Vulture Mine–Why It's among the West's Best Ghost Towns

ARIZONA HIGHWAYS

APRIL ■ 1994 ■ $2.25

Tracking the **Birdman** of the **Chiricahuas**

Navajo Rugs Young Artists Weave New Life into an Ancient Art

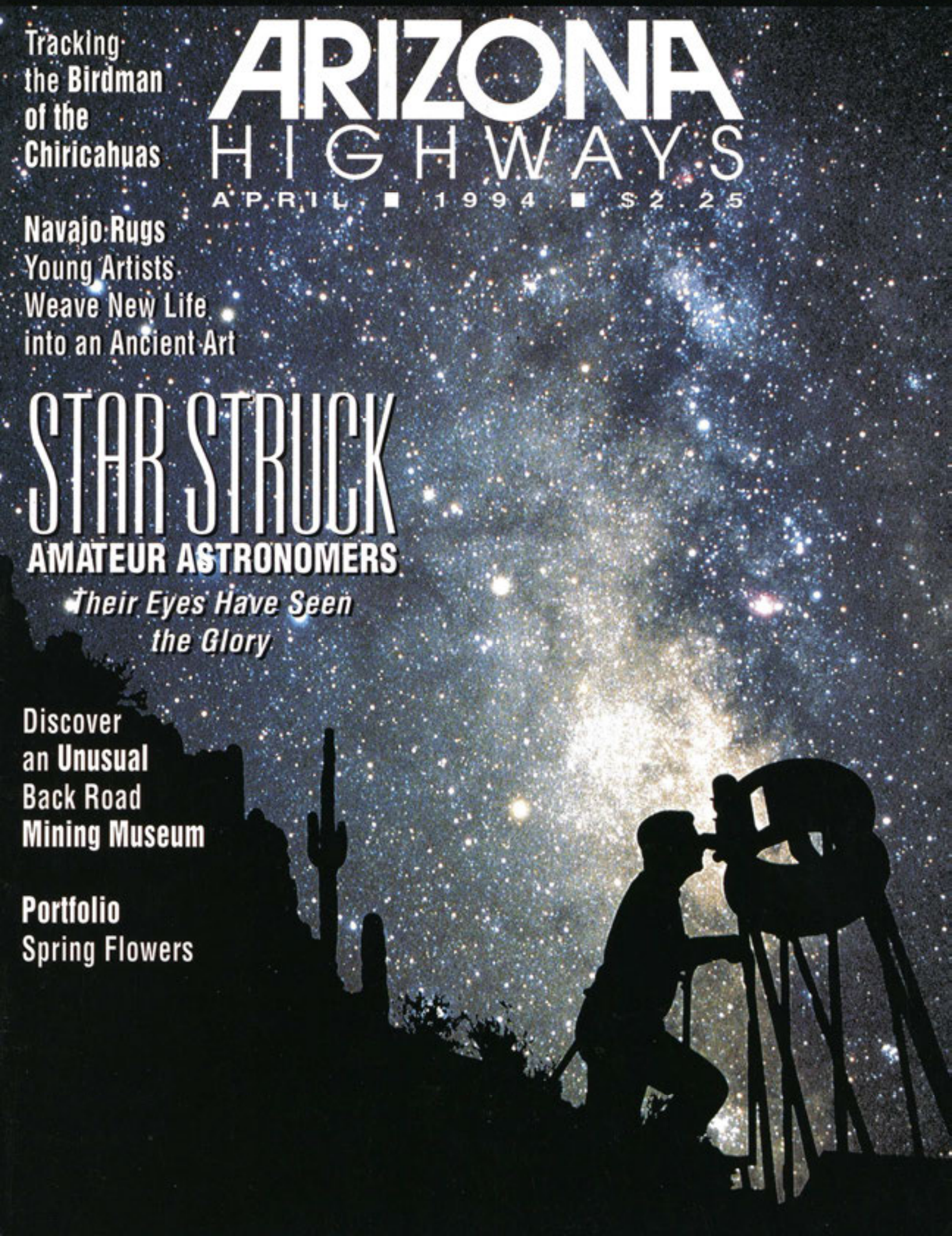
STAR STRUCK

AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS

Their Eyes Have Seen the Glory

Discover an **Unusual** Back Road **Mining Museum**

Portfolio Spring Flowers



ARIZONA HIGHWAYS • APRIL 1994 • VOLUME 70 • NUMBER 4

COVER STORY

Amateur Astronomy

The stars at night are big and bright — in Arizona. And the clarity of the nightly show has led an untold number of amateur stargazers throughout the state to purchase sleek telescopes and spend their free hours with their peers in the outback staring into space. A hobby that for most becomes a wonderful obsession. **page 4**

Ghost Towns

The Life and Death of Vulture Mine

Here are more than a dozen old buildings and mining gear galore all set in an impressive — and history rich — site beneath the watchful eyes of Vulture Peak. **page 34**

Profile

Birdman of the Chiricahuas

Even before the term ecotourism became fashionable, Rick Taylor was hard at work escorting birders into the Chiricahua Mountains in search of the elusive elegant trogon. Today he leads ecologically oriented trips throughout the world. **page 12**

Travel

Charles Robson's Arizona Mining World

In the isolated Harcuvar Mountains west of Wickenburg is a one-street town out of the past converted into a unique attraction, complete with a 24-room hotel, museum shops, and mining equipment from glory holes of the territorial days. **page 40**

Indians

Navajo Rugs

Today on the Navajo Indian Reservation, a new breed of craftswomen is keeping the art of weaving alive. **page 20**

Focus on Nature

Mother Nature's Night Stalker

Combine noiseless flight, a hooked razor-sharp beak, bone-piercing talons, and an eerie ability to see in the dark, and you've got yourself a killing machine called the great horned owl. **page 18**

Portfolio

When Spring Comes

In Arizona November and December showers bring April flowers. And the number of plants in bloom is beyond counting. **page 26**

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A love and respect for the land are imparted by a father to his young daughter, a legacy that remains with her always.

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A fortune in gold and silver packed in two whiskey kegs disappears near Flagstaff.

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Chickens go *clo, clo*; dogs say *guauguau*; ducks, *cua, cua*; and turkeys don't gobble. They say *gordo, gordo*! It's true — south of the border.

52 Back Road Adventure

The old Vail ranch is a historic tour de force for back road aficionados.

56 Hike of the Month

In May cascades of wildflowers dream in the sun along the Ballantine trail.

(ABOVE) *Silhouetted against a sunset, mule deer gracefully leap over a fence.* CAROL WEIN

(OPPOSITE PAGE) *With its rocking chair, rough cot, and wash tub, one of the seven original structures at Arizona Mining World recalls the homey side of a miner's existence. A mountain lion pelt hangs from the rafters and steel-jawed leg-hold traps line the wall. Story on page 40.* DON B. STEVENSON

(FRONT COVER) *In this composite image, one of Arizona's legion of amateur astronomers peers through his telescope against a backdrop of a star-filled sky above the Superstition Mountains. Story on page 4.* FRANK ZULLO

(BACK COVER) *Brittlebush is just one of countless wildflowers that decorate Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in springtime. Portfolio on page 26.* RANDY PRENTICE

Points of interest featured in this issue

Along the Way

By Carol O'Hara

The Victory Garden: a Father's Legacy to His Daughter

Dad spoke the words softly on a summer afternoon in the evening of his life.

"I love to watch things grow."

We were seated in his Tucson garden, where roses, in pale shades of pink and yellow, climbed splendidly along his fence and covered the arched trellis that marked the entrance to his home.

Our conversation was limited, for Dad's breathing was difficult. Yet neither of us felt a need for words. We were content simply to be together.

My eyes moved from Dad to his flower beds, which encircled his well-cared-for lawn. Zinnias, periwinkles, and young chrysanthemums bloomed. Tomatoes, radishes, and green onions grew among the flowers.

My thoughts turned backward — to mid-1943. I was seven, and Dad was well into his middle years. The details of that summer, the summer of my first gardening experience, have never left my heart.

The battles of World War II were being fought, and we at home were growing vegetable gardens. We called them "victory gardens." Dad, raised on a farm, wanted to put his boyhood skills to work. One spring evening he smiled at me and in his special way said, "Let's us have a victory garden."

"Okay," I answered, not sure of my part.

The next day he began to prepare the soil. On a Saturday morning, when he thought the ground was just right, he came to me. "Time to go to the greenhouse," he said.

Mother smiled approval. I trotted out the door behind Dad, hopped upon the running board of our Model A, and climbed into the seat to wait while Dad cranked the engine. It acknowledged his efforts and sputtered to a start. He jumped in, and away we went.

At the greenhouse, Dad selected tomato and green pepper plants. I chose parsley. Then, with his slender fingers, Dad slid from the rack the seed packets he wanted.

"Here, take care of these," he said, handing me the envelopes.

I gripped them tightly, giving them up only to the gray-haired cashier. He rang the price of each on his cash register and returned them to me. Dad picked up the tiny plants, exchanged a few words about the war with the elderly gentleman, thanked him, and we hurried home.

At our garden spot, Dad and I got down on our knees. He handed me a small hand shovel. "This is a trowel. Dig us a little hole — right here."

He pointed to a spot near the edge of the spaded ground.

I began to dig. When the hole was satisfactory to Dad, he gently separated one tomato plant from the others. "Now put this in the hole. Hold it straight, and hide the roots with our dirt."

I followed his directions. The soft, cool dirt went deep under my short fingernails. Then with both his hands, Dad made a well around the plant. "That's so the water won't run off," he said. One-by-one, we planted our tomatoes and peppers — and my parsley.

Dad stood up, and so did I. I wanted to do everything just as he did. He reached for the hoe. "You make a furrow like this," he said, moving the hoe an inch or so deep from one end of our garden to the other. Together we made many furrows. Then Dad taught me how to plant the seeds.

"Work them between your thumb and two fingers, so they drop evenly into your little ditch." His patience was endless.

We finished planting and then marked each row of seeds with stakes topped by our empty seed packets. Dad protected our garden by placing taller stakes and white string around its edges. Then he watered our work. We went inside to wash our hands and wait for it to grow.

Each day, after school, I sat beside the damp brown earth — waiting. By the sixth day, I grew impatient. I didn't think our garden would ever grow.

Suddenly it happened! First came the radishes. Soon all our vegetables were growing. The plants were very thick, so Dad taught me to thin the seedlings, leaving the strongest ones just enough room to grow properly. Summer came. We began to harvest. I was beside myself the day Dad said, "Time to pick the parsley."

Later Mother canned tomatoes and made pickles from the cucumbers. Dad took beets, carrots, and corn, carefully wrapped in old newspaper, to his co-workers.

By summer's end, our garden had given its all. Dad turned the ground over to let it rest until spring. But in late winter, the war claimed a family member. Our bare soil, the summer following, reflected the bleakness within our souls.

Dad's voice interrupted my thoughts. "Whatcha thinking?" he chided.

"About our victory garden," I answered.

Dad nodded. "That was a good summer."

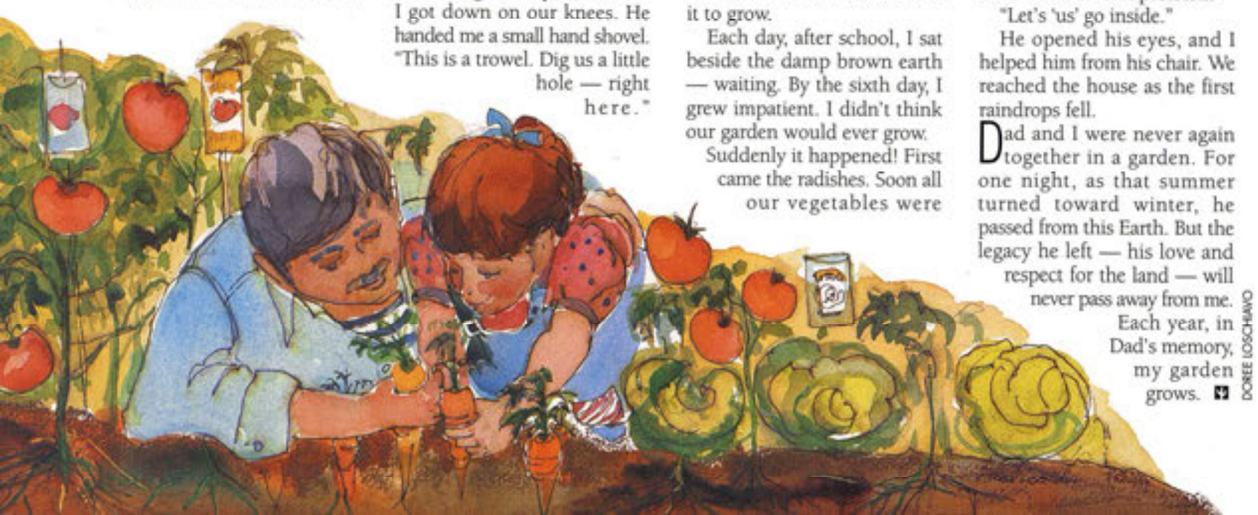
He closed his eyes and began to doze. I looked at his wrinkled hands and tanned face, simple evidence of his devotion to the earth and of his ability to make it produce.

Suddenly a stiff breeze startled the leaves of the great mesquite tree above us. The sun slid behind a cloud. I sensed a thunderstorm and used Dad's own expression:

"Let's 'us' go inside."

He opened his eyes, and I helped him from his chair. We reached the house as the first raindrops fell.

Dad and I were never again together in a garden. For one night, as that summer turned toward winter, he passed from this Earth. But the legacy he left — his love and respect for the land — will never pass away from me. Each year, in Dad's memory, my garden grows.



DOREE LOSCHIAVO

Letters

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MORE PICTURES

I disagree with the writer (January '94) who wants more stories and less pictures. In my opinion, the only way to improve the publication would be to include more scenic pictures.

Melvin Holt
Bloomington, IL

Tell John F. Reeves to go to the library if he likes reading so much.

There is no other publication that can give its faithful devotees more delight and pleasure than your magazine with its beautiful pictures.

Thomas S. Malmin
Los Angeles, CA

Every issue (almost) of *Arizona Highways* has spectacular photos. I want to frame them all. Keep your format.

I also like cats. If it were not for them our country would be overrun with rats and mice.

Agnes W. Cramlet
Cotter, AR

LEGENDS OF THE LOST

I missed reading "Legends of the Lost" in the December '93 issue. It is one of my favorite articles. Please continue with "Legends of the Lost."

Charles Smola
Willowick, OH

RODEO SUPPORTERS

Regarding the letter in the January '94 issue objecting to articles about rodeo: please don't change anything to accommodate the "feelings" of those who don't appreciate Arizona as it is.

Rodeo always has been a big part of Arizona's history and culture.

Paula Ward
Yuma

That letter calling rodeo a "barbaric" sport and saying it "often results in injury to unwilling animals" just proves that some people tell everything they know when they say, "Good morning."

I grew up in a rodeo family. Rodeo people take good care of their animals. They are their "bread and butter," and they cannot afford for their animals to be mistreated.

Shirley Burgher
Hamilton, OH

RUNNING WATER PHOTOS

It all started with a letter in the August '93 issue when a reader mistakenly criticized what the writer thought was airbrushing in some of your photographs.

Another reader, in the December '93 issue, said these kinds of photographs look like "a blurry picture taken by an excited tourist." Nothing could be further from the truth.

When photographers take pictures of this sort, we take much more time than an "excited tourist" would. We use a tripod and compose and set up the shot carefully.

Cheryl Brennan
Baltimore, MD

Please, please permit a decent demise for the foamy-foto fad. The laggard shutter speed that transforms moving water into shaving cream was an interesting technical nuance at one time, but that was in the remote past.

Don Peer
Salem, OR

For some reason, the airbrush-type shots of moving water are remindful of the Elvis Presley and children with large round eyes on black velvet that used to be hawked on vacant lots 20 years ago.

Donald Naranjo
Pittsburgh, PA

THE LAND I LOVE

You really outdid yourself with the December '93 issue. I can't describe my feelings of joy and exultation. I've never seen such beauty pictured. It's like I was in a fairyland.

Freda M. Havens
Nipomo, CA

Your annual greeting card to the world is without doubt the most impeccable piece you have ever published. The photography brilliant. The compilation of quotes unparalleled. I saw many of my thoughts in those quotes.

Jon D. Logan, Jr.
Lincoln, CA

I am very disappointed in the cover for the December issue. It just doesn't fit the season. The list of names is unacceptable.

Joseph R. Lacagnina
Tucson

WHAT IS IT?

Is that picture on page 2 of the December '93 issue supposed to be blurred with the "ink blob?" I just wondered what the reason for it was. Am I missing something?

Doris Beloat
Odessa, TX

That "ink blob" is supposed to be a representation of the Milky Way.

ARIZONA HIGHWAYS SPRING SALE

Wrap up your gift shopping and find a treasure for yourself at the *Arizona Highways* Annual Spring Sale, which will be held from 9 A.M. to 2 P.M., Saturday, April 9, at 2039 W. Lewis Ave., Phoenix. Scenic prints, calendars, books, clothing, Christmas cards, and other items will be available at reduced prices — some at or below cost. For information, telephone 1 (800) 543-5432. In the Phoenix area, call 258-1000.

STARLIGHT STAR BRIGHT

As Far As You Can See

Text by Carle Hodge · Photographs by Frank Zullo

As the western horizon swallows the sun, darkness brushes away the last of the reddish dapple from the lava-strewn desert. Then a canopy of celestial pinpoints, populous almost beyond comprehension, slowly floods the heavens.

You stand near a dot on the Arizona map appropriately named Sentinel.

You are Robert Dahl, Midwest-born, an electrical engineer by profession, by avocation a passionate watchman of the night sky. Not far south of Interstate 8, a thicket of portable telescopes surrounds you as you fine-tune your own. You aim to the south above the Crater and Growler mountains, and suddenly your grail looms in the eyepiece: Omega Centauri, a sphere of starfires flaring 16,000 light-years distant — light that originated 16,000 years ago, 80 centuries before Homo sapiens taught themselves to write.

To you, Omega Centauri, visible in this country only from the southernmost latitudes, evokes a shiny swarm of bees. It engulfs you with awe, a defining moment only your peers can truly savor. And you remember: this is why you moved to Arizona.

No one really knows how many amateur astronomers live in the state. More than 300 belong to a dozen or so observing clubs. *Sky and Telescope* magazine, the hobby's monthly bible, and decidedly not all casual reading, boasts 2,000 Arizona readers. Uniquely, many of these people either retired here or reoriented their careers to migrate.

They came for the same reasons that brought Arizona the world's largest concentration of giant telescopes and made it an international mecca for professional astronomers: an array of qualities scientists sum up in a single word: "transparency." Translated that means dry, unsullied skies and vast areas remote from nocturnal urban glow.

Those factors lured Dahl. A surfeit of employment opportunities awaited when he was graduated from college in 1979. Dismissing the others, he packed up lock, stock, and telescope and drove to a job in Phoenix. Soon thereafter he joined the Saguaro Astronomy Club, or SAC. Before, Dahl always observed solo. Now he finds the company of kindred souls enriching and rarely takes his telescope out alone. "That," he explains, "is like going to a movie without a girlfriend."

Bernard Merems, an amateur almost as beguiled by the instruments of astronomy as by the stars, decided to retire early from McGraw-Hill, the New York media monolith. For several months, off and on, he scoured Arizona and northern New Mexico for the perfect night-sky site for his scope. Finally he chose a hilltop near Patagonia, Arizona, almost within earshot of the Mexican border. He first had a house built. Second, he joined the Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association.

Another member attracted by the transparent atmosphere, astronomy writer David Levy, settled in Tucson in 1979 and has become an almost legendary comet chaser.

A former evangelical preacher, Leon Knott once ran a Rock Hill, South Carolina, planetarium, where he conducted classes. He also made telescopes for sale and wrote a weekly newspaper column on science.

Although he knew of Arizona's superior visibility, he had never visited until 1991. That year he and his wife went to Mazatlan on Mexico's west coast to witness a solar eclipse. They were clouded out. Returning home they drove through Arizona, visiting several observatories. The self-styled "astroevangelist" was converted. The next year, the couple moved to Mesa.

Knott still writes, and he continues to teach mirror making, now at Scottsdale Community College, where the East Valley Astronomy Club (EVAC) meets.

By last fall, when he became director of the Mesa schools' portable planetarium, Knott had fashioned more than 200 mirrors and nearly 70 complete telescopes, among them a 32-inch mirror for a Florida customer. (The size of a telescope is defined by the diameter of its main mirror.)

A 32-inch instrument would be both costly and unnecessarily large for average amateurs, certainly for beginners. A newcomer can spend several hundred to thousands of dollars for a telescope, according to Dick Simmon, a travel agent who organized EVAC because the locale of SAC's outings is 90 miles from where he lives in Scottsdale.

"Before making a major investment, a person should at least visit one of the clubs," Simmon says. "The clubs are a kind of forum, where you can find out what you want to do."

Kai Staats of the Phoenix Astronomical

(PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 4 AND 5) *As the moon sets and the stars of the constellations Scorpius and Libra emerge, members of the Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association observe the display from Vega-Bray Observatory near Benson.* (LEFT) *The spectacle of the crescent moon in a darkening sky inspires the club members to attend their telescopes.* (ABOVE) *A composite image shows a Perseid meteor streaking through the star-filled sky above a silhouetted desert near Tucson.* (RIGHT) *Amateur astronomer Don Wrigley gets more than an eyeful of moonlight, focused by his eight-inch f/15 refractor, during a "star party" in the desert near Florence Junction.*

Society, the state's oldest club, agrees. "People can come to a meeting or a star party, look through other people's telescopes, and ask questions," says Staats.

These are not 'party' parties. They are, rather, part swap meet, part seminar. All the clubs run them, generally away from city glare and during the dark of the moon.

One trait characterizes club members almost to a person. They are virtually missionary in their zeal to attract everyone else to the thrills of stargazing. Because of that, they will, at the drop of an invitation, appear with their telescopes in shopping malls, at schools, before Scout troops, and the like. Even from a brightly illuminated mall, one can observe at a minimum a planet or two, the moon, and some bright stars.

Many members share at least one other similarity. They became captivated by the cosmos as preteens.

When he was a sixth-grader in Abilene, Kansas, Robert Dahl chanced to spot a feathery blur in the luminous vault overhead. Curious, he borrowed his father's binoculars for a better view of what he later learned was a star cluster. He looked up the cluster on a star chart. And then, really excited, he began pursuing other objects in space. That Christmas he got a three-inch telescope — and what would become a consuming pastime.

"Once you memorize about 20 constellation shapes, you can navigate your way across the sky," he says.

David Levy, the Tucson comet man, grew up in Montreal. He was 12 when he fell from his bicycle and broke an arm. While he recuperated, a cousin gave him an astronomy book, and he was hooked. "I decided immediately I would become a writer and an astronomer."

He did become a writer on astronomy and a sort of semipro astronomer. He has authored nine books, including a biography of Clyde Tombaugh, who, although he later became degreed, was an amateur in 1930 when he discovered the planet Pluto at Flagstaff's Lowell Observatory.

Leon Knott grew up on the Kentucky farm his parents still work. Summers, he slept outdoors, the brilliant tapestry above lulling him to sleep — and igniting his imagination. He was a third-grader when he, like Dahl, received a three-inch telescope for Christmas. "I've never been able to stop looking up," he says.

One might ask why, if these people are so enamored of the night sky, they did not turn professional. Levy concedes he was never very skilled in the required math. Dahl says, "This sounds crass, but it was money." He found that in general engineers make more than degreed astronomers.

He gives a second explanation, however, one you hear from most amateurs. To them, the excitement is their ability to look directly at the wonders of the universe, whenever they wish, at their own time and place. Modern professionals seldom do that.

The image of an astronomer alone atop a chill, dark mountain, one eye clamped to an eyepiece, is almost passé. Today most large telescopes don't have eyepieces. Electronic equipment performs the observations, digitizing the information collected. A few astronomers sit at their own computer terminals to operate telescopes half a continent away.

Nonetheless amateur astronomers contribute more to the profession than is true with other sciences. A third of all new comets, for example, along with many previously unknown asteroids and the erupting stars called novas have been found by volunteers.

When such phenomena are disclosed, the major observatories often turn their telescopes toward them, to confirm their existence and perhaps learn more about them. Meanwhile the professionals keep busy with what they consider more fundamental mysteries, such as how creation

(OPPOSITE PAGE) *A popular focus of amateur astronomers is the combination of M8, the Lagoon Nebula, center, and, above it, M20, the Triffid Nebula. Both are viewed here from the Superstition Mountains.*
(LEFT) *A 16-inch diameter mirror made by Leon Knott shows classic Ronchi line patterns as viewed and photographed through the Ronchi grating he uses to test how well a mirror has been made.*
(ABOVE) *In the desert near Lake Pleasant, Robert Dahl, of the Saguaro Astronomy Club, is reflected in the main mirror of his homemade 20-inch Newtonian reflector as he peers into the eyepiece drawtube to check the alignment of the optics.*

came about and what the ultimate fate of the universe might be.

Comets appeal particularly to unpaid researchers in part because comets are the only astronomical bodies named after their discoverers. Comets are often located at about the same time by two or more hunters.

David Levy's triumphs in this endeavor turned out to be especially dramatic since it took him 19 years to encounter his first new comet — in November of 1984. He can even tell you precisely how long he had patrolled the firmament by then: 917 hours, 28 minutes. With some understatement, he allows: "It does take patience."

Clouds shrouded Tucson that fateful November night when he joined his dinner date at a Chinese restaurant. When the overcast broke, his date, Lonny Baker, expected to be abandoned at the table. He assured her they would finish their meal first. They did, and then he went home to his backyard telescopes.

He uses two. Because it provides a wider field, he scans the sky with a six-inch reflector. For magnification, he switches to a 16-inch.

Later that night, Baker phoned to ask if Levy had found a comet for her. When he said he had, it took considerable explanation to convince her he wasn't joking.

Five comets he had detected by himself at the end of 1993 bear Levy's name. Fourteen more carry his name hyphenated with those of people with whom he shared the revelations. In the annals of comet tracking, no one has found more than the 30 of Carolyn Shoemaker, whose degree is in education and political science. Levy, with 19, ranks fourth in the all-time record books.

In 1972 Eugene Shoemaker, a pioneering astrogeologist in Flagstaff, began a photographic pursuit of potentially disastrous asteroids, those with orbits that intersect that of the Earth. His tool is an 18-inch telescope on Mount Palomar, near San Diego. Around 1981 he taught his wife, Carolyn, how to spot those intruders, and she has worked with him ever since. Charting comets became a by-product of their quest. And since 1989 Levy has joined them in California for six week-long observing sessions a year.

Last May Levy disclosed to the Tucson club the team's unmasking of an exotic comet streaking on a collision course with Jupiter. Periodic Comet Shoemaker-Levy 1993e (the "e" indicates the year's fifth comet discovery) is odd, in part, because it is not one blip but some 20 mountain-size chunks lined up like a string of pearls. It should strike Jupiter in July of 1994.

If even a few of those mighty chunks slam into the planet's Earth-facing side, the explosion could unleash the celestial extravaganza of the century, showy even to naked eyes during daylight. But astronomers predict the comet will crash into the opposite side and initiate at least short-term changes in the Jovian atmosphere. We won't know until an hour or two later, when the "far" side has spun around to face us.

Most amateurs must settle for the more mundane though still spectacular targets that come into focus during the star parties.

Typical was a party on a clear, star-spangled night last June. A dozen SAC members converged in a clearing — amid creosote bushes, saguaros, and scraggly mesquites — in the Buckeye Hills Recreation Area, a county park 45 miles west of Phoenix. In the coal-black darkness, perfect for observing, only a sliver of urban glow traced the eastern horizon above the metropolis.

Tom Browning, by day a computer programmer, and his dog, Clancy, were the first to arrive. By nightfall he had positioned his eight-inch reflector. Soon he threaded his way up to the constellation Scorpius and then to the Dumbbell, or M27.

By coincidence, only a few yards away, Grant Klassen, a technician at Intel, the microchip maker, also eyed the Dumbbell along with a heavenly host of other worlds. So did transportation planner Ethan Rauch. Save for an occassional muffled conversation, the night was as silent as it was black.

Occasionally the state's clubs merge for a single event, such as the SAC-sponsored Messier Marathon, named for an 18th-century French astronomer. Charles Messier searched for comets. To recognize them, he needed to distinguish them from other diffuse objects that, unlike comets, can regularly be seen in deep space. So he cataloged 109 of those other objects, known to this day by their Messier numbers, i.e., M1 (the Crab Nebula), M2, and so on.

Galaxies, clouds of gas and dust called nebulae, and globular clusters (such as Dahl's Omega Centauri) make up most of the list. And they encompass some of the most glorious sights in the heavens. Dahl calls them "the showpieces." Although globular, or galactic, clusters appear in small telescopes as tiny, hazy patches, they in fact are dense balls of thousands of ancient stars that formed about the same time from a common source.

The goal of the Messier Marathon is to locate as many Messiers as possible in a single night. This unfolds in an all-night vigil in late March — the only time the positions of the Earth and the sun make it at least theoretically possible to see them all in one night. The 1993 winner, Paul Lind, a Phoenix electrical engineer, spotted 94 of the 110.

A number of Arizonans have won lapel pins given by the national Astronomical League to those who catch a look at 400 of the objects John Herschel, the astronomer son of Sir William, the discoverer of Uranus, listed in an 1884 publication. That task takes several years.

Awards aside, most amateurs believe that what they see is sufficient reward. Scanning the astral beacons night after night bestows a special kinship with the stardust from which all life arose.

"There's a perspective," Dahl muses. "Human problems shrink into insignificance because you see yourself as a tiny speck in the universe.

"You feel sorry for people who never bother to look up at the sky. It's as if they belong to an ant hill, and they're just bustling around and interacting with other ants, never grasping the larger context of which they are only a small part." ■

Photo Workshop: Join night-sky photographer Frank Zullo and the Friends of *Arizona Highways* for the Superstitions on Horseback workshop-tour, April 13-16. "Shooting" the stars, planets, constellations, and other celestial wonders is all in a night's work for Zullo, who will share tips on astrophotography during an evening get-together. For details, contact the Friends' Travel Office, 271-5904. For other workshops and Scenic Tours, see page 45.

Carle Hodge, the dean of Arizona science writers, died September 30, 1993. The enthusiasm that he brought to the coverage of science inspired generations of students and writers. His absence will leave a void.

Frank Zullo became interested in astronomy as a child when he saw the rings of Saturn through a neighbor's telescope.

(ABOVE) *Observers near Benson are surrounded by red light that protects their night vision as stars trail overhead and an airplane skims the horizon.*
(RIGHT) *Inside his backyard observatory dome, near Payson, Chris Schur prepares for a night of astrophotography through his homemade 12.5-inch Newtonian reflector telescope.*

WHEN YOU GO

In a composite image, amateur astronomers are silhouetted against a full rising moon.

Following are some of Arizona's amateur astronomy clubs, monthly meeting times, places, and contacts:

Coconino Astronomers: Second Wednesday of the month; U.S. Geological Survey, 2255 N. Gemini Drive, Flagstaff; Ralph Aeschliman, (602) 556-7354.

East Valley Astronomy Club: Wednesday nearest full moon; Scottsdale Community College; Ted Heckens, (602) 827-1524.

Huachuca Astronomy Club: First Sunday of the month; Sierra Vista Senior Center; Ray Perger, (602) 458-9774.

Phoenix Astronomical Society: Third Thursday of the month; Brophy College Preparatory; Andy Castillo, (602) 839-4499.

Prescott Astronomy Club: Saturday nearest new moon; in members' homes; Robert Gaul, (602) 445-4325.

Saguaro Astronomy Club: Friday nearest full moon; Grand Canyon University, Phoenix; Robert Dahl, (602) 582-5526.

Sonora Astronomical Society: Second Tuesday of the month, September through May; Green Valley; J.R. Andress, (602) 625-8324.

Sun City West Astronomy Club: Irregularly; R.H. Johnson Lecture Hall; Jim Crisman, (602) 584-0896.

Tucson Amateur Astronomy Association: First Friday of the month; UofA Steward Observatory; Dean Ketelson, (602) 293-2855.

Everyone had news about the trogons.

"About 200 yards up the trail there are five or six of them, practically at eye level," a hiker coming down the South Fork of Cave Creek Canyon said.

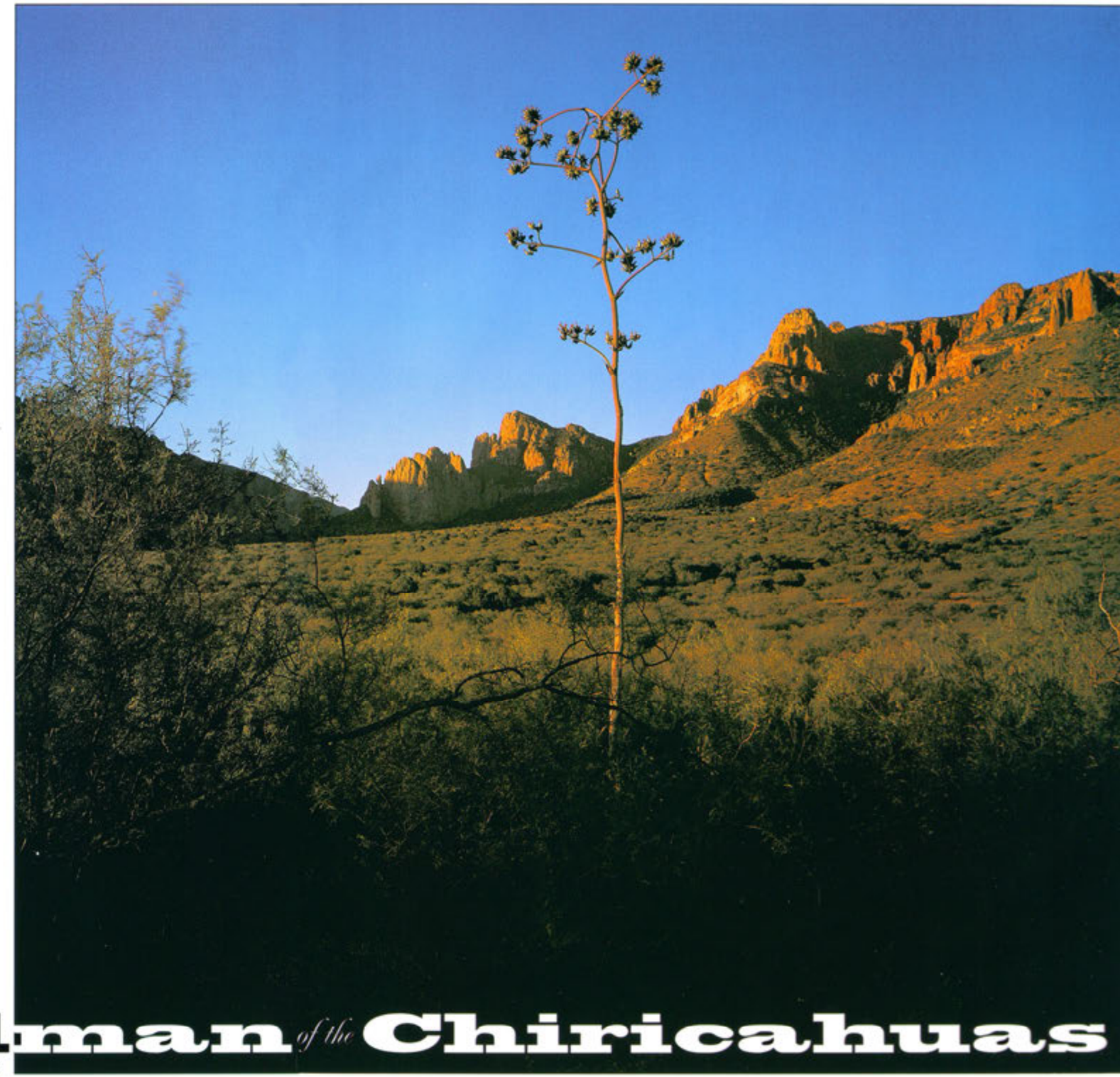
Encouraged by the news, Richard "Rick" Taylor and the dozen bird-watchers on his tour accelerated their pace up the shady canyon in the Chiricahua Mountains. Burnt-orange cliffs of rhyolite towered above them; tiny rainbow trout skittered in the clear creek adjacent to their trail.

A few hundred feet up the canyon, Taylor stopped, cupped his hands to his mouth, and let out a singularly unappealing call that sounded like someone tearing a thick piece of cardboard. Somewhere above, in the dense stands of velvet ash, sycamore, oak, pine, and spruce trees, the tropical bird known as the elegant trogon returned the call.

"They're all out there," Taylor said, "above the canopy."

Two more hikers

(TOP) *Nearly a foot long, the elegant trogon is a rare tropical bird found in the U.S. only in southern Arizona.* GREG R. HOMEL/NATURAL ELEMENTS INC.
(ABOVE) *Rick Taylor scans for trogons in Madera Canyon.*
(RIGHT) *One of the easiest places to find trogons is in the Chiricahua Mountains.*



Rick Taylor Birdman of the Chiricahuas

Text by **Sam Negri** *Photographs by* **Edward McCain**

came down the canyon with additional information: "There are two or three of them just above the next creek crossing. They're high up, but you can hear them calling."

No one asked whether Taylor and his birding group — easily identified by the expensive binoculars dangling from their necks, the cloth hats with the campaign pins from various bird counts in other parts of the country — were looking for trogons. South Fork, well known to birders the world over as "trogon heaven," is a place where this rare and beautiful bird can easily be seen.

The elegant trogon, sometimes called the coppery-tailed trogon, is nearly a foot long and vaguely resembles a parrot. Before 1885 there were no firsthand reports of trogons north of Mexico. The first positive identification of a trogon in the United States was made that year by Lt. H.C. Benson, an off-duty Army officer stationed at Fort Huachuca, a military post adjacent to Sierra Vista in southern Arizona.

Today there are fewer than 50 pairs of these birds in the U. S., all concentrated in four southern Arizona mountain ranges. By far the easiest place to see them is in the Cave Creek drainage of the Chiricahuas where their nests are scattered at half-mile intervals along the streams. At South Fork, at least one nest can usually be found within a quarter mile of the parking lot at the road's end, about a five-minute drive from the tiny community of Portal near the Arizona-New Mexico border.

Rick Taylor, 44 years of age, started doing research on the trogons nearly two decades ago. He estimates that at least 25,000 visitors per year come to Portal primarily to see the elegant trogons that come up from Mexico each April to spend the summer at South Fork.

"It's one of the three most sought-after nongame birds in the United States," he says. "The trogons are as rare as the whooping cranes in this country."

Trogon experts may be rarer than both. Taylor, author of the book *Trogons of the Arizona Borderlands*, began studying these birds in 1976, long before the term "ecotourism" entered the traveler's lexicon and years before he ever envisioned supporting himself by leading visitors on natural history and birding tours throughout the world.

At the time, Taylor was living about 14 miles north of South Fork in Whitetail Canyon (now his part-time home). He had just finished writing a guidebook, *Hiking Trails and Wilderness Routes of the Chiricahua Mountains*, and, employment opportunities being few in that remote corner of Arizona, he launched what he thought would be "a fast and easy project," a short fact-filled book on the elegant trogon.

The book would be based on research funded by several Arizona chapters of the Audubon Society, and although the commercial value of a work so narrowly focused was minimal, Taylor didn't care. It was the mission that was most important to him. As he explains: "At that time, no one knew how many trogons there were. The best guess was about 20 birds. My concern was that we didn't unwittingly eliminate trogon habitat simply because we lacked information about their habitat needs." Besides, he liked what he was doing.

After all, trogons are extraordinarily attractive birds. The male has a scarlet breast, smoke-gray wings, an emerald-green body, a yellow beak, and an orange eye ring circling a large dark pupil. Up close you can see copper highlights on the upper tail. Females have a brown body, a dove gray head, and a white eye ring with an inner pencil line of orange. In short, says Taylor, "This bird happens to be glamorous."

Furthermore, trogons are fussy about where they live. "So limited are they in their choice of habitat that the knowledgeable can predict, almost to the acre, where trogons are likely to summer," he says. The majority of trogons that come across the Mexican border end up in four major canyons in the Chiricahua, Santa Rita, Huachuca, and Atascosa mountains, spanning about 125 miles of the Arizona-Sonora, Mexico, border.

Within these mountains, the trogons occupy approximately 1,000 acres, where they live on insects and the fruit of the canyon grapevine and Southwestern chokecherry tree, among other plants. Taylor knows these things because for nearly a decade he hiked more than 500 miles a year in search of trogon nests. Ironically, in 1992, after he had spent 16 years on bad roads and finicky trails looking for these birds, a pair of trogons built a nest a few feet from his home in the Chiricahuas.

In the early stages of his research, Taylor set up housekeeping in a tent in South Fork. (The Forest Service has since declared South Fork a Zoological Botanical Area, and overnight camping is now prohibited.) He would scramble out of his tent at 5 A.M. and pursue trogons until 9:30 A.M. Then he would mount a bicycle and pedal to his job as a fire fighter at the Forest Service station in Portal. The next year, he took a leave of absence from the Forest Service to continue his trogon study, and he never went back.

Predictably, he learned more about trogons than most might want to know. He even learned the trogon language.

"They have about 10 calls that are separable in the field," he notes. At his desk in a tiny office in his Whitetail Canyon home, he would listen to his field tapes repeatedly, and eventually he decoded the function of each of the calls. Now he's confident he can tell what the trogons are saying.

By their behavior, the trogons are clearly saying they like what South Fork has to offer. Despite armies of birding enthusiasts trodding through their habitat, the birds continue to return to nest in the same few acres of forest every year. Why?

In a word, food. Vegetation in the shady canyon bottom is so diverse and lush that it nurtures a thriving insect population. Trogons, fruit and insect eaters, don't have to travel far from the nest to feed their young. South Fork is the northernmost range of the trogons. In this one canyon, they can find an unusual mixture of tropical

A female elegant trogon (ABOVE) *can be identified by its brown and white coloration. This one, spotted in Sunnyside Canyon in the Huachuca Mountains, holds a remnant of some prey in its bill.*
GREG R. HOMEL/NATURAL ELEMENTS INC.
(OPPOSITE PAGE) *Maple trees line the rocky bed of the South Fork of Cave Creek in the Chiricahua Mountains. Birders around the world regard South Fork Canyon as "trogon heaven."*

Male elegant trogons (ABOVE) *are as colorful as parrots but not as noisy or gregarious. The birds were once called coppery-tailed trogons because of the faint copper highlights on the male's upper tail.* RICK TAYLOR (OPPOSITE PAGE) *A huge sycamore stands out among pine trees below the red cliffs of Cave Creek Canyon in the Chiricahuas. Prime country for spotting elegant trogons, this area is a home to a variety of birds, including black-throated gray warblers, brown-crested flycatchers, and Scott's orioles.*

and temperate zone plants remarkably similar to those found in Mexico's sprawling Sierra Madres.

"South Fork," Taylor says, "represents the best, and perhaps the only, essentially undisturbed example of a canyon system spanning all the life zones, from desert ocotillo to spruce highland, in the Coronado National Forest. Given its predominantly Sierra Madrean character, I suspect more rare and unusual plants and animals are found in South Fork than any other canyon in the Southwest." Because of that accident of Nature, more trogons nest in South Fork than any other canyon in the U. S., a fact that has not escaped the attention of innumerable avid bird-watchers throughout the country.

"In South Fork, as few as a dozen Arizona trogons share the spotlight for thousands of bird-watchers," Taylor says in his book. Strangely, the birds seem relatively untroubled by this incursion. Taylor notes: "Trogons *allow* themselves to be observed. If the male is courting the female, showing her prospective nest cavities, he may cavalierly ignore the creak, snap, and crunch of an advancing bird-watcher, or even a group of bird-watchers. Similarly, territorial advertisement, territorial defense, a chokecherry tree drooping with sour purple carps all may have greater priority for an elegant trogon than seeking cover from human eyes."

In 1980, a year after *Audubon* magazine crowned him "Arizona's resident trogon expert," Taylor started Borderland Tours to merge his interest in birds and natural history with his need to make a living. He didn't realize at the time that he had entered the ground floor of a new industry called ecotourism. It simply happened, and it snowballed to the point that Taylor now leads ecologically oriented trips throughout the world.

His reputation as a knowledgeable and affable guide usually precedes him, which is why, in May, 1993, a dozen birdwatchers from Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Texas, and California swooped into southern Arizona for his week-long "Owls and Trogons" tour. Almost everyone on the trip was, as Connecticut resident Betty Kleiner put it, "a hardcore birder." And most, like Tony Buonocore, were there for the trogons.

"The main appeal of this trip is definitely the trogons and especially the possibility of seeing an eared trogon," said Buonocore, a management consultant from Mendham, New Jersey. (In 1977 Taylor reported the first sighting of the elusive eared trogon in the U.S.)

Before the week was out, Buonocore and the others would see at least a dozen trogons and nine species of owls near Cave Creek in the Chiricahuas, Garden Canyon in the Huachucas, and Madera Canyon in the Santa Ritas.

"I was right behind Gil Kleiner when he saw the male trogon," said Julia Marsden of Burnet, Texas, "and I'll tell you, I was three feet off the ground because I've never seen one before. But, you know, we love it so much here in southeastern Arizona that, even if we hadn't seen the trogon in South Fork and had seen other birds, we'd still be very happy."

Fortunately there is no shortage of other birds. There are so many, in fact, that as Taylor scans the treetops along the trail, he starts to sound like a sports announcer at a fast-paced game: "Black-throated gray warbler in the sycamore dead ahead, two thirds up the main trunk; painted redstart just off the trail on the left, maybe 30 feet ahead; listen, there's a musical hermit thrush. Studies say its call is the closest to the harmonics of a clarinet of any birdsong. Acorn woodpecker in the silver leaf oak just this side of the creek, about eye level; brown-crested flycatcher in the Apache pine. Hey, listen, that's a Scott's oriole singing so beautifully out there!"

There are more than 350 species of birds in the Chiricahua Mountains, and many of them can be seen at South Fork, where the diversity of plants also sustains some of the 74 species of mammals, at least 31 kinds of snakes, 24 lizards, four turtles, and 13 frogs and toads that call the Chiricahuas home.

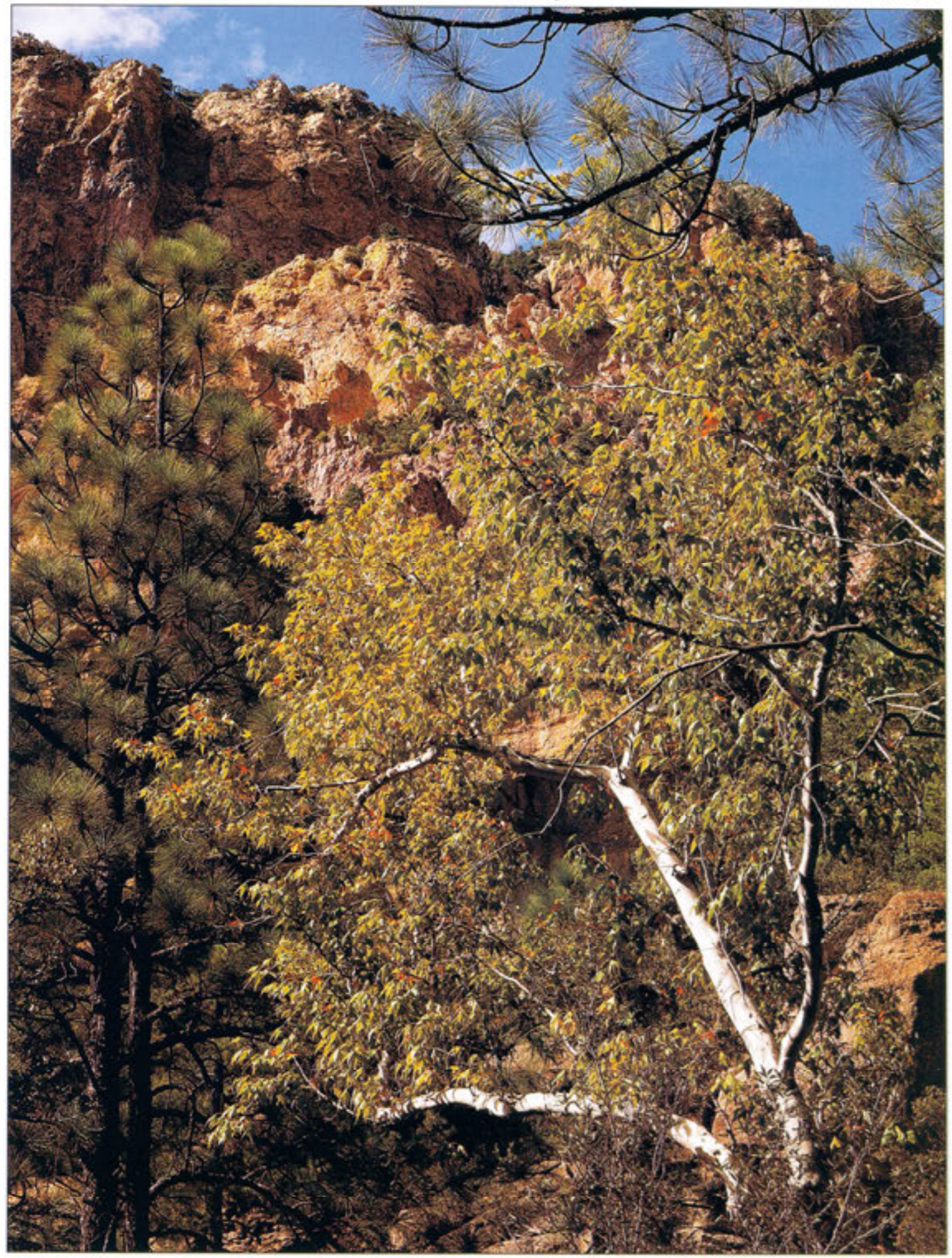
However, the main lure of the area remains the trogons, a bird Taylor speaks of with hyperbolic intensity. He is their advocate, protector, a sort of bragging grandfather. He recently launched a campaign to get the elegant trogon added to the federal list of threatened and endangered species. In the letters he sent to Washington, he adopted the sober, quasi-scientific tone of someone testifying at a congressional hearing, but at home in a quiet Tucson neighborhood, he is less reserved. He swivels away from his computer and tugs on the strands of a mustache that refuses to grow in evenly, and he is off and running.

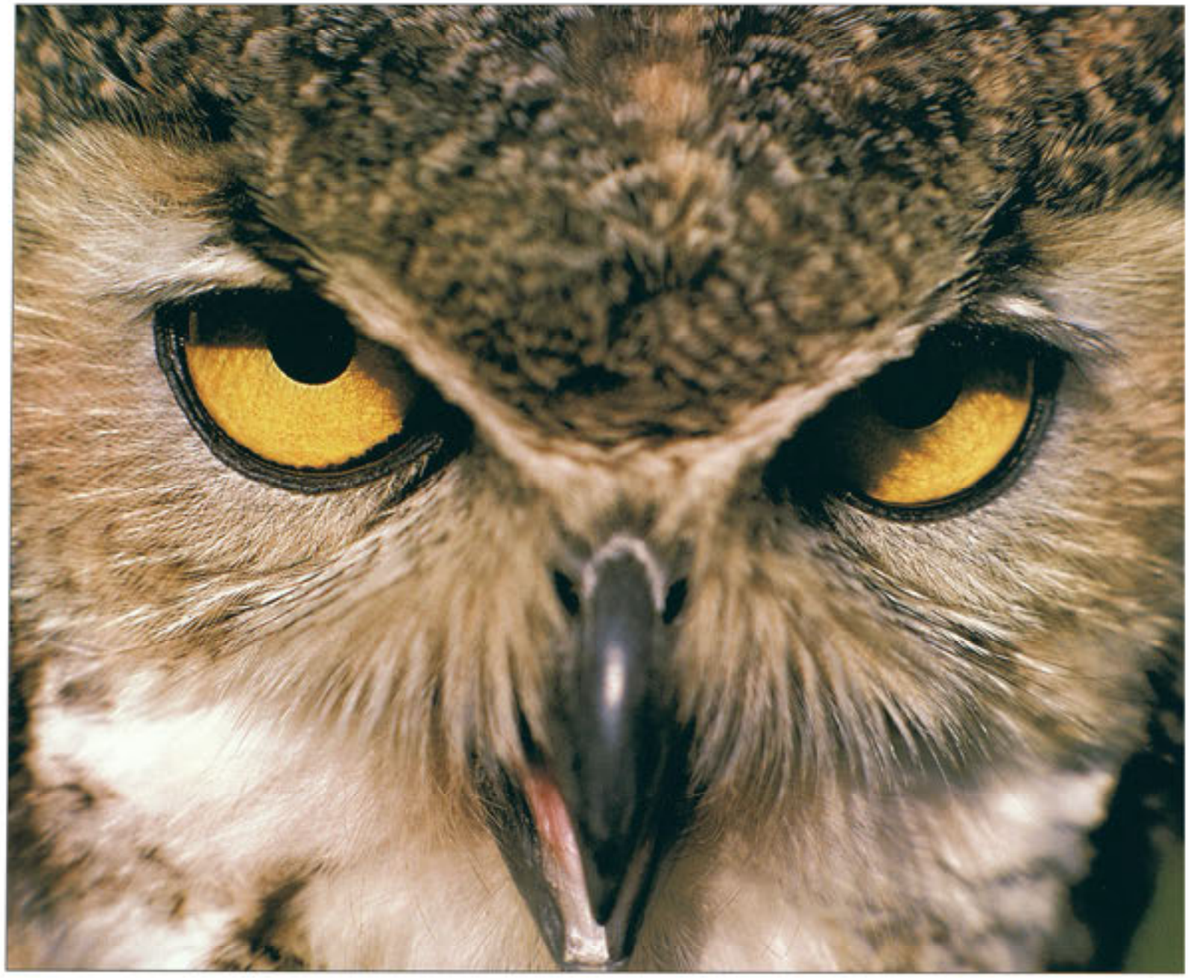
"Listen, the elegant trogon should be on that list. I hate to say it, but many birds on the endangered list are small or secretive and don't have a big impact on things like motels, restaurants, car rentals, and airline ticket sales. This bird happens to be charismatic. A hundred trogons are probably bringing 50,000 tourists a year to southern Arizona. These birds — with no exaggeration — are worth a million dollars each to the economy of southern Arizona."

For those who define wealth in terms of dollars, that's undoubtedly an important statement. Taylor, on the other hand, is more likely to define wealth in terms of trogons and habitat. As he puts it: "Because they're low in number, yet highly visible, elegant trogons are a sensitive barometer to the biotic health of Arizona's borderland canyons. The abundance — or absence — of elegant trogons in the mountains of southeastern Arizona will tell our future generations exactly how well we managed the land." ✪

Tucson-based Sam Negri has known Rick Taylor for nearly 20 years, and he has tracked the elegant trogon with him from the Mexico-Guatemala border to southern Arizona. Negri also wrote about Robson's Arizona Mining World in this issue.

Edward McCain had long been intrigued by the croaking call of the elusive trogon on his many trips into the Chiricahua Mountains.





FOCUS ON NATURE

THE GREAT HORNED OWL: DEADLY HUNTER OF THE NIGHT

Text by Tom Dollar
Photographs by Marty Cordano

It's an afternoon in June, and I'm hiking with a friend's dog in a slot canyon near Lake Powell. I round a tight bend in the four-foot-wide canyon and, to my utter astonishment, come face-to-face with an unfledged great horned owl — there, directly in front of me, sitting on the sandy floor of the canyon, its back against the wall.

I've seen great horned owls before, but only on high perches like trees, saguaro cacti, and telephone poles. If I hadn't been looking dead-on at the spot where this half-grown owl sits, I would have missed it altogether, so perfectly does its coloration blend with the canyon wall.

I stare. The young owl, motionless, stares back, the large disks surrounding its great round eyes giving them an even larger and more solemn aspect. My canine companion, as amazed as I, cowers at my heels. Then, bird dog that she is, she steps boldly around me toward the owl and goes on point.

Instantly the owl is transformed into feathered fury. Ear tufts erect, eyes bulging, it ruffles its feathers and spreads its wings to suddenly appear twice its actual size. Hissing loudly, it clappers its hooked beak and lifts a feathered leg to display deadly gang-hook talons.

Frightened, the dog leaps back. I also back away smiling. With fuzzy down feathers still clinging to its breast and cheeks, the owlet presents a somewhat comical, albeit wild, appearance.

Then, crisis over, the owl resumes its skinny adolescent shape, mottled plumage fading into background rock. The dog lies a safe distance away, head on paws, feigning indifference. I call to her, and we continue our hike through the canyon.

Later I learn that immature great horned owls are often found outside the nest. Some owl experts offer a number of reasons. Nests become overcrowded, and half-grown owls may sometimes jump ship or get pushed overboard by their siblings. Also nestlings are often savaged by fleas and ticks. Going over the side is the only escape. Finally adult owls sometimes may oust the young, urging them into a head start, but continue to care for them on the ground.

This encounter was several summers ago. If it survived, my comical baby owl would become what many believe to be the most successful raptor on Earth. Stealthy, noiseless flight on a three- to five-foot wingspan, a hooked razor-sharp beak, four tonglike, bone-piercing talons on each foot — two forward and two rear — and an almost supernatural ability to see and hear in the dark make the great horned owl an excellent example of a nighttime killing machine. It can see in light one hundred times dimmer than humans require, and in almost total darkness the horned owl unerringly reckons the location and movement of prey animals by its sense of hearing alone.

A ferocious defender of a hunting territory that might encompass several square miles, a great horned owl will attack anything it figures it can subdue, even other owls and hawks. Rabbits seem to be its favorite food, but it also hunts snakes, gophers, wood rats, squirrels, frogs, mice, quail, and even shallow-water fish. The horned owl also loves skunks (captured owls frequently stink of skunk spray), and, although it weighs not much more than five pounds itself, it will pursue and kill small raccoons. Near human dwellings, especially in winter when rodents are scarce, great horned owls have been known to make a pretty good living on house pets.

Of savage disposition, great horned owls have been observed battling bald eagles for nest sites. No wonder they've been dubbed "flying tigers."

As is typical throughout its range, north to Alaska and south to Argentina, the great horned owl in Arizona occurs in all habitats.

Horned owls mate in winter but don't seem to be fussy about nest sites, usually setting up in abandoned abodes of other birds, such as red-tailed hawks, bald eagles, herons, or crows. They also nest in small caves in cliff faces, in tree hollows, on the ground, and even in leaf nests abandoned by squirrels.

Young owls are voracious eaters, and their incubation, about five weeks, is timed to coincide with spring's bounty. In approximately 12 weeks, when the young have fledged, both parents are worn out from feeding them.

Whenever I hear the resonant hooting of a great horned owl, I recall the angry young owlet I encountered near Lake Powell. I wonder if it survived? It would have needed some luck, for as fearsome as they are grown-up, young owls are vulnerable to red-tailed hawks, eagles, and other predators. By now, it would be several years old and looking forward to perhaps another 10 years. I like to imagine it living and hunting the canyonlands along the Arizona-Utah border. I loved its fierce spirit.

Keen night vision allows great horned owls (LEFT AND RIGHT) *to see small prey in near total darkness. The birds, distinguished from other large owls by their ear tufts, nest on the ground, in trees, and in caves.*

Tom Dollar lives on the outskirts of Tucson, where he often sees great horned owls. He also wrote about the Empire-Cienega Resource Conservation Area in this issue.

Marty Cordano is a former wildlife biologist for the Bureau of Land Management.

From LAMB to LOOM

This New Breed of Traditionalists Strives for Excellence

"It takes me about an hour to shear one sheep," D.Y. Begay remarked with a smile. "Takes my dad about 15 minutes. He's good," she added, as she and her father continued shearing a large ram. One of a new genre of weavers who reside in urban areas and who are usually younger than their reservation counterparts, D.Y. makes her home in Scottsdale. But at every opportunity, she heads for "home," a hogan just up the road from her parents' place near Salina Springs on the huge Navajo Indian Reservation.

On a chilly spring morning, I was there to observe what some believe is a rapidly disappearing traditional art: rug weaving.

Like most weavers, D.Y. learned the craft from her mother. For generations, this has been true among the Navajos. Although legend says they were taught to weave by Changing Woman, grandmother to the people and one of their most important deities, history teaches that they learned the art from the Puebloans.

This probably occurred in the early to mid-1600s when the Navajo homeland became a refuge for Puebloans fleeing from encroaching Spaniards. The first styles and designs woven by the Navajos were much like those of their tutors, but their weaving gradually took on a distinctive style, and soon the Navajos became masters of the craft.

Then in 1864 came the Navajos' four-year incarceration at Bosque Redondo (Fort Sumner, New Mexico) which threatened to destroy the craft. (See *Arizona Highways*, January '88.) With few sheep to provide wool, the ingenious Navajos mixed what little they had with new commercial yarns and strands raveled from soldier's uniforms or any other available fabric.

First the Army, then the coming of the railroad in 1880 furnished buyers for Navajo goods, and soon almost all weaving was being done to serve that market. Many exceptional weavings from that period have become prized collector's items, but on the whole, quality

Text by Lois Essary Jacka Photographs by Jerry Jacka

(ABOVE) *Navajo weaver D.Y. Begay uses the wool shorn from her family's flock of sheep to create her artistic rugs.*
(RIGHT) *Sarah Paul Begay included 28 4-inch by 5-1/2-inch rugs into this weaving, which reflects the Two Gray Hills style. The yeibichai figures in the center honor her father, who participated in such dances.*
RUG COURTESY McGEE'S BEYOND NATIVE TRADITION GALLERY, HOLBROOK

(ABOVE, LEFT AND RIGHT) *Long before she starts to weave, D.Y. Begay begins the process of making a new rug by shearing the sheep and carding the wool.*

(LEFT) *After carding, she spins the yarn.*

(BELOW, LEFT) *D.Y. examines some mistletoe growing on a juniper tree. This parasitic plant is often used to make rug dye.*

(BELOW) *The ripe fruit of the prickly pear is also used to make a dye.*

plummeted. As weavers rushed to fill the demand for their rugs, inferior dyes were used to color poorly carded and unevenly spun yarns that were woven haphazardly onto cotton string warp.

It was not until around the turn of the century that Lorenzo Hubbell at Ganado and J.B. Moore at Crystal Trading Post began working with weavers to revive the classics. They also introduced new designs, some from oriental rugs, and encouraged the use of vegetal dyes. There was an insistance on high quality. As weavers working under the guidance of the two traders improved, so did their market. Other weavers and traders were quick to note their success, and soon quality weavings were coming from several areas on the reservation.

Traders continued to be a positive influence through the years. Today some — including the Foutz family at Shiprock; Bruce Burnham at Sanders; the McGees at Holbrook, Pinon, and Keams Canyon; Dan Garland at Sedona; and Bill Malone from Hubbell Trading Post at Ganado — still work with Navajo weavers, encouraging them to try innovative ideas.

To achieve weaving excellence requires an extraordinary amount of time, especially if the weaver, like D.Y. Begay, follows tradition from start to finish. Preparation alone takes many hours: sheep must be tended year-round and sheared in spring, then the wool must be washed and dried, carded, spun, and dyed.

To see some of these tasks demonstrated, we left the sheep-shearing behind and accompanied D.Y. to her hogan.

D.Y. explained the lengthy wool-cleaning process, which involves using traditional yucca root as the cleansing product. "After the root is cut, you have to pull off the bark, chop the root until it's soft, then rub it together until it becomes foamy. It takes a lot of time — and a lot of yucca root.

"I usually use Orvus, a detergent used by vets to clean animals. The wool is washed and rinsed over and over, then laid in the sun to dry. I tear off any stained pieces and use only the best part. Sometimes I get just a handful of usable wool from a whole fleece."

Watching D.Y. card the wool gave new meaning to "time-consuming." Small bits of tangled fleece were combed between two cards (metal-toothed wooden boards) again and again until she had a short, fluffy roll called a batt. While it took only five minutes or so to produce a batt, the average rug requires hundreds of them. "This is a job I do in front of the television at home," D.Y. said, laughing.

The spinning devoured time even though D.Y. made it look easy. The wooden spindle was twirled against her blue-jeaned thigh with one hand while with the other she twisted and pulled the attached batt into a strand of yarn of the desired fineness. Batt after batt of fleece was added as the newly spun yarn rolled down and around the shaft of the spindle.

After lunch, we were off into the cedar-studded countryside to search for plants to use in the dyeing process.

Several trips are made at different seasons of the year to gather the needed plants, and D.Y. uses everything from lichen and rabbitbrush to walnut and yellow daisy, as well as some commercial products such as indigo and cochineal (a tiny insect).

Kettles of dye simmer for an hour or two on a fire outside or on the kitchen stove. Then the dye is strained, spun yarn (or fleece if dyeing is done prior to carding and spinning) is added, and simmering continues for another hour or so. A fixative is added, the pots are removed from the fire, and the wool is left to soak for a few days.

Meanwhile the loom is prepared, and the strands of warp yarn are vertically positioned, a complicated process and an art in itself. But once that is accomplished, the weaver is finally ready to begin.

"The weaving is the easy part," D.Y. said with a grin. Not so. Each strand of weaving yarn (or weft) is woven loosely into place and tamped down with a weaving comb. Placement of the different-colored yarns as they are woven back and forth dictates the design. With no pattern to work from, D.Y., like all Navajo weavers, retains an image of the finished rug in her mind as the intricate design is formed, strand by strand, on the loom.

Given the time spent in preparation and weaving, many weavers were fortunate to make minimum wage, but no longer. And Bill Malone, at Hubbell Trading Post, says, "It's about time. The world has treated Navajo weaving as a craft for much too long. The better weavers today are going for works of art and are finally getting the recognition they deserve as artists."

As prices have risen accordingly, so have the weavers' incomes. Knowing that her work is valued certainly adds to the self-esteem of a weaver, but the sociological rewards are more easily understood if one knows at least a bit about the Navajo Way.

(ABOVE) *D.Y. uses a dye made from walnuts to color a batch of yarn.*

(RIGHT) *The many shades of yarn that D.Y. achieves come from a variety of plants that she collects on the reservation. Sometimes she will use commercial products, as well.*

(BELOW) *Working at her loom without a pattern, D.Y. arranges the different colored yarns into an intricate pattern that she can see in her mind's eye.*

Caring for family — which includes clan members as well as actual kinsmen — is one of the first priorities of the Navajos; therefore, the weaver's contribution not only adds to the family coffers, but earns tribal prestige.

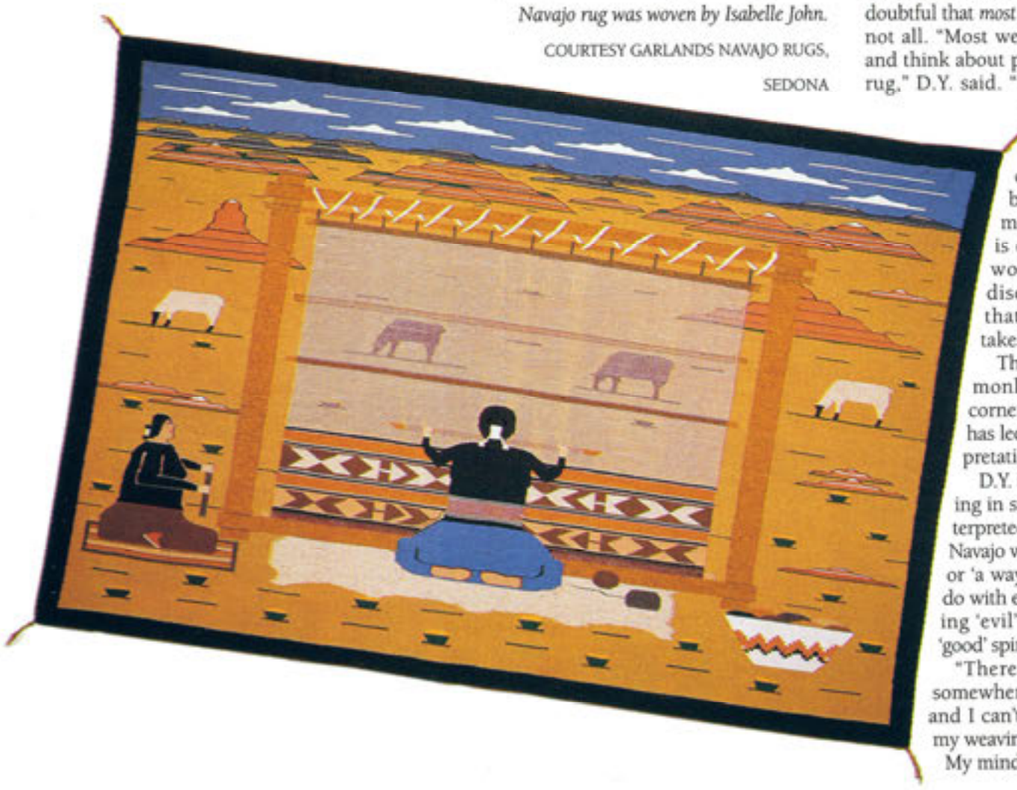
Beauty and harmony are the prevailing themes of the Navajo Way. The people not only "walk in beauty," but express it ritualistically. They believe the proper ceremony can alter adverse conditions, misfortune, illness, even death that can result from failure to maintain the harmony so necessary to well-being. Navajos therefore strive to avoid tension and conflict as they obey tribal taboos and follow traditional directives.

(ABOVE) *Navajo weaver Evelyn Payer created this 73-inch by 48-inch Teec Nos Pos-style rug.*

(BELOW) *This 78-inch by 53-inch pictorial Navajo rug was woven by Isabelle John.* COURTESY GARLANDS NAVAJO RUGS, SEDONA

Weavers are no exception, and some of their practices have led to two common misconceptions about Navajo weaving.

One is that an intentional "mistake" is included in each rug. Although this may be common with some weavers, it is doubtful that *most* do this — and certainly not all. "Most weavers don't sit around and think about putting a mistake into a rug," D.Y. said. "But sometimes it does happen, and it is left in." Since weavers express beauty and create harmony within by blending diverse elements in a pleasing way, it is questionable that they would purposely create disorder. It's more likely that the majority of mistakes are just that.



The contrasting line commonly woven through one corner of a rug's border also has led to numerous misinterpretations.

D.Y. tried to explain its meaning in simple terms. "When interpreted literally," she said, "the Navajo word for the line is 'a trail' or 'a way out.' It has nothing to do with evil spirits; there is nothing 'evil' about it. Nor is it for 'good' spirits; it is for us [weavers].

"There are times when I go somewhere or I'm with a group, and I can't think of anything but my weaving. I want to be working. My mind gets so totally taken up with weaving, that it's hard to think of anything else. When both mind and body become so absorbed, a weaver may become trapped. We add the line to give us 'a way out.'"

Weaving is a demanding craft, yet many skilled weavers continue to produce a great diversity of styles, designs, and colors. Many rugs can no longer be categorized by the area in which they were woven. A Ganado design may be done in colors more commonly used in Wide Ruins, or a weaver may combine several styles in one rug.

Sarah Begay, an exceptional weaver, took this concept one step further: she wove 28 miniature rugs of different styles into a Two Gray Hills background with a line of sacred yeibichais through the center. Seventy-one colors were used in this high-quality masterpiece.

And quality is today's watchword among Navajo weavers who blend complex designs and a rainbow of colors into intricately woven tapestries that exemplify the universal Navajo philosophy of beauty and harmony.

The time spent on the reservation with D.Y. simply reaffirmed that this traditional art is far from disappearing. In fact, considering the many talented and innovative young women who are weaving today, one might say it's just getting started, again.

Author's Note: Many fine Navajo rugs are being woven today, but, unless you are an expert, don't go out onto the highways and byways hoping to find a bargain. You might come across one, but you're more likely to find a poorly crafted rug or get stung with an inexpensive copy made in Mexico and passed off as the genuine article. To play it safe, buy only from reputable dealers or museum shops.

Lois Essary Jacha and her husband, Jerry Jacha, are noted for their knowledge of American Indian art and have produced many books and articles on the subject for Arizona Highways.

(ABOVE) *This 49-inch by 75-inch yeibichai rug by Virginia Nakai shows both male and female dancers in a Navajo healing ceremony.*

(BELOW) *A Ganado-style tapestry weaving by Mary Kee measures 49 inches by 35 1/2 inches.* BOTH COURTESY GARLANDS NAVAJO RUGS, SEDONA

When Spring Comes to Organ Pipe

One thing you can be certain of when spring comes to decorate Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, one year will not be like the last. Heavy monsoon rains in November may produce a lush display of Mexican goldpoppies while a good December drenching could bring a great show of annuals. Last year lupine and Mohave Desert star dominated the scenery. This year the featured attractions are owl clover, brittlebush, and an explosion of green everywhere.

Why such variation? I don't have a clue. I'm just thankful I was there with my camera for this annual display. Set a spell and enjoy.

A Portfolio by Randy Prentice

(LEFT) Mohave Desert star and owl clover bloom together on a mountainside in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. (RIGHT) Lupine and brittlebush surround a many-armed organ pipe cactus.

(PRECEDING PANELS, PAGES 28 AND 29) *Owl clover, lupine, and cholla flourish near Puerto Blanco Drive.* (PAGES 30 AND 31) *Brittlebush adds a touch of softness to an outcrop of volcanic rock.*

(LEFT) *In the desert, ineffable beauty punctuates the most rugged of landscapes. Here a rough tree cholla flaunts its exquisite blooms.* (RIGHT) *A decayed cholla and vibrant penstemon symbolize the inexorable cycle of death and renewal.*

TEXT BY PHILIP VARNEY
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN DREW

The Ghost of Vulture Mine

It's a spot where many men got rich and many men died

The welcoming committee of four stands awkwardly on the blacktop, enjoying a fresh breakfast rabbit, the road kill du jour. As I approach, they reluctantly relinquish the road, lumbering away a short distance with their enormous black wings, clearly showing disdain at the annoying interruption of their feast. I glance in the mirror to see them reconvene at their meal. What an appropriate moment on the 13-mile drive southwest of Wickenburg to revisit the famous Vulture Mine.

The mine has been a frustrating place in recent years. In a book I wrote on Arizona ghost towns in 1980, I called Vulture "one of the best in the West." Unfortunately only a few years later that best ghost town was closed to the public because of work being done to extricate gold from old tailings piles. So my book sent people down a road to a ghost town dead end, so to speak, and I had no way to warn them.

But now the news is much better. Although some tailings work continues, Vulture is once again open to the public, much to the delight of back road travelers and ghost town aficionados.

Why is Vulture one of the West's best ghost towns? It features more than a dozen buildings, considerable mining evidence, and fascinating memorabilia scattered over several acres; it's much easier to reach than other impressive sites; you can explore at your own rate rather than be ushered about; and you can visit Vulture in relative peace, as the townsite is so spread out that even if many people are there, you'll feel as if you're practically alone.

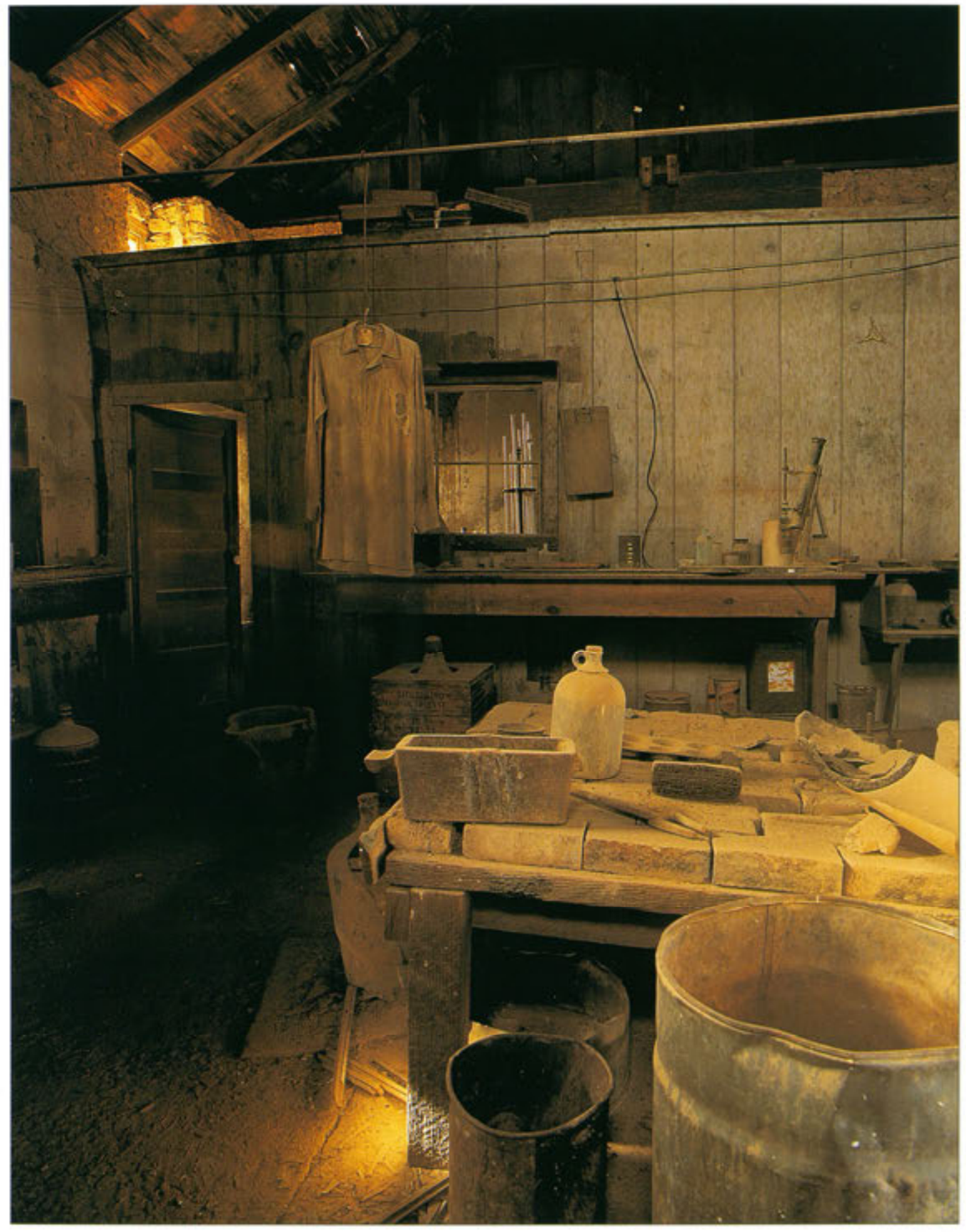
The Vulture story begins in 1863 when Henry Wickenburg, investigating a quartz outcropping, discovered a rich ledge of gold ore. Why name the claim The Vulture? One account says that Wickenburg killed a vulture and saw nuggets lying around when he picked up the bird. A more likely version states that on the day Wickenburg made his find he saw several of the birds hovering over what is now Vulture Peak.

Because Wickenburg was inexperienced at hard-rock mining, he sold the ore within the mine for $15 per ton; the customer would have to do the mining and milling himself. In 1866 Benjamin Phelps bought an 80-percent interest in the mine from Wickenburg and began to organize what had been a haphazard operation. In the mine's first six years of operation, it produced an estimated $2.5 million in gold. The total would have been considerably higher had not an estimated 20 to 40 percent been "highgraded" (stolen) by the company's own miners. Highgrading, however, could be a risky business: one source says that 18 miners were hanged at Vulture for the crime.

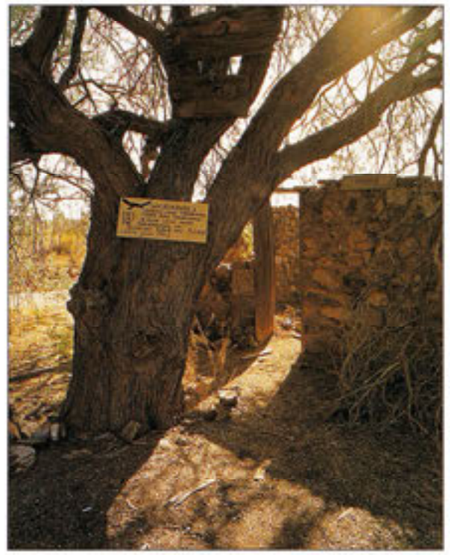
By the 1880s, the mining town had a post office and a population of about three hundred. The biggest structure in town was an 80-stamp mill, where rock was crushed by huge pestles, called "stamps," to separate ore from waste material. The water used in the process was piped 12 miles from the Hassayampa River. The peak years lasted into the 1890s; the post office closed in 1897.

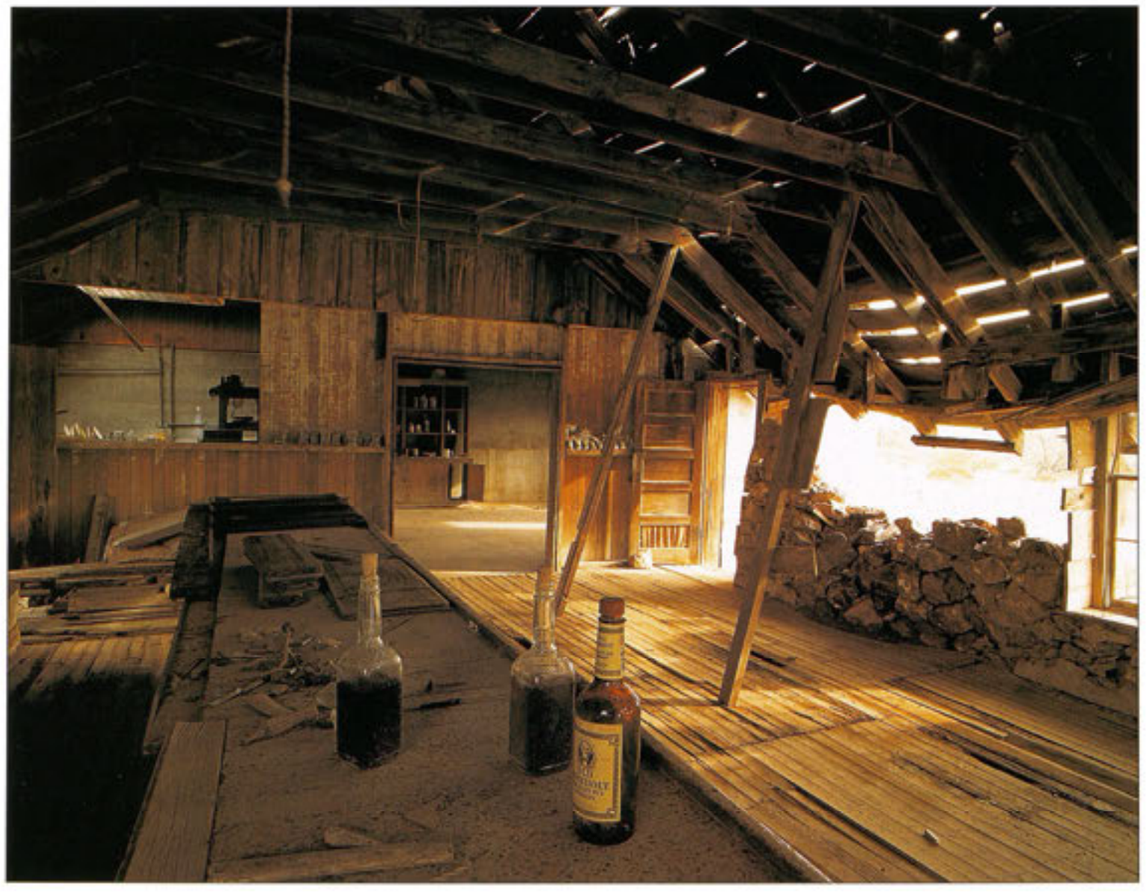
Henry Wickenburg, who made the strike and who donated much of the land for the town that bears his name, never was paid his true share for the Vulture. In 1905, despondent and penniless in his 85th year, Wickenburg killed himself with a revolver.

Mining at Vulture continued on a lesser scale well into the 1920s and didn't completely cease until 1942, when President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 208, shutting down all mines that were not involved in the production



(OPPOSITE PAGE) *In the old assay office, remnants of the past recall the heyday of Wickenburg's fabulous Vulture Mine. Legend has it that a small fortune in gold lies within the stones with which this structure is built.*





of minerals strategic to the war effort.

Even though Vulture became a historical footnote, the mine had a lasting effect upon Arizona. When Wickenburg made his discovery in 1863, the middle of the state, between Tucson and the mining claims near Prescott, was virtually uninhabited by Anglos. His gold strike brought hundreds of people to the area, making Vulture the third-largest community in the territory. To fill the demand for livestock feed, newly settled farmers began producing crops in the Salt River Valley to the south.

But let's return to the present. When you enter the mine's property at the end of the pavement on Vulture Mine Road, you'll see ahead of you, on a low hill, a mining superintendent's house, currently occupied by mine manager John Osborne and his wife, Marge. A left turn takes you to the headquarters, where you'll check in, pay a modest fee, sign a liability waiver, and receive a walking-tour brochure. Osborne also has some samples of gold taken from recent operations, a few tourist items, and news clippings and articles about Vulture.

From the headquarters, you'll follow a clearly marked trail at your own pace. The first stop is the 1884 two-story stone assay office building. Photographers who want a challenge can get some outstanding low-light moody shots of memorabilia framed inside cloudy windows. The brochure contends that more than $600,000 in gold is in the stone with which the building is constructed. I react to that statement with a healthy dose of doubt; how often in the search for riches has historical importance stood in the way of greed?

Beyond the assay office is the actual mine site (the "glory hole"), where a sign will tell you of another peril of highgrading ore: in 1923 seven miners were pilfering gold from stone support pillars in a main shaft when the pillars collapsed, entombing them all along with 12 burros. They remain there to this day.

Has the mine played out? According to manager Osborne, definitely not. But the price of gold has to rise considerably before it would be profitable to reopen the mine, which has 30 to 35 miles of tunnels. The main shaft, the source of Wickenburg's initial strike, descends to the 3,000-foot level.

Next to the main shaft's headframe, a hoist apparatus that raises ore from the depths of the mine to ground level, stands the blacksmith shop. A short walk to the south takes you to the ball mill, which replaced the earlier stamp mill. A ball mill uses rolling metal balls to crush rock rather than the pestles of a stamp mill. But the workings of the ball mill are long gone, removed for salvage following World War II.

Adjacent to the mill is the power house. Remote mining communities were not connected, as they would be today, to electrical lines. Back then the mines had to produce their own power. In the case of Vulture, electricity was generated by an enormous diesel engine, still in place, that was brought from Germany and assembled on the site in 1904. One can only imagine the roar that must have emanated from this nearly two-story behemoth.

The return route to the townsite takes you past the walls of Henry Wickenburg's home and the hanging tree that had 18 short-term occupants, an apartment house that is collapsing on one end, a stone bunkhouse, an adobe shop building that has some crumbling exterior walls, and the mess hall and kitchen.

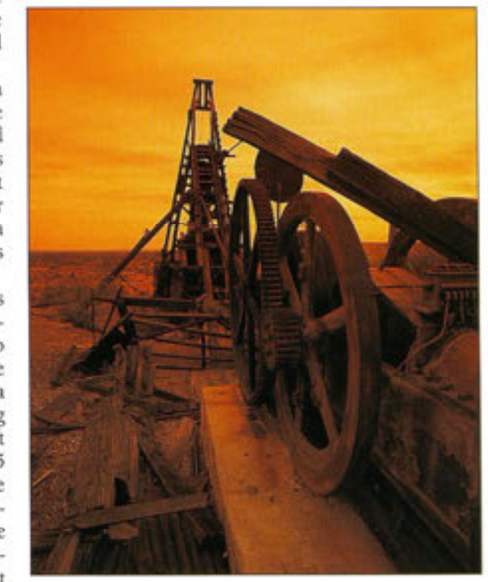
In the back of the kitchen stands a huge ice box that more than a few collectors have tried to purchase. But the hundreds of artifacts on the site are not for sale, a decision the visitor should applaud, as they are a substantial part of what makes Vulture such a treasure.

I do, however, feel a sadness about Vulture, because no serious attempt has been made to preserve the buildings. Osborne says that people do not want a gussied-up, restored mining town, so things are being left alone. As a result, over the 15 years that I have visited the townsite, I have seen some valuable buildings taking a severe beating from the relentless elements. The mess hall has lost enough of its roof that a marvelous tin ceiling now lies collapsed on the floor, and the adobe walls of the shop are crumbling. I agree, nevertheless, that Vulture should never become a Tombstone or a Virginia City.

But a third option exists: maintaining the site in a state of what is called "arrested decay," in which efforts are made to stop further deterioration rather than to restore it to its original condition. This process is preserving the ghost town of Bodie, California, and historic Fort Union, New Mexico, among other sites in the West. At Vulture, walls need to be buttressed and roof leaks patched. If they are not, I advise visiting Vulture soon; the longer you wait, the less and less you'll be able to see of this extraordinary historic place.

At Vulture visitors will see an almost unspoiled site, much of it exactly as it was when the miners walked away. In a tiny cubicle off the kitchen are boxes of receipts and other miscellaneous paperwork. In the power house, replacement parts — "new old stock" to collectors — wait for the start-up of a diesel that will never fire again. And all about the town lie the discards of the once-bustling operation, for Vulture prospered long before a litter-conscious recycling generation.

The best place to end your tour of Vulture isn't mentioned in the official brochure. Walk north from the parking lot and go around the small knoll on which the superintendent's house sits. In a few



(OPPOSITE PAGE, COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP, LEFT) *Visitors to Vulture today can explore the remains of some of the old mine's buildings, Henry Wickenburg's original house, which later served as a jail, and the infamous hanging tree, the last stop for highgraders who helped themselves to the mine's gold. It is said that as many as 18 miners judged guilty of this "heinous" crime swung from this tree.*
(ABOVE) *Next to the blacksmith's shop, stands Vulture's headframe, a hoist apparatus that was used to raise the ore from inside the mine to ground level. In its first six years, Vulture yielded $2.5 million in gold.*

dozen yards, you'll come upon two of the best buildings at Vulture: the schools. With its weathered wood and belltower cupola, the first, built in 1877, is one of Arizona's finest territorial schoolhouses still standing.

Next door is its 1936 replacement, featuring an attached teacherage with a private entrance. Immediately adjacent stand a flagpole, a vintage swing set, and a marginally ridable seesaw. You can peer in the windows of the school room and discover that the building still sees occasional use for weddings and holiday events.

I think we often ponder, in ghost towns like Vulture, about the hard lives of the men who worked down in the hole or in the earsplitting din of the mill. Perhaps less, regrettably, do we consider the lot of the women who had to tend to the needs of their families, bear their children under hardly ideal circumstances, perhaps watch the burial of an infant who could not survive. It is at a place like the Vulture schoolhouses that we remember that *families* lived in old ghost towns, not just names on shift lists or payrolls. They had picnics in the shade of the school yard trees, cheering as children played softball on the nearby field. We should be interested in their lives as well as their leavings. When you stand on the playground at Vulture, pause to reflect upon the people who settled in this desolate and now fascinating ghost town.

Additional Reading: Explore the intriguing remains of Arizona's once-boisterous boomtowns with ghost town authority Philip Varney. *Arizona Ghost Towns and Mining Camps: A Travel Guide to History* is filled with lively anecdotes and rare historical photographs that document the turbulent lives of these towns, while detailed maps, reliable travel information, and color photography show you how to find these nostalgic relics of the Wild West. The softcover book will be available after March 15, 1994, for $14.95. To order, telephone *Arizona Highways* toll-free at 1 (800) 543-5432. In the Phoenix area, call 258-1000.

(ABOVE) *Among the most interesting sights at Vulture are the mine's school buildings, the first built in 1877 and the second, its replacement, put up in 1936.*
(OPPOSITE PAGE) *An old Singer treadle sewing machine that sits in the living quarters of the assay office building reminds visitors that the mine was more than just a place where men wrested precious ores from the earth. The families of the miners also lived there.*

Philip Varney, recently retired English Department chairman at Rincon High School in Tucson, is the author of Arizona, New Mexico, and Southern California ghost town books.

John Drew thought he heard the ghosts of Vulture as he roamed the buildings captured in these photographs.

WHEN YOU GO

Getting there: To get to Vulture Mine from Wickenburg, take Wickenburg Way west to Vulture Mine Road, turn south and proceed for 13 miles; the mine is on your right. Wickenburg is 58 miles northwest of Phoenix via State Route 60.

The mine is open to the public from mid-September through mid-May, 9 A.M. to 5 P.M., Thursday through Monday; mid-May through mid-July, 8 A.M. to 4 P.M., weekends only; closed mid-July to mid-September.

Pay admission fees and sign a liability waiver at the mine headquarters, where you receive a walking-tour brochure. Wear comfortable clothing and sturdy shoes. There's plenty to see, so allow enough time for your visit.

Nearby points of interest: The old gold mining town of Wickenburg — once dubbed "The Dude Ranch Capital of the World" — with its historic Frontier Street, Jail Tree, Desert Caballeros Western Museum; the Hassayampa River Preserve with its spring-fed pond; a Joshua tree forest along U.S. 93 about 20 miles northwest of Wickenburg (the tall shaggy-barked trees briefly produce pale green flowers in March and April, lighting up the desert); and the ghost town of Congress, 17 miles north of Wickenburg on State Route 89.

Accommodations: Places to stay in the Wickenburg area range from motels to dude ranches and luxury resorts.

For more mine information, contact Vulture Mine, P.O. Box 1869, Wickenburg, AZ 85358; mobile phone (602) 377-0803. For general visitors information, contact the Wickenburg Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Drawer CC, Wickenburg, AZ 85358; (602) 684-5479.

The Real Make-Believe Mining World

A hundred years ago, many of Arizona's mountain ranges were like beehives riddled with gold and silver mines. As a result, today there are an estimated 500 to 1,000 ghost towns scattered about in various stages of decomposition, places where dried-out doors flap and squeak on their twisted hinges and corrugated tin roofs rattle in the searing winds. Other one-time boomtowns exist only in postal records or as items in yellowing newspapers long out of print.

If it were not for a man who loves beehives — real beehives — a gold mine that was originally called the Gold Leaf would be like many others, just one more abandoned hole in the desert, largely forgotten and unvisited. Instead the remnant of an old mine in the isolated Harcuvar Mountains a few miles west of Wickenburg has been rebuilt into a one-street "town" and converted into a unique tourist attraction called Robson's Arizona Mining World.

Nestled in a hollow near low hills covered with saguaros, ironwood trees, and ocotillos, Arizona Mining World encompasses a 24-room hotel built on the foundation of the original boardinghouse, a restaurant, replicas of old stores, and a collection of old mining equipment culled from territorial-day glory holes and major mining operations across the state, as well as a first-rate exhibit of mineral specimens. There is a small shop where visitors can buy crafts produced by local artisans and other products created in Arizona, but the other stores on Main Street are strictly museums displaying memorabilia from the early part of this century.

Charles and Jeri Robson found these treasures — everything from pocketknives, new hightop shoes, and tin cans of Log Cabin syrup to unopened bottles of Hanford's Balsam of Myrrh ("For external use on humans and domestic animals") — on their many trips to explore old Arizona mining towns like Tombstone, Globe, Bisbee, Pearce, Winkelman, and some in the Yuma area.

The Robsons were born in Phoenix and grew up with an acute sensitivity to

(ABOVE) *An early telephone system is among the memorabilia at Robson's Arizona Mining World.* (RIGHT) *A variety of old mining equipment lines the town's one street.*

TEXT BY SAM NEGRI PHOTOGRAPHS BY DON B. STEVENSON

'Charles and I always wanted to save these irreplaceable pieces of Arizona history, old buildings, and the mining equipment that played such a big part in the development of the state.'

the desert landscape and the history of those who settled here during an era when Stephen Foster songs were popular, travel was dangerous and slow, and air-conditioning was provided by a breeze through a wet sheet hanging over an open window.

Both are descended from families of beekeepers and ranchers, the occupations that became the livelihood of many former miners and prospectors. As a young man, Charles Robson worked briefly as a blacksmith but left that to develop his beehives on a full-time basis. Eventually Robson became a beehive king, moving thousands of his hives from one farming operation to another (the bees are used for pollinating crops). He also patented some inventions related to beekeeping and pollen collecting, and then he branched out to health-food supplements produced by bees.

Throughout this frenetic business building, Robson continued to collect blacksmith tools and anything that was related to old mines.

"Charles and I always wanted to save these irreplaceable pieces of Arizona history, old buildings, and the mining equipment that played such a big part in the development of the state," Jeri Robson said. "No one else was doing it, so we just had the field to ourselves."

Actually back in the 1940s, a mechanical engineer by the name of Wilbur Johnson had been collecting old mining equipment in a big way when the Robsons were still youngsters. Johnson had grown up in Arizona (his family moved here from Missouri when he was 12), was graduated from the University of Arizona in 1930, and then went to work for the Allis-Chalmers Corp. in Milwaukee. After 15 years there, he came back to Arizona, his wife, Barbara, said, determined to be "a junkman."

But Johnson was not a traditional junkman. He knew heavy equipment thoroughly and combined that knowledge with a purist's sense of history. He scoured the countryside buying or swapping equipment he knew was unique and brought it back to his five-acre lot in what is now central Phoenix. In 1985 he sold a portion of the collection to The Walt Disney Company for use at Tokyo Disneyland.

The bulk of the collection — enough to fill 27 huge trucks — was purchased by Robson two years later.

Johnson said Robson first came to him many years ago looking for a ball mill, a machine that pulverizes rocks, to process some trace minerals he was mining in Nevada for use in his vitamin-supplement business. The two eventually built a friendship around their shared interest in old tools and mining machinery.

And yet, when Robson bought his ghost town-mining camp, Johnson must have felt a slight twinge. It was what he always wanted to do but never got around to.

"I wanted to set up a mining museum near Apache Junction in 1971," said Johnson, who is now 85. "I bought five acres of land contingent on my being able to get the zoning from Pinal County, but when they gave me the zoning they attached so many conditions to it that I just scrapped the whole thing."

When Robson bought the place that was called the Nellie Meda Mine, he brought Johnson out for a visit and asked his views on how he should reconstruct the community that once was there.

"I'm a purist on historical stuff, and he didn't do exactly what I would have done," Johnson said, "but what the hell, he owned it, and it's his business. It's much more elaborate than anything I would have done."

The machinery that Johnson had collected came from almost every mine in Arizona including the Christmas Mine east of Globe, various Tombstone mines, the Tiger (also known as the Mammoth-St. Anthony Mine) near San Manuel, and the Copper Queen in Bisbee. Now all the cranes and pumps and compressors and related paraphernalia are displayed at the place that once was the Nellie Meda.

Actually Nellie Meda was the mine's second name. Westley Rush, a rancher from nearby Aguila who filed the original claims in 1917 and 1918, named the operation the Gold Leaf because the rock that first revealed the area's riches was speckled with gold that formed a leaflike pattern. Rush had two daughters, Nellie and Alameda, who had helped dig a 115-foot shaft with hand tools. When Phoenix newspaper publisher Ned Creighton acquired the mine in 1933, he renamed it the Nellie Meda Mine in honor of Rush's daughters.

Creighton had interests in about 20 other mines as well as a lucrative newspaper business. As a result, he was able to obtain financing to drop the shaft to 450 feet. He built a kitchen, recreation hall, and a half dozen cabins to accommodate the workers isolated in the southwestern corner of Yavapai County. While most businesses were struggling in the aftermath of the Great Depression, the Nellie Meda Mine prospered, and its shares were traded on the Salt Lake Exchange.

One of Creighton's first employees was Harold Mason, a man who was destined to remain at the mine for 50 years. During World War II, the federal government closed down all mines that were not producing strategic metals, and the Nellie Meda suddenly became an all but useless chunk of 20 acres of lonely desert. Mason, a bachelor who had been living at the place as long as some of the vegetation, evidently liked the solitude, and Creighton liked Mason. He willed the mine to him.

Mason's closest link to civilization was an outpost called Aguila, a tiny farming community a few miles south of the mine, where Robson happened to establish a small manufacturing plant to fabricate wooden frames for beehives. In towns as small as Aguila, sooner or later everyone meets everyone else. Mason and Robson got to know each other.

In about 1972, Mason went to Robson at his plant in Aguila and said he'd been having problems with vandals at the old mine. Looking for a way to keep people out, he asked Robson if he'd mind putting some of his beehives on the property. Robson complied, vandalism evidently declined, and the two men developed a closer relationship.

At some point, Robson offhandedly mentioned to Mason that if he ever got interested in selling the mine, he'd like to make an offer. Mason kept that idea in the back of his mind for several years. Around 1979, he went to Robson and asked if he was serious about wanting to purchase the place. Robson said he was, and Mason indicated he would stipulate in his will that when he died Robson would have first crack at buying the place. Robson did not know at the time that Mason was suffering from cancer.

Later that year, Mason died in a Tucson hospital. He was 84 years old. He had lived at the mine for 50 years and never had the luxury of electricity or running water. About a year after Mason's death, the executor of his estate called Robson and told him that Mason had indicated in his will that he be given the first option for purchasing the mine.

"At first I wasn't certain what I was going to do with the place," Robson said. "But then we decided to build a mining museum. We brought in 150 semiloads of mining equipment. Fourteen buildings were here. There had been a community here at one time. We rebuilt almost everything and opened to the public January 19, 1992."

Since that time, 50 elderhostel groups have stayed at the place, accompanied by a geologist from Grand Canyon University in Phoenix. Although the Robsons have done no advertising, individuals driving lightly traveled State Route 71 have discovered them.

Mining World consists of 20 acres surrounded by two square miles of lush desert leased from the Bureau of Land Management, and there's no shortage of things to do there. Visitors can spend time

(OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP AND BOTTOM) *Dick Wick Hall's old grocery store and post office, trucked in from Salome, seems at home at Robson's. As a display case for Hanford's Balsam of Myrrh shows* (ABOVE), *the grocery is filled with turn-of-the-century merchandise, much of it from an old store in Solomonville.* (RIGHT) *A scale and other assayer's implements line the counter behind tandem barber chairs in Robson's combination hair parlour and assay office.*

exploring the late Dick Wick Hall's grocery store, for example. Hall was a grocer at nearby Salome who was best known for his sideline, writing humorous stories about Arizona life. The Robsons bought his store, which had closed in 1950, and trucked it in from Salome, then supplemented its contents with the turn-of-the-century merchandise from another historic store at Solomonville in the eastern end of the state. Adjacent to the grocery, there's a combination barber shop and assay office, and alongside that, there's the Hillside Press, an old newspaper office with an antique linotype machine and a hand press.

For Charles and Jeri Robson, Arizona Mining World was a way to preserve the state's history.

There's also a museum containing some 20,000 pounds of minerals, including honey-colored wulfenite, deep blue azurite, bright green malachite, Apache tears, and much more. At the end of the street, a storefront houses a steam-run electric generating plant that once powered the lights in Kingman, a town in the northwestern part of the state. The plant is there only as an oddity. All electricity at Robson's is provided by a solar installation, which means there are no utility lines to mar the view.

The "old" boardinghouse with its corrugated tin roof has been resurrected as a three-story hotel with comfortable knotty-pine rooms on the inside and rustic pine planks on the outside. Fresh coffee is served each morning on the hotel's enclosed porch, which offers a postcard view of the saguaro forest below.

Adjacent to the few original miner's cabins that remain unrestored, the Robsons have installed a sluice visitors can use to pan for gold. Sand from Weaver Creek at the base of Rich Hill, once one of the most lucrative gold mining areas in Arizona, is brought to Robson's, and tiny nuggets can still be found.

The area also offers wonderful opportunities for short hikes in a terrain thick with wildflowers, saguaros, and numerous pictographs of bighorn sheep etched in the rocks by prehistoric Indians. This rough terrain also is home to mountain lions, deer, coyotes, kit foxes, ringtails, and javelinas.

Somewhere in the ground below the animal tracks, pockets of gold may still exist, but the Robsons aren't looking. Their "gold mine," it is clear, is the huge collection of memorabilia they have assembled on a mine site that is an authentic relic of Arizona's past.

Sam Negri also wrote about trogon expert Rick Taylor in this issue.

Don B. Stevenson has returned to Robson's Arizona Mining World three times to explore and photograph more of man's treasures set among Nature's treasures.

WHEN YOU GO

To reach Robson's Arizona Mining World, drive State Route 93 about 16 miles north of Wickenburg to the junction of State Route 71. Go west on State 71 for approximately 11 miles. The sign for Robson's is on the right between Mileposts 89 and 90. Turn right onto a maintained gravel road and continue a mile and a half to the entrance. Visitors arriving via U.S. Route 60 will see a big Arizona Mining World sign about 4-1/2 miles after they turn north onto State 71.

Ask about panning for gold at the sluice, and be sure to explore the lush desert around Robson's. Wear comfortable walking shoes.

Visitors can eat at the Gold Leaf Saloon, a turn-of-the-century restaurant which, despite its name, does not serve alcohol. Accommodations are available in the hotel, shown at the left. The three-story, 24-room hotel was built on the site of the original boardinghouse. An enclosed porch affords superb views of the surrounding saguaro forest.

For additional information, contact Robson's Arizona Mining World, P.O. Box M-2, Wickenburg, AZ 85358; (602) 684-5838 or 684-3160.

Photo Adventures

Focusing on the Slot Canyons and Lake Powell

There is a world beneath the earth where up and down converge and the light creates awesome, ever-changing images.

A challenge for amateur and professional photographers alike, a trip to the Slot Canyons and Vermilion Cliffs near Lake Powell stretches the imagination and highlights the essence of natural light as it seeps through dark recesses and reflects off canyon walls. The trip also takes photographers high above the canyons for vistas of treacherous cliffs and powerful Lake Powell.

Join the Friends of *Arizona Highways* May 5 to 8 on a Photo Workshop led by photographer Michael Fatali, who has been capturing images of the Slot Canyons for years. From the glowing reddish-gold of the soft morning light to the fiery late afternoon sun that plays brilliantly off the sculptured sandstone rocks, the intense beauty of the area offers a stunning array of photographic experiences.

The first stop is for a Navajo lunch at Cameron Trading Post. Participants will then jeep to Antelope Canyon, a vibrant chasm with geologic designs.

Day two will include Horseshoe Overlook with its wonderful view of the Colorado River.

Vermilion Cliffs will be the first stop on day three, followed by Wirepass Trail Head, which leads to Buckskin Gulch, and the Paria Bluffs.

Then it's on to the world's largest natural rock span, Lake Powell's Rainbow Bridge.

Following are more trips.

PHOTO WORKSHOPS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS
Superstitions on Horseback; April 13-16; Gary Johnson.
Monument Valley; April 20-23; Tom Till.
Slot Canyons and Lake Powell; May 5-8; Michael Fatali.
Paria Canyon Backpack; May 10-14; Jerry Sieve.
Grand Canyon; June 8-12; Edward McCain.
Prescott Rodeo/Ranches; July 2-5; Ken Akers.

FRIENDS SCENIC TOURS
Keet Seel-Betatakin; June 2-5.
White Mountains by Horseback; August 15-19.
White Mountains Fly Fishing; September 29-October 2.

SCENIC TOURS WITH RAY MANLEY
Arizona Grand Tour; April 19-27.
Monument Valley-Canyon de Chelly; May 5-9 and October 27-31.

WHEN YOU GO

Photo Workshops, sponsored by the Friends of *Arizona Highways*, provide photographers of all skill levels with tips and hands-on experience to help them take pictures like those that appear in the magazine. Our master photographers lead the workshops and are assisted by experts from Nikon, Hasselblad, Fuji, and Image Craft.

Scenic Tours also are available.

For information on these and other tours, telephone the Friends' Travel Office, (602) 271-5904.

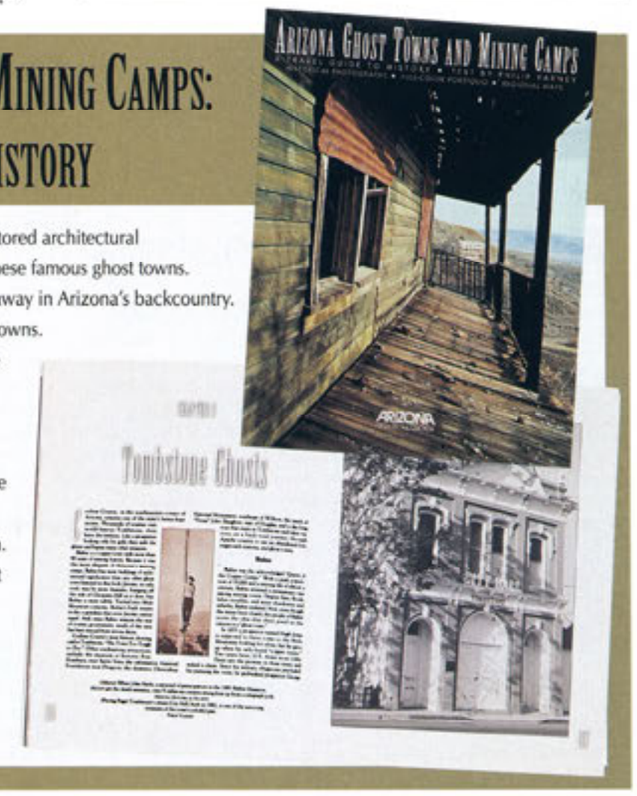
Arizona Ghost Towns and Mining Camps: A Travel Guide to History

Tombstone . . . Jerome . . . Bisbee . . . explore the restored architectural treasures, museums, boutiques, and restaurants in these famous ghost towns. Travel to remote, abandoned mining camps hidden away in Arizona's backcountry. And relive the exciting history of these boisterous boomtowns.

Ghost town authority Philip Varney brings to life these romantic vestiges of the Old West with intriguing anecdotes and a gallery of rare historical photographs. Regional maps, up-to-date travel information, and a full-color photographic portfolio tell what each site is like today, making this attractive book a reliable travel guide as well as a fascinating history of Arizona's mining boom.

The 136-page, 8 1/4" by 10 3/4" softcover book is just $14.95 plus shipping and handling.

Order through the attached card, or write or visit *Arizona Highways*, 2039 West Lewis Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85009. Or call toll-free nationwide, 1-800-543-5432. In the Phoenix area, call 258-1000.



Mileposts

Edited by Rebecca Mong

Orienteering Course

City slickers who fear finding their way in the great outdoors can take a step in the right direction on Phoenix's Papago Park orienteering course.

Set up by the Phoenix Parks, Recreation and Library Department, the course helps novices learn to use maps and compasses in unmarked terrain. (Intermediate and advanced courses also are available, and there also are courses at North Mountain and South Mountain parks; Papago Park's is the largest.)

An "easy" outing, the Papago course snakes through hilly desert and takes about an hour to complete. Maps, information, and compasses are supplied for beginners.

The course is open only to groups of 15 or more, but individuals and families can put their names on a waiting list, and they will be notified when to show up appropriately dressed and ready to become real outdoor folk.

To inquire, contact the parks' Central District Office, 1001 N. 52nd St., Phoenix, AZ 85008; (602) 256-3220. ■

Yuma Train Tours

Turn back the clock to yesteryear on the historic Yuma Valley Railway for a scenic, two-hour, 24-mile tour of the lower Colorado River valley. Riding comfortably in a fully restored 1922 Pullman coach, you'll head south along the river, past the historic waterfront and through the desert to Gadsden. Along the borderlands, you'll see California and the Mexican states of Sonora and Baja and pass through the Cocopah Indian Reservation. Chances are you'll spot some of the wildlife that live along the river. You'll also see the vast fields of produce that help make Yuma the "salad" capital of Arizona.

The Yuma Valley Railway has scheduled runs from October 1 through May 31. From April 1 to May 31, the train runs every Saturday, leaving the station at 10 A.M. and returning at noon. Fares are $5 to $9, adults; free, under age four.

For more information (lunch and dinner runs, train rental for special events), contact Yuma Valley Railway, P.O. Box 10305, Yuma, AZ 85366-8305; (602) 783-3456. ■

— Stuart Rosebrook

CONSERVE Arizona

Text and Illustration by Laura Jackson

Saguaros grow only in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona and Mexico, with a few minor exceptions in California. In Arizona it is illegal to remove them from their natural surroundings without a permit or to damage them.

- Saguaros provide nesting habitat for hawks, woodpeckers, owls, and pack rats; the flowers and fruit feed many desert denizens including bats, birds, rabbits, and javelinas.
- Saguaros live 100-150 years and weigh up to 2-3 tons. About 80 percent of the plant is water.
- The average saguaro sprouts an arm at about age 70.
- Saguaros are susceptible to frost damage.

Sources: Arizona Agriculture Department and the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum.

EVENTS

Culinary Festival
April 12-17; Scottsdale

The tasteful Scottsdale Culinary Festival has been drawing huge crowds (60,000 last year) since 1978. This year's food extravaganza promises everything from intimate wine tastings and the pricey — $175 per person — Le Tour Culinaire to family favorites (free admission) like the Great Arizona Picnic and Concerts Under the Stars. Information: 994-2787.

Copperdust Stampede Rodeo
April 15-16; Globe

The first rodeo performance of this PRCA event takes place Friday at 7:30 P.M. at the Gila County Fairgrounds. A 10 A.M. parade Saturday through downtown will be followed by a 1 P.M. rodeo performance. Dances begin at 9 P.M. both nights with a highlight of each to be the Wrangler Best Buns Contest — last year a six-year-old boy and a seven-year-old girl took top honors. Rodeo admission is $5, adults; $4, seniors; $1 kids; free, children under six. Information: 425-4495.

Peacock Jazz Festival
April 16; Glendale

Flocks of peacocks roam the grassy knolls and brick pathways of Sahuaro Ranch Park, the setting for this annual event featuring top regional and local performers. The music begins at 3 P.M. — and lasts till 10 P.M. — but arrive early to see the park's historic buildings, picnic, and, of course, watch the peacocks. Concession stands offering beverages and international foods will be available. Free admission. Information: 435-4108.

La Vuelta de Bisbee
April 27-May 1; Bisbee

During this big annual bike race, everybody's eye is on the clock — which is unusual for Bisbee, an old copper mining town known nowadays as much for its laid-back life-style as its rip-roaring frontier past. Top amateurs, including past Olympians, compete in a series of races that mostly begin and end at the convention center in historic old Bisbee. Probably the best time for spectators is the weekend. On Saturday there'll be a chili cook-off with public tasting and a children's bicycle contest; Sunday will include the Criterium, a multilap race up and down the hills of Old Bisbee, followed by the awards presentation. Watching's free and so are most of the activities. Information: 432-5795.

Chili Championship
April 30; Bullhead City

Bullhead City, a town that knows a thing or two about hot stuff — its summer temps make the national news — once again hosts the Arizona State Chili Championship Cook-off. Held at Rotary Park, the cook-off will feature more than one hundred hopeful chili chefs making the most of such ingredients as possum, rattlesnake, buffalo, kangaroo — and even beef. All-day activities start at 9 A.M.; the cook-off starts at noon, and at 3 P.M., there'll be free chili samples. Also on tap: live music, carnival rides, arts and crafts, game and food booths. Free admission. Information: 763-5885. ■

Information is subject to change; telephone to confirm before planning to attend events. Unless otherwise indicated, telephone numbers are in area code 602.

For a free Arizona travel kit and a calendar of events, telephone the Arizona Office of Tourism toll-free at 1 (800) 842-8257.

Event of the Month

By Marilyn Taylor

Culinary Imagination Takes the Prize at the Southwest Salsa Challenge

Barehandedly managing a big chunk of needled cholla cactus, Mexican chef Jose Molinar flashes a dare-me grin at the chief executive of Xerox/Arizona. Hamming like an on-stage magician, Molinar whips out a lighter and torches the cholla.

"Jeez, what are you doing?" asks Xerox's Jule Limoli. He's the host of the ninth annual Xerox Southwest Salsa Challenge in Phoenix, and right now he's not sure what he's gotten his company and 2,000 guests into. Needle-laced cholla salsa?

The needles incinerate to ash. Molinar rubs off the ash, slaps the green cholla chunk down on a chopping block, and picks up a chef's knife. He briskly dices the cactus and wipes it into a frying pan in which his cooking partner is sautéing onions, garlic, cilantro, and other secret salsa stuff.

Molinar hands Limoli a tortilla chip dripping with gravy-thick brown salsa. Limoli tries it. He likes it. Molinar hands him another salsa-drenched chip.

The Xerox Southwest Salsa Challenge, touted as one of the largest salsa contests in the Southwest, is held every year in Phoenix to benefit Arizona's Hemophilia Association.

The parking lot at Aunt Chilada's, a Mexican restaurant at the Pointe-Hilton South Mountain, has been transformed into Mexican market-style rows of cooking booths established by more than two dozen professional and amateur salsa wizards.

According to challenge rules, entrants must make their salsas on site, beginning at 9 A.M. Also, only fresh ingredients can be used. After hours of judging by a special panel and tasting and balloting by the public, several awards are given in categories including the Best Hot Salsa, Best Use of Chiles, and Best Restaurant Salsa.

By 9:30 A.M., the paths between entrants' booths trap heavenly drifts of Southwest cooking aromas: freshly chopped cilantro, garlic, green and yellow onions, pungent chiles, and ripe tomatoes. Molinar's cholla is only one of the day's many unusual ingredients. Others are grilled smoked tomatoes, grilled cantaloupe, diced mango, black beans, and fresh chunked pineapple.

And then there are the salsa names, promoted by posters fastened to each of the booths. El Salsa Inferno, High Mountain Salsa, Mingalicious Salsa, and The Salsa That Can't Be Xeroxed. Even Phoenix Suns' Dan Majerle has donated his SUNs-Rise Salsa to promote the event, as did Phoenix Mayor Paul Johnson, with his Salsa por los Muchachos (nothing hot in it).

The fresh aromas mix with bright festive colors beaming from piñatas, salsa "team" flags, garlands of chiles and bougainvillea, balloons, and "try us, we're the best" banners.

One entrant, Minga Garcia, has used food dye on her home-made tortilla chips, and they're heaped in colorful mounds of green, turquoise, red, yellow, orange, and blue.

Public tasters, who have paid $5 to sample entries, arrive at 10 A.M. and stroll to each booth, where they are offered fresh salsa ladled onto golden tortilla chips.

Curiously, most of the tasters instantly are drawn to

amateur chef Tim Long's booth, which promises aficionados the hottest salsa around.

And at the close of the day, it's Long, with his burning entry, who wins the most awards: People's Choice, Best Hot Salsa, Best Use of Chiles, and, justly, Best Name for a Salsa: Satan's Revenge. ■

WHEN YOU GO

The 1994 Xerox Southwest Salsa Challenge will be held from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M., Saturday, April 23 at Aunt Chilada's, Pointe-Hilton Squaw Peak in Phoenix. For more information about entering or attending the event, call Arizona's Hemophilia Association, (602) 266-8427.

(ABOVE, LEFT) *Shane Higginbotham extols a pineapple salsa at the Xerox Southwest Salsa Challenge.* (ABOVE, RIGHT) *With a mouthful of tortilla chips, Teddy Medina participates in the whistling contest.* BOTH BY ERROL ZIMMERMAN SALSA PHOTO BY CARLTONS' PHOTOGRAPHIC

Text by Rose Houk ✳ Illustrations by Kateri Weiss

Five Dead Outlaws Leave No Clues to $125,000 in Buried Loot

The outlaws are definitely dead. But their loot — valued at $125,000 in gold, silver bars, and coins — may still be out there in the desert, waiting for someone to find it. The outlaws were five in number, and they were buried near the loot they supposedly heisted from a stagecoach near Canyon Diablo between Winslow and Flagstaff.

The story of the Dead Outlaws' Loot began on the morning of May 10, 1881, at the rawboned town of Canyon Diablo. Here passengers sat in a red Concord stagecoach, waiting to leave the woebegone spot. They had to deboard the decidedly more commodious train and climb into the stagecoach because the Atlantic & Pacific Railroad tracks stopped at this point. Canyon Diablo was not only a town but also an approximately 250-foot-deep defile awaiting a bridge before the railroad could continue its westward progress.

While the tired, cramped passengers tried to make themselves comfortable, a Wells Fargo employee unceremoniously stashed four mailbags in the boot on the back of the stage. The driver snapped the reins, and the six-horse team pulled the stage away from the station.

The stage driver was none other than muleskinner John Hance, who would later make a career of guiding enthralled visitors into the Grand Canyon and regaling them with incredible tall tales. On this particular morning, though, Hance was about his work, driving the stage north to a spot where the horses could negotiate Canyon Diablo. They then charged west across the red sands of the Little Colorado River valley, past the black cinder hills, and steadily upward into the lush green forests that flank the San Francisco Peaks.

As Hance let the lathered horses slow to catch their breath, five men appeared out of nowhere and surrounded the stage. The unmasked bandits pointed the business end of their six-shooters straight at Hance's nose. Despite the driver's assurances that there was no money box aboard, the outlaws dispatched two heavy mail sacks from the boot and then ordered the stage on its way.

The passengers were wide-eyed but still in possession of their valuables. Hance himself may have been a bit unnerved, but he also was curious that the bandits had taken only a couple of apparently worthless sacks of mail and left his passengers unaccosted.

At 5 P.M. the stage finally arrived in Flagstaff, which wasn't much of a town back then either. When Hance reported to the stationmaster that "some folks ain't gonna get their mail today," the agent blanched and escorted him inside, along with the grim-faced town marshal.

The agent informed Hance that the mailbags had been a disguise: inside were not purloined letters but "a fortune" in gold and silver packed in two whiskey kegs and wrapped in paper. Because there had been so many robberies along the stage line, Wells Fargo was transferring the money incognito from a bank in Albuquerque to San Francisco. Hance said what the others were thinking: it had to have been an inside job for the outlaws to know which two bags to lift.

A posse headed out immediately, but the outlaws were long gone. More than a week later, Capt. E.C. Hentig and his Sixth U.S. Cavalry, Company D, out of Fort Apache, heard of the robbery. With some Indian scouts, they started to track the by then lukewarm trail of the robbers. The trail led them to a spring tucked into the San Francisco Peaks above Flagstaff. Here Hentig and his troops found five men about to mount their horses; one was a burly red-bearded man who matched the description given by John Hance.

An exchange of gunfire left the five supposed robbers dead. They were placed in a single shallow grave beside the cabin at the spring. According to Hentig, there was no sign of any loot. Later Hance was brought to the temporary grave, the bodies were exhumed, and he identified them as the ones who held up the stage.

As time went on, the robbery made good wintertime storytelling among Flagstaff's early settlers. Prospectors occasionally showed up to look for the gold and silver, including a mysterious father and son who claimed they had come to study the geology of the area. They were seen in ice caves near the spring, poring over a map by lantern light. When a homesteader confronted them, they acknowledged that their intention was to find the lost treasure. But they never let on where they had gotten the map.

Some believe the spot where the loot is buried is marked by letters inscribed in a rock near the old cabin by the spring. Others, perhaps affected by the altitude, claim they've seen a silvery light glowing in the vicinity.

The story took on renewed credibility in 1913 when "Short Jimmy" McGuire appeared in a Flagstaff saloon, declaring he had found the lost loot with the help of a willow water witch. A month later he was back at the same bar, flashing $50 gold pieces and buying drinks for everybody in the house.

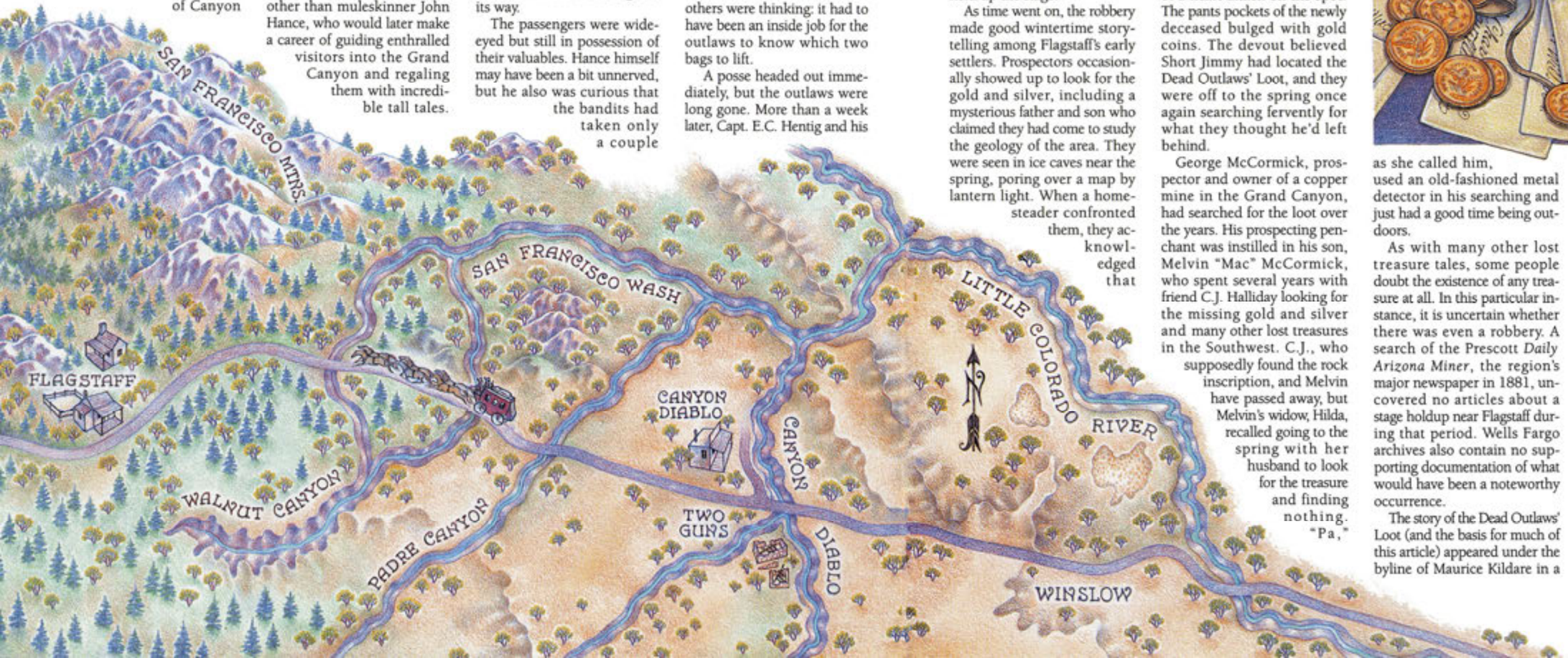
Unfortunately Jimmy had one too many and keeled over of a heart attack on the spot. The pants pockets of the newly deceased bulged with gold coins. The devout believed Short Jimmy had located the Dead Outlaws' Loot, and they were off to the spring once again searching fervently for what they thought he'd left behind.

George McCormick, prospector and owner of a copper mine in the Grand Canyon, had searched for the loot over the years. His prospecting penchant was instilled in his son, Melvin "Mac" McCormick, who spent several years with friend C.J. Halliday looking for the missing gold and silver and many other lost treasures in the Southwest. C.J., who supposedly found the rock inscription, and Melvin have passed away, but Melvin's widow, Hilda, recalled going to the spring with her husband to look for the treasure and finding nothing. "Pa," as she called him, used an old-fashioned metal detector in his searching and just had a good time being outdoors.

As with many other lost treasure tales, some people doubt the existence of any treasure at all. In this particular instance, it is uncertain whether there was even a robbery. A search of the Prescott *Daily Arizona Miner*, the region's major newspaper in 1881, uncovered no articles about a stage holdup near Flagstaff during that period. Wells Fargo archives also contain no supporting documentation of what would have been a noteworthy occurrence.

The story of the Dead Outlaws' Loot (and the basis for much of this article) appeared under the byline of Maurice Kildare in a Western pulp magazine. Kildare was one of many pen names used by the late Gladwell "Toney" Richardson, one of the West's most prolific writers on lost mines and lost treasures. In his 76 years, this Flagstaff resident wrote more than 300 novels and 5,000 magazine articles under his own and many other names. Richardson knew both Melvin McCormick and C.J. Halliday, and he said that he was with Halliday when the treasure hunter found the inscription etched into the rocks near the spring.

Still, might this have been just another of John Hance's tall tales? Hilda McCormick believes not. There is a Dead Outlaws' Loot, she says, "or Pa wouldn't have looked for it." ■



Arizona Humor

Plant Expert

A friend visiting Arizona for the first time was eager to learn as much as possible about the state. He took detailed notes on the various cacti and other desert plants.

After I identified several olive trees for him, he got a puzzled look on his face and asked, "How do you tell which ones are green and which ones are black?"

Sam Cissel
Mesa

Hot Tub Talk

In Tempe during spring baseball training, I was relaxing by the pool and listening to a three-year-old boy sharing all he knew with an aging gentleman reclining in a hot tub.

"Mimi is in the apartment. Mama's swimming over there." Then, after a pause, "My papa is with the angels."

The man fell silent. Guessing what he must be thinking, I spoke up. "His father is not with the heavenly angels. He's with the California Angels."

Margie Knickerbocker
Dewey

Moving to Arizona

Several years ago when my wife and I decided to relocate from Miami, Florida, to Tucson we wanted to make sure our children, Toby, six, and Gloria, eight, were comfortable with the idea. We gathered together to discuss the move.

Gloria asked about time zones.

"Yes, Arizona's in a different time zone," I said. "It's in the Mountain Time Zone, three hours earlier than Florida."

Toby asked if the weather were like Florida's.

"Oh, yes, but Arizona has a different warmth," I said. "It's not hot and humid like Florida. It's hot and arid. Not wet. Arid means dry."

The next day we overheard Toby's conversation with a young friend.

"Yeah," said Toby, "we're moving to where it's hot and dry."

"Where's that?"

"I'm not real sure," Toby said, "but it's in a different place and time, somewhere in the mountains, in the Arid Zona."

Gary E. Sabbag
Tucson

"I liked all of your sermon, Reverend, except that part about sheep."

JIM WILLOUGHBY

Teenage Impression

Our teenage nephew, who viewed himself as a cool and unflappable dude, had heard about the Grand Canyon in school back East, but now his family was on a vacation and headed for the real thing.

At Yaki Point on the South Rim, he peered over the guardrail into the sun-dappled abyss. For a long moment he stared, eyes wide, jaw slack. Finally he sputtered, "What the devil happened here?"

Robert W. Bermudes
Rochester, NY

Tom Mix Memorial

My family and I stopped to visit the Tom Mix Memorial on U.S. Route 89 between Florence and Tucson.

As we read the bronze plaque embedded in the memorial, which stands a good eight feet high, I explained how the famous cowboy movie star crashed his Cord auto at this spot and died.

Our seven-year-old son, Adam, was impressed and, after several reflective moments, opined, "I think I know what happened, Dad. I'll bet Mr. Mix ran right into this monument."

D.P. Maynard
Mesa

Church Offering

While visiting his grandparents in Tucson, our son Sean attended his first church service with the grown-ups.

As the offering plate was being passed around, Sean watched intently as person after person donated.

Noticing his interest, his grandmother asked if he would like to fill out an envelope.

He did so, and when the plate came around he dropped it in.

"So," he asked his grandparents as the plate continued down the aisle, "if they pick my name what do I win?"

E.R. Nathe
Los Angeles, CA

Oak Creek Fishing

My young son and I were returning to our Oak Creek campsite after a successful morning of trout fishing. As we walked past our neighboring camp, a man drawled, "How did you come to get all wet, son?"

"I didn't come to get all wet," Jim replied. "I came to fish and I slipped on a rock."

Marcia Devere
Tarkwa
Ghana, West Africa

Rolling Stone

My younger brother said he knew when I was still quite young that I was going to be a scientist.

"And what made you think so?" I asked.

"Remember when we used to climb the hills around Miami and roll big rocks down the sides?"

"Yeah, but how did you know I was going to be a scientist?"

"Because every time we'd roll a stone down the hill, you'd follow it down, roll it around to look it over, and then you'd shake your head and say, 'Nope, no moss.'"

Charles Osterberg
Tucson

TO SUBMIT HUMOR

Send us a short note about your humorous experiences in Arizona, and we'll pay $75 for each one we publish.

We're looking for short stories, no more than 200 words, that deal with Arizona topics and have a humorous punch line.

Send them to Humor, *Arizona Highways*, 2039 W. Lewis Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85009. Please enclose your name, address, and telephone number with each submission.

We'll notify those whose stories we intend to publish, but we cannot acknowledge or return unused submissions.

Roadside Rest

By Don Dedera

Talking Turkey in Mexico Isn't What You May Think

For many years I have cherished a friend, Vidal "Vic" Rivera, who once held a mid-level position in the Mexico Tourist Bureau. At the same time I was active in the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce, dedicated, then as now, to nurturing relationships between Arizona and Mexico. Arizona annually exports almost $2 billion in goods to Mexico, and today our state is home to about 700,000 Hispanics.

When Vic was my host below the border, neighborly sentiments colored our conversation.

"Welcome to the proud land of my parentage," Vic might say.

"*Usted mi hermano,*" my response might be, "My brother."

I remember one day we were on a tour bus careening through a rolling countryside of *ejidos*, farmlets that checkerboarded about half of the nation's agricultural areas. I felt compelled to utter something — anything — to foster international goodwill.

"How arrogant of us, Vic," said I, "that more North Americans do not speak Spanish. The language is part of our Southwestern heritage, and it is spoken in the big cities of the Midwest and East. Yet most of us non-Hispanics can talk only to the animals of Mexico."

As I reflected upon my brilliance, Vic smiled blandly.

"Is that so?" he wondered. "And exactly what would you say, for example, to a Mexican chicken?"

"*Cluck, cluck,* of course."

Vic rolled his eyes. "A Mexican chicken goes *clo, clo.* I tutor Spanish, and I have made a study of this thing."

Still, I argued, "Everybody knows that a chicken *clucks.* All over the world dogs go *bowwow,* except for Annie's Sandy, which barks arf."

An edge of patronizing patience sharpened Vic's voice. "Never in all the glorious history of Mexico has a self-respecting dog uttered *bowwow.* No patriotic Mexican dog would wake up his pueblo with such an inanity. Mexican dogs go *guauguau.* Or maybe *giauo.*"

Inanity, indeed! I scarcely masked my suspicion that what's-his-name had lost his marbles. "It's simple phonetics," I lectured. "North or south, horses are horses. To any ear, they *neigh, neigh.* Watch some reruns of "Mr. Ed," man."

"Ree-dick-you-luss," hissed Vic. "To a Mexican ear, horses go *i-i-i-i-i, i-i-i-i-i. Neigh* is not even close, hombre."

I retorted testily, "And now you're going to tell me that donkeys do not say *hee-haw.*"

"Burros bray *ji jau.*"

We were closer on cows, goats, and sheep. But as to roosters, Vic allowed, "In Mexico, if a male fowl should say *cock-a-doodle-do,* the hens would peck him to death. A Mexican rooster cries *ki-ki-ri-kiiiii.* And chicks don't *peep.* They say *pio, pio.*"

It was too much. I exclaimed, "Donald Duck talks through a Kleenex in his cheek. All other ducks *quack.*"

"*Cua, cua, cua,*" Vic taunted.

"In the world's leading country, turkeys also are known as gobblers because they call *gobble, gobble.* The turkey is so American, Benjamin Franklin nominated it as the national bird."

"*Ai, Chihuahua!*" yelled Vic. "Wild turkeys are as Mexican as *salsa verde,* and they say *gurdu, gurdu,* except around Mexico City, where the dialect is *gordo, gordo.*"

Which brought us to owls.

Grasping for comic relief, I said, "Did you hear about the adoring mama owl that bragged about her baby, 'Color-wise, feather-wise, and vision-wise, he is perfect.' And another owl asked, 'Yeah, but how is he wise-wise?'"

Vic frowned. "But owls do not go *who, who.* They go *ooo, ooo.* No w-h sound."

On the subject of pigeons, I informed Vic that Phoenix City Hall daily was insulted by hundreds of these winged vandals, each enunciating *coo, coo.* Vic said the defacement of the municipal building in Hermosillo was no less, but there the pigeons plainly speak *cu, curu, curu.*

Pigs. Ours *oink.* Theirs *joink.*

Again, we seemed to be closing the linguistic gap. Encouraged, I told Vic that back home we called pigs like so:

"Sooooooeeee! Sooooooeee! Pig! Pig! Pig!"

Vic shook his head. "Mexican pigs would head for Guatemala. Down here you have to shout: Ahhhhhhhhhhh! Ahhhhhhhhh! *Cochi! Cochi! Cochi!*"

We fell into sullen silence until our bus rolled into an inspection station. Little boy car-watchers were extracting tribute from U.S. motorists.

"Rivera," I demanded, bitterly, "when is this country going to crack down on these little bandidos?"

"When your stores accept the peso, as the dollar is accepted down here, that's when."

"*Cluck, cluck,*" I teased.

"*Clo, clo,*" countered Vic.

"Still buddies?" I asked.

"Amigos forever," he answered, and we laughed all the way to the cantina.

JACK GRAHAM

Text by Tom Dollar ✷ Photographs by Marty Cordano

Ride the Grassy Hills of a Cattle Baron's Ranch near Tucson

If while riding across the grassy oak-flecked hills of the Empire-Cienega Resource Conservation Area you begin to feel that you're in the middle of a cattle baron's immense fief, there's good reason. The Empire-Cienega's 45,000 acres is as big as a feudal realm, and, although no longer owned by a cattle baron, cows still graze here. It all started with a meager 160 acres, a small adobe house and corral, and about 600 head of cattle.

The year was 1876, a time when land grabbers, mining speculators, and stockmen were amassing huge personal fortunes. Wealthy men were called railroad czars, industrial tycoons, and cattle barons. So, inspired by naive ambition or perhaps downright prescience, when 24-year-old Walter L. Vail and a partner paid $1,174 for the 160-acre spread, he promptly dubbed it Empire Ranch. Thirty years later, Vail's empire had become a king's domain in more than name. Forty thousand head of cattle grazed on 1,000 square miles of rangeland sprawling across parts of eastern Pima and northern Santa Cruz counties.

Located 46 miles southeast of Tucson along state Route 83, Empire-Cienega lies in a high desert basin at 4,500 feet, situated between the Whetstone and the Santa Rita mountains. The preserve supports one of the few true grasslands remaining in the state. In some parts of the range grasses grow to six feet. Cottonwoods, willows, and velvet ash grow along Cienega Creek, which bubbles to the surface near the original ranch headquarters. Hillsides are covered with oak, juniper, and scattered mesquite. Managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the conservation area consists of portions of the former Empire, Cienega, and Rose Tree ranches.

(ABOVE) *More than a thousand head of cattle graze the 45,000 acres of grassland in the Empire-Cienega Resource Conservation Area, the one-time site of a cattle baron's empire.*
(RIGHT) *Located southeast of Tucson between the Whetstone and Santa Rita mountains, the Empire-Cienega stretches across a high desert basin and supports one of the few remaining true grasslands in the state.*

For me, Empire-Cienega always seems to be on the way to somewhere else. On the way to Sonoita or Patagonia, the Huachuca or Santa Rita mountains, the San Pedro River, Bisbee, Douglas. It's not much of a detour, 16 to 20 miles, depending on the number of byways I follow and the amount of time I don't mind whiling away. Although it lengthens my journey, a drive through the conservation area doubles the pleasure.

The turnoff onto Empire Ranch Road is on the east side of State Route 83, just south of Milepost 40, approximately 20 miles south of Interstate 10. A sign clearly marks the entrance. Another entrance is on State Route 82 four miles east of Sonoita. What I usually prefer, depending on my destination, is to enter one gate and exit the other.

After about .8 of a mile, the road approaches a kiosk which shelters a guest register. Interpretive bulletins are sometimes posted here, and maps of the preserve, when available, also can be picked up at this point. During the week, I usually see only a few names before mine in the register. Sometimes I meet other visitors on the roads that lace the area. Often I see no one at all.

Walter L. Vail's original adobe homestead stands amid a group of other ranch buildings 3.3 miles east of the entrance. After acquiring the property in July, 1876, Vail and one of his partners, an Englishman named Herbert Hislop, spent the night sleeping on the mud floor in the windowless house. When Vail brought his bride to Empire Ranch in 1884, he built onto the house. One of the additions was a large living room with a bay window.

You come to a road fork near several corrals just east (right side of the fork) of ranch headquarters. At this point, Empire Ranch Road continues north; South Road meanders south-southeast.

One of my favorite rest spots is dead ahead on Empire Ranch Road, just a few hundred yards from the road fork. A charcoal grill and picnic table sit amid some very large cottonwood trees that line a small creek.

Picnicking and camping are allowed just about anywhere on Empire-Cienega, unless otherwise posted. On a typical weekend, bird-watchers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, and hikers are encamped. One cool spring afternoon, I happened upon the camp of about 12 kennel club members, and I spent an enjoyable hour watching them run their bird dogs through field trials.

Beyond the picnic area a short distance, Cienega Creek surfaces and flows about 10 miles before going underground again. Eventually the creek joins Pantano Wash near the Rincon Mountains 20 miles north of ranch headquarters. For five years, Vail and others operated Total Wreck, a very profitable silver mine, near Pantano Wash. In its heyday, the mine supported a community of 300 people, and its profits helped Vail develop Empire Ranch.

(OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP) *Rancher Walter Vail's house, which he enlarged when he brought his new wife there in 1884, still stands on the property.* (BELOW) *Storm clouds build over the rolling grasslands.* (LEFT) *Giant cottonwoods line a small creek near the picnic area at Empire-Cienega. Visitors can picnic and camp almost anywhere in the conservation area.*

Four and a half miles from ranch headquarters, on Empire Ranch Road, the roadway rises to follow the crest of a dike erected when the *cienega*, "marsh," was drained for agriculture. Green fields parallel the left side of the road and a flood-control ditch runs along the right side. No crops are grown here now, but cows graze, a reminder that this is still a working cattle ranch.

For most passenger cars, the tour of the north portion of Empire-Cienega ends here. But if your vehicle has four-wheel drive, the fun has just begun. A number of "real" back roads take off from this point to meander slowly, very slowly, up into Apache, Mattie, and Spring Water canyons.

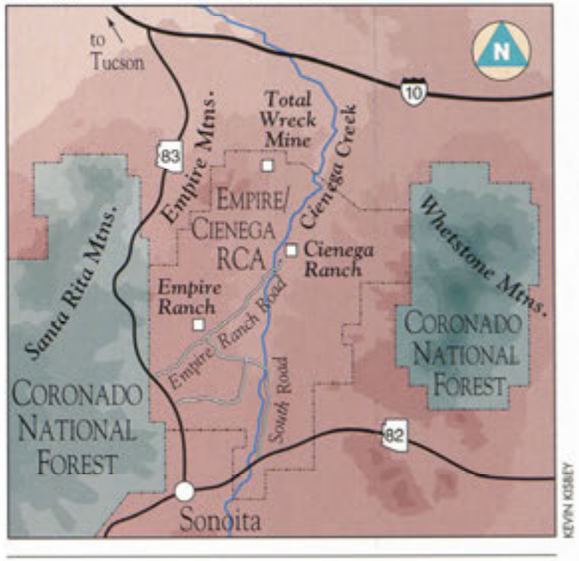
I've spent many a happy weekend exploring these roads on my mountain bike, which, unfortunately, is not equipped with an odometer, so I can't give distances between points. When I'm enjoying an outing, time and distance become irrelevant anyway.

At this point, you can turn around and drive back to the road fork near the corrals. From here you can go back the way you came to State 83 or take South Road about 8.2 miles across the southern portion of the area to State 82. About three miles from the road fork, another road intersects from the right. If you turn here, you will come out at State 83 but will miss much of the preserve. Don't turn. Instead continue on South Road in a wide loop of about 5.2 miles to State 82.

TIPS FOR TRAVELERS

Back-road travel can be hazardous if you are not prepared for the unexpected. Whether traveling in the desert or in the high country, be aware of weather and road conditions, and make sure you and your vehicle are in top shape, and you have plenty of water.

Don't travel alone, and let someone at home know where you're going and when you plan to return.



KEVIN KISSLEY

Hike of the Month

By Rick Heffernon

Orchestrate Your Own Flower Show on the Ballantine Trail

Along the Ballantine Trail, hikers encounter clumps of brittlebush (LEFT), *jojoba, and cacti, including the saguaro and ocotillo* (RIGHT). BOTH BY NICK BEREZENKO (BELOW) *Seeing an elusive Gila monster is an unexpected treat.* T.A. WIEWANDT

Up ahead Rob called out: "Look at this." A 16-inch-long Gila monster was crossing our trail. I trotted over, reached for my camera, and accidentally dropped a film cap on the ground a foot from the animal's head. At first the big lizard showed no reaction, but when I reached down to retrieve my film cap, it suddenly whipped around to face me. So much for the Gila monster's reputation as sluggish and lumbering.

Our monster backed up under a small cholla. Its forked black tongue dutifully flicked the air for scent as its coal black eyes kept track of my feet. But I couldn't keep my eyes from the Gila monster's back. It was a beautiful piece of beadwork in swirling patterns of coral and black. One of the creature's paws particularly caught my eye. Each toe was wrapped in beaded pink rings.

We — four hikers and a beautifully beaded monster — were on the Ballantine Trail, a long snaking passage that could have led us all the way from saguaros to snow country if we'd had the time. But not that spring day.

I'd hiked the Ballantine many times. It is an especially convenient trail for me because it lies about halfway between Phoenix and my home near Pine, perfectly situated as a meeting point for hikes with friends from the city. That day, for example, I'd planned to meet some friends for the Ballantine's springtime desert flower show, one of the best in years.

We started at 10 A.M. on the north fork of the Pine Creek Loop. Within a half mile, we were traipsing along a stream lined with mesquite and cottonwoods and one of the biggest droopy-armed saguaros I've ever had the pleasure to meet. The slope to our right was painted nearly solid purple with lupine, while bursts of yellow from brittlebush, gold from poppies, pink from owl clover, and red from ocotillo filled in around the edges. As we hiked, we identified more than 20 other wildflowers on this trail, but we left at least another 50 unnamed. Flowers we had never seen before seemed to pop open as we approached.

After about four miles, much of it steady climbing along the ridge between Pine Creek and Camp Creek, we reached Boulder Flat just in time for lunch. We crossed the creek to find a pleasant place to stretch out on the rocks. While we relaxed, a red-tailed hawk drifted by, and a perky little rock wren repeatedly hopped upon boulders to belt out songs as if auditioning. The air whirred with nectar-drinking insects, and a black-chinned hummingbird sat on a bare paloverde branch and seemed to lick its "lips."

From Boulder Flat we had a choice. We could continue east up into narrow Ballantine Canyon and on south to the Four Peaks Road some seven or eight miles and more than 2,000 feet in elevation gain. On the other hand, we could cut off on a non-system, unmaintained trail to the north, traverse along the foot of Boulder Mountain and eventually hit the hamlet of Sunflower at Sycamore Creek. Or we could do what we did: lounge around in the sun a bit longer, then take our time moseying back to the car sniffing flowers as we went. Not a bad choice. That was when we saw the Gila monster. ✚

WHEN YOU GO

The Ballantine is primarily a desert trail, so the best times to hike it are in the cooler months of the year. It is recommended that you call ahead to check trail conditions. In spring be sure to bring along a flower identification book. The Pine Creek Loop, about three miles long, is at the beginning of the trail and is fairly easy, but the rest of the Ballantine can be strenuous. The rugged trail climbs about 4,000 feet in 12 miles before dropping down to its terminus at Cline Cabin.

To reach the Ballantine Trailhead from the Phoenix area, take State Route 87 northeast to Milepost 210.3 (about 32 miles from the junction of McDowell and Country Club roads in Mesa). The trailhead and parking area are on the east side of the highway, and the trail is well-marked. Topographic maps are a must.

For additional information, contact the Mesa Ranger District, Tonto National Forest, P.O. Box 5800, Mesa, AZ 85211-5800; (602) 379-6446.

KEVIN KIRSEY