, but she will be staying on the board for a year and focusing her attention on coordinating the organization’s volunteer efforts in Santa Cruz County.

Lana Tompkins-Stutzman of Sierra Vista has taken over as president and will be forming a new board that will be primarily based in Cochise County, where the organization has its largest share of clients. Meanwhile, Hoffstetler-Dearing is soliciting members for an advisory board to ensure that the organization remains connected to the needs of its Santa Cruz County clientele.

Nina Smith, 86, of Patagonia is on a fixed income and has been a grateful

Lending Shed client for many years. “With prices of everything going up so much, the Lending Shed and their incontinence products, it really makes a difference,” she said while lunching at the Patagonia Senior Center. “I can use that money to buy better food. I’m well aware of what it would cost.”

Locals may have already noticed that FH Amigos opened an expanded administrative office in the building it owns on McKeown Avenue, in the former Long Realty offices. The administrative office had shared space with The Lending Shed and the Purple Elephant Thrift Shoppe, which sells donated materials to help pay for some of the organization’s expenses.

“It became critically important to me that I have a private space for people to come, we can do an assessment and figure out what they need,” Hoffstetler-Dearing said. “I want people to have an attractive, safe place where they can talk about what’s going on with them and their families.”

Hoffstetler-Dearing said when The Lending Shed began, it served five clients, all in Patagonia. It now has auxiliary hubs in Huachuca City and Douglas and last month served 199 clients, a total that more than doubled in the past year.

“We went from spending about \$18,000 to \$42,500 last year on incontinence supplies,” she said.

The Lending Shed provides clients with up to 60 pullups and 30 bladder pads a month. Hoffstetler-Dearing said out-of-pocket costs for those products, which are not covered by Medicare or Medicaid, might typically run \$200-\$400 a month.

“There’s a huge need out there for this service,” she said. “There’s no other healthcare organization in southern



President emerita Linda Huffstetler-Dearing and assistant Doug Gann outside the expanded offices of Family Health Care Amigos | Photo by Dave Lumia

Arizona that gives a monthly supply to people who sign up.

“It’s not about diapers, it’s about dignity. Our clients tell us things like I now have the money to buy better quality food. I now have the money to pay medical co-pays. I now am able to get out of my house.”

The organization’s operational expenses for the past year were \$126,000, covered primarily through grants and donations. Much of the medical equipment it loans out – such as wheelchairs, walkers, canes, hospital beds – are reconditioned items that were no longer in use and stored in homes and garages.

“We ask people to bring it back, we’ll recondition it, and we’ll get it back in the community,” Hoffstetler-Dearing said. “It’s one of the things that makes us cost-effective.”

Rhonda Brew of Patagonia was in dire need of that equipment after

suffering a stroke five years ago, leaving her left side paralyzed and unable to walk or move her arm.

“My son had to take care of me for a little while when I got out of the hospital, and (the Lending Shed) loaned us a hospital bed, bedside table, bedside commode, everything I needed.

“I could not possibly have recovered without them.”

As Hoffstetler-Dearing begins to step back from her duties, she’s hoping to attract volunteers from all parts of the county to help continue the organization’s mission by serving on the advisory committee or helping with distribution and other tasks.

“The first time, when you hand out those products to people who haven’t any, it’s like Christmas morning to them,” she said. “It means so much, the expression on their faces. It’s addictive.”

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Hardware shopping gets a lot more convenient

By Pat McNamara

Whether you're a do-it-yourselfer or a contractor, when you need that one particular item to finish a job, you need it now, and you need it nearby.

That's a lot more easily and readily accomplished thanks to the recent expansion of Carnevale's Sonoita Hardware. The store, located at 3149 Highway 83, has been an essential part of the community since it was founded in 1983. It was purchased by Joe and Stephani Carnevale in August, 2020, who set their sights on expanding its footprint and inventory. That mission was accomplished this spring with the opening of a 5,000-square-foot building that faces the Highway, providing greater visibility. The new building connects to the original 4,200-square-foot facility tucked behind it, more than doubling the floor space.

Not quite a big-box hardware warehouse, but complete enough to save countless hours on the road and miles on the pickup.

"We have always had big plans for this place, a store that people can come in and get everything they need and not have to drive 45 minutes to Sierra Vista, Nogales or Tucson," said Mike Carnevale, the store's general manager and brother of Joe Carnevale.

"Everybody's still getting used to how much stuff we now have," he said. "We're just adding more and more."

The additional stuff falls into a wide variety of buckets: electrical, RV equipment, lighting, faucets, paint and even bird seed, which Carnevale was in the process of unloading and inventorying before being interrupted to have his photo taken.

"We've got tons of bird seed now," he said. "Tons more household goods. A lot more tools. Doubled the amount of nuts and bolts."

The original building in the back will primarily focus on serving the construction trades, with expanded lumber, electrical and plumbing supplies and rental equipment.

"If something goes down, or say we need a scissor lift out here, well, they don't have to stop what they're doing and drive for two hours just to get a scissor lift and waste that much time on the job site," Carnevale said.

The Carnevales have also maintained their plethora of greeting cards and unique gift items. Many of these items celebrate the Sonoita/Elgin area so are especially popular with the community.

The store currently has 13 employees, with hopes of adding more. Although it never shut down during



General manager Mike Carnevale takes a break from unloading birdseed to relax in the front entryway of the newly expanded Sonoita Hardware. | Photo by Dave Lumia

construction, plans are in the works for a grand reopening and six-year anniversary event to introduce the new digs to the community.

"The only reason we are able to do as much as we're doing is because of the community support," Carnevale said.

THE FOREST SERVICE APPROVED THE HERMOSA MINE DESPITE SERIOUS FLAWS

IT DID NOT RESOLVE THE QUESTIONS THAT MATTER MOST.

TO APPROVE THE PROJECT, THE FOREST SERVICE:

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- ✓ Approved a mine waste facility before resolving serious legal questions.
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~ Robin Wall Kimmerer



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Fire districts working to reduce firefighter cancer risk

At a recent meeting of the Sonoita-Elgin Fire District Board, acting Capt. Tim Hart, president of the United Firefighters of Sonoita, spoke about the known risks to firefighters, such as burns, smoke inhalation, cardiac arrest and navigating traffic.

He then quietly added, “Our No. 1 killer is a silent one – occupational cancer. Consistent exposure to smoke, byproducts of combustion, vehicle exhaust, firefighting foam and chemicals in our uniforms are all contributors.”

The following article is based on the information Hart shared in his report.

By Kat Crockett

For decades, cardiac arrest and heart disease were the primary causes of line-of-duty deaths for firefighters.

Not anymore.

Firefighters now face elevated risks of cancers such as testicular, prostate, bladder, kidney, thyroid, breast and many others. SEFD Chief Marc Meridith said the International Association of Fire Fighters recently reported that cancer caused 70% of career firefighter line-of-duty deaths, compared with 18% from heart disease. Exposure to wildfire and structural fire smoke adds to risks, as it can contain toxic chemicals such as carbon monoxide, benzene, formaldehyde and dangerous levels of particulate matter. As research continues, fire stations, unions, medical personnel and government agencies are struggling with how to deal with the problem.

PFAS – a group of synthetic chemicals used in various products for their resistance to heat, grease and water – are emerging as the source of devastating, debilitating and deadly cancers. They are commonly referred to as “forever chemicals” due to their persistence in the environment for decades. PFAS are used in firefighter personal protective equipment including “turnout” gear – multilayered pants, jackets, gloves and hoods – to repel water and contaminants like oil, prevent moisture-related burns, and resist heat. They also are present in air, dust and smoke at fire scenes, often from sealants, roofing materials, paints, metal coatings, carpets, electronics and furniture. Firefighters are exposed to PFAS through inhalation, ingestion and dermal absorption.

Elevated PFAS levels have been detected in firefighters’ blood serum, with higher concentrations compared with the public. Studies show that PFAS chemicals are absorbed through the skin, especially with wear and tear on the gear. A University of Arizona Health Sciences study found that blood levels of specific PFAS in firefighters changed gene expression tied to cancer development and disorders and immune sys-

tem issues. These findings have created a wave of concern and movement to remove the dangerous chemicals from gear, but it’s not a simple process.

The development and deployment of PFAS-free gear is relatively new, and safety standards have not been modified to require such. The International Association of Fire Fighters reports five states have already banned PFAS from firefighter protective gear and hope these bans will spur more states to act. At the national level, the PFAS Alternatives Act, designed to accelerate the development of PFAS-free turnout gear, was introduced in May 2025, and referred to subcommittees. Many states including Arizona have already banned the use of foam containing PFAS, but no legislation to ban PFAS from gear is on the docket, at least not yet. Meanwhile, health concerns among firefighters have kindled a host of lawsuits against manufacturers of gear and PFAS chemicals.

SEFD is taking measures to reduce exposures and prioritize health and safety. Meridith requires all members to inspect their gear regularly, and the district will replace any that is damaged or worn. Over the last two years, the district has and continues to purchase new structural personal protective equipment for all employees. Following exposure, firefighters are expected to clean their equipment via gross decontamination and wash the gear in a special district-provided PPE extractor washing machine with appropriate detergent. Employees are encouraged to shower after removal of all PPE. The PPE is not stored or worn in living quarters or other open-air environments. The district provides PPE storage in the bay. All hoses, hose appliances and apparatus are washed before being placed back in service. Meredith added that full-time SEFD firefighters undergo extensive annual physicals, and SEFD has been able to offer cancer detection tests to select members in recent years and is working to provide testing to even more members.

“Ideally, I would like to offer all our firefighters advanced cancer screening on an annual basis, but money is an issue,” Meridith said.

Other measures Meredith is working on include providing a second set of turnout gear and contract out for PPE professional cleaning. “There is more that we can and want to do,” he said. He also hopes for a clear and mandatory standard on PFAS in turnout gear, enabling SEFD to transition to safer gear.

Patagonia Volunteer Fire and Rescue Chief Zay Hartigan said that over the past year, he has seen an elevated awareness of firefighter cancer risks.

“PVFR’s isolation in a small town highlights the different challenges faced by volunteer and career fire



Sonoita-Elgin Fire District firefighter Lucas Olkiewicz loads his turnout jacket into the district’s extractor washing machine. | Photo by Tricia Flaherty.

departments,” Hartigan said. “Volunteer departments do not have funds to cover the costs of medical exams and are limited in their ability to buy new gear (and) pay for medical exams and extractor washing machines.”

Hartigan relies heavily on fundraising and grants, which usually are specific in scope. PVFR does not have advanced equipment to wash gear, but Meridith has offered use of the SEFD extractor washing machine to PVFR. Gross decontamination for all gear occurs before leaving the scene, and upon return to the station, additional cleaning occurs as needed. PVFR has a new hose washer and minimize storage of potentially contaminated gear/equipment. Volunteers do not receive a physical exam prior to or during time with the station. The chief pushes safety and cancer awareness information to volunteers through various channels and encourages discussions during the monthly general member meetings.

Awareness of cancer risks linked to PFAS exposure for firefighters and data on occupational deaths continue to emerge and are affecting change. In 2017, Arizona expanded the list of health conditions that are presumed to arise from employment, adding 12 types of cancers for firefighting duties and several amendments have occurred since then.

On June 22, the Arizona Legislature passed a new law to further protect firefighters by adding more qualified cancer types and expanding benefits.

The new list includes 23 cancers related to employment exposure. The law also states that any disease, infirmity or impairment of a firefighter’s health from covered cancers is presumed to be an occupational disease covered by workers’ compensation provided the firefighter (1) passed a physical examination before employment and the exam did not indicate evidence of cancer, (2) he/she was assigned to hazardous duty for at least five years and (3) the physical examination is reasonably aligned with national fire protection association standards for fire departments. The new law is retroactive to July 1, 2021.

Because of an influx with firefighters being diagnosed with multiple various aggressive end-stage cancers at young ages, the Vincere Cancer Center in Scottsdale, Arizona, established a pilot screening program to study the impact of early aggressive cancer screening for firefighters and first responders. The center reported that firefighters have a 50% increased risk of dying from cancer compared with the general population.

“This is an epidemic amongst our nation’s first responders,” said Vincere’s Dr. Vershalee Shukla, who said he sees three firefighters with terminal cancer each week, adding that early diagnosis is critical, but too often firefighters are at Stage 3 or 4 by the time they are tested.

Kat Crockett is a member of the SEFD board of directors.

Baling twine recycling is coming!

By Clare Bonelli

If you don't have livestock, you're probably wondering, "What's this all about?"

Unless you know people who do have horses, cows, goats, sheep, etc., don't worry about it. Read a different article.

But if you do have livestock, you might be saying "HALLELUJAH!, It's about time." As you know, there are only so many fence/truck/etc. repairs and so many craft projects you can make out of baling twine. A fairly small horse operation using two bales of hay

a day generates 2,190 strings a year. And, at this point, it all goes into our landfills — and adds to the global, omnipresent, non-biodegradable plastics problem.

Hay baling twine is made from Polypropylene # 5. No recyclers in southern Arizona take it. It tangles their machines. However, RMC Industrial in Glendale does take it. The quotes in this article are taken from its website <https://haytwinerecycling.com/>.

Cindy Martin and I have teamed up to help get this stuff out of our landfills and back into circulation. We did a trial

run in July but didn't get the info out in a timely fashion. However, the people who brought strings were very enthusiastic and will be spreading the word.

So, what happens to the stuff after it gets to the plant? According to RMC: "Automotive components, consumer durable goods, and reusable commercial packaging are just some of the items we convert (from) polypropylene twine."

Unfortunately, recycling dropoff points tend to collect garbage. For this reason, the solution is collection events. The twine needs to be fairly

clean — you don't have to wash it, just shake off the hay and put it in a bag. Put really dirty stuff in your trash.

The first real collection event will be on the Saturday of the Ranch Rodeo at the Fairgrounds in Sonoita — Sept. 12, from 7 to 10 a.m. Donations are requested to offset the cost of taking the twine to Glendale, with proceeds going to the Patagonia Regional Aquatics Center. For more info, contact Clare at clarebonelli@gmail.com (no i in Clare!) or Cindy at 520.216.1168 — and watch for flyers!

Connecting with Patagonia ancestors

By Carolyn Shafer

I was 6 years old when I first learned about Native American peoples. My family moved to lakefront property in Northeast New Jersey. Indian Lake honored the Lenni Lenape tribal peoples who had occupied those lands for many centuries.

Later in life, I gratefully participated in the tradition of land acknowledgement that honors the Indigenous peoples who are the original stewards of the lands.

I arrived in the Patagonia area in 1996. In about 2000, I bought unoccupied property on a ridge and built a home. During my time on that property, I discovered many artifacts: plain and decorated sherds (sherds are ancient fragments of pottery) as well as tools and projectile points. I moved from that property in 2009, and I was sad to leave ancestral occupied lands.

In 2012 I moved onto property within the town borders. In order to deal with a flooding situation during heavy rains, a trench was dug. The person digging the trench brought me some pottery sherds. I was delighted and grateful that the ancestors again honored me with their memories.

Fast forward to mid-June 2026 and a visit from archeologist Dr Hunter Claypatch. Dr. Claypatch currently serves as the President for the Arizona Archaeological Council and as a professor in the Department of Anthropology and History at Pima Community College. Dr Claypatch's conclusion after examining the sherds found on my property in town is that there is a mixture of Hohokam and Trincheras pottery with a production period of 900 to 1300 CE, which suggests possible occupation before the known occupation at the location of the Patagonia Museum. The mixture of Hohokam and Trincheras



Left: Trincheras pottery sherds found on the author's property in town. Right: HoHoKam tools and pottery sherds found on ridge property outside of town. | Photos by Carolyn Shafer

pottery also suggests distant trade and interaction, which Dr. Claypatch says is unique to southern Santa Cruz County.

The energy of the ancestors remains with me and part of my "end of life" planning is a designation that all the pottery sherds are to be given to a museum designated by Dr. Claypatch and/or the Arizona Archaeological Council.

Artifacts found on private property that you own belong to the landowner, although state law makes it illegal

to disturb or possess human remains without authorization. Collecting or disturbing artifacts on any state, federal, or public land is a serious violation of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act.

Learning about the ancestors who lived by our rivers, mountains, and valleys deepens our sense of place and honors the original stewards of the lands we are now honored to call "home."

Celebration marks Empire Ranch's 150th birthday

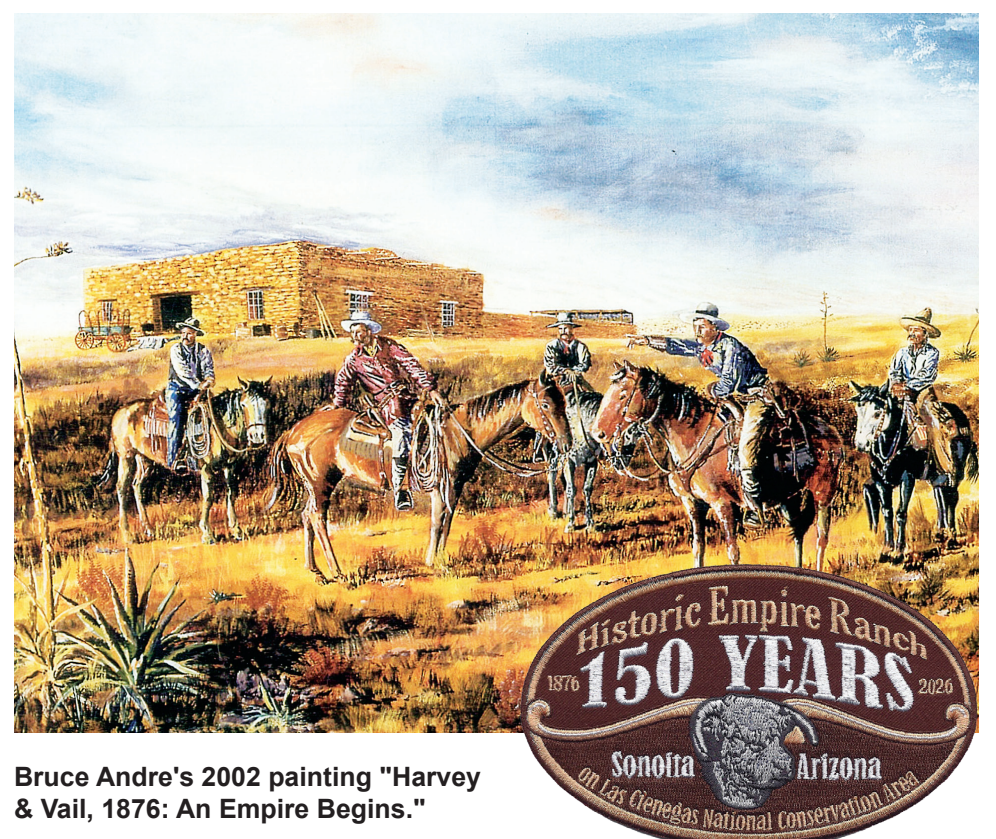
By Alison Bunting

On Aug. 22, 1876, Walter L. Vail and Herbert Hislop completed the purchase of a 160-acre ranch from Tucson businessmen Edward N. Fish and Simon Silverberg. The Empire Ranch Foundation invites one and all to join it on Saturday, Aug. 22, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. for a birthday celebration to commemorate the birth and achievements of the historic Empire Ranch.

At 9 a.m. Rick Collins will present "Danger Road, the Perils of Travel through the Sonoita Valley." Learn about the dangers and sometimes deadly encounters experienced by 18th and 19th century travelers on the Sonoita Road, from Calabazas on

the west to the modern I-10 on the northeast. Starting at 10 a.m., docents stationed in several rooms of the Ranch House will share stories about the ranch's people, buildings and remarkable history. A new exhibit of movies filmed in Empire Ranch territory will be on display, and Ken Brown and John Anderson will provide strolling musical entertainment throughout the morning. Alison Bunting and Gail Corkill will be on hand to sign their books about Empire Ranch history.

The celebration concludes at noon with commemorative remarks, followed by the cutting of a birthday cake — a fitting way to honor 150 years of Empire Ranch history and the people who have helped preserve its legacy.



Bruce Andre's 2002 painting "Harvey & Vail, 1876: An Empire Begins."

Obituaries

Monika Maria Aylward 1941-2026

Monika Maria Aylward, 84, passed away at her home in Christiansburg, Virginia, on Sunday, May 24, 2026. She was the second of ten children born to Johannes and Hildegard (Witek) Schmidt, whose family owned and operated Schmidt Kistenfabrik, a major crate factory on the Oder River in Stettin, Germany.

Born October 3, 1941, she was raised in a house built by her father on Lister Weg. Narrowly evading capture when the Eastern Front arrived on her doorstep in March, 1945, she fled with her family on one of the last trains heading west, and then miraculously survived the Allied bombing of Berlin. Having lost everything to the War, Monika and her family spent the next seven years as refugees in West Germany. They lived first in Scharbeutz, then Wevelinghoven, and finally Rhede (Emsland) in Lower Saxony, where they lived in a Quonset hut while her father found work building a school for boys orphaned by the War. As refugees from Pomerania suffering loss of identity and impoverishment in West Germany, Monika and her family, now with seven children, left for a new life in the USA in May, 1952 under the auspices of the National Catholic Welfare Conference.

They settled in Dublin, OH, where Monika helped her father build a house for their family on Summitview Rd. She became a US citizen on November 17, 1958.

Monika attended boarding school for girls at St. Francis Academy in Joliet, Illinois, and remained in Joliet to earn a liberal arts degree with a focus on art, botany and teaching while advancing to Postulancy in Catholic formation at the College of St. Francis in the early 1960s. Back in Ohio, Monika became a teacher at St. Cecilia School in Columbus, where Helen (Aylward) Mulligan, who became one of her dearest spiritual friends, introduced her to her brother, Thomas Aylward. Monika married Tom at the Church of St. Michael the Archangel in Worthington, Ohio, in 1965 and remained in loving matrimony for 48 years until his death in 2014.

With her husband, Monika began raising a family in Michigan. As they moved to Illinois, Ohio, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and ultimately Arizona (with interludes in British Columbia, Canada, and Santa Fe, New Mexico), their family grew to include six children. In Arizona, Monika's German heritage became the inspiration and culinary foundation behind a string

of acclaimed bakeries, canneries and restaurants she owned and operated with her family: Monika's Home Bakery in Tucson, Arizona; The Ovens of Patagonia, in Patagonia, Arizona; Monika's Bakery on Gabriola Island in British Columbia, Canada; and the Grasslands Café and Monika's Home Bakery in Sonoita, Arizona. After the death of her husband in 2014, Monika retired to Tucson, Arizona, and then to Christiansburg, Virginia.

Beyond her culinary expertise, Monika was a consummate calligrapher, clothing designer and artist. A lover and practitioner of collage, fabric art, music, poetry and language, she instilled a passion for culture in her children and friends. Monika was also an accomplished runner and gardener. She revered the outdoors and cherished long hikes in the wilderness with her family. Monika was a deeply spiritual person who valued prayer and never ceased to encourage peace and empathy to those around her.

Monika was preceded in death by her husband Thomas Aylward, her brothers Michael Schmidt and Thomas Schmidt, and her sister Barbara Bohland. She is survived by her sisters Maria Spiess, Felicitas Erdmann, and



Theresa Franklin, her brothers John Schmidt, Bernard Schmidt, and Christopher Schmidt, and by her children Clare Aylward, William Aylward and his wife Juliet and their children Sebastian, Damian, Zenon, and Ginevra, Roberta Aylward and her husband Greg Newland and their son Luke, Eric Aylward and his wife Christine Korger, John Aylward and his wife Kate Soper and their daughter Robin, and Frank Aylward and his wife Leah Okraszewski and their children Viola and Oscar.

Services will be private.

Peter Miller Robbins 1944-2026

Peter Miller Robbins was born April 11, 1944, in Gates Mills, Ohio, to Barbara Woolworth Miller and Lawrence "Larry" Shattuck Robbins. He was the older brother of Tyler Barkwill Robbins.

He attended Hawken School in Cleveland, Ohio, where, even as a boy, he was drawn to trains, gadgets, and anything he could take apart and rebuild with his hands.

At Tabor Academy in Marion, Massachusetts, he discovered a lifelong love of marine biology and deep-sea research. He went on to the University of Colorado, where he worked as a research assistant in Frank Oppenheimer's physics lab.

After a few years in New York City, Peter settled in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he began restoring vintage 1940s and '50s train cars — a passion that would define much of his life's work. He eventually relocated the cars out west (following his parents who retired in the San Rafael Valley) and founded the Sierra Madre Express, a luxury Pullman tourist train that carried travelers through northern Mexico and the Copper Canyon for nearly twenty years.

In 1981, he married Julieta Flores of Nogales, Arizona. They raised their daughter, Alicia, in Tucson and would spend weekends at their beloved family ranch, The Little Outfit Ranch in the San Rafael Valley. After the death of his father, "Larry," Peter took over the family ranch.

His fascination with the sea never waned. He designed a submarine that was later featured on PBS Nova, and was a proud member of The Explorers Club. In one of the great adventures of his life, he was among the few Americans invited by the Russian Navy to dive aboard their vessel Keldysh to see the remains of the Bismarck.

Closer to home, his idea of a good time was riding with Los Charros, taking friends on his "tank rides," and welcoming neighbors and friends to The Little Outfit Ranch. He will be remembered for his hospitality, his wonderfully eccentric hobbies, and his colorful stories of his many adventures.

In his final years, Peter developed dementia, and the family is grateful to those who cared for him with patience and compassion through that journey.

Peter is survived by his brother,



Peter Robbins with grandson Leo. | Contributed photo.

Tyler; his daughter, Alicia Robbins; his son-in-law, Tarek Korban; and his three grandchildren, Leo, Maxim, and Otto.

A celebration of his life will be held on Aug. 28 at The Little Outfit Ranch at 10 a.m. All are welcome.

Shirley Ann Ambrose 1934-2026

Shirley Ann Ambrose was born on April 30, 1934, in Bozeman, Montana, and passed away on June 28, 2026, in Tucson, Arizona.

Shirley moved to Patagonia in 1976 and worked at the Little Outfit Ranch. With her exceptional business skills, she later joined Patagonia Schools, where she served as Business Manager for 20 years. She was incredibly proud of her work with the schools and especially loved the students, always referring to them as "the kids." She worked tirelessly to help secure a weight room and swimming pool for the school, often saying, "These kids need something to do." Shirley's warm smile and generous spirit left a lasting impression on everyone who knew her.

She had many dear friends throughout the Patagonia and Sonoita communities. In 1984, she married the love of her life, William "Bill" Ambrose. Together, they created a home that was

always open to family and friends. It was not uncommon for Bill and Shirley to pull extra steaks from the freezer to feed unexpected guests who stopped by.

Before making Patagonia her home, Shirley worked at the Elkhorn Ranch in both Arizona and Montana and served as Executive Secretary for the Montana State University Athletic Department.

Family was the center of Shirley's life. Nothing brought her greater joy than having her family gathered at their home in Patagonia. Her yard was always filled with beautiful flowers and plants. She and Bill shared a love of gardening, growing vegetables and gourds that Shirley later transformed into beautiful painted works of art. Dancing with Bill was one of her greatest joys, and it remained one of her favorite memories throughout the last few years of her life.

Shirley was predeceased by her be-

loved husband, William "Bill" Ambrose; her parents, Floyd and Helen Stoner; her daughters, Donna Wing and Susan Stewart; and her stepdaughter, Suzanne Sosa.

She is survived by her daughter, Helen "Holly" Allen (Doug); her stepson, J.W. Ambrose; eight grandchildren; thirteen great-grandchildren; her sister, Linda and her brother, Gary. She is also survived by many nieces and nephews. Having her grandchildren and great-grandchildren visit their home brought Shirley endless happiness.

A memorial service was held at Patagonia Community Methodist Church.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Black Oak Cemetery; Valerie Burleson, 13300 E Beatty Rd., Sonoita, AZ 85637 or Patagonia Volunteer Fire & Rescue: P.O. Box 497, Patagonia, AZ 85624.

Shirley will be remembered for her kindness, generosity, unwavering ded-



ication to her family and community, and the smile she shared so freely with everyone she met.

Leslie Gaskill 1966-2026



Leslie Gaskill passed away at home in Elgin, on Feb. 13, 2026. surrounded

by the love of her family.

A lifelong resident of Southern Arizona, Leslie was a graduate of Tombstone High School, where she was known as a talented athlete. She was honored as a Sonoita Rodeo Queen and later served as a Correctional Officer for the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

Throughout her life, she held various jobs in the community, but the role she cherished most was being a mother.

Leslie was known for her strength, honesty, quick wit, and love of life. She faced challenges with determination and had a way of making people laugh.

She is survived by her son, Jayson Hicks; her daughter, Nichole Webb; and her beloved granddaughter; and many family members and friends who will miss her dearly.

A graveside service was held at Black Oak Cemetery.

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Super El Niño summer



NATURE JOURNEYS



By Vincent Pinto

“El Niño” is periodic warming of sea-surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean that carries sometimes drastic climatic and hence ecological implications for most of the globe. When this spike in sea temperatures is particularly high, the resultant effects upon the Earth’s various ecosystems is concordantly large as well. Hence the qualifier “super” for this year’s El Niño event. Some areas of the world, especially the southern hemisphere, will likely experience severe drought. Other regions may be deluged with floods. Many sectors, as witnessed already, will endure excessive heat. Human suffering is sure to follow such extreme weather. What, then, are the implications for our Sky Islands area?

Though scientific opinions vary, the overall, short-term predictions for southeast Arizona based upon this super El Niño is for a very active monsoon season. June saw average to above average precipitation across the borderlands region. Early and mid-July did not disappoint, with anywhere from average to well above average rainfall throughout our region. With the latter stages of monsoon seasons seemingly trending with increased rainfall, perhaps the stage is set for a truly monumental monsoon come August and September. More rain naturally equates to more biodiversity, as witnessed relatively recently in the summer of 2020, when a huge mon-

soon season made parts of the Sky Islands look like proxies of Costa Rica. This year, be on the lookout for some of the local species mentioned below.

Raven’s Nest Nature Sanctuary serves as a microcosm of monsoonal effects on biodiversity in our Sky Islands region at large. As I pen this article, our 42-acre preserve has received over 4.5 inches of July rain — an excellent start to the monsoon. This set plants off and running — key components to our overall species richness as they furnish food, shelter and nesting sites for area wildlife. With the deep soaking rains of July, the ground sprung to life. Within days, bare soil was transformed by a delicate patina of native vegetation. Leading the way were sprouts of the annual Palmer’s amaranth. With continued rains, these summer specialists will develop into tall plants proffering calorically rich seeds to birds and mammals alike — a vital resource to see them through leaner winter months. Sunflower weed, Bolivian cilantro and various morning glories also initiated their life cycle in July, promising nectar to butterflies and other pollinators as well as forage for deer. Given the swift response of many warm-season plants to soil moisture, some species began to flower soon after the rains began. Perhaps my favorite one, growing along south-facing canyon slopes at our preserve, is mala mujer. For those of you deficient in Spanish, this translates to “bad woman” — a clear allusion to the violently stinging hairs covering this shrubby relative of cassava. Nevertheless, the showy white flowers were heavily visited by many species of butterflies.

Some invertebrate species responded even faster to our July rains. As the first good storm hit us, dry-wood termites filled the air like a squadron of fairies in tenuous flight. Visibly absent for most of the year, they emerged from our velvet mesquite and catclaw acacia trees in a mating frenzy. At ground level, predatory velvet mites began to prowl about for, not coincidentally, the larvae of termites and ants. Female desert firetail damselflies and flame skimmer dragonflies began laying eggs in our wildlife ponds. Butterfly diversity also ticked up, including a few telltale sulphur species actually swept in by a few storms. All of these and many other invertebrates are now poised to explode in numbers come August and September, setting up a feast for larger creatures.

Accordingly, a good number of Sky Island bird species time their first or second nests with summer moisture. Evolution has honed them into the plant and animal foods that form a veritable cornucopia during the monsoons. July’s storms initiated the mating songs of Botteri’s and Cassin’s



With the soaking rains of July, the ground has sprung to life with native vegetation at Raven’s Nest Nature Sanctuary. | Photo by Vicent Pinto

sparrows — close relatives of each other that literally start to sing when they hear thunder! I also spied furtive pairs of varied buntings searching for nest sites in our dense bottomland woodlands. Meanwhile, avian predators such as our pair of gray hawks, as well as red-tailed, zone-tailed, and Cooper’s hawks, prowled the preserve, looking to mug various reptiles, mammals and birds to feed their growing young. A black phoebe — a riparian specialist likely visiting from nearby Sonoita Creek State Natural Area — also began to hawk insects around our wildlife ponds, some of which were filled with the tadpoles of various toad species.

Meanwhile, Palmer agaves truly stole the show, luring in a plethora of birds to their towering flower stalks. Hooded and Bullock’s orioles, pyrrhuloxias, Lucy’s warblers, various hummingbirds, house finches and others partook of this nectar feast. Though spring is rightly touted as a birder’s paradise in the Sky Islands, monsoon birding is also a profoundly enriching experience.

As evidenced by their many mounds and holes, various species of rodents exploded in numbers. In particular, several species of pocket mice — so

named for their external, fur-lined cheek pouches that they employ as carrying devices for both food and nesting material — bred and increased as if there were no tomorrow. In a state renowned for its boom-and-bust ecological cycles, it clearly pays to ride the wave of resources while it lasts. On the heels of these mammalian tidbits, expect a spike in snakes, foxes, bobcats, ringtails and other predators.

Thus, while a super El Niño certainly can spell disaster for many parts of the world, including the ocean itself, I feel as if we should not look a gift horse in the mouth if that means a good monsoon and more biodiversity in the Sky Islands. Perhaps the lightning swift response of many of our species to this abundance can also teach us something: Carpe diem, “seize the day”!

Vincent Pinto and his wife, Claudia, run Ravens-Way Wild Journeys LLC, their Nature Adventure & Conservation organization devoted to protecting and promoting the unique biodiversity of the Sky Islands region. RWWJ offers a wide variety of private, custom-made courses, birding & biodiversity tours. Visit: www.ravensnatureschool.org.



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Pollinator garden habitat restoration project is underway

By Mary Tolena

A five-acre parcel of land in Patagonia near Harshaw Creek is being restored with native plants to benefit pollinators, birds and, eventually, residents and visitors.

Tucson Bird Alliance is leading the design and implementation of the habitat restoration project. Property owner South32 contracted with the Alliance for the job, recognizing the organization's expertise in habitat restoration and its strong presence in Patagonia operating the Paton Center for Hummingbirds.

"This project is about creating something that benefits both people and nature," said Maggie Blais, Principal Biodiversity & Permitting with South32 Hermosa. Once South32 had contracted with Tucson Bird Alliance, "we said to them, 'Tell us what you want to happen here,'" Blais recalled.

The land is in the northeast corner of what was previously farm and grazing land owned by the Ensign family, until South32 bought it in 2018. The section being restored is bordered by The Nature Conservancy property to the north, which runs along both sides of Harshaw Creek.

Being adjacent to Nature Conservancy land made this project especially attractive to the Alliance, since the creek bed already attracts many species. "We're always happy when we can work in areas with established microclimates," said Kari Hackney, Director of Habitat Stewardship at Tucson Bird Alliance, and a project leader.

The project is in phase two of a three-year plan. Phase one focused on planning and design, earthworks to create water retention ponds, and initial invasive species control. This year's phase includes installing irrigation lines, seeding and planting native species, and continuing invasive species management.

TBA's crew of restoration specialists and invasive plan strike team members works on the project between one and three days most weeks. When asked

what their biggest invasive challenge is this year, Hackney said "Tumbleweeds!"

Three habitat zones are planned: A pollinator garden of nectar plants, a section of sacaton grassland, and a mesquite bosque for birds and wildlife. They are planting 75 trees of layered canopy, including desert willows, Arizona walnuts, hackberry and elderberry.

"The most fun part is coming up with which plants to plant," said Hackney.

Target species for the pollinator garden include monarchs and other butterflies, bees, hummingbirds and agaves for bats.

The three habitat zones will create food sources for birds who are migrating through the area. While some birds, like Lucy's warblers, may nest there eventually, "the real value is in the forage," explained Melissa Fratello, Tucson Bird Alliance Executive Director. "Birds need bugs, and these plants will support bugs."

Another design goal of the project is flood mitigation and erosion control. The water retention ponds will help slow water flow during heavy rains. Some of the dirt from the earthworks was used to build up a bit more flood protection for the property's neighbors.

Next year, phase three will include building a loop trail, installing seating and signage, and preparing for public access. The hope is to eventually connect to the existing trails in the creek area.

The pollinator project is part of South32's commitment that the Hermosa mine results in "no net loss of biodiversity" through a combination of avoidance, minimization, restoration and offsets like this project.

Fratello said the Bird Alliance wishes extractive mining wasn't happening in this sensitive, biodiverse region, but since it is, "the extractive industry has a responsibility to mitigate, in real time and in real ways, the environmental impact of their operations," she said.

"Tucson Bird Alliance has been doing environmental mitigation work



Irrigation lines are being laid among mesquite trees, with Red Mountain in the background. | Photo by Mary Tolena

for 25 years, where a developer has to pay for mitigation for damage done," Fratello said. "although we know we can never truly mitigate all of the effects of development."

"We can, however, ensure that the restoration work done on this property

is executed to the highest standards in terms of ecological function," Fratello continued. "If there's anything we can contribute that can add value here, we want to do that. We want to offer some benefit to the environment, and to the community."

Ghosts by the Elgin Bridge (Oklahoma!)

By Robert Dorney

Years before his grizzled face adorned The Last Picture Show, Ben Johnson the wrangler (uncredited) drove the runaway buggy to the dogleg railroad crossing right there by Flying Kite Winery (as it exists today, just the railroad bed).

There in Elgin you can also see Ben (a face in the crowd)

on the rail station platform – a bit of stagecraft for the choreography of Agnes de Mille

(she, who already got her boots wet)

with the ballet Rodeo scored by Aaron Copland

(he, who had never seen a real ranch).

Rodgers and Hammerstein were sitting on the fence as de Mille danced the lonesome cowgirl. They roped her to do Oklahoma! – on the Broadway stage. Later, it was...

(her only screen credit)

Travel down winery row and some say cowboy boots can still be heard step dancing there in the night by the Elgin Bridge.



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SHERIFF'S BLOTTER

July 22: Sonoita Border Patrol called and advised of a vehicular accident

involving an agent and a semi truck for a company working on the border wall. Caller reported no injuries.

July 16: A caller from Patagonia advised that there is a male subject yelling at a female, and she is crying.

July 14: A caller advised that his co-worker had located remains of a human skull near Gardner Canyon.

July 9: An officer from Sierra Vista Police Department reported he was on a Sierra Vista city bus when the driver sideswiped a bridge rail at the intersection of Elgin Canelo Road and Upper Elgin Road.

He said no one was injured.

July 7: A Sonoita caller said her husband does not let her leave the home. She said he has weapons in the house and is not under the influence.

July 5: A deputy reported a driver was cited for going 84 mph in a 55 mph zone on SR 82 near MP 27.

June 29: A caller from Patagonia reported that there are explosives, including liquid explosives and caps, in the caller's late father's basement. No one lives at the residence.

June 28: A caller from Phoenix said she had lost her phone at Lake Patagonia State Park and was able to plot it later at Walmart.

A deputy reported that a traffic stop on SR 82 east of Sonoita Creek Road had caught a driver with an arrest warrant.

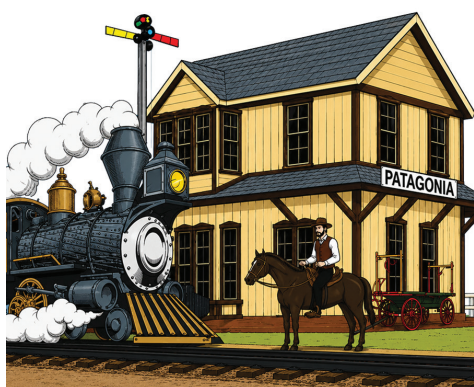
June 27: A Patagonia caller reported a violation of a protection order by their spouse, who had sat down two tables away from them at a restaurant.

June 25: A deputy requested assistance from Border Patrol after conducting a traffic stop on West Naugle Avenue in Patagonia.

June 18: Border Patrol requested a deputy to the Sonoita station as a detainee there was reporting a sexual assault allegation.

June 14: A caller from the Harshaw Ave. area requested a deputy. The caller said their teenage daughter had two juvenile friends over for a sleepover, and the caller's son said the friends are not from the area and are possibly run-aways or from a group home in Mesa or Florence.

June 11: A caller said there had been a vehicle accident in the Harshaw Avenue area involving a semi truck with Idaho plates.



TOWN COUNCIL NOTES

June 10, 2026 — Regular Meeting

- The meeting began with a short public hearing at which Town Manager Ron Robinson presented the 2027 Fiscal Year budget. Robinson began with a reminder that he'd previously shown several spreadsheets in a more detailed public presentation, so the review was more general. He spoke of the budget shortfall and explained how the differences between expense and income are adjusted from year to year. Legal requirements were met by the posting of the budget ahead of its approval and by ensuring that the Town's utility expenditures for water, sewage and garbage did not run in the red.

- Other actions and programs listed by Robinson included management of the Enterprise Fund in support of businesses, tree maintenance, repair of the town's senior apartments, overall town cleanup effort (well received), successful operation of the recycling program now in its third year, Deputy Manager Carmen Fuentes helping with the office work environment, the success of the new Library Director, a 5 percent increase in library usage and a couple of expense reductions for the coming Fiscal Year. Councilor Steve Finch reinforced the view that the community was proud of its library.

- Upon completion of the public hearing, the council convened into reg-

ular session and unanimously approved adoption of the town's 2027 budget.

The council accepted Rodrigo Sierra-Corona's resignation from the Flood and Flow Commission with appreciation for his service and approved the appointment of Chuck Klingenstein as his replacement.

- The council approved an agreement for Fire Protection and Emergency Services between the Town of Patagonia and the Patagonia Volunteer Fire and Rescue Inc.

- The council approved an updated Intergovernmental Agreement for building plan review and inspection services to be provided by the Santa Cruz County Building Department.

June 24, 2026 — Regular Meeting

- There were no speakers for the call to the public.

- Mayor Andy Wood mentioned the upcoming July 4 dedication of the Blue Star Memorial at the ramadas at the south end of the Town Park.

- The council approved signing the new Funding Agreement with the Friends of the Library for \$25,000, 23 reformatted administrative forms, and Mayor Wood's Proclamation that August would be "Child Support Awareness Month."

July 8, 2026 — Regular Meeting

- Fire Chief Zay Hartigan reported that the fireworks postponed from July 4 might be used on New Years Eve, an idea still under discussion.

- Councilor Steve Finch mentioned the success of the July 4 park dedication event of the Blue Star memorial, at which Rep. Adelita Grijalva added some brief remarks.

- Resolution 2026-09 was approved, designating Chief Fiscal Officer Robinson to submit the Fiscal Year 2027 Expenditure Limitation to the Arizona Auditor General, as legally required.

- In response to a request by Library Director Linda Shore, the council approved that Robinson submit a South32 Smart Grant Application for \$13,078 for

purchase of six Dell Computers and a Panasonic video camera with accompanying tripod for library usage.

- The council approved the extension of Planning and Development Committee Chair Laurie Monti's term by one year, to provide continuity and recruitment time for her replacement on the Committee.

- The council approved the appointment of Patagonia resident Brad Boschetto to the Planning and Development Committee. He brings a background in the management of environmental projects.

- Future agenda items to be considered included a PVFR-guided firebreak program for the town, and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Friends of the Library.

July 22, 2026 — Regular Meeting

- Three members of the public spoke in advance of the quarterly update from South32 President Pat Risner.

- John Nordstrom, a resident near Mowry, disputed Risner's claim before the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors that South 32's well data had been published. He then discussed alternative options and considerations for the redistribution of the mine's water discharges. One was for discharges to continue into Harshaw Creek and for South32 to provide the town with a new water treatment plant for its current wells.

A second option considered the use of Goldbaum Canyon as another discharge point, and the third option was for all discharges to go to a point in the Mowry area that would put them flowing toward San Rafael Valley instead of Patagonia. Nordstrom closed with a suggestion that the town drill a new well as a backup source should their present wells become too contaminated, raising the question of who should pay for it.

- Hydrogeologist Chris Gardner prefaced his remarks with the view that the community input survey for the ongoing Community Protections and Ben-

efits Agreement (CPBA) being worked on by Patagonia, Nogales, Santa Cruz County and South32 was unnecessarily complex in requiring all issues to be broken down to have technical action responses one by one.

- From spatial and temporal analysis of data Gardner has gathered since large-scale mine discharge of water began, he said that "mobilization" of sediments from the water's flow in existing stream beds is a real phenomenon, and as an overall pattern, he's seen significant rises in contaminants such as arsenic and antimony. He said this pattern applied to samples from the streambeds themselves, from wells both private and otherwise, and from measurements in town.

- Gardner concluded that the Forest Service has ignored the large body of "Organizational Comments" presented among the citizen inputs and that South32 has used the Forest Service's approval of the Final Environmental Impact Statement to similarly ignore the Town's concerns. He asked South32 to provide the actual water analysis data for all wells it has sampled as a means for transparency and proving the citizens' concerns are being heard.

- Ernie Edwards of Lake Patagonia area raised a question about the current powerline construction by Unisource for mine use. He asked if Unisource was being paid by South32 or ratepayer dollars. He expressed hesitation about accepting mine company claims and suggested the Town ask Hermosa Project for the whole of water and well data it has collected or generated.

- New Business primarily consisted of Risner's quarterly update on his company's local activities. Construction workforce was currently 900, he said, with 300 at work at a given time. He explained that the modular construction method — fabrication of some components offsite — had reduced site traffic substantially, and that they were

Continued on the next page



NOTES FROM SEFD

June Meeting

• The 4th annual Future Firefighters Camp 2026 welcomed 20 children ages 6 to 13 for two weeks of activities in

June. Each day focused on a different topic and included physical fitness, with a strong emphasis on fun. Tricia Flaherty, who organized the event, reported that the children and firefighters all had a great time.

She received a Certificate of Appreciation for her hard work and support of the event.

- Recruitment for an operations chief was postponed for a minimum of six months due to a lack of sufficient candidates.
- The number of incidents for May was 59, with a majority occurring on Sunday.
- The Board adopted a Mutual Aid Agreement for Emergency Services between Whetstone and Sonoita-Elgin Fire Districts for fire suppression, emergency medical services, hazardous material and rescue emergency.
- The Board also adopted a new hu-

man resources policy on donated paid time off, allowing employees to donate paid leave hours to fellow employees in the event of a serious medical situation, a circumstance that creates severe financial hardship or other appropriate circumstances as approved by the Chief.

July Meeting

- Robert “Bob” Garber resigned from the Board due to scheduling conflicts. SEFD recognized him with a Certificate of Appreciation for six years of service and for strengthening SEFD programs and processes through his work in finance, audit, and internal controls. Anyone interested in filling the Board vacancy may contact Tricia Flaherty at (520) 988-5162 or flaherty@SEFD911.org.
- The number of incidents for June was 67, primarily medical in nature and occurring on the weekends.

CLASS OF 2026 Julie Rodriguez



From a young age, Julie Rodriguez has pursued a love of learning through science and engineering. She completed her first science-fair projects in elementary school and continued her interests as a Elgin Middle School student, researching and developing award-winning projects, encouraged by her science teacher, Mrs. Annette Kowek. As an Andrada Polytechnic High School student, Julie's yearly engineering projects have gained her recognition and prizes at science and engineering fairs at the school district (Vail), regional (SARSEF), state (AzSEF), national and international (ISEF) levels. Julie also enjoys hands-on studies of biology and veterinary science.

Julie's favorite classes were her career education courses at Andrada, in which she earned technical certificates in both Engineering and Veterinary Assisting. Combining her interests of biology and engineering, she will major in Biomedical Engineering at the University of Arizona this fall, at which she has accepted admission to the Honors College and the College of Engineering.

At Andrada High School, Julie was ranked in the top 10 of her graduating class and was in the scholars program. She was the president of National Honor Society and the president of Science Club. She was also an active member and officer of several other school clubs, including SkillsUSA Engineering, the VEX Robotics team, HOSA (future healthcare leaders), Girls Who Code, and Link Crew.

COUNCIL (cont. from p. 12)

now focusing on zinc and lead production. Because of the large “silo building” now under construction on the south portion of the site, Risner stated there would be no open stockpiles of rock to be processed. For further road traffic reduction, he added that completion of the new powerline would eliminate the VoltaGrid natural gas generators that currently put 51 trucks per day on local roads.

• The Centro remote operation facility under construction in Nogales is expected to employ 200 workers, Risner said, and is expected to be finished in July of 2027. As for the large scale of financing the Hermosa Project overall, Risner said the increase in capitalization from \$2.1 to \$3.5 Billion would have “no impact on the viability of the project.”

First production from the zinc-lead-silver deposit is now anticipated in March of 2028, but progress toward magnesium production is on hold because of major new production of it in Japan and Korea, and because of global changes in technologies and amounts of battery storage of electricity. If magne-

sium mining is not pursued, it would mean a 45% decrease in activity, Risner said.

• Councilor Stabile asked about traffic from the proposed new access road into Nogales, and Risner pivoted to his company's commitment to not use Highway 83 for major ore shipments, but rather stay on 82 east to 90 for land transport. Risner said that if the next 18 months see completion of a major zinc smelter in Tennessee, ore would go to the Port of Tucson. There is also a possibility of routing it to smelters in Guaymas, Mexico, or Vancouver, British Columbia.

Stabile's question about what would happen if mine traffic went through the city of Nogales was not directly addressed.

- In response to a question from Councilor Retherford, Risner replied that the possibility of mining copper was undecided, and thus far the known copper deposit appeared to be small.
- Risner returned to the Final Environmental Impact Statement in clarifying that South32's has 15 years worth of wildlife data and 10 years of water data. He said that the 2019 tribal engagement work by the company involved

12 tribes, and that the FEIS has added 135 mitigation measures that would be done. With regard to light pollution, Risner said the company works with Whipple Observatory on control of light emissions, and he added that the new mine tailings had been “redesigned.”

• He said the next step with the Forest Service is a September “Notice to Proceed,” at which time the detailed design of the Access Road would proceed.

Risner also addressed the topics of workforce training and conservation efforts, including the in-town Pollinator and Restoration garden project being done with the Tucson Bird Alliance, using water catchment and some pumping from the company's well on Harshaw Road. The goal, he stated, was “no net loss of biodiversity.”

• New Business went on to approve renewal of the Management Agreement for the Senior Citizens/Community Center from July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2027.

• Approval was given for a Special Event Liquor License for the Patagonia Community Garden's annual Pie Auction and Fundraiser on Saturday, October 17 at the Garden.

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Good news from Orion



STARSTRUCK



By Harold Meckler

Good news is best when it is unexpected. Think about it. When the good news you know is coming finally arrives, your response is usually something like: “That’s great. I’m so happy for you. Isn’t that wonderful.” When it comes out of the blue, however, you just can’t hold back from blurting out: “That’s incredible! Are you kidding me! Just unbelievable!” And, rightfully so, the exclamation points always seem to attach themselves automatically to the exclamations.

I’ve been looking around a lot lately for good news. There’s just so much of the other stuff. Of course, I now realize that was a mistake. It’s just too contrived, and when it’s contrived, disappointment is sure to follow. Thankfully, and totally by accident, good news suddenly appeared recently via news about a region of space called the Ori-

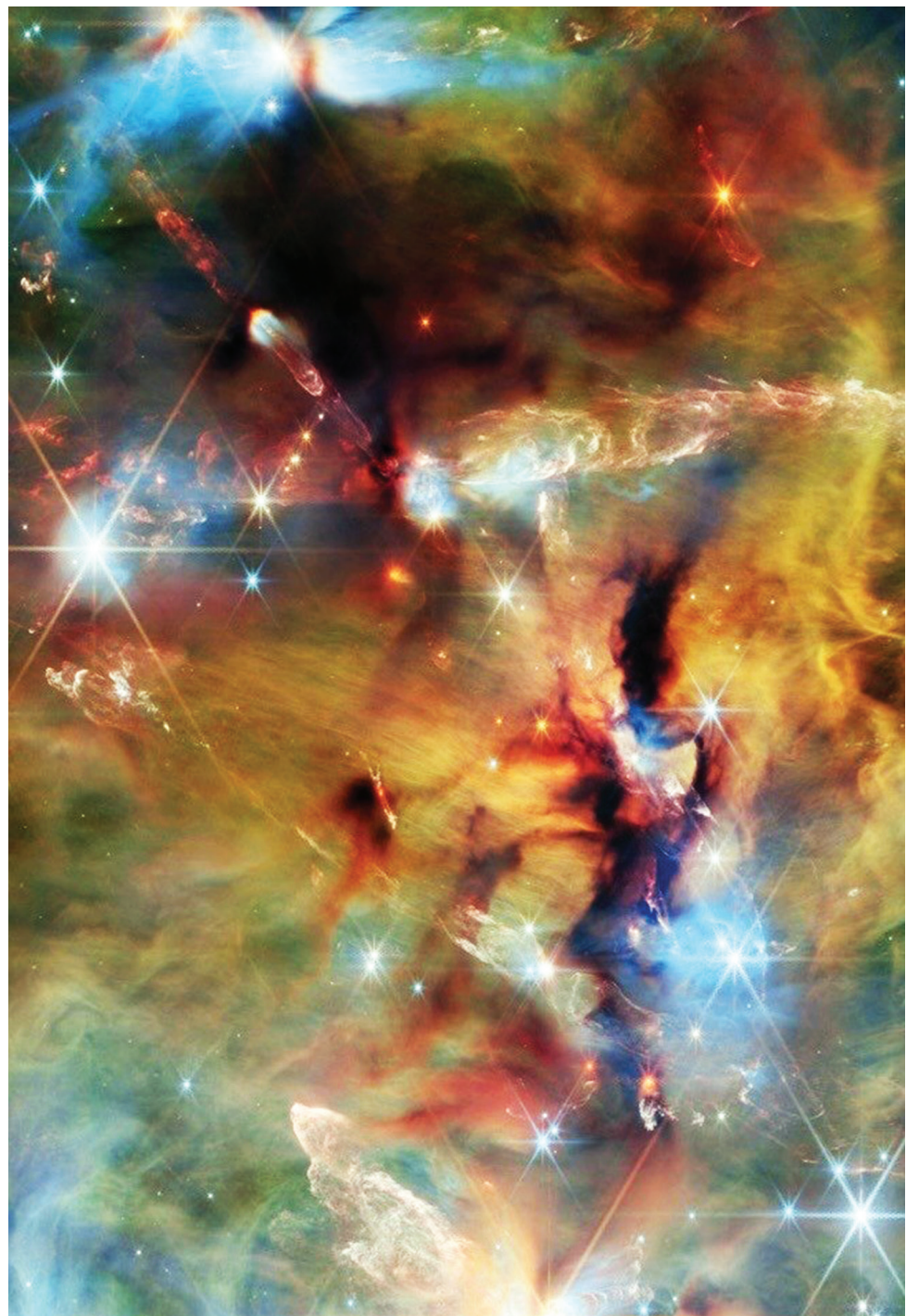
on Molecular Cloud-2. I mean, I never imagined that the OMC-2 could bring out the smiles. But, it did. At least for me. Here’s why.

Though we’re months away from Orion and its magnificent nebula owning the southern sky, the Webb Telescope recently released an image taken by its near infrared camera, the NIRCarn, that captures a part — the OMC-2 — of the Orion A Molecular Cloud. Another part, the well-known Orion Nebula is but a small — one-tenth the size — subset of the full cloud. Luckily though, and with the help of a pair of binoculars, we can see it because energetic young stars within that area have effectively blown away, or diffused, enough of the surrounding gases to make it glowingly visible to us.

Molecular clouds as a whole, on the other hand, are too dense and cold for us to see into. They trap light. Without special equipment we wind up looking at apparent emptiness. But we now know that these immense structures are the exact opposite of emptiness because Webb has pierced through the darkness and has let us see just how active they are. OMC-2 is a bit behind and above the Orion Nebula and is located some 1280 light years from Earth. Webb’s unprecedented view of it leaves us with mouths agape — a display of creation that should entice each of us to try to consider our role and our place in such majesty.

Intense gravity and unimaginable cold temperatures in OMC-2 drive atoms to combine into molecules, gain mass and eventually become protostars that eject powerful energy jets from their poles as they acquire the fuel necessary to burst into newborn stars. These processes interact constantly within OMC-2. It is not a place one would want to casually visit. Everything seems to be a target of something else. However, the chaos exhibited there is not really random. This is how the universe has unfolded. This is how it is supposed to be. This is how the building blocks of life begin. It’s not chaotic at all. It’s our origin story.

All of this formed my unexpected good news. Sometimes, we just have to



Stars in various stages of birth within the Orion Molecular Cloud-2. | Photo by ESA/Webb, NASA & CSA, T. Megeath, M. Zamani.

widen our view. Sometimes, we have to think beyond ourselves. Sometimes, good news is realizing that far off — whether in space or somewhere beyond our immediate grasp — conditions exist that allow us to add many layers of perspective to everything we hold dear. Once we do that, some of life’s harshness can become more manageable, even if only temporarily.

The real gift, I’ve come to understand, is that such unexpected good news can actually be transformative and go well past temporary relief. There may be plenty of material right

now to doom-scroll, but reading about the OMC-2, the Webb’s extraordinary technology and then reflecting upon the absolute perfection — utterly violent though it may be — of star birth gives me hope that we clearly still have the means and the ability to overcome all of that other stuff that so horribly detracts from all that is possible. Yeah, good news — brought to us from deep space and through the genius of many right here on Earth — is out there, unexpected, much needed and very timely.



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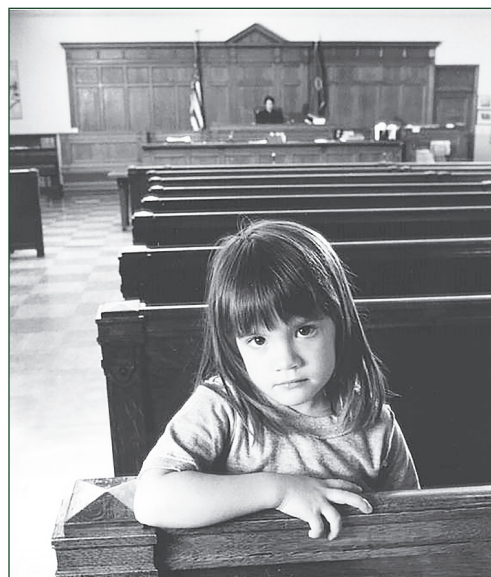
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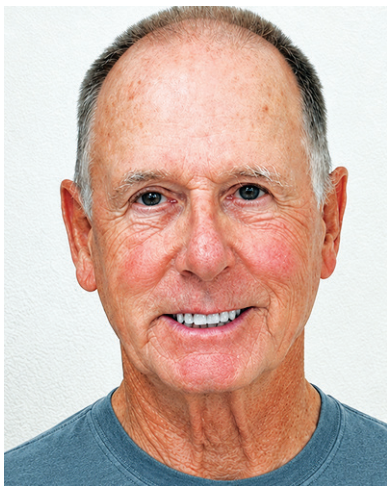


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Cave Creek South/Crosses Canyon Trail



TAKE A HIKE



By Wayne Tomasi

The Cave Creek South/Crosses Canyon route is not an official Coronado National Forest trail, therefore, it has no number or official designation. The hike is an easy 2.5-mile round-trip walk that begins on an abandoned mine road in a shallow canyon. There is no actual trail. The hike begins where the Cave Creek South Mine Road leaves the Gardner Canyon Road (FR-92) approximately eight miles west of route 83. The unnumbered road heads south up a side canyon, where the entrance is marked with two large boulders. The road is not marked on the USGS Mount Wrightson topo map, but Rita Mountains.

The first half mile of the trail has an almost imperceptible elevation gain, and the last three-quarters of a mile gains 425 feet up a moderate grade

directly in or along a creekbed. The entire hike is in a pristine canyon where the upper section more closely resembles a glen.

The road begins along the west side of the unnamed creek in an oak and juniper woodland and begins winding up the secluded canyon. After a quarter mile and a couple of creek crossings, the road passes between two steel posts. Beyond the poles where the roadbed deteriorates significantly, start looking on the left side for a low-profile stone and mortar building about 30 feet from the road. The structure is only about 3 feet high, 5 feet long, and 4 feet wide. I suspect it was a storage cellar or tool locker.

Approximately a half mile from FR-92, the creekbed passes a very large boulder on the left and an alligator juniper on the right, making it impossible for anything other than a very narrow vehicle to continue. Look for a large, flat excavated area on a small terrace above the creek on the right bank that appears to have been the site of a building. There is a 75-foot-long drift tunnel directly across the creek that ends at the entrance to a four-foot-high adit. The mine was called the Cave Creek South Mine and was worked prior to 1902, although there does not appear to be any record of what was extracted from it.

Beyond the entrance to the tunnel, the shaft opens into a small room-sized cavern with one shaft extending a short distance to the left and another up a slope to the right. The most interesting item in the mine is a narrow-gauge track on the floor. I did not venture beyond the entrance so I do not know how far the tunnel or the track goes or what equipment might still be in the tunnel.

A clear footpath continues up a stone-lined path on the right side of the drift tunnel to the bottom of a very steep slope covered with tailings. About 50 feet up the slope, a small area of the hillside has been scraped flat in front of two more adits. One entrance is a vertical shaft about 15 feet deep that is partially filled with debris. The second opening is a horizontal



The Cave Creek South/Crosses Canyon trail begins about eight miles west of Highway 83 off of Gardner Canyon Road. | Photo by Wayne Tomasi

stoop directly behind the first. The entrance is encased in a wood enclosure with a small, screened window and a five-foot high wooden door with the name 'TOM' inscribed into the surface. I was disappointed when I went inside and discovered it did not go anywhere beyond a small tomb-like room.

Beyond the mine, with a little imagination you can see where the road continues about 150 feet along the west side of the rocky creek where it ends, and a faded path continues past two man-made placers. The first on the left side of the creekbed and the second directly in the middle of the creek. The placers indicate someone once found or at least panned for gold in the creek. They are both constructed from juniper logs placed between two large rocks with a shallow basin scoured out of the middle on the downstream side. I couldn't resist sifting through the fine sand on the bottom of the basins looking for gold flakes but had no luck.

There is another 60-foot-long drift tunnel on the left about 100 yards up the drainage with no shaft or adit. I found a fourth dig site about 100 yards farther up the canyon with a small crawlspace for an opening to a small, gloomy room. The path continues meandering along the creek, sometimes

on the right, sometimes on the left, and sometimes directly up the bed. There are two places where downed trees, rockfalls, and other debris necessitate bypassing the creekbed on one side or the other, but I found it amazingly easy to walk up the canyon. Just when you least suspect it, you come to a very contemporary-looking barbed wire fence across the creek in a narrow, steep-sided section of the canyon. If you wish to continue, your only choice is to carefully climb over the fence.

I found an occasional cairn along the route, but the path and route are both obvious – simply continue heading up the drainage. A short distance upstream from a steep incline, start looking on the east side of the creek for two crude wooden crosses sticking out of the ground (hence the name Crosses Canyon). Each cross is made from small tree limbs held in place with zinc-plated bolts. One bolt is shiny and appears to be relatively new, whereas the other is weathered and rusted. Only your imagination can reveal the story behind the crosses.

Beyond the crosses, the drainage veers to the right and abruptly ends in a shallow basin at the end of the canyon within a five-minute walk of FR-785.

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- Betty, Environmental Compliance Manager



Learn more



Seasoned knitters and crocheters form newest library club

By Carrie White

Socks, hats and sweaters, you can buy. But peace of mind?

That's one of the health benefits that can get lost in the knitty-gritty of learning how to "needle-bind" and do "hook work." Those are terms that, through history, have been used for knitting and crocheting.

Jen Cranston of Patagonia knows about the relaxing part. But as the middle school social studies educator for Sonoita Elementary School District, she has also seen the frustration of knit newbies.

Cranston has taught the craft as an elective at Elgin Elementary school. Some have liked it. Others, not so much.

"It's relaxing when you've done it for a long time," Cranston acknowledged. "But when you're learning, it's frustrating."

For the most part, though, the knitters and crocheters who show up for the Patagonia Public Library's newest semimonthly group – the Knitting and Crocheting Club – have been doing one or both crafts for a while.

Sandy Wolf learned to knit sitting on her mother's lap. "I don't remember if I used needles or sticks," the Sonoita resident said.

Moving to the Valley of the Sun, she lost touch with the craft there – the need for winter garb in a place with one season being minimal. At a recent club gathering, though, she works on a blue

sweater that will be seasonally useful from time to time.

Cheridayn Egan of Patagonia is crocheting a baby hat on this day. She learned to crochet from a college roommate, and picked up knitting from a student taking a gap year in Ecuador.

"I take it (crocheting) on road trips and long flights," she said. In addition to relaxation, socialization and community involvement are also positive outcomes, both of which are components of well-being.

"There is something very lovely about being around other people who do this kind of handwork," Cranston said.

That plays right in to the historical aspects of knitting and crocheting.

Cami Schlappy, historian for the Bowman-Stradling History Center in Sonoita, noted loneliness could be an issue for ranch wives many years ago. Handwork "allowed for socialization when crafters gathered to work on projects together," Schlappy said. Additionally, it was a means to repurpose old material by creating much-needed supplies, especially for warmth.

"It allowed households to add personal touches and decorations to their products. If extras were able to be made, they could be sold and income was added to the family," Schlappy said.

Today, the "how-to" knowledge may not be generationally passed down from grandmother to mother to daughter. Which begs the question, is the Patagonia Public Library Knitting and



^ **Jen Cranston of Patagonia would love to see the semimonthly knitting and crocheting meetings at Patagonia Library be a regular touchstone for area crafters.** | Photos by Carrie White

> **Cheridyn Egan of Patagonia crochets a baby hat. "I gift most of my stuff," says Egan, who learned crocheting from a college roommate.**



Crocheting Club the best place to learn?

Not really, Cranston said, although the knitters and crocheters do share tips and tricks at the gatherings. Learning, she said, is better done one on one or through free online videos.

"I love to teach people to knit, so I wouldn't have to know them very well to say, 'Sure, sure, sure, let's meet at

the library and knit,'" Cranston said.

A good first project in both crafts? A pot holder. Hey, Christmas will be here before you know it!

The Patagonia Public Library's Knitting and Crocheting Club meets 3:30-4:45 p.m. the first and third Tuesday of each month.

LON PARKER (cont. from p. 1)

on July 25 marking the 100th anniversary of Parker's murder. Steve Lindsey, pastor of the Canelo Cowboy Church, served as master of ceremonies.

Gone but not forgotten, Parker was honored with a ceremony befitting an honored fallen comrade. Participating in the ceremony were Border Patrol personnel from Naco, Nogales, Sonoita and Tucson. A horse patrol and pipe and drum units were also present, as were canines.

Two of Parker's nephews, Byrd Lindsey and Jim Maloney, were on hand to witness the ceremony. So, too, were members of the Gatlin family, representing Albert Gatlin, who was Parker's Border Patrol partner at the time of his killing. All told, more than 100 people were present.

"I was surprised," Lindsey said. "So

many people there at such short notice. It was gratifying."

Lindsey grew up knowing of his uncle, but not a lot of details. He knew he had a sense of humor. He remembers seeing his uncle's World War I gas mask in a bedroom closet at his grandparents' home. And he remembers visiting Parker's widow — Aunt Georgia — in Phoenix, where she moved following her husband's death. She would eventually become secretary to Arizona Governor Daniel E. Garvey (1948-1951).

Grasky, an organizer of the event, spoke of Parker's early beginnings with the Border Patrol.

"They recruited 450 officers in 1924, and they had certain requirements," he said. The first requirement was two years of general ranch work. Second, applicants had to be "big, strong and absolutely fearless." Big, he said, meant

big in spirit. Strong implied a strong heart. "Otherwise, you couldn't do this job."

Fearless?

"Remember that old John Wayne thing. They wanted people who were scared to death but still saddled up," Grasky said.

Parker fit the bill: A cowboy, turned Army artilleryman, turned Border Patrol Inspector. Parker's name is still evoked to inspire others to rise to the occasion.

According to accounts of the events of July 25, 1926, found on the U.S. Border Patrol website, Parker left his camp alone in pursuit of mounted liquor smugglers. Tracks of a man and a horse led Parker to believe that the horse was loaded with liquor or other contraband. Nothing was heard from Parker until the Wills family returned to their ranch at about 6 p.m. They found

Parker on their wood pile, dying from a gunshot wound. He never regained consciousness.

During the investigation, the body of Artilio Espinosa, a known smuggler, was also found. Espinosa's horse, with 20 gallons of mescal cans strapped to its back, had also been killed. From tracks, investigating officers theorized that Espinosa was accompanied by another smuggler who followed Espinosa from a distance as protection. Although mortally wounded, Parker was coherent enough to kill Espinosa and his horse and ride 2½ miles to the Wills ranch, where he eventually collapsed.

Services for Parker were held at the Nogales Undertaking Parlors, with full military honors extended at the burial site, the American Legion Cemetery. According to newspaper accounts, the funeral was attended by hundreds of county residents.

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LIBRARY DOGS (cont. from p. 1)

“He’s a gorgeous, silly dog.”

The library assistant’s ability to connect with animals is a function of her DNA. Her mother, Jean Tait, was gifted in that regard. Horses, cows, dogs — you name it. DeForest jokes that if her mom could have given birth to puppies instead of children, she would have.

“She would say, ‘Anybody can talk to a dog. But you have to be able to listen. They’ll tell you exactly what they need.’”

Which is what DeForest did with Daniela, a lab mix who had been abused badly enough that Santa Cruz County Animal Control deemed her unlikely to be pet-worthy. Adopted at about age seven, Daniela was driven to the library by her new family. The pup was too frightened to come in. So, DeForest went to her, climbing into the front seat and eventually coaxing her to accept a treat. Now Daniela is an “irregular” visitor, a function of hip dysplasia. When she is there, though, the gentle sage wags her tail and gladly accepts treats, her physical and mental scars long since healed.

Moving on to Riddley, a scholarly member of the beloved Patagonia institution. The German Shepard/Akita mix has a dual role as Ambassador and Chief Protection Officer. Often, he can be found in repose behind the checkout desk as mom Pamela Freeman looks for books. (Riddley confided, however, that the lounging position is a ruse, aimed at foiling nefarious activity by visiting ne’er-do-wells.)

“In my year as library director, I’ve seen how well-behaved dogs help bring people together in a positive manner,” said Linda Shore. “People start up general conversations because they have a four-legged friend in common, which is preferable to a political discussion in the lobby.”

Like DeForest, Shore pointed out that there are health benefits to dogs. And research bears that out. According to the Mayo Clinic, dogs have the capacity to lower stress hormones (cortisol) and boost mood-enhancing chemicals (oxytocin). They encourage daily exercise, improve cardiovascular health and reduce loneliness by acting as a natural social catalyst.

Brenda Pentland, Hamish’s Mom, can attest to the latter. Moving here in 2019, she knew the town dogs before she knew their families.

“Dogs are a real icebreaker. They bring people together,” she said. “I joke that everyone in Congress should be forced to bring a puppy to the session.”

*I’d like to go to Congress.
I bet they have great treats.
I bet there are a lot of nice people
there.
And dogs.
Life is good.*



Vaquita, July’s Dog of the Month, with her human, Jami Willaman. | Photos by Carrie White.



Left: Ruby and her young chaperone, Winslow Mount Masters. Right: Can Wooley Booley have his treat please?



Left: Say hello to Lily and Lucy. Right:Riddley’s gentle disposition belies his role as Chief Protection Officer.

SONOITA WATER (cont. from p. 1)

she said, winemaking would come to a standstill: “a lot of the stuff we do, cleaning barrels, washing tanks, and then the water goes off and you don’t know when it’s coming back on.”

The positive news is that the water company purchased land and drilled a new 1,200-foot well to replace the old one and has also installed a pipeline connecting the Los Encinos and Papago Springs wells. Wene said the new well is awaiting electrical hookups and final approvals and could be operational within 30 days. “That should solve the (water hauling) problem permanently.”

Other improvements include an electric panel at the Papago well, a new storage tank and booster pump at Los Encinos and rehabilitation of the downtown system. Wene said because the downtown projects will require turning the system off and relying on stored water for a day or more, it is being delayed to accommodate heavier usage demands in the summer.

Erin Bigford, who lives along Highway 82 and draws her water from the downtown well, shared details of her most recent water bill of \$201.51. It includes \$105.79 for 3,116 gallons of water usage (by comparison, the current cost for 3,000 gallons of water usage for a resident of Patagonia would be \$28.81), surcharges of \$51.70, plus various other service charges and taxes.

“My water bill is over \$200,” Bigford said. “Oh my god. I do my laundry once a week.

“I live alone. I’m on social security. It frustrates me that I have to pay that much for water. I pay \$50 to \$80 a month for electricity.”

Bigford’s frustrations have accumulated. She recounted receiving a monthly bill for \$350 when she was out of town traveling (the bill was later corrected) and having her water shut off on Christmas morning, when she was expecting 14 people for dinner.

“It just keeps getting worse,” she said. “The meeting didn’t do much for me. Everybody is angry.”

Wene said the company’s rates are set by the Arizona Corporation Commission according to a formula calculated to allow for a 10 percent profit over operating expenses, but he said Sonoita Valley Water doesn’t hit that benchmark.

“It’s a money-losing machine,” he said.

Wene shared 2025 financial documents with the PRT that showed revenues of roughly \$117,000 and expenses of \$70,000, but the revenues included \$20,000 in surcharges that were passed through to other entities, leaving income of roughly \$27,000. From that figure, Sonoita



A newly drilled well is expected to eliminate the need to haul water for Papago Springs customers | Photo by Dave Lumia.

Valley invested \$55,000 in improvements, thus eating up any profits.

The financial statements show that no one from the company is drawing a salary. Sonoita Valley Water pays Southwestern Utility Management about \$12,000 in management expenses.

The management company also came in for its share of criticism at the July meeting, with multiple attendees saying that phone calls routinely go unanswered.

Bostock said she routinely pays \$400 a month for water service for the B and B, which has two accommodations and is primarily occupied on the weekends. She had guests over Christmas and said she was on hold “for most of Christmas morning” waiting for an explanation of when service would resume. “You want people to have a nice experience, not having water is kind of a problem,” she said.

Wene acknowledged those frustrations and said the water company can and should do a better job of communicating with its customers.

“I heard the service complaints, I get that,” he said. “But the implication that somehow this is being used as a money-making operation is unjustified.”

Wene said his brother remains committed to operating the business.

“We still want to help,” he said. “At the end of the day, there’s 75 connections, the thing’s not ever really going to be profitable. He owns other water systems, hopefully at some point he’s able to make a little money off it. But five years ago, nobody would take it, he couldn’t give it away. Usually, you need about 200 connections to be economically profitable.”

COMMUNITY CALENDAR



Saturday, Aug. 8

- Patagonia Community Garden Work Day, 7-10 a.m.
- Native Plant Propagation and Nursery Management Workshop, Borderlands Nursery, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Voices from the Border: Erick Mesa, Patagonia Library, 2-3:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Aug. 12

- Patagonia Union High School and Patagonia Elementary School Districts Joint Governing Board Meeting, 4 p.m.
- Regular Meeting of the Patagonia Town Council, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Aug. 19

- Regular Meeting of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, 9:30 a.m.

Saturday, Aug. 22

- Historic Empire Ranch 150th Anniversary

Wednesday, Aug. 26

- Regular Meeting of the Patagonia Town Council, 6 p.m.

Thursday, Aug. 27

- Patagonia vs. Tombstone high school volleyball, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 29

- Patagonia Museum guest speaker: Mauro Trejo on the history of the Santa Cruz River, 10:30 a.m.-noon at Patagonia Library.

Tuesday, Sept. 1

- Sonoita Elementary School District Governing Board Meeting, 5 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 5-Monday, Sept. 7

- Sonoita Elementary School District Governing Board Meeting, 5 p.m.

Wednesday, Sept. 9

- Patagonia Union High School and Patagonia Elementary School Districts Joint Governing Board Meeting, 4 p.m.
- Regular Meeting of the Patagonia Town Council, 6 p.m.

Thursday, Sept. 10

- Patagonia vs. Duncan high school volleyball, 5 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 12

- Patagonia Community Garden Work Day, 7-10 a.m.
- 15th Annual Great Crush Festival, AZ Hops and Wines, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 12-Sunday, Sept. 13

- Sonoita Ranch Rodeo & Rodeo Horse Competition

Wednesday, Sept. 16

- Patagonia vs. St. David high school volleyball, 5 p.m.
- Regular Meeting of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, 5:30 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 18-Sunday, Sept. 20

- Santa Cruz County Fair and Sonoita Smash Demolition Derby

Wednesday, Sept. 23

- Regular Meeting of the Patagonia Town Council, 6 p.m.

Monday, Sept. 28

- Patagonia vs. Bisbee high school volleyball, 6 p.m.

Submit your community or nonprofit announcements to editor@prtnews.org.

Huachuca District Ranger Robert Thompson



By Alison Bunting

Robert Thompson (1880-1937) became the second district ranger for the Huachuca Forest Reserve in January 1922, succeeding Robert Rodgers (See Glimpses, October, 2023). A collection of early 20th century Forest Ranger notebooks, recently donated to the Bowman Stradling History Center, provides firsthand accounts of his activities and responsibilities for the first six months of his tenure [March-August 1922].

Thompson entered the Forest Service in 1906 and had been the ranger of Tumacácori district since 1918. He lived in Nogales with his wife Emma Violet Hosfelt (1891-1957) and their three children: Charles (1910-1975), Bert (1912-1981) and Helen Mary (1915-2004). March 1, 1922, found Thompson working on improvements to the station dwelling and grounds, which had apparently been neglected. Wallace R. Beaty, brother of Arizona Ranger Marshall Beaty, was working with Thompson. On March 4th, Thompson returned to Nogales to pack for his move to Canelo. He took the stage to the Elgin train depot, where he boarded "the Bug," arriving in Nogales that evening. By March 15th, Thompson had moved in, and "you can now see there is a house at station from afar." Day-long trips to Ft. Huachuca were made to purchase supplies for the station and medical care. Additional supplies and material arrived by train at the Elgin depot and were delivered to Canelo.

Evaluating homestead applications and managing Forest grazing leases required long days in the saddle and overnight stays at local ranches. The diaries provide a "who's who" record of area ranchers, including Nick Bercich; James Parker; Bill and Stone Collie;

Charles Everhart; Clyde McPherson; J.A. Jones; Lou Pyeatt; Pete Bergier; W.H. Hathaway; De La Ossa. Special use permits were issued to construct drift fences and create "waters" on the Forest. Juan Telles was granted a permit to cut 33 cords of wood.

Maintenance of Forest Service telephone lines, essential for communication about fires and between the field and headquarters, was a never-ending task. Ranchers were allowed to use the phones in return for reporting fires.

In May, Thompson began supervising the construction of the Lyle Canyon trail. A trail camp was established, local workers hired, and supplies ordered. Beef (100 pounds a month) for the crew was purchased from J. A. Parker. Mr. Bond provided the burros to pack in materials including blasting caps and TNT.

May also called for heightened fire awareness and hiring of lookouts. Each report of smoke had to be investigated, often requiring a long horseback ride to a higher elevation to determine if the fire was in the Forest or Mexico. The 1922 fire season passed without any serious fires. On July 8th, Thompson wrote: "Heavy rains today all over district fire season over – lucky again, no serious fires during season since fire tools would only furnish 10 men."

Thompson's doesn't mention his family in the diaries except for an incident on May 9th: "In going after mail Mrs. Thompson met with serious accident on sharp turn of road. Car coming from the opposite direction ran into her car broke windshield twisted axle frame and hurled youngest daughter out the windshield on fender. All came through safely, except shock and small bruises." Newspaper reports note that Mrs. Thompson frequently called in fire reports and once took care of one. "She loaded tools and supplies into her car, enlisted her two boys as firefighters and left for the blaze within five minutes from the time (1:15) she had received the report. The party traveled 12 miles in the car and about one mile on foot, and had the fire entirely out by 3 p.m." [Arizona Republic, 7/29/1926].

Thompson served as Huachuca District ranger until 1930, when he transferred to the Rincon district of the Coronado National Forest and later to the Tusayan and Prescott National Forests. He died suddenly, in the field, in 1937.



District Ranger Robert Thomson in the 1920s. | Photos courtesy of Bill Gillespie



The Canelo Ranger Station in 1923.

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WHAT THE HECK?

Oddities of the Arizona Trail

By Vince Waldron

From miles away I see it glinting in the harsh sunlight.

Jeff and I are headed SOBO (south-bound in the parlance of Arizona Trail hikers) on that stretch near Patagonia. For my money, it's the most interesting small town in Arizona, boasting an award-winning library, community theater, opera house, radio station, arts cooperative, museum and a cafe where you might find the mayor pouring your coffee.

Today we are tracing ridges that connect the Santa Rita range, all 9,000 feet of it, with the grasslands of the Sonoita Creek watershed. This is a land of stately oaks and blue-green juniper, it's home to literally dozens of native grasses, the ones that amazed Spanish explorers by growing, to steal a phrase from a certain movie that was filmed nearby, "as high as an elephant's eye."

Maybe you are having trouble squaring this image with the harsh deserts you find in so much of our state? Me too.

But for now, I'm obsessing over that big, glowing hunk of metal down there on the lowest ridge, the one we cross before exiting the trail at Casa Blanca Canyon. Even at this distance I can tell it's cylindrical, like those giant tanks you see on gasoline trucks. Is it some kind of water container? The fuselage of a crashed jet?

We press on through the midday sun, and the thing radiates heat and light like a nuclear hot dog.

My chest is flooded with excitement, and a little fear, as it dawns in me. The narrowing ridgeline will force us to pass directly alongside the metal monster.

To Jeff and the larger universe, I mutter, "What the heck?"

An hour later, the mystery is solved. Sort of. The shining beast is in fact a huge metal cylinder — a hollow tube, some 20 feet long and 4 feet around, solidly planted on its side, as if dropped from the sky. But what's it doing here, far from any road, serving no discernible purpose?

Gobsmacked by the hulking piece of trail trash, Jeff and I stare, touch the metal, peer inside the empty chamber.

Only later do we learn that other hikers are speculating online, swapping ideas about the source of this trail oddity. The most likely theory suggests the object did fall from the sky. Apparently, the tube dropped from a large aircraft, a container for fuel or maybe even weapons, attached to one of the giant cargo planes that operate out of Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, located in nearby Tucson.

I imagine the real-time reactions of witnesses to what must have seemed



Anyone missing a huge metallic cylinder? It can be reclaimed along the Arizona Trail among the grassland of the Sonoita Creek watershed.
| Photo by Vince Waldron

like a meteor crash, hikers or even range cows, meandering this grassy ridge on a quiet afternoon. Whether the big tube dropped by accident or due to some pilot's malice towards Arizona Trail hikers, we can only speculate. The Air Force would not comment for this story. Well, maybe they would, but I never asked. Why ruin a good surprise?

Surprises drop into my city life too. As a young man, I never imagined moving to Texas and falling in love with a girl from Ohio. At work, I expected to be that teacher who overstayed his welcome and died at the lectern. But here I am, happily retired and hiking the Arizona Trail with my good friend Jeff, section by section. As life passed by, I gave up on the idea of being a grandfather. But then Alice appeared. At three years old, she is my youngest companion in exploring the mysteries of turtles, bugs, and gleaming objects large and small.

Of course, not all surprises are so pleasant. But I like knowing that even the most familiar path might lead to mysterious encounters, moments when only three words seem to suffice.

What the heck?

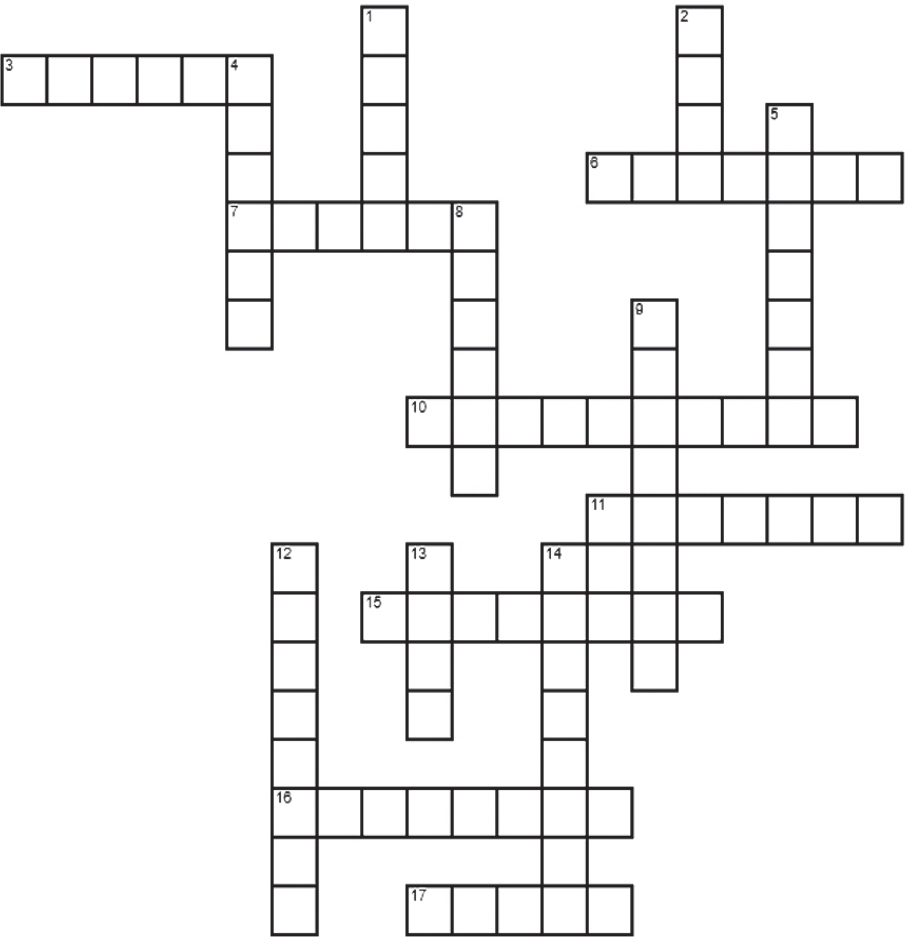
A former resident of Sonoita and frequent visitor to Patagonia, Vince Waldron writes about his adventures hiking the 800-mile Arizona Trail and living in the Borderlands. You can find Vince's essays on his Natural Connections blog on Substack.

CROSSWORD

The Spice Club

After a summer hiatus, the Patagonia Library's Spice Club will resume at 2 p.m. Friday September 18. The featured spice will be turmeric. Librarian Jade DeForest, a wildlife biologist and herbal pharmacist, will talk on turmeric's medicinal qualities. Dishes using turmeric will be available for sampling, selections prepared by Steve Finch. There is no fee to attend and reservations are not required.

Patagonia Library
342 Duquesne Ave. Patagonia



ACROSS

- 3. I am the seed of the apricot fruit.
- 6. I have higher antioxidants than fruit or veggies.
- 7. It is said I ward off vampires.
- 10. My chemical makeup mimics the sensation of ice hitting the tongue.
- 11. I help deal with intense tropical heat.
- 15. Some place a stick of me in hot chocolate.
- 16. My name means "dew of the sea."
- 17. I am the fourth herb in a Simon & Garfunkel song.

DOWN

- 1. I am a key ingredient in pesto.
- 2. The Greeks and Romans used me to preserve meat.
- 4. I have a long tradition of helping with gastrointestinal distress.
- 5. I am a very expensive spice.
- 8. Chinese courtiers used me as a breath mint.
- 9. I have a gentle ginger taste with a hint of pine.
- 12. I am often referred to as "Indian saffron."
- 13. When you think of pickles, you think of me.
- 14. I am closely related to oregano.

WHAT IS THAT?

Pumpkin seed flask

By Tom Shore

Granted, it's a bottle, an old one that's turned purple from the sun, but do you know what it once held?

This type of bottle, popular in the

late 19th and early 20th centuries, was called a "pumpkin seed" flask. Small and easily concealed, it was handy for travelers and workers to discreetly carry and sip liquor (typically whiskey) without being caught.



Photo by Linda Shore

PATAGONIA UNION HS

- 27 AUGUST** Tombstone (H) 6 P.M.
- 31 AUGUST** At Palo Verde Magnet (A) 6 P.M.
- 02 SEPT.** At The Gregory School (A) 5 P.M.
- 08 SEPT.** At ASDB (A) 5 P.M.
- 10 SEPT.** Duncan (H) 5 P.M.
- 16 SEPT.** St. David (H) 5 P.M.
- 23 SEPT.** At Fort Thomas (A) 5 P.M.
- 25 SEPT.** At Valley Union (A) 5 P.M.
- 28 SEPT.** Bisbee (H) 6 P.M.
- 29 SEPT.** At Lourdes Catholic (A) 6 P.M.
- 02 OCT.** At San Simon (A) 5 P.M.
- 06 OCT.** Lourdes Catholic (H) 5 P.M.
- 12 OCT.** At San Manuel (A) 6 P.M.
- 21 OCT.** Valley Union (H) 6 P.M.
- 22 OCT.** Superior (H) 5 P.M.
- 24 OCT.** Ray (H) 5 P.M.
- 28 OCT.** At Cicero Prep (A) 5 P.M.



2020 VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

CLASSIFIEDS

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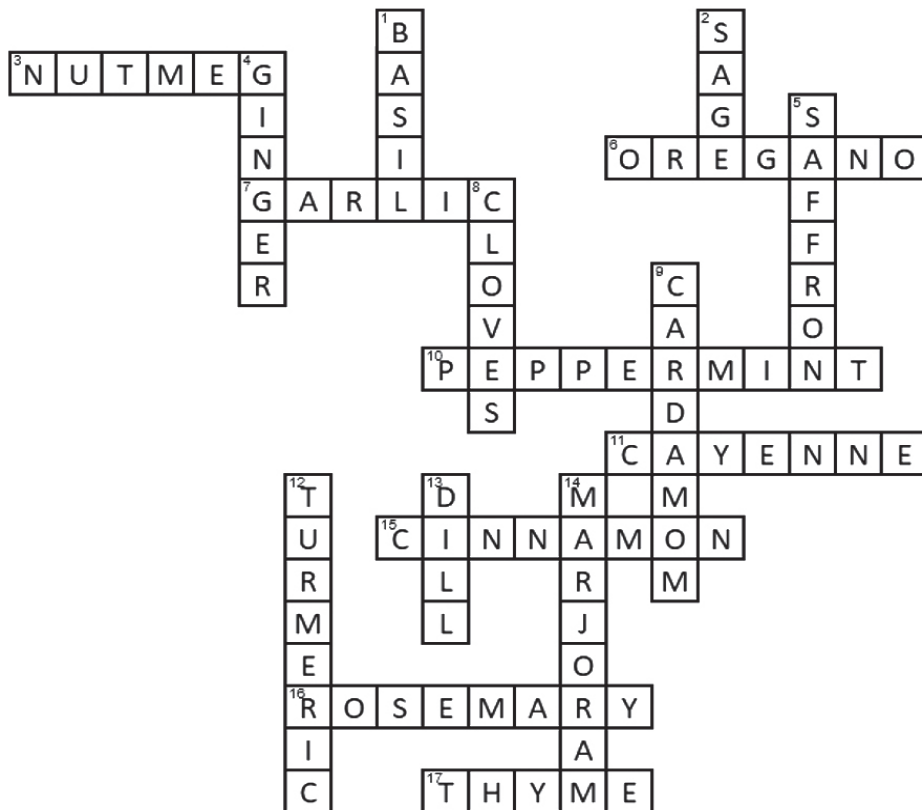
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CROSSWORD

The Spice Club

Fall in Santa Cruz County is a great time to plant things like cilantro, parsley, dill, chives and garlic. For precise elevation micro-calendars, check the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension website

Patagonia Library
342 Duquesne Ave. Patagonia



ACROSS

- What is at the center of the Milky Way?
- In July & August, the best time to view the Milky Way is when?
- Viewed from outside, what color is the Milky Way?
- In light years, how big across is the Milky Way?
- I is believed the Milky Way was the result of this event.
- Which candy bar shares this galaxy's name?
- Which culture is responsible for naming the Milky Way?

DOWN

- This is the biggest reason why people cannot see the Milky Way in the U.S.
- Only one in how many people in the U.S. can see the Milky Way with the naked eye.
- The Milky Way is made up of stars, dark matter, gas and what other component?
- Sagittarius A is the name for what part of the Milky Way?
- In June, what is the best time to view the Milky Way?
- Technically, the Milky Way is what?
- It takes this many minutes for the human eye to adjust to a dark sky to see the Milky Way.
- In 1610, this Italian figured out the band of light was individual stars.



\$459,000

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MLS # 22605799 3 BACA CORTE 4.15 ACRES
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While our office location has changed, our dedication, availability , and personal service remain the same. I am just a phone call or email away and ready to meet with you to at your convenience. So, if you are thinking about buying or selling, or simply have questions about the market, I would be honored to assist you.

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August/September 2026

