

Native American Hoop Dancers Converge on Phoenix

# ARIZONA HIGHWAYS

FEBRUARY 2007

14 **Fun Things**  
to do on the  
**Reservations**



## Reservation Guide

# Many Nations

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## online arizonahighways.com

Native American, Spanish, Mexican and European influences have made Arizona one of the most culturally rich states in the country. This month, discover Arizona's Native American traditions at arizonahighways.com and click on our February "Trip Planner" for an expanded guide to visit Arizona's Indian nations.

**HUMOR** Our writer takes his hat off to Arizona.

**WEEKEND GETAWAY** Bond with fellow birders at a southeastern Arizona B&B.

**EXPERIENCE ARIZONA** Plan a trip with our calendar of events.

**FRUITFUL FUN** Kids of all ages dash for sweet treats during the "Fruit Scramble" event at the 4th Annual Natoni Horse Race on the Navajo Indian Reservation. See story, page 16. TOM BEAN

**FRONT COVER** Navajo hoop dancer Tyrese Jensen, 7, competes in the 16th Annual World Championship Hoop Dance Contest held at the Heard Museum in downtown Phoenix. See story, page 32. JEFF KIDA

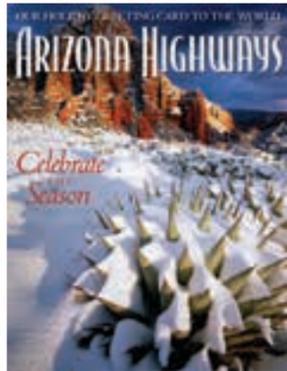
**BACK COVER** A hiker amounts to a Tiny Tim on the window "sill" of Los Gigantes Buttes Arch near the Lukachukai Mountains on the Navajo Indian Reservation. See story, page 24. TOM TILL

To order a print of this photograph, see information on opposite page.



#### Photographic Prints Available

Prints of some photographs are available for purchase, as designated in captions. To order, call toll-free (866) 962-1191 or visit [www.magazineprints.com](http://www.magazineprints.com).



**Loved the Poems**

Your *Arizona Highways* December 2006 edition is outstanding. The pictures and, in particular, the poems were excellent. Do you think you could republish the pictures and these poems in a stand-alone booklet format? These would be outstanding gifts. Last but not least, could you create for your magazine a set of articles focusing on the individual Arizona Indian tribes?

—Paul F. Dougher, Gilbert

Whew. So glad you liked the poems. If we get a good response, we'll consider doing more—maybe even a book that combines scenic photography and poetry. I was sweating whether or not readers would like the poems. Sometimes, being the editor is a walk along the

edge—but then, the view is much better there. —Peter Aleshire, Editor

**Poetry—Ugh!**

I have been a subscriber for more than 10 years. I once read it cover to cover. Now I don't. I initially was disappointed when several sections were relegated to the Internet Web site, then the format changed, now it seems to be on writing. December 2006 was the capper. I have no interest in reading poetry in *Arizona Highways*! Also, I don't like Peter Aleshire's flowery, contrived and affected writing style. Is the magazine trying to save money by getting double duty out of the editor?

Larry Weaver, *Show Low*

I just fell off the edge. But wait, there was no poetry in the January issue—just lots of aerial photography. And no February flourishes. Oh, wait. March will be all about pollinators and poppies. Very flowery. Drat. —Ed.

**Preserving the State's Heritage**

I'm a longtime subscriber to your magazine and a fairly recent newcomer to Arizona. I believe in Arizona's American Dream, so I am devoting much of my time to the conservation of the natural and historic heritage of this great place. Your magazine has been very successful in promoting Arizona—perhaps too successful. *Arizona Highways* has been a prime cause of the accelerating growth, which now poses a challenge to its own natural and historic heritage. I think that now is the time to devote more of your editorial resources to preserving the wondrous beauty that you so capably showcase.

—Murray Bolesta, *Green Valley*

Here's my rationalization: By showcasing the beauty of these places, we increase public support for protecting them. Moreover, we sometimes address those issues directly—as in the November 2006 story about

pothunters plundering land designated for addition to the Petrified Forest National Park. At least that's what I remind myself. We publish stories about wonderful and pristine places hoping to inspire visits to those places to find solace and a sense of preservation and appreciation. —Ed.

**Acts of Kindness on State Route 77**

Recently, my husband, who had just had major surgery, and I were moving to Tucson for treatment at the Arizona Cancer Center. We were thoroughly enjoying a fine autumn drive south on State Route 77 until, at the bottom of Salt River Canyon, we had a flat tire.

Almost simultaneously, a young man stepped out of a pickup next to us saying, "Would you like a hand changing that?" A wave of relief and appreciation swept over us. The young man and his girlfriend not only changed the tire, but also followed us to Globe in case we had any additional trouble. In Globe, the busy staff at the tire company agreed to fix our tire, although it would be a 90-minute wait.

Someone suggested we might enjoy eating lunch at Libby's Mexican Cafe about a mile back down the road. There, in a tiny pink building with a faded sign, we found great local atmosphere and good food, a treat we would have missed. I can't say we wanted a flat tire any more than anyone wants cancer, but our experience opened up for us the opportunity to appreciate the many acts of loving kindness ordinary people do for travelers along Arizona's highways.

—Nancy Lethcoe, *Tucson*

I am consistently amazed and moved by the kindness of strangers, especially in the outback. Now I only hope your kind heart and wonderful attitude are reflected in the outcome of the treatments. —Ed.

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**highways on tv**

*Arizona Highways* magazine has inspired an independent weekly television series, hosted by Phoenix TV news anchor Robin Sewell. For channels and show times, log on to [arizonahighways.com](http://arizonahighways.com); click on "DISCOVER ARIZONA"; then click on the "*Arizona Highways* goes to television!" link on the right-hand side.



Pam and Winford celebrate the persistence of love overlooking the Grand Canyon.

**Love on the Edge**

AS I CLIMBED ABOARD the Grand Canyon Railway train with a randomly selected scattering of strangers, I didn't expect much. I had my mind on the Grand Canyon, not the two-hour trundle on the train through juniper and grassland. So I settled into the refurbished railway car, with its well-stocked bar, amiable strangers and big windows.

Immediately, Birdie bustled through the half-full car, exuding good cheer. A combination tour guide, bartender and enabler, Birdie happily dispensed drinks, jokes and Canyon tidbits in equal measure.

Sitting quietly, I covertly studied my fellow passengers, fascinated as always by the pinball dynamics of people bouncing off unfamiliar bumpers.

A German couple sat off by themselves, looking out the window and making soft, secret comments. He was a beer stein, she was light on the water.

A balding man, a harried woman and three jumping-bean kids took up one set of seats—the kids frenetic, the parents fatalistic.

An elderly couple, impeccably dressed for an outing, alternated between gazing steadfastly out the window and fondly studying the three kids, nostalgic for the scurry and the laughter.

But I found myself drawn mostly to a quiet, Anglo woman with a wickedly ironic smile sitting with a dashing black man in a white panama hat, a Hawaiian shirt and white pants, from whom joy spilled like water from the top of a fountain.

His delight in the day was palpable. It ran down his chin like mango juice from too large a bite. Something about him put everyone within 10 feet at immediate ease. He had seemingly won the lottery, inherited a fortune, just won the Pulitzer—something big and impossible to resist.

And she watched him with a half-smile, delight and mischief sparkling in her eyes. They were the major and minor notes on a keyboard, half a note off, blending perfectly. They riffed and rippled. She seemed always about to laugh, he, always laughing. They seemed half odd couple, half soul mates.

They drew me naturally and easily into conversation, as though we'd gone to high school together and had to catch up.

They were nothing alike. Yet Pam and Winford fell in love easily, like breathing. He was irrepressible, she was unflappable, so what seemed oil and water proved more tequila and mix. It was absurd. They had nothing but love and joy. They didn't fit. Their families knew it. Anyone could look and see.

Then Winford's divorced first wife took the kids and moved to the South, 2,000 miles from where Pam had put down deep roots in San Diego.

So he made the hard choice. He followed his kids. He left Pam in San Diego.

They died inside, far from one another. Seeking solace, she undertook a trip to the Grand Canyon, hoping that so vast a space would shrink her grief to its proper size.

It didn't. It only made her miss him more. She saw condors and thought how much he would have loved to see them. She fed squirrels and thought how he would have laughed at their antics. She studied diagrams of the rock layers in the Canyon wall and thought how it would have fascinated him.

She went home, bleeding but resigned to live with the wound. Then one day, all dappled with light, Winford came back.

They didn't fit, but nothing else made sense. So she asked him to return to the Canyon with her, to see it for the first time.

The train came then to the Canyon, to the edge, to the beginning of things, friends of the moment and the circumstance.

Birdie bustled us off the car, laughing and waving goodbye. Somehow, Winford and Pam had made us all friends, intimate and fond and warmed by their glow.

I walked with them to the Rim, to look down through the layers of time, down to the granites and schists forged in the heart of the Earth 1.2 billion years ago when life was but an ooze and a hope. We balanced atop the limestones of the Rim, laid down before dinosaurs got ambitious and long before anyone had the capacity for anything so extravagant and unreasonable as love.

Winford and Pam stared into the Canyon—he for the first time and she as though for the first time. They fed the squirrels, and he laughed, head thrown back. She pointed to the red and yellow and white and lavender layers of rock across the way. A great bird—maybe a condor—wheeled past and he tilted his head back and pointed.

Standing there in the sun, I'd never seen a grander sight—nor love so layered.

Happy Valentine's Day, my beloved readers.



editor@azonahighways.com

## A Girl's Dream and a Photographer's Eye

OUT THERE IN a dust cloud, a thunder of Navajo kids on horseback charges right at photographer Tom Bean—a joyful mingling of ancient tradition and modern adaptation in a horse race that somehow materialized on a flat, red expanse of dust and shrub in the rolling heart of the Navajo Indian Reservation.

Tom found himself in that moment the same way he'd managed to sustain a profession in his long career of photographing all over Arizona—by remaining open to every possibility—always.

Oddly enough, that blend of passion and happenstance lay at the heart of the horse race itself, which all grew out of the dream of a young Navajo girl.

Of course, any good photographer has to learn how to pick up the scent of the story—and also how to adapt to change without abandoning tradition. That's especially true in this time of technological upheaval, as digital cameras replace film. The avalanche of digital images has already dramatically impacted photographers, mostly by burying the stock photography business on which so many freelancers depended.

The digital revolution has also required photographers to spend half their time just keeping up with image-editing programs, while constantly investing in new cameras with greater storage capacity.

Through it all, photographers must scramble to find economical ways to continue doing what they love—making compelling images.

Then there's Tom Bean, who shot this month's story on the Navajos' 4th Annual Natoní Horse Race, a fund-raiser inspired by 13-year-old Shanee Natoní.

It all began in 2004, when Tom, a 20-year contributor to *Arizona Highways*, listened to then-*Highways* Photography Editor Richard Maack talk about the magazine's search for stories that showcased not only the state's landscapes, but also its people, cultures and lifestyles.

The next day, Tom pitched a photo essay about Dr. Adrienne Ruby, a mobile veterinarian on the Navajo Reservation. Richard gave him the go-ahead.

On one of his many ride-alongs with the reservation vet, Tom ended up in the middle of nowhere at a Navajo horse race, with no idea of what to expect. Fortunately, he'd long ago learned the great lesson for all photographers: Expect the unexpected.

Suddenly, one story became two.

Because he was with Dr. Ruby, a respected member of the community, Tom got the acceptance and access he needed to document the event.

Still shooting film at that time, Tom made a quick edit, scanned a number of images and e-mailed them to the



Shanee Natoní

magazine. Director of Photography Peter Ensenberger loved those initial images, so Tom rattled back out to the distant and dusty spaces on the reservation to find more races so he could learn the rhythms of the events that would allow him to place himself in just the right spot to capture the images. From race to race, he reviewed his photographs, constantly refining his shot selection.

He also purchased his first digital SLR camera.

Now armed with both formats, working in the heat of summer, at a time of day when most savvy landscape photographers are either sleeping or scouting, Tom captured the spirit and essence of the event.

Like so many great photographers, he found a way to use harsh and difficult light to his advantage. When covering the action, he looked for dramatic backlighting, utilizing the haze of the rising dust. For the more intimate portraits, Tom wisely set up under awnings and used the cowl-like shade of horse trailers on site. This is where he captured the quiet moment with Shanee (above), with bits and bridles framing her exuberance.

At that moment, everything clicked—Navajo tradition, a girl's dream, a photographer's improvisation and the latest technology. He recorded his images on both film and digital formats. Both work very well in this application—grain meets pixel. This narrative speaks of culture and tradition, potential and possibility.

What a great pleasure to work with people who love what they do and, in spite of so many environmental and technological odds, determine to make the personal sacrifices to realize their vision.

Whether it's a photographer peering into the dust.

Or a grinning girl with a great dream. ■■■

## taking the off-ramp



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### Gila Monsters: From Demonized to Droolin' for Drugs

IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE 20TH CENTURY, Arizonans who had recently migrated from the East knew little about the unique desert creatures that dwelt in the West. Scorpions, rattlesnakes and lizards of all types inhabited the region, causing some settlers to wonder about their new home. A Territorial Arizona woman (above) displays two Gila monsters, when the lizards' venom and habits were still much debated. As the largest native lizards in the country, these desert dwellers inspired tall tales and monster myths. One myth alleges that the Gila monster uses its fetid breath as a weakening weapon. Another legend asserts that when a Gila monster clamps its strong jaws, it won't release its grip until sundown or a thunderclap. But recently, Gila monsters have found a new claim to fame: drooling for drugs. An experimental medication developed from Gila monster saliva reportedly can "tell" pancreatic cells when to produce insulin and may someday eliminate the need for insulin injections for people with diabetes.

—Kimberly Hosey

### The Bear Facts

WITH HIS GRIZZLED BEARD, 6-foot-4-inch frame, and paws “hard as Malpais boulders,” Jesse Jefferson “Bear” Howard (below) resembled the animals he trapped well into his 80th year. This larger-than-life character became part of Arizona folklore long before his death at age 93.

Born in Illinois in 1817, Howard fought in the Mexican-American War, and sold supplies to forty-niners. He fled California after shooting a Mexican sheepherder during a dispute over pastureland. A wanted man, Howard ended up settling near Oak Creek Canyon’s West Fork. There, he pursued mountain lions, bears, elk, antelope and deer, selling his game to lumbermen and railroad crews in Flagstaff. Together with the official bounty, a bear’s meat, hide and tallow could fetch 10 times the daily wage of a laborer. Howard also bred horses and mules and, at 69, he still rode the meanest broncs. Like the extinction of Arizona’s grizzly population, the bear man’s death in 1910 marked the end of an era.

—Michael Engelhard



### An Old-timer Keeps Watch Over the San Pedro

IT WOULD BE HARD TO FIND A MORE PEACEFUL PICNIC SPOT than under the huge Fremont cottonwood tree that towers near the San Pedro House. The tree is somewhere between 90 and 130 years old, and its trunk is nearly 30 feet in diameter. Relatives of willows, cottonwoods grow in riparian areas and provide the smooth, easily carved roots from which Hopi Indians make kachinas.

Once home to the Apaches, then to cattle ranchers and potato farmers, the wide river valley is now part of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. Recently, The Nature Conservancy named the area as one of the “Last Great Places” of the northern hemisphere. The San Pedro River forms a migratory superhighway for bats, hummingbirds, tropical songbirds and insects. Visitors, wandering along hiking, riding and biking trails with binoculars “glued” to their faces, spend hours watching the 350 species of birds that either migrate through or winter there.

Run by volunteers, the San Pedro House, a restored historic ranch house, serves as the unofficial Bureau of Land Management’s visitors center. Books, maps and cards are available, and it’s open daily from 9:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., except Thanksgiving and Christmas.

The San Pedro House is on the west side of the San Pedro River, 7 miles east of where State routes 90 and 92 intersect in Sierra Vista.

Information: (520) 439-6400.

—Wynne Brown

### Underwater Arizona Towns

FORGET ATLANTIS—Arizona has its own share of lost, submerged towns. Well, they’re not really lost, since their locations are known to Arizona history.

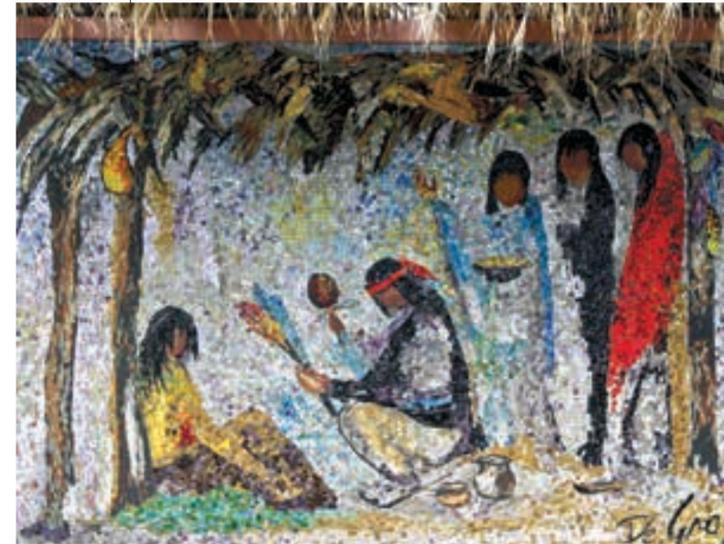
Some lakes retain the names

of the drowned towns like Alamo Crossing, which is under Alamo Lake. But sometimes there’s no relation at all. The town of Frog Tanks or Pratt is under Lake Pleasant, and the former Colorado River port Castle Dome Landing is under the

waters of Martinez Lake.

Just as Arizona lost Pah-Ute County to Nevada in 1866, we also lost the river port and the Pah-Ute County seat Callville to Lake Mead. It’s still there, but now it’s known as Callville Bay.

—Vince Murray



### DeGrazia’s Medicine Man Mosaic

AMONG THE HUNDREDS OF PAINTINGS on permanent display at Ted DeGrazia’s famed Gallery in the Sun in Tucson is “Desert Medicine Man,” a Tohono O’odham healer under a mesquite ramada with his feathers and fetishes healing a sick Indian as others look on. Arizona’s best-known painter (he died in 1982), DeGrazia occasionally chose Indian healers and medicine men as subjects for his art, but none matched the popularity of this image. Reproduced in thousands of prints, the painting also served as a model for one of DeGrazia’s first major mural commissions—a large Italian glass tile mosaic (left) created for the Sherwood Medical Center in Tucson. In serious disrepair after years of neglect and weathering, the mosaic was reclaimed by the DeGrazia Foundation and moved to the gallery grounds, where it was repaired and restored and is now permanently displayed outdoors, not far from the gallery’s main entrance and DeGrazia’s original home.

—Ron Butler



### Buckaroo Spanglish

**Q:** ASIDE FROM BEING part of Western vernacular, what do a lasso, a wrangler and a rodeo have in common?

**A:** They all derive from Spanish words, reminding us of the Anglo cowboy’s debt to his Mexican counterpart.

Few people realize that ranching in Latin America predated similar activities in the United States. Hispanic influence reached the West by way of Texas, California, Arizona and New Mexico. Many names for cowboy equipment such as chaps, cinch and corral have roots in Spanish equestrian culture. Horse colorings like pinto, meaning “paint,” sprang from the same lexicon. “Buckaroo” itself is a corruption of *vaquero*—“cow man.” Topographic features, foods, clothing, materials and practices all bear the stamp of Hispanic horsemen. Without them, Arizona’s multiethnic palette would be less colorful.

—Michael Engelhard



### Horse Whisperers Give Second Chance at Life

TUCKED AWAY ON 25 ACRES near Elgin, Whisper’s Sanctuary at the Double R Heart Ranch shelters horses and other animals that have been abused, neglected or abandoned. Owners Ross Romeo and Toni Leo started the sanctuary in March 2006 to provide animals with a safe and loving environment, giving them an unexpected “second chance” at life.

New animals get jobs according to their interests, abilities and personalities. Whether serving as a companion, security guard or visitor greeter, each animal plays a meaningful role in the sanctuary’s operation. According to Toni, this allows them to give back to the community for the care they receive.

Since its inception, Whisper’s Sanctuary has fielded requests for 15 horse placements. The owners pay the \$2,000 per year per horse cost of basic care out of their own pockets, including the “unadoptables” that might otherwise be destroyed. “It’s love on our part,” says Ross. “We give the horses an opportunity to get the care they’ve never had before.”

Information: (520) 455-5424; www.rrheartranch.com.

—Marilyn Hawkes

# Delight OR DEFENSE?

DESIGN OF SOUTHWESTERN  
PUEBLOS STILL SPURS  
QUESTIONS

BY LAWRENCE W. CHEEK

**PUEBLO DEL ARROYO** Draped in a layer of snow, the pueblo's massive stone walls stand deserted in Chaco Culture National Historical Park, New Mexico. Early Southwestern dwellers left behind many clues that help historians understand ancient cultures. **GEORGE H.H. HUEY**





**WE AMERICANS ARE**, at heart, a romantic people. Give us a choice and we'll take the mysterious over the mundane, the poetic over the pragmatic. And why not? Life is more interesting in the realm of the right brain.

### SEDITIONARY THOUGHTS FOR

someone committed to the science of archaeology, as I am, but in this setting—a whisper-quiet spring morning, facing the great sandstone proscenium that frames the ruin of Betatakin—they will not clear away. The ruin, a 135-room pueblo begun in 1267 and abandoned a generation later, is simply beautiful. In our time, squarish architecture meets curvish earth with a jarring thud, but this miniature village, like so many of its contemporaries, seems to bud from the floor and walls of its alcove as gracefully as a living organism. Architects today would say that its “siting” and “massing” are masterful.

But did its builders have beauty on their minds?

The pueblo form literally emerged from the earth in what we now call the Southwest—Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado—over several centuries, beginning in the A.D. 700s. Before this, early Southwesterners took shelter in pit houses scooped out of the ground and built up with walls and roofs of logs, sticks and patted mud. They were dark, dingy and inclined to catch fire, but also thermally efficient; archaeologists say they would have been more comfortable in winter than the aboveground compounds that followed.

But the compounds, which Spanish explorers later termed *pueblos* (“towns”), were more durable, and they reflected increasingly sophisticated social organization. Between 700 and 1100, the Southwest's population exploded by 1,000 to 2,000 percent, which meant more dependence on agriculture and community cooperation. Food could be better preserved from spoilage and scavengers in stone masonry buildings, and extended family ties could be expressed in the joined rooms of a pueblo.

These ancient condos took dramatically different forms, depending on who built them and where. Tuzigoot, built in Arizona's Verde Valley beginning in 1076, crowns a ridge by stairstepping up the land's natural contours; it

fulfills Frank Lloyd Wright's dictum more than eight centuries later, which stated, “No houses should ever be on any hill . . . it should be of the hill, belonging to it, so hill and house could live together each the happier for the other.”

New Mexico's Chaco Canyon was a ceremonial center with “Great Houses” of enigmatic geometry with up to 800 rooms on five stories. Taos, the most famous living pueblo, is a syncopated stack of adobe cubes that seems to echo the form of the mountain looming behind it.

And finally came the cliff dwellings, an architectural form that materialized and spread throughout the Southwest, wherever there were alcoves in cliffs and canyon walls, in a curiously short bracket of time. Tree rings recorded a furious construction boom between 1200 and 1280. Then even more quickly, by 1300, they were abandoned.

Despite how tour guides and even some museums play it, the abandonment isn't much of a mystery. Too many people, too few resources. Toward the end, the cliff dwellers could have found themselves combing a radius of several miles just for firewood. A tenacious drought from 1276 to 1299, also recorded in tree rings, probably caused repeated crop failures. James Charles, superintendent of Navajo National Monument, reduces it to common-sense archaeology. “I tend to look for the simple reasons,” he says as we walk into Betatakin. “They used up their welcome and moved on.”

For me, the compelling question is why they were built in the first place—shelter, defense or sheer beauty? The romantic in me asks for beauty. I want to believe that even people living on the rocky edge of survival found joy in architecture, the most enriching of all the arts. But I'm nagged by a line I remember from Marc-Antoine Laugier, the 18th-century Jesuit philosopher whose *Essai sur l'architecture* offered profound observations on civilization and building. “A building is neither more nor less magnificent,” Laugier wrote, “than is appropriate to its purpose.”

**ANCIENT IMAGES** The ancestral Puebloans fashioned pictographs (above) using mineral pigments and natural plant dyes. TOM TILL

**BETATAKIN** A cliff dwelling formed of sandstone bricks (right) clings to rocky Tsegi Canyon in Navajo National Monument. The Puebloans who lived here farmed and hunted game in the steep canyons at an elevation of 7,000 feet. GEORGE H.H. HUEY



**SPRUCE TREE HOUSE**  
A protective cliff overhang shelters the ancient structure in Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado. The remote cliff dwelling, built in the 13th century, once housed about 80 Puebloan residents. GEORGE H.H. HUEY



## ONE OF THE FIRST EUROPEANS

to see a pueblo immediately inferred that it was designed for defense. In 1540, one of Coronado's lieutenants, Hernando de Alvarado, reported finding "an ancient building like a fortress" in western New Mexico (the exact location is unknown) and then scrambling to another pueblo "on a very high rock, with such a rough ascent that we repented having gone up to the place."

Later explorers made the same instinctive assumptions. Charles Lummis, the newspaperman who hiked from Ohio to California in 1884, reported from Canyon de Chelly that the pueblos "are usually high up from the bottom of the cliff, and between them and the foot is a precipitous ascent which no enemy could scale if any resistance whatever was made." In 1891, Gustaf Nordenskiöld, the self-taught but meticulous archaeologist who investigated Mesa Verde, declared that "Nothing short of the ever imminent attacks of a hostile people can have driven the cliff-dwellers to these impregnable mountain fastnesses."

This tide of theory turned in the 20th century. A persistent problem was that archaeologists had failed to dig up any evidence of those "hostile people." Ancient warfare also became politically unfashionable. The Hopis, Zunis and New Mexican Puebloans, apparent descendants of the cliff-dwelling Anasazi, had cultivated the modern image of peace-loving people, and this tinted the research into their past. Romanticization was spinning white America's view of Native America, as it always has.

What were the other possible reasons for the rush into the cliffs? Superior shelter was one, an idea that occurred to the novelist and naturalist Mary Austin. Cliff dwellings were "an easy adaptation to local advantages," she wrote in 1924. "Why dig a hole when there is a

hole in a wall already dug for you?" The alcoves would have kept the rain and snow off and the wind out, and at least the exposed rows of dwellings would have enjoyed solar heating in winter—most large cliff dwellings face south.

Another reason leaps out at anyone who's ever suffered a flooded house: to raise the pueblos off low-lying floodplains. And the more people there were to feed, the more valuable this farmland would become—too valuable, perhaps, to spend on housing.

And what about beauty? We know from their surviving basketry, pottery and even clothing that the ancient Puebloans had an appreciation of fine design and proportion, and it became more sophisticated over time. The tense, parallel figures painted on Puebloan jars and bowls—triangles, ziggurats, rectilinear scrolls—are first cousins to the architectural composition of pueblos such as Keet Seel and Betatakin. It doesn't seem far-fetched to imagine that the architects of these containerized cities took some care to plan and organize their lines.

The trouble with all these theories is encapsulated in one word of that last sentence: *imagine*. We amateur archaeologists—and sometimes professionals, too—can easily color our thinking by what we want to see, or expect to see because we peer through the prism of our own time and culture. Where we perceive beauty, people in utterly foreign circumstances might have seen only terrible necessity. We tend to romanticize art and architecture in their ruined forms.

"It's like the Greek statues, which actually were painted and had clothes on them," says Peabody Museum Curator Steven LeBlanc, a prominent Southwest archaeologist. "What the cliff dwellings might have looked like when they were occupied, with all the laundry hanging out, is not what we see today."



**PUEBLO BONITO** Morning fog cloaks the ruins at Chaco Canyon. At its zenith, the pueblo rose four or five stories high with more than 800 rooms surrounding a central plaza. A thin layer of protective plaster once covered the tightly packed stone walls. GEORGE H.H. HUEY



**KEET SEEL** To reach the jagged ruins in Navajo National Monument (far left), visitors must navigate a strenuous 17-mile round-trip trail. Early inhabitants hauled building materials up the steep cliffs using hand- and toe-holes carved in the stone. GEORGE H.H. HUEY

**TUZIGOOT** The rocky remains at Tuzigoot National Monument (left) overlook the lush Verde Valley and the city of Cottonwood. The Sinagua occupied the ancient village from about A.D. 1000 to 1400 and grew corn, beans, squash, native plants and cotton on the surrounding land. GEORGE H.H. HUEY



**CLAY VESSELS** Ancestral Puebloans fashioned natural paintbrushes from the yucca plant to decorate their pottery. Unglazed pots, called ollas, were used for carrying water, cooking and storing grains. The more intricate Kayenta Black-on-white olla (above left) dates from A.D. 1260 to 1300. The Sosi Black-on-white vessel (above right) was made between A.D. 1070 to 1150. GEORGE H.H. HUEY

**WHITE HOUSE RUINS** Nestled in a sandstone cave beneath a 600-foot sheer cliff, the secluded ruins overlook Canyon de Chelly (right). Ancient Puebloan people occupied the precarious cliff dwelling from the 9th through the 11th centuries. GEORGE H.H. HUEY

## THE CLIFF DWELLINGS INDEED

offered terrific protection from storms and floods, but at quite a price. In my research for the book *A.D. 1250*, I climbed to many cliff dwellings that (a) required serious effort, (b) scared me witless, or (c) both. I pondered the additional burden of hauling up an antelope carcass or an armload of firewood, and envisioned toddlers scampering on a narrow plaza with a 300-foot drop to the canyon floor.

Some of the professionals believe in what might be called “common-sense archaeology,” and this seems like a good place for it. Northern Arizona University archaeologist Chris Downum is one of them. “There are some sites in the Grand Canyon located in unbelievably dangerous, difficult-to-access sites,” he says. “There was no reason on earth people would have built there unless they were afraid for their lives every night when they went to sleep.”

In the late 1990s, the warfare theory suddenly revived, although it’s still furiously controversial. Among other advocates, LeBlanc published an enormous book forthrightly titled *Prehistoric Warfare in the American Southwest* and laid out the archaeological evidence: burned villages, mutilated and unburied human remains, patterns of population clustering and defensive sites. LeBlanc believes that beginning around A.D. 1250 the entire Southwest was engulfed in warfare, not with “foreign” invaders but among neighbors fighting for survival over dwindling natural resources.

It wasn’t anything like the contemporary warfare of medieval Europe; the Americans didn’t have the communications, the technology or the sophisticated command structure to hurl massed armies at each other. If the horse—the catalyst for so many advancements in Europe—had been native to the Americas, the story might have been different. Here, warfare was opportunistic: hit-and-run pillage, captive-taking, ambushes and massacres. Apparently nobody conceived of the siege strategy, which would have been effective against cliff-dwellers. When Coronado’s troops besieged a New

Mexico pueblo, the defenders seemed unprepared—they quickly ran out of water.

But the fighting was serious and deadly. Between 1250 and 1400, the people of the Southwest abandoned thousands of villages, moved around in flurries and imploded in population. Provocatively, LeBlanc says that modern warfare disturbs us because it usually isn’t about survival, and therefore it seems senseless. But the ancient Southwest had no Red Cross to provide relief and no United Nations to mediate disputes, and fighting was about living or dying. “Just because we live in an era of senseless wars,” LeBlanc says, “does not mean war was always senseless.”

On the morning of my prowl through Betatakin, the ruin seems reluctant to whisper of violence. The canyon air is crisp and silent, and the relic aspens are putting out the first tentative shoots of spring. A snow field, preserved in a shady corner, is punctuated by a fox’s delicate pawprints. These rhythms of life seem intact and perpetual. Romanticism, as usual, rears its pretty head.

I contemplate why, and how, a primitive people in desperate circumstances would build such an elaborate and beautiful fortress, if that’s what it was. Did the beauty occur as a coincidence, are we imagining something that isn’t there or were these canyon pueblos designed to look impressive as a territorial statement to potential enemies?

Amazingly, Laugier’s principle explains it all. The cliff dwellings are magnificent because they needed to be for all the reasons we can imagine, environmental and social. They were a last, great effort of people squeezed by circumstances beyond their control. If their builders considered them beautiful, it was an act of faith in their civilization—something we romantics can’t prove, but must believe. ■

*Lawrence W. Cheek wrote A.D. 1250: Ancient Peoples of the Southwest, published by Arizona Highways, and currently is working on a book about Mesa Verde. He lives in Issaquah, Washington.*



# Tradition Triumphs

HOOVES POUND, HEARTS FLUTTER, GROUND SHAKES AT NAVAJO HORSE RACE

By LEO W. BANKS Photographs by TOM BEAN



**HIGH-SPEED FACES** Competition inspires a range of emotions as young boys drive their own brand of souped-up mustangs to the finish line at the Rocky Ridge 4th Annual Natoni Horse Race on the Navajo Indian Reservation.

DUST BILLOWS TO THE ENDLESS SKY as 14 horses gallop past. Heads arching high and lunging low. Mouths hanging open. Hooves drumming the dirt track. *Pa-dump, pa-dump, pa-dump* they go, making the ground shake and hearts flutter on a summer day in Indian country.

A thousand people have come to the 4th Annual Natoní Horse Race at a waterless, mercilessly hot outpost called Rocky Ridge.

This is Navajo country, all the amenities at your command. Dust for lunch, sage for dinner and a heaping bowl of blue sky for dessert. By dark, participants and onlookers alike will be so filthy they could flick the dirt from their ears and plant corn.

But nobody complains. Everyone defines happiness in his or her own way. Here it means bringing a community together for a day of reunion and food and retelling old stories and creating new ones and feeling the pure joy of racing horses in the sun.

"Navajos have done this ever since we came home from Fort Sumner," says Eugene Natoní, referring to the tribe's four-year New Mexico exile imposed by the U.S. Army in the 1860s. "It's part of how we live."

Tradition holds great sway on the reservation. So does showing respect for elders.

In 2003, Eugene's daughter Shanee was stepping down as Western Junior Rodeo Association queen. But she needed money to buy a new saddle and a crown for the incoming queen, as custom demanded.

The matter became a family affair that included Shanee's mom, Missy, Uncle Ryan and Aunt Leta Natoní and another uncle and aunt, Darrell and Leona Natoní.

They decided on a fund-raising horse race in honor of their late grandfather, John Natoní. His life revolved around racing horses.

The first race had an entry fee of \$50 and drew 100 people.

The following year, the race attracted much bigger numbers. The Natonís posted flyers as far away as Farmington, New Mexico, but most came by word-of-mouth. The Navajo Indian

Reservation is the biggest small town in the world.

This year, Eugene's sister, Alvina Hernández, drove 1,000 miles from Killeen, Texas, with her husband, three kids and a seriously nervous Chihuahua dog named Mama.

"I come to honor my grandfather," says Alvina. "He was a gentle, loving man who taught us how to live and survive, and how to handle livestock. We cherish those lessons. And it's just great to come home."

Gathering to celebrate runs deep in the Navajo character.

"The elders especially love to see everyone again," says Missy Natoní. She adds that other reservation towns—from Steamboat to Inscription House to Red Lake—have followed the Natonís' lead and started races of their own.

Little Shanee, now 13, stands trackside beneath her family's tent, a look of surprise overspreading her features. She never intended on starting a prairie fire.

"I didn't think it was possible to go from 100 people to 1,000 people in four years," says the bright-eyed teen. She throws her arms wide at the happy commotion around her. "But I guess it is."

Race fans begin showing up early this day, filling usually lonesome Rocky Ridge with big belt buckles and cool hats.

Tents and umbrellas go up for precious shade. The air holds the scent of kerosene from open-fire kitchens set up beside campers and trailers.

Name your pleasure. A Navajo taco? A brisket sandwich with Spanish rice and beans? The corn stew is out of this world.

Long before the first race, pickup trucks line the track for prime, front-row seating. Forget about a guardrail or restraining rope.

Sometimes a horse will out-stubborn his jockey and bolt off the track, back toward its trailer.

"Look out! . . . Runaway!" someone shouts, and the crowd scatters like quail. But no one suffers anything worse than a spit bath.

Between horse races, the Natonís put on fruit grabs, in which a dozen or so contestants dash through the dirt on foot to collect

bananas, apples and other fruit scattered around the track. The competition gets wild.

Adrienne Ruby, who is 63, takes part in one of the fruit grabs, and winds up getting bumped onto her fanny in the happy melee.

No problem. Ruby, known as the Rez Vet, for the mobile veterinary service she runs, departs the track, gripping that fruit like gold, and beaming under her straw hat.

Dan Gray, an old boy from west Texas, can't resist needling her. He unloads a mouthful of tobacco juice that looks like Valvoline, and says, "Doc, you was moving like a slow elk out there."

But Ruby has reason to be tuckered out. She arrived at Rocky Ridge early, and barely had time to shake the wrinkles out of her socks before going to work.

**HOT SPOTS** A welcome wind sweeps over spectators and the mane of an Appaloosa at Yazzie's Benefit Horse Race in Jeddito. With temperatures in excess of 90 degrees and no shade in sight, Navajo Nation horse races can be grueling for both man and beast.



**HORSEPOWER** Though it began less than five years ago, the Natoní Horse Race instills a sense of passion, pride and longstanding tradition in young tribal members like Valentino Shootinglady (left) and Troy Begay. Other races like it have been held throughout the Navajo Nation for more than a hundred years.

WINNERS HERE CAN WALK AWAY WITH A NEW SADDLE, VALUED AT \$650,  
OR A FINE EMBROIDERED HORSE BLANKET.  
A RIDER HAVING A GOOD DAY CAN TAKE HOME A CASH WAD OF \$1,000.



"I get recognized everywhere I go on the reservation, so it isn't long before people come over wanting to buy medicine, or have me check their animals," she says. "Why, just this morning I was castrating a horse up on that hill over there."

The races begin about 9 A.M., and run throughout the day, a total of 12 in all, with entry fees up to \$50. They range in length from 330 yards to 5 miles, although the shorter races have been scratched for 2007. Without a starting gate, a horse that jumps off early can steal a victory, causing too many disputes.

It seems the Natonis' seat-of-the-pants family endeavor has begun to attract competitive riders hungry for cash and prizes.

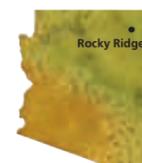
Winners here can walk away with a new saddle, valued at \$650, or a fine embroidered horse blanket. A rider having a good day can take home a cash wad of \$1,000.

Two years ago, Kirt Atakai stirred local pride when he beat two fellows who'd brought their fancy thoroughbreds down from Utah, figuring they were a cinch to win the 5-mile race.

Atakai burned up the track and smoked the out-of-town big shots, drawing wild cheers from local patriots. "I was all proud watching that," says Louise Sheppard, Atakai's mom.

At the moment, she's standing beneath the family's open-side tent with her sister, Nancy, and their kids. They all have death grips on its metal frame to keep the gusting wind from relocating the whole contraption to a different area code.

#### when you go



**Location:** About 120 miles from Flagstaff.  
**Getting There:** From Flagstaff take Interstate 40 east for 55 miles to State Route 87 at Exit 257. Drive north for 55 miles on State 87 to the Hopi Cultural Center on Second Mesa. From there, take Indian Route 4 north for about 15 miles. Turn left at the sign for Hardrock. Continue on the paved road, ignoring the left turn that leads uphill to the Hardrock Chapter House. Drive 3 miles and look left about a mile in the distance for rising dust, horses and trailers. At the end of 3 miles, stop at a T intersection, where Rocky Ridge School sits on the right. Turn left onto the dirt road and drive for about a mile to the Rocky Ridge Store. The races take place on a large patch of dirt near the store. Look for dust billows and follow the horse trailers.  
**Hours:** The race is scheduled for June 2. Events begin about 9 A.M. and run until the races and awards ceremony ends, around 5 P.M.  
**Additional Information:** The area has no stadium seating or parking lots. Some food vendors sell their wares near the race, but visitors should bring their own supplies.

Louise is a policewoman, a Hopi Ranger from Rocky Ridge who grew up on horseback. When she was an infant, her mom would wrap her in a blanket and cradle her as her horse trotted along. Louise began riding by herself at age 2.

With her horses laid up, she's not competing this year. But Louise is usually a Natonis race regular, and a regular winner. She won a total of \$800 in the second and third seasons.

The pleasure of the day as a whole shows on the faces of those who have gathered at the Sheppard tent. Louise and Nancy draw a happy throng, with folks coming to share a plate of food, or share local scuttlebutt.

The good spirits are important to Louise right now. Her son Kirt, a 23-year-old Army medic, has just completed a tour of duty in Afghanistan, and he is scheduled for deployment to Iraq.

Louise adorns her tent with an American flag in his honor. It helps remind friends and family that Kirt is away, and prompts visitors to ask about him.

"Their support helps keep me going," says Louise. "I'm not racing today, but I had to be here because Kirt will call tonight from Hawaii, and I know he'll ask about the races. He always wants to know how his horses and other animals are doing back home. It makes him feel good."

It's 4 P.M. and all eyes in the Sheppard tent turn to the start of the 3-mile race.

The horses are mustangs, most of the riders bareback. A stout fellow in a big hat waves his arms and calls for bids, auctioneer-style.

"Ten dollars!" he shouts. "Do I hear \$20? How about \$20!" The highest bidder has that horse to win, and if it does, the animal's owner pockets the total amount wagered on the 14 horses. In this case, the Calcutta purse comes to \$245.

Off they go, the jockeys hunching down, the sound of their snapping whips meeting the *pa-dump, pa-dump* of the mustangs' churning legs.

"Look at them go!" calls announcer Ed Begay over the loud speaker. "I'd run, too, if I had a bunch of wild Indians chasing me!"

A strange silence settles over the track as the riders vanish behind the distant hills, flying dust the only evidence of their exertion.

A calm before the final storm. Now here they come 'round again, back to the finish line in an explosion of dirt and full-throated shouts and arms raised in triumph.

The winner is 14-year-old Troy Begay of Dinnebito. Still clinging to his mustang's bare hide, Troy circles back toward the Sheppard tent and brings his frothing mount to heel beside his mother, Trudy Johnson, who is clapping wildly, and a reporter, standing ready with the standard winner's questions.

PLACES, EVERYONE Leta Natoni presents a prize to Chris Begay at Rocky Ridge (opposite page), but not every winner sports a horse. Jean A. Nez (below, third from left) takes top honors in the Natonis Horse Race "Best Dressed Elder" competition. At Yazzie's Benefit Horse Race in Jeddito, even the race workers and event committee get a chance at a photo finish (bottom).



But Troy has no time for that. He turns his horse sideways, lets the animal preen and dance for its audience, then kicks his mount past the reviewing stand, chased by a thousand cheers.

And who can blame him? The young man has won the moment at the Natonis Horse Race, and on this hot summer day in Navajo country, he is taking it for his own. ■■■

Tucson-based Leo W. Banks plans to return to the Natonis races to enjoy the horsemanship, and of course the Navajo tacos.

Tom Bean lives in Flagstaff and finds that when he's going to one of the Navajo horse races, the adventure begins with just trying to find the racetrack. He advises: If you think you're lost and see a pickup pulling a horse trailer, follow it.

## Reservation Guide by Marilyn Hawkes

With 21 Indian reservations covering more than a quarter of Arizona's lands, visitors face some tough sightseeing options. Fortunately, whether gazing at a purple-hued Grand Canyon sunset, fishing for trout in the crystal-clear streams of the White Mountains or observing a traditional Hopi dance, it's hard to make a bad choice. Start with these five reservations and explore the traditions, culture and history that distinguish each tribe.

### SAN CARLOS APACHE RESERVATION

115 miles east of Phoenix on U.S. Route 60

To the visitor, the Apaches say *Hon Dah*, which means, "Welcome, come in." So, slip on those hiking boots for some Black River backcountry hiking, or raise your binoculars to spot some of the 218 species of birds roosting on the reservation. Year-round community events include the July Mount Graham Sacred Run, the November All-Indian Rodeo and Fair and the February Apache Gold Casino Pow-Wow. (928) 475-2361; [www.sancarlosapache.com/home.htm](http://www.sancarlosapache.com/home.htm).

#### San Carlos Apache Cultural Center

Located in Peridot on U.S. Route 70, the San Carlos Apache Cultural Center features exhibits on the history and culture of the San Carlos Reservation. See the works of Apache artists and craftspeople, including woven burden baskets, ornamental Apache cradle boards and peridot jewelry, mined on the reservation from the largest gem peridot deposit in the world. Visitors have a chance to meet community members and ask questions about Apache culture. (928) 475-2894; [www.apacheculture.com/](http://www.apacheculture.com/).

#### Salt River Canyon

Arizona's "mini-Grand Canyon" in the 2,000-foot-deep Salt River Canyon offers Class III and IV rapids, remote wilderness, hiking, kayaking, canoeing, fishing for everything from catfish to endangered trout, glimpses of wildlife and dramatic scenery. Be sure to obtain the necessary recreation permits, which cost \$3 to \$20 per day depending on the activity. (928) 475-2343; [www.sancarlosapache.com/Permits\\_Information.htm](http://www.sancarlosapache.com/Permits_Information.htm).

### WHITE MOUNTAIN APACHE RESERVATION

225 miles northeast of Phoenix on State Route 260

From high atop Mount Baldy to the bottom of the Salt River Canyon, the 2,600-square-mile White Mountain Reservation affords spectacular views of Arizona, not to mention some 400 streams and a rich wildlife habitat. Visit the reservation to spot the Apache trout, which swims exclusively in the waters of White Mountain streams and lakes. (877) 338-9628; [www.wmat.nsn.us/](http://www.wmat.nsn.us/).



#### Apache Cultural Center and Museum

Located at Fort Apache Historic Park, the museum showcases the history and culture of the White Mountain Apache people. Step into a *gowa*, a traditional Apache home, to experience a multimedia presentation of the Apache Creation Story. The Museum Shop features beadwork, Crown Dancer figures, basketry and other Apache arts. (928) 338-4625; [www.wmat.us/wmaculture.shtml](http://www.wmat.us/wmaculture.shtml).

#### Fort Apache Historic Park

Take a guided or self-guided walking tour of the 27 remaining buildings of Fort Apache dating from the 1870s through the 1940s. It was a major outpost during the Apache Wars, but was turned into a boarding school in 1923 by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. But when the tribe took over in the early 1990s, this seeming symbol of conflict became a showcase for Apache culture and history. Visit the re-created Apache village, ancient ruins and the military cemetery. (928) 338-4525; [www.wmat.nsn.us/fortapachepark.htm](http://www.wmat.nsn.us/fortapachepark.htm).

#### Kinishba Ruins National Historic Landmark

The nearby Kinishba Ruins, partially restored in the 1930s, once housed an estimated 1,000 Zuni and Hopi ancestors. During its heyday, between A.D. 1250 and 1350, the pueblo contained 600 rooms situated on three different levels. Experts still question why residents abandoned the masonry village in the late 14th century. (520) 338-4625; [www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/amsw/sw12.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/amsw/sw12.htm).

#### HOPi RESERVATION

250 miles northeast of Phoenix on State Route 264

Perched on three rocky mesas rising up to 7,200 feet, the Hopi Reservation sits completely inside the Navajo Reservation. Each mesa has its own villages, where visitors can view cultural and historical sites, best seen with a Hopi tour guide. Known for their dry-farming method using only natural precipitation, Hopi farmers produce 17 types of corn including red, white, blue, yellow and speckled varieties. (928) 734-3283; [www.hopi.nsn.us/](http://www.hopi.nsn.us/).

#### The Hopi Museum and Cultural Center

The Hopi Museum and Cultural Center on Second Mesa offers an overview of activities on the reservation. Tour the museum and visit the gift shop, which features Hopi arts and crafts including coiled baskets and kachina dolls. The most expert Hopi carvers fashion their kachinas from one piece of cottonwood root. For traditional Hopi fare such as *paatupsuki*, pinto bean and hominy soup, or blue pancakes made of Hopi corn, visit the Cultural Center restaurant. (928) 734-2401; [www.hopiculturalcenter.com](http://www.hopiculturalcenter.com).

#### First Mesa Consolidated Villages—First Mesa Tour

Explore First Mesa on a one-hour guided walking tour and learn about the history and traditions of the Hopi people with stops for sightseers to purchase Hopi arts and crafts. Call in advance for reservations. (928) 737-2262; [www.hopibiz.com/tour.html](http://www.hopibiz.com/tour.html).

#### Old Oraibi Village

Considered to be the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in North America, Old Oraibi dates to the 12th century, and its residents still live without running water or electricity. Located on Third Mesa. (928) 734-3283; [www.hopi.nsn.us](http://www.hopi.nsn.us).

### HUALAPAI INDIAN RESERVATION

250 miles northwest of Phoenix on Historic Route 66

The million-acre Hualapai Reservation straddles 108 miles of the Colorado River and the Grand Canyon and ranges from deep rocky canyons and thick pine forests to rugged mesas and rolling hills. The name Hualapai means "People of the Pines." (888) 255-9550; [www.itcaonline.com/tribes\\_hualapai.html](http://www.itcaonline.com/tribes_hualapai.html).

#### Indian Village at Grand Canyon West

Take the guided walking tour to explore authentic dwellings of the Hualapai, Navajo, Hopi, Plains and Havasupai Indians built by members of each tribe. Stroll through the Hualapai Market for handmade jewelry and crafts and attend one of the cultural performances in the centrally located amphitheater. (877) 716-9378; [www.destinationgrandcanyon.com/activities.html](http://www.destinationgrandcanyon.com/activities.html).

**FISH STORY** At an elevation of 8,200 feet, Christmas Tree Lake on the White Mountain Apache Indian Reservation is stocked with Apache trout from nearby Williams Creek National Fish Hatchery. The tribe issues 20 permits per day during the fishing season. JACK DYKINGA

#### Grand Canyon West Bus Tour

To see a remote and not-often-visited part of the Grand Canyon, take the 4.5-mile bus tour along the dramatic western Rim. The 1.5-hour tour takes visitors to Guano Point for a barbecue lunch. (928) 769-2230; [www.grandcanyonresort.com](http://www.grandcanyonresort.com).

#### Hualapai River Runners

From March through October, ride the Class III white-water rapids of the Colorado River to quench your thirst for adventure. See the Grand Canyon from a motorized raft piloted by an experienced river guide. If you don't have a week to spend floating down the gorge, Hualapai River Runners offers one- and two-day trips. (928) 769-2219; [www.grandcanyonresort.com](http://www.grandcanyonresort.com).

#### NAVAJO RESERVATION

Northeastern Arizona

With land in Arizona, Utah and New Mexico, the Navajo Nation is larger than 10 of the 50 states. Containing more than a dozen national monuments, tribal parks and historical sites, the reservation spreads out over 27,000 square miles. (623) 412-0297; [www.explore.navajo.com](http://www.explore.navajo.com)

#### Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park

The 17-mile loop off Indian Route 42 and U.S. Route 163 encompasses spectacular scenery dominated by the 1,000-foot-tall buttes first made famous in a series of John Ford Westerns. Much of Monument Valley remains off-limits to tourists, but Navajo tour operators

offer excursions into some of the more remote locations. (435) 727-5874; [www.navajonationparks.org/html/monumentvalley.htm](http://www.navajonationparks.org/html/monumentvalley.htm).

#### Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site

Founded in 1878 by John Lorenzo Hubbell, the Hubbell Trading Post is the oldest continuously operating trading post on the Navajo Reservation. The Hubbell family owned and operated the trading post until the National Park Service purchased it in 1967. Today, the site houses the original Hubbell homestead, trading post, family home and visitors center. Shop for Navajo rugs, jewelry, baskets and pottery. Navajo artisans still trade there, just as they did more than a century ago. (928) 755-3475; [www.nps.gov/hutr/](http://www.nps.gov/hutr/).

#### Canyon de Chelly National Monument

For striking views of Canyon de Chelly's steep walls, drive along the canyon rim and stop at one of the many scenic turnouts. Navajo-guided jeep and horseback tours lead deep into the canyon. Visitors can also hike the only self-guided trail, a steep quarter-mile descent to White House Ruins. Legendary Indian fighter Kit Carson marched through Canyon de Chelly in 1864 and destroyed the Navajo stronghold, forcing 8,000 Navajos to surrender and begin the "Long Walk" to Fort Sumner in New Mexico. Today, close to 80 families still dwell in this historic canyon. (928) 674-5500; [www.discovernavajo.com](http://www.discovernavajo.com). **HH**



**online** Find our expanded guide of Arizona's Indian nations at [arizonahighways.com](http://arizonahighways.com) (Click on the February "Trip Planner").

# ROCK ART TAKING THEIR STORIES WITH THEM

BY SCOTT THYBONY PHOTOGRAPHS BY TOM TILL

**ON THE MARCH** Drawn by ancestral Puebloans, often with plant dyes and animal blood, pictographs adorn a cliff wall in an undisclosed location.  
To order a print of this photograph, see inside front cover.

**TRACES OF A HORSE TRAIL ANGLE DOWN** the side of an obscure canyon in the Navajo country of northeastern Arizona. I follow it to the bottom, looking for rock art along the way. By midmorning, heat already radiates off the south-facing wall, and shadows have drawn back into the sharpest angles of the cliff.

Earlier, Jon Hirsh had told me about an intriguing panel of horse-men painted on one of these walls. The river guide has a knack for turning up this sort of thing, and I'm on my way to check out his report.

In a land of cliffs, it's no surprise to find an immense number of rock-art sites, some dating back thousands of years and often in remote locations. To reach a single panel, I've driven 60 miles of dirt road and then backpacked for several days. Other sites have required drifting down a river or dangling from a rope. Rock-art panels may be harder to reach than a gallery exhibit, but at least you don't have to wait in line to view them.

At the next bend, I spot an overhang hollowed into a vertical face below the rim. I detect a smudge of color inside it, and with the binoculars pull into view several red handprints. These pictographs, or painted images, are likely much older than the ones I'm looking for, and it's hard to pass them by. I begin searching for a route up the cliff used by prehistoric Indians. There has to be one.

A ledge, screened by junipers, leads to a set of *moki* steps, footholds carved in the rock centuries ago. Being alone, I move cautiously, knowing a simple misstep can have dire consequences. I climb to a higher ledge and work my way to the dark recess. Within lie two sets of small handprints, where centuries ago children pressed hands painted with red hematite against the rock face. Dozens of additional handprints cover the interior walls. They could be an individual's mark, a signature, but more likely they are ritual artifacts of a ceremony long forgotten.

Similar handprints can be found throughout the Navajo lands and cover a long span of time. On one panel, handprints crowd the sandstone in bursts of turquoise, green, yellow and red. Unfaded in a thousand years, they are the most vibrant pictographs I've seen. At that ancient Puebloan site, Navajo medicine men still incorporate the rock art into their prayers, treating it as an active shrine.

Resuming my search, I follow the wash and notice a flaring cliff, a likely place for more pictographs. Scrambling up the bank, I suddenly come upon a tumultuous scene filling the canyon wall. Painted horsemen gallop across the rock face, quirts outstretched behind them. The sweeping lines of sandstone enhance the action, setting in motion a throng of 36 horses. Many of the riders are seated on high-cantled Spanish saddles, and some wear eagle feathers stuck in their broadbrimmed hats. A mounted warrior leads the cavalcade carrying a feathered lance, and feathers also hang from many of the horses, a Ute custom I've been told.

While studying the pictographs, I notice an anomaly. A single horse carries two women, each wearing her hair tied at the base of the neck in typical Navajo fashion. So it appears the men are Ute raiders driving off a couple of longhorn steers and taking the women along as captives. Historians have overlooked the event, but I suppose someone living in a hogan nearby might know it. Men on horses, the old restless story.

A few months later I decide to find a site on the Navajo Reservation said to depict a Spanish priest. After making inquiries for half a day, rock-art researcher Ekkehart Malotki and I end up at the notched-log hogan of Johnson John, a Navajo in his late 60s. As we talk, he offers to take us to the panel located on his land

in the adjacent canyon. The two of us follow as Johnson picks his way down the trail, surprisingly surefooted.

Soon we reach the canyon floor and cross a sand dune to an undercut cliff. Centuries of campfires have darkened most of the alcove with soot. In an unblackened section rises the poster-sized pictograph we've come to see. Sunk in the shadows only a few steps from the sun-filled canyon, the dark figure stands draped in a *manga*, the long blue cloak, richly trimmed in red, worn by Spanish gentlemen in the 1800s. A straightbrimmed hat shields a face without features. John says a member of his clan, the Bitterwater people, painted it a long time ago. Oral tradition tags the man as a priest or bishop, an identity difficult to confirm from the image alone. What remains is a lingering sense of mystery.

The Navajo guides us farther up the canyon, thick with prehistoric ruins, where each cliff shelters a tumble of old walls and a scatter of pictographs. At one site, two warriors engage each other in a duel using *atlatls*, a kind of spear-thrower, the weapon of choice before the bow and arrow spread to these parts. Soon we stop at an impressive pair of human figures, pecked into the sandstone face in typical Basketmaker style. A crescent-shaped head tops an upright form matched with another turned upside down. Whatever message the composition once held is now lost. Attempts to interpret rock art lead to lively speculation or a dead end. "The meaning," Malotki says, "is buried deep in these vanished cultures."

The three of us take a water break below a grouping of pictographs, and I ask John if the older Navajos knew the meaning of these symbols. "My father told me, 'You don't need to know all these things. I know them; that's good enough right now.'" John pauses a moment before adding, "Some of these old people hold on to their stories. It's their strength. And some of them take their stories with them."

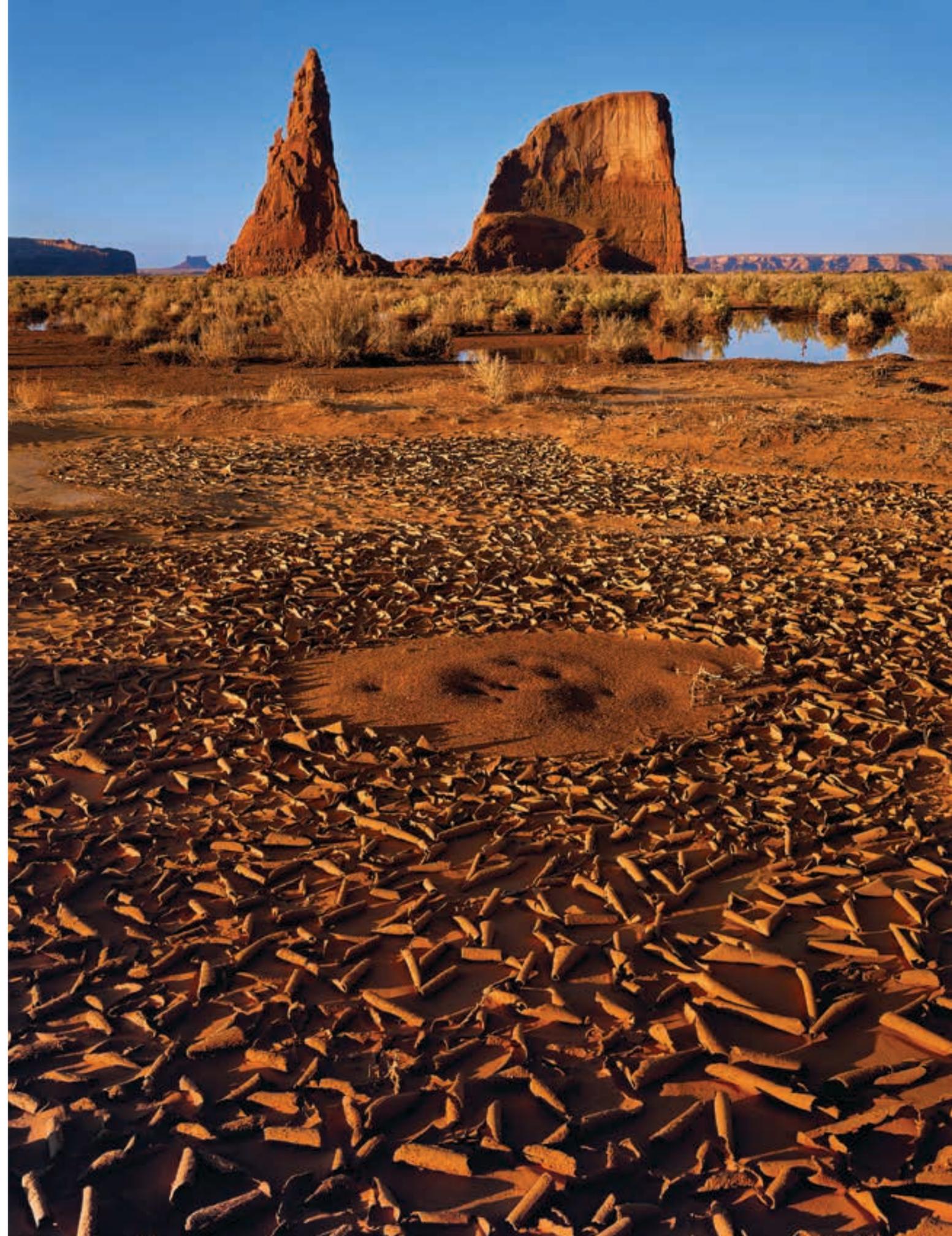
Turning back, he leads us past a cluster of petroglyphs, likely recording a military expedition against the Navajos. Each figure, probably a soldier, wears a high-crowned hat, the type worn by the U.S. Army in 1858. Two infantrymen carry rifles on their shoulders, and another takes aim with his weapon.

The most prominent figure holds a bayonet-tipped rifle in loading position as he reaches into his cartridge box. But an anatomically correct detail surprises me, since depictions of genitalia are rare in Navajo rock art. This soldier is definitely out of uniform. Perhaps the glyph was meant to convey the idea that he was caught, if not with his pants down at least with them unbuttoned.

Whatever the original intention of the rock art, a sense of humor is alive and well among the descendants of those who made it. As we climb out of the canyon, John tells us about the origin of the name for the nearby town of Chinle. He gives it a Navajo pronunciation, drawing out the sounds, and says it means "where the wash ends." Then the old guide pronounces it in English. "Chin-lee," he says with a smile, "sounds like a Chinese laundry to me." ■

**EYE OF THE STORM** Still pools of rainwater sit close to mud patterns at Dancing Rocks, two 500-foot sandstone pillars on the Navajo Indian Reservation.

■ To order a print of this photograph, see inside front cover.



ATTEMPTS TO INTERPRET ROCK ART LEAD TO LIVELY SPECULATION OR A DEAD END.

**HIDDEN TALES** A Tsegi Canyon waterfall (left) caresses a hillside in the Kayenta area. Keeping pictograph figures and handprints hidden (below) protects them from the oil in modern visitors' hands and possible destruction.  
■ To order a print of these photographs, see inside front cover.



WHAT REMAINS IS A LINGERING SENSE OF MYSTERY.



**THE WAYS OF OLD** Most pictographs shy away from nudity, but the “Blue Marvels” (bottom left) may show the ancestral Puebloans’ sense of humor. Pointed pictographs (above left) are thought to symbolize clouds. A Kayenta ancestral Puebloan ruin (below) is concealed in a cave along the Arizona-Utah border. Early hand-print pictographs (bottom) known as the “Neon Hands,” which some medicine men still consider holy, hide in a secret location.

■ To order a print of these photographs, see inside front cover.





**POWER AND GRACE**  
Scoring an almost-perfect 291 out of a possible 300 points, 27-year-old Canadian Dallas Arcand of the Cree tribe demonstrates the concentration and agility that won him the 2006 World Champion Hoop Dancer title at the 16th annual competition at the Heard Museum in Phoenix.

# Hoop It Up

National  
championship  
draws Native  
American dancers to  
practice new forms  
of an old connection

BY LORI K. BAKER  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEFF KIDA

Jones Benally, an aging Navajo medicine man, sat on a wool handwoven blanket on the fragrant rye grass of the Heard Museum's outdoor amphitheater. His wispy gray hair dangled past his shoulders, and his long, lean legs—with calves covered by leggings made from the hair of an Angora goat—stretched out from his fringed, buckskin skirt. His cheekbones rose high, deep-etched with weather-carved lines. His deep brown eyes reflected the stillness of a pool of rainwater. He was one of 66 hoop dancers from tribes all over

the United States and Canada—Cree, Ho-Chunk, Cherokee, Chippewa, Navajo, Odawa, Hopi and Kiowa—who had convened at the 2006 16th Annual World Championship Hoop Dance Contest in downtown Phoenix. The dancers ranged in age from 2 to about 70 and competed in divisions spanning from tiny tots to seniors. All wore regalia that dazzled the eye with blazing reds, turquoises, canary yellows, royal blues and lime greens, embellished with feathers, beadwork and sequins twinkling in the sun. (Held at the Heard Museum, known for its large collection of Indian art and artifacts, this year's event celebrates its 17th anniversary on February 3 and 4.)

The glitz and glamour drew a crowd of about 9,000 fans who anxiously waited over two days of performances to find out who'd become the next champion.

"I just wanted to tell you," an admiring fan gushed to Benally, "that I saw your picture in a back issue of *Arizona Highways*, and you're far more striking in person." Benally looked at her kindly but silently, not knowing quite how to respond to such celebrity worship.

With brilliantly colored hoops looped over their shoulders and bells jingling on their moccasins, one by one the dancers wove past the spectators to enter the dance circle. Dancers enveloped their bodies with up to 50 hoops that they shifted into an ever-changing kaleidoscope of forms: butterflies, eagles, the ladder of life and a globe representing Mother Earth. All the while, the dancers' bodies whirled and their feet stomped to the pulsating rhythm of a large cowhide drum, accompanied by the chants of the Oklahoma Outlaws and Mandaree Singers.

Even though the dance demands breathtaking speed and agility, Benally, who never tells his age, remains a master. "I am as old as the wind—ageless," he once told curious fans, who'd be shocked to learn that tucked away in the Heard Museum archives his biography reveals he was a "star performer with 'Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show' for 30 years."

Benally's agelessness just added to the mystique of the hoop dance, whose mysteries have been passed on only as an oral tradition among the tribes. According to one oral tradition, each time a dancer passes through a hoop, he adds one year to his life. Watching Benally perform could turn a skeptic into a believer. "Traditional dancing has its own healing way, and he is a testament to that," the emcee told the crowd.

In Navajoland, where Benally grew up, the hoop dance is part of a nine-night ceremony called "Fire Dance." Never betraying the dance's sacred secrecy, his performance at the Heard provided a sense of its flavor. Like a heartbeat, the deep primal rhythm of the cowhide drum animated his dance as he slipped his lithe body through hoops made of traditional willow branches, which he maneuvered into constantly shifting forms. His movements were as fluid and meditative as a

The dances tell stories—of battles and the hunt, of the spirit world and, in the case of the hoop dance, of the sacred circle of life and the kinship of humans to all living things.



**FANCY DANCER** Festooned with beadwork, fringes, feathers and bells, hoop-dancing competitors must demonstrate precision, timing, rhythm, showmanship, creativeness and speed while manipulating up to 50 hoops at once.

tai chi master's. The crowd watched silently, mesmerized.

The dances tell stories—of battles and the hunt, of the spirit world and, in the case of the hoop dance, of the sacred circle of life and the kinship of humans to all living things.

According to one version of the hoop dance's history, it began as a ceremonial dance in Taos Pueblo, after the Spanish arrived. When the tourists started arriving on the scene in the late 19th century, the Indians entertained them with a spectacular, exhibition-style version of the dance.

From the early 1920s onward, hoop dancing spread in an ever-widening circle across the Plains. At first, dancers used only two hoops, but now they use 10, 12 or even 50 hoops.

Elements of American pop culture are creeping into the hoop dance. At the 2006 competition, one young dancer was named Britney, while boys competing in the youth division adorned their regalia with Batman and Superman emblems. Nakotah LaRance, a 16-year-old Hopi from Flagstaff, drew some of the biggest ahs from the crowd after he performed a handstand, a breakdance move, and Michael Jackson's famous "moon walk."

LaRance nonchalantly hopped on his skateboard after his performance. His mastery of the hoop dance has provided him an unusual entrée into Hollywood. It all began when an audition landed him

a spot on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" in July 2004, when he performed a nationally televised hoop dance. Next, he nabbed the spotlight on "America's Most Talented Kids." But perhaps his biggest break came when he nailed a role in the Steven Spielberg-produced TNT miniseries, "Into the West." He's since been involved in four other movie projects.

Hoop dancing's celebrity quotient has also landed 27-year-old Dallas Arcand in the limelight. The Cree Indian from Alberta, Canada, soon plans to release his debut hip-hop album under his pseudonym, Kray-Z-Kree. "When the tribal elders hear it, they are proud of it. But the youth can jam to it as well," said the break dancer who's performed throughout Alberta in groups such as Rising Nation, Magoo Crew and Red Power Squad.

And in the hoop-dancing competition last year—scored by a panel of judges on the basis of showmanship, creativity, speed, timing and precision—a little star power paid off. Arcand won the World Champion Hoop Dancer title in the adult division, and LaRance claimed his third teen champion title after being a two-time youth champion. In

**AGELESS MASTER** Using willow-branch hoops, rather than plastic, Navajo dancer Jones Benally performs choreography more traditional and sacred than that of many of his younger counterparts.



**WHAT'S ALL THE HOOPLA?** With a downtown Phoenix high-rise in the background, contest participants in five age categories—Senior, Adult, Teen, Youth and Tiny Tot (the youngest entrant, 4 months old)—parade into the Heard Museum's arena.

the senior division, Terry Goedel from Rancho Cucamonga, California, reclaimed his 2005 title, with third-place honors going to Benally.

For Benally, his performance wasn't so much about the competition as about his life's work: to preserve his Navajo heritage as a living tradition. "I teach the traditional way," he said. "It's hard to find that now."

Derrick Suwaima Davis, a four-time world champion hoop dancer who grew up in Old Oraibi on the Hopi Reservation in northeastern Arizona, feels a similar motivation. Both Hopi and Choctaw, he now shares his interpretation of the hoop dance with audiences around the world—in Germany, Spain, Australia, Denmark, Malaysia, Africa and Singapore. He's performed at the Heard Museum's hoop dance competition since its inception.

"We believe there is medicine in our song, drum, the clothing and the dance," he said. "We as hoop dancers are only vehicles to share the dance's message." That message is about stewardship of Mother Earth and the sacred connection of all life. "When people watch, they are very uplifted."

As I listened to Davis, I did feel uplifted, but I wondered if the crush of modern times might overwhelm this simple, sacred message. I lifted my eyes to the high-rise condominiums that loomed over the Heard Museum's grassy amphitheater in the heart of downtown Phoenix on Central Avenue. I noted a large digital clock flashing each passing second of the dancers' performances, scored like the Olympics by a panel of judges. Amplifiers on poles broadcast the war chants sung by the Oklahoma Outlaws and Mandaree Singers.

My heart longed for the traditional simpler ways of the Navajo medicine men, like Jones Benally, whose dance taught me the importance of living life in balance and honoring the sacredness of all living things. ■■■

*After attending the hoop dance contest for two days, Lori K. Baker of Mesa felt tempted to buy an armload of hula hoops and give them a spin at home.*

*Jeff Kida of Phoenix says that photography has always been his entrée into cultural events. After covering the Hoop Dance Championship, he came away with a better understanding of the hoop-dance tradition, not to mention a little more bounce in his step.*

#### when you go

**Location:** Heard Museum, 2301 N. Central Ave., in downtown Phoenix.  
**Dates:** February 3 and 4.  
**Fees:** \$10, adults; \$3, children ages 4 to 12; \$7, museum members and Native Americans; free, children under 4.  
**Additional Information:** (602) 252-8848; www.heard.org.

**online** To see a slide show of the 2006 Hoop Dance Championship go to [arizonahighways.com](http://arizonahighways.com). Click on the February "Trip Planner".



# Blood Enemies

**A LONG-FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY  
OF THE APACHE WARS PITTED  
TWO CONSUMMATE WARRIORS  
AGAINST FATE AND  
EACH OTHER**

**by Peter Aleshire  
illustration by Brad Holland**

**I**SAT ON THE SUN-WARMED ROCK where Juh had waited for his revenge, patient as death. Shading my eyes against the lowering sun, I studied the canyon bottom where Lt. Howard Bass Cushing had stopped to sniff Juh's baited trap, his blood lust pitted against prudence. I could sense them now, as though their intricate game of death and vengeance had marked this all-but-forgotten canyon in the Whetstone Mountains of southern Arizona. Juh and Cushing's lethal rivalry captures the futile tragedy of that long-ago struggle between irreconcilable cultures. They each inspired terrible love and devotion, battled to the death and fought fearlessly.

Juh remains the more mysterious figure, one of the Apaches' greatest strategists and leaders. Six feet tall and weighing a heavily muscled 225 pounds, Juh suffered all his life from a stutter that should have handicapped him in the war councils of the Apaches. But he won devoted followers as a result of courage, strategy and a reputation for the power to see the future and handle men.

His Nednhi Apache band haunted the heart of the wild Sierra Madre in Mexico and raided into Arizona and New Mexico. Jason Betzinez, a Warm Springs Apache relative of Geronimo, called the Nednhi the "true wild men, whose mode of life was devoted entirely to warfare. . . . They were outlaws recruited from other bands."

"Juh was a prominent and important Apache of singular

**Cushing made killing Cochise a personal crusade in 1869 and 1870, crisscrossing the Southwest and fighting numerous battles. He even narrowly avoided drowning when caught in a flash flood in a desert wash.**

capacity and ruthlessness, deserving to rank with Cochise, Mangas Coloradas, Victorio and well above Geronimo in accomplishment," concluded the late historian Dan Thrapp.

Juh was a "powerful figure," reported James Kaywaykla, a young Apache warrior. "Juh was very large, not fat, but stockily built. His heavy hair was braided, and the ends fell almost to his knees. His features . . . were what people now call Mongoloid."

Juh repeatedly won major battles against Mexican troops, led warriors in the famous battle of Apache Pass, staged frequent major raids and kept fighting even after Cochise surrendered. One of his most astonishing feats was the abduction of several hundred Apaches from the San Carlos Indian Reservation and the flight across a thousand miles of rugged terrain pursued by thousands of soldiers. He stalked his enemies with deadly patience, laid ambushes with exquisite care and defied many of the conventions of Apache warfare, like frontal assaults and night battles.

That made Cushing his perfect adversary.

Cushing also seemed born for war. He was one of four war-hero brothers—one of whom died at the Battle of Gettysburg. After that battle, Cushing insisted on a transfer to his dead brother's artillery unit. After the war, he ran afoul of Army law when he and another officer tried to break their captain out of jail, where he was lodged on charges of having shot a civilian. Cushing was suspended from the Army for a year but then was reinstated as a lieutenant and sent west to fight Indians. He led F Troop of the Third Cavalry, a small detachment of well-armed, superbly conditioned men who chased renegade bands with terrible tenacity.

"An officer of wonderful experience in Indian warfare . . . who had killed more savages of the Apache tribe than any other officer or troop of the United States Army has done before or since," wrote Lt. John G. Bourke. "He was about five feet seven in height, spare, sinewy, active as a cat; slightly stoop-shouldered, sandy complexioned, keen gray or bluish-gray eyes, which looked you through when he spoke, and gave a slight hint of the determination, coolness and energy which had made his name famous all over the Southwestern border."

Cushing made killing Cochise a personal crusade in 1869 and 1870, crisscrossing the Southwest and fighting numerous battles. He even narrowly avoided drowning when caught in a flash flood in a desert wash.

Bourke recalled one winter incident when Cushing surprised an Apache camp, killed many adults and captured children and ponies. The fight also claimed the life of Cushing's close friend, Lt. Frank Yeaton. Cushing brooded as the troop struggled through the snow away from the battle.

"The more Cushing brooded over the matter, the hotter flamed his anger until he could stand it no longer," wrote Bourke. So

he turned the troop around, leaving the dying Yeaton with a small guard, hoping to catch the Indians in their ruined camp at daybreak, mourning their dead. "Not knowing what to make of such an utterly unexpected onslaught, [the Apaches] fled in abject terror, leaving many dead on the ground behind them," reported Bourke.

That could be the attack that focused Juh's attention on the daring young officer.

Juh's son, Ace Daklugie, later told historian Eve Ball that Juh decided to hunt down and trap Cushing after learning of one such attack on an Apache village. "From the time that Juh heard of what Cushing did to those people in the Guadalupes he was determined to kill that man." Thus began a deadly game of cat and mouse. "Three times Juh's warriors had skirmishes with Cushing," recalled Daklugie.

Finally, they came together at Bear Springs Canyon.

Cushing's scouts found the tracks of an Indian woman leading into the canyon. Veteran Sgt. John Mott led the advance detachment into the canyon, but grew suspicious because the woman made no effort to conceal her tracks. Worried, he signaled a halt, but it was too late.

About 15 warriors emerged from an arroyo behind the small group, and a larger band appeared among the rocks ahead. The Indians' initial volley wounded one private and killed the horse of a second. Mott stood his ground, realizing his situation was hopeless. The Indians kept their distance, pinning him down. One daring warrior rode up and snatched the hat from a private's head. Mott noted a heavysset Indian directing the battle, exercising absolute control with hand signals. Clearly, the besieged soldiers were bait in Juh's trap.

Sure enough, Cushing charged to the rescue with the rest of his 22-man force.

The Apaches faded into the rocks. Cushing ordered a charge, over Mott's objection.

"Cushing was so sure of himself and had killed so many Apaches, that he must have thought he knew more than Ussen (God) Himself," Daklugie said later.

Before the troop had covered 20 yards, the Apaches emerged again from the rocks. "It seemed as if every rock and bush became an Indian," wrote Mott later.

Suddenly Cushing cried, "Sergeant, Sergeant, I am killed. Take me out! Take me out!" Mott turned in time to see Cushing pitch to the ground. Mott and another man seized the wounded officer's body, but within 10 paces another bullet struck Cushing in the face.

The soldiers turned to make their stand, but now the Apache attack lessened. Abandoning the bodies of Cushing and three others, the troop fought its way a mile back down the canyon.

"Juh wasn't much interested in the troops—just Cushing,"

Daklugie said. "Other White Eyes were killed too, I don't know how many. We weren't all the time counting the dead as the soldiers did."

Bourke bitterly mourned Cushing's passing. "There is an alley named after him in Tucson," he wrote, "and there is, or was, when I last saw it, a tumble-down, worm-eaten board to mark his grave, and that was all to show where the great American nation had deposited the remains of one of its bravest."

Juh lived on to play a key role in other major events, but had already seen his doom in a vision. He had assembled his warriors on a cliff as he prayed. Peering through the campfire smoke, his followers saw a black spot growing in the face of the cliff opposite their position.

"It looked like an opening in the immense wall opposite us," said Daklugie. "As we watched, a thin white cloud descended and stopped just below the opening in the cliff. Every person knew this was a message from Ussen. We watched as thousands of soldiers in blue uniforms began marching eight abreast into the great opening. This lasted for a long time. The cave must have extended far into the cliff, for none returned."

The tribe called upon the medicine men to interpret the dream. "Ussen sent the vision to warn us that we will be defeated, and perhaps all killed by the government. Their strength in number, with their more powerful weapons, will make us indeed *Indeh*, the Dead. Eventually, they will exterminate us," said a medicine man.

But Juh would not surrender—even to Ussen. "We must gather together all Apaches," said Juh. "We must not give up. We must fight to the last man. We must remain free men or die fighting. There is no choice."

Juh died as he lived—unbroken. After most of the Chiricahua Apaches surrendered to General Crook in the Sierra Madre, Juh fled with the tattered survivors of his band. Riding along a riverbank with his sons, he suddenly fell from his horse into the water. Some accounts suggest he was drunk, but Daklugie said he suffered a stroke. Daklugie held his father's head above the water, but Juh died in his arms.

As I picked my way down from the lichen-encrusted rocks above Bear Spring Canyon, I thought of those two graves—Cushing's and Juh's—lost in the drift of time. Today, the canyon stands empty, remaining much as it did the day that Howard Cushing's eyes raked the sky as he clutched his death wound.

Haunted by that thought, I sat on a rock in the canyon bottom, watching the day dying in a wash of light as golden and burnished as a medal—or a shell casing. ■■

*Peter Aleshire is editor of Arizona Highways.*

*Brad Holland is a New Yorker who has created award-winning illustrations for Arizona Highways.*



Heart of Rocks, Chiricahua National Monument. TOM DANIELSEN

### In The Apaches' Footsteps



**1 Chiricahua National Monument**  
Twenty-seven million years ago, an enormous volcano erupted in what is now the Chiricahua National Monument in southeastern Arizona. Over the millennia, thousands of feet of fused volcanic ash slowly eroded to create some of the most stunning rock formations found anywhere

in the world. Here, a 12,000-acre maze features a network of trails through giant rock columns, delicately balanced rocks and hoodoos. Before their capture, Geronimo, Massai and the Chiricahua Apaches traveled through these weathered spires, keeping their camps secret from U.S. soldiers. Today, visitors can walk along the same trails to the Heart of Rocks area or take the 8-mile scenic drive that ends at Massai Point and enjoy the view.  
Information: (520) 824-3560; [www.nps.gov/chir](http://www.nps.gov/chir).

**2 Fort Bowie National Historic Site**  
In July 1862, several hundred Apaches ambushed 88 U.S. Army soldiers in Apache Pass, and the battle marked one of the first times that the soldiers used howitzers against the Apaches, assuring the soldiers' victory. The area was famous as the site of the Bascom Affair and numerous skirmishes between the Apache warrior Cochise and the U.S. Army. Because of the conflict, Union Army Brig. Gen. James Carleton arranged for the construction of Fort Bowie in Apache Pass for the protection of settlers and travelers. Although all that remains of the fort are a few walls and its foundation, history buffs can learn about Arizona's Apache Wars that took place on this storied ground.  
Information: (520) 847-2500; [www.nps.gov/fobo/](http://www.nps.gov/fobo/).

**Cochise Stronghold**  
**3** Deep within the Coronado National Forest, the rugged canyons that cross the Dripping Springs Mountains once served as a refuge for one of the West's most famous Apache warriors. Cochise took shelter within the labyrinth of canyons that eventually became known as Cochise Stronghold. To understand why the Apache warrior considered the area a great escape, hike the Cochise Trail from Cochise Stronghold Campground to West Stronghold Canyon.  
Information: (520) 364-3468; [www.fs.fed.us/r3/coronado/forest/recreation/trails/cochise.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coronado/forest/recreation/trails/cochise.shtml).

# DO FENCE ME IN

Sonoran pronghorn bounce toward recovery in giant enclosure



American pronghorn antelopes numbered over 30 million in the 1800s but plummeted to near extinction in the early 20th century. The Sonoran pronghorn, native to Arizona and Mexico, has been protected by the Endangered Species Act since 1967.

by Dexter K. Oliver photograph by John Hervert

**FROM THE TOP OF PACK RAT HILL** in the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, I study the gleam of the electrified 5-foot-high wire mesh fence that contains the future of one of the Western Hemisphere's most remarkable and most endangered creatures within a frail square mile of creosote bushes, ocotillos, paloverde trees and saguaro cacti. ☞ The exquisitely adapted Sonoran pronghorn antelope survives only in a patch of southwest Arizona and northwest Mexico. Not true antelopes at all, the pale tan Sonoran pronghorns weigh 100 pounds and stand 3 feet high at the shoulder, with distinctive black stripes and white rumps. They shed their strange, black forked horns annually and rely on hollow hairs to insulate them against cold or rise up to allow air to circulate in the killing heat.

They depend on great spaces, using their binocular vision and 50-mph sprints to evade coyotes, bobcats or mountain lions. The fleetest mammals in America, even fawns, usually born as twins, can sprint at 25 mph within their first week.

Still, they can't outrun the threat that stalks them, a combination of fragmented habitat and a decade of drought. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Arizona Game and Fish Department surveys have documented a plunge from 200 to just 20 in the past decade.

The Sonoran pronghorn is one of five subspecies of American pronghorn, and is a subspecies that is considered critically endangered. Although adapted for speed with an oversized heart and lungs that make it second only to the cheetah in speed, the Sonoran pronghorn is a poor jumper. So the division of habitat by roads, fences and canals threatens the roaming Sonoran subspecies.

Illegal immigrants and law enforcement activities along Arizona's border with Mexico are other intrusions that the Sonoran pronghorns' cousins don't have to battle. Add to this the threat of livestock grazing and the potential for conflict with the adjacent Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Range, and the Sonoran pronghorns are facing an uphill battle.

Removal of barriers where possible, and minimizing human disturbances during fawning season are keys to saving the Sonoran, according to Defenders of Wildlife.

Biologists built a giant pen in the Cabeza refuge, which sprawls for 50 miles along the Mexican border in the heart of pronghorn country. Established in 1939 to save dwindling herds of desert bighorn sheep,

the refuge now offers the Sonoran pronghorns their last, best chance. Last spring, 10 fawns were born in the enclosure. Then last November, biologists released two yearlings born inside the fence.

A joint, international effort involving public and private groups in two countries led to the construction of a holding and breeding facility similar to one in Baja California. Biologists stocked it with a buck and six pregnant females captured in Arizona and Mexico to provide a breeding population that could repopulate the refuge. Irrigated areas and a well ensure food even during drought, both in the enclosure and in areas of the reserve and the Air Force range.

I keep looking through the binoculars until suddenly six pronghorn does emerge from an arroyo to eat. This spring, the does produced six fawns in the pen, but I see no fawns and no buck. Winter rains have at least temporarily interrupted the drought, so the desert is green and the pronghorns have made their first tentative steps back from the brink. In the early morning sun, the does glow ghostly white before disappearing back into the thick scrub. They are living up to their nickname, "phantoms of the desert." ■■

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Nature lovers with a permit can sometimes glimpse a Sonoran pronghorn on the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge, headquartered just north of Ajo. The refuge is closed during the pronghorns' breeding season, approximately March 15 to July 15. Information about rules, regulations and wildlife may be obtained by contacting the refuge manager in Ajo, (520) 387-6483.

Dexter K. Oliver of Duncan is a wildlife field technician who once worked on the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge and was a member of the Sonoran pronghorn recovery team.

# Perambulations on Percolations

The quest for a perfect cup of camp coffee

OVER THE YEARS, my search for a simple cup of camp coffee has come full circle. And when you find yourself walking in circles, you know you're in trouble.

I started out using those packets of powdered coffee you find in a surplus store. Designed for the foxhole, they dyed water the right color but did little else. Since then I've tried, with varying degrees of success, coffee bags and a drip cone, a reusable coffee sack and even a French press. Wanting a more civilized instant coffee, I once made a syrupy concentrate to mix with hot water. Any of these methods will work, as long as you're tired, sore, dazed or hypothermic.

But the desire for good coffee in the wild goes unchecked. Walk into a backpacking store and the range of coffee-making gizmos crowding the shelves is mind-boggling. You can choose a palm-sized coffee grinder or a collapsible filter basket, a mini-esspresso maker with a knock-down handle or the ultimate: a titanium café latte set with a coffee press and milk foamer. Extravagance, or merely a sign of refined taste? I'll let you be the judge.

Times were simpler when the inveterate traveler Burton Holmes crossed the Painted Desert in 1898. "The amount of coffee," he wrote, "that one can consume in Arizona is incredible; it is poured out in bowls, served piping hot, black and without milk."

An old-timer I knew also drank his coffee from an enamel bowl, one he never washed. He insisted the buildup of residue gave it an extra punch, and I didn't argue with him. One look at the dark sludge coating the rim convinced me he was right.

Arizonans have worked hard to maintain their caffeine traditions. I've drunk cowboy coffee heated on a twig fire while the horses grazed nearby. It's ready to drink, the wranglers tell you, only when it's strong enough to stand a spoon straight up. An old Navajo couple I lived with drank an even stronger brew. They kept an enamel pot simmering all day and let the grounds build up until the pot was two-thirds full. And for true grit, you can't beat river coffee, best made when the Colorado is running muddy red.

People will doctor their coffee with lumps of butter, twists of



lemon peel or splashes of more potent additives. Others have tried hard to come up with alternatives. I've hiked with a guy who drank nothing but plain hot water, and a couple who swore by hot Jell-O. Camped on a mountainside at 15,000 feet, it tasted surprisingly good, but I've never been able to gag it down since. Tea drinkers only appear to have an easier job of brewing up. While traversing an icefield in the Rockies, a Canadian woman showed me how to make a proper cup for high tea, an undertaking almost as formal as a Japanese tea ceremony.

After returning from the Sahara, I started carrying a brass coffemaker given to me by a Bedouin. The Turkish coffee, capable of raising the hairs on the back of your neck, was harder to make on the burner of a high-tech stove than on the coals of a fire. And to do it justice meant carrying the thick glass cups that went with it. Soon the whole process turned into a cumbersome ritual, and I found myself back at the instant coffee aisle.

Coffee on the trail should be quick and simple, something you can make with numb fingers while the wind is howling. But instant, I've found, isn't always quickest. On one trek, I was bent over the stove with my back to the wind as gusts kept blowing the coffee crystals out of my cup.

Despite the drawbacks, freeze-dried coffee has become my default method. It's a lot like cough syrup; you take it for the effect, not the taste. And the secret, I've found, is to make it strong enough to prickle the scalp—then the taste no longer matters. ■

**CUP O' JOE**  
Coffee comes in many forms, from six-dollar-a-cup latte to simple cowboy coffee simmering next to an open fire. But they all boil down to different caffeine delivery systems. Most coffee drinkers prefer substance over style.



Robyn Noll, volunteer



Dean Hueber, volunteer



Mark Orlovski, participant



Tom Keller, participant



Roger Gaubart, participant

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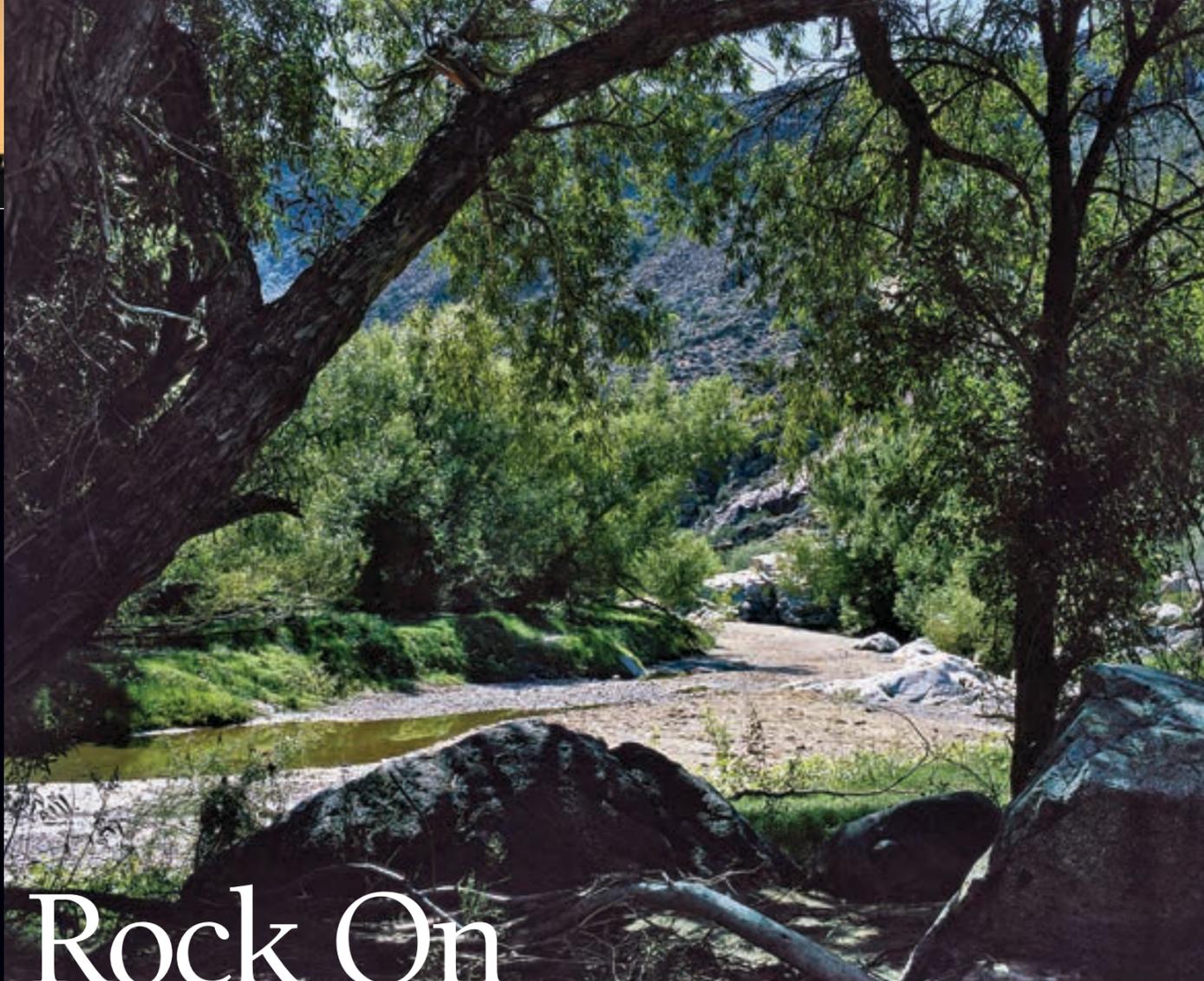
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# Rock On

A fitful stream, black boulders, scattered ruins and rock art await on Agua Fria hike

I HAD NOT BEEN in the outback for months. Neither had my hiking pal, Carl. So it was with anticipation that we strolled down Badger Spring Wash one cool February morning to the Agua Fria River, following a tributary no wider than curb water as it meandered a half-mile through parched desert scrub.

This stretch of the river, 40 miles north of Phoenix and a mile or so east of Interstate 17, gouges a deep canyon through Agua Fria National Monument—71,000 acres of grassy mesas and big-shouldered hills punctuated by black volcanic rocks, petroglyphs and more than

450 prehistoric ruins.

Although most archaeological sites lie on the mesas, petroglyphs also appear along the river. We found some just a few yards upstream from the tributary. Scratched into cactus-sprouting boulders, they stood out white in the sun, closer to immortality than a thousand misbegotten paintings.

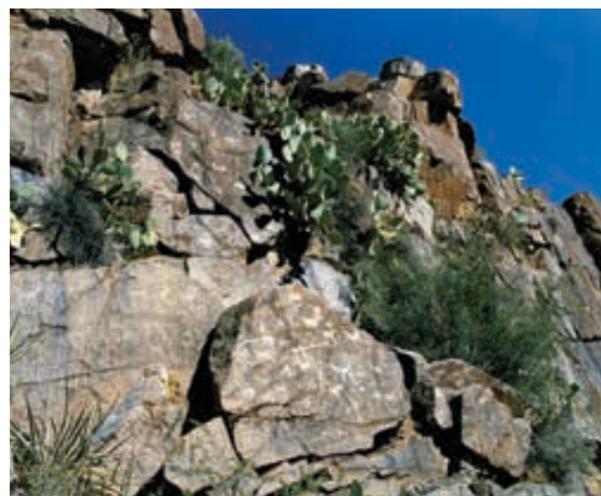
Images of deer and elk leaped across 10 centuries to join descendants still roaming the mesas (along with mountain lions, javelinas and bears). Enigmatic loops and circles overlaid with toothbrushlike symbols invited speculation. Were

they Hohokam doodles or something more?

As we headed downstream into the deepening canyon, all pretense of trail vanished. We spent most of our time

## LAND OF THE FRIA

Massive cottonwood trees create a shady spot amid the desert landscape at the confluence of Badger Springs and the Agua Fria River (above), where ancient Puebloan petroglyphs have survived for centuries (below).



## GO WITH THE FLOW

Horses tote passengers down the dusty Badger Springs Trail (right), while the gentle water of the Agua Fria River (below) charts its own course through the rugged wilderness, just east of Interstate 17.

scrambling over and around the jumble of smooth granite boulders choking the riverbed, taking care not to slip and fall. Once, checkmated by rock and water, we detoured high up the steep bank and picked our way over timber and brush deposited by a flood.

It was a reminder that, despite its proximity to the freeway, this country is primitive. Flash floods, broken legs and snakebites have code-red potential. After a rainfall, the normally solid mesas turn into a sea of slick clay that immobilizes even four-wheel-drive vehicles.

All of which, of course, contributes to the allure. The solitude, the unpredictability, the lack of amenities—what more could you ask? Although wildlife is abundant, we saw

only the tracks of a small animal, possibly a raccoon. Tiny fish—the Agua Fria hosts four native species—moved languidly in quiet pools, while butterflies with yellow-tinged black wings flitted about desert shrubs.

After hiking roughly three-quarters of a mile, we lunched on trail mix and started back. Had we gone another mile, we could have scaled the 700-foot canyon

wall and viewed the ruins of Richinbar Mine, which overlooks the river. From 1896 to 1912, the Richinbar produced both gold and silver while anchoring a thriving community.

We did not feel deprived. The petroglyphs, the sound of water gurgling over rocks and the satisfaction that comes

from a good workout were reward enough. The hike made up in exertion for what it lacked in distance (about 2.5 miles). “Rock-hopping” is a great physical conditioner.

The Agua Fria River is like a good book. It whets your appetite for more. And every time you read it, you learn something new. **AH**



## trail guide

**Length:** Approximately 2.5 miles.

**Elevation:** 3,045 feet.

**Difficulty:** Easy to strenuous.

**Payoff:** Fine views and petroglyphs.

**Getting There:** Drive 40 miles north of Phoenix on Interstate 17 just past Sunset Point. Exit at Badger Spring, Exit 256, and head east a quarter-mile to the parking lot and kiosk. You can either walk to the river from here (about a mile) or continue driving to the trailhead over a primitive road best suited to four-wheel-drive vehicles.

**Travel Advisory:** Avoid this hike during summer months. Carry plenty of water, snacks and a good map with a GPS device if possible. Do not hike alone.

**Additional Information:** (623) 580-5500; [www.blm.gov/az/aguafria/pmesa.htm](http://www.blm.gov/az/aguafria/pmesa.htm).

**online** Before you go on this hike, visit [arizonahighways.com](http://arizonahighways.com) for other things to do and places to see in this area. You'll also find more hikes in our archive.

A remembered childhood and small-town pleasures await a writer on some laid-back roads from Heber through Holbrook

# Memory Lane

LET ME ADMIT to a fondness for the kind of roads most people want to sleep through, not waking up until they're in the forest or among the red rocks or at the view of the green-water river.

I like bleak. I like empty. I like being able to see where the world curves, and I like to see the dirt underneath struggling plants.

For most people, State Route 377, from Heber to Holbrook, is a sleeping road.

But it always held me, because when the land strips itself this bare, there's no telling what secrets it might reveal.

Once, when I was younger and driving this road rather far over the speed limit, a policeman zoomed past even faster. And so we both missed the bald and golden eagles that hunt from the telephone wires. We missed the tortoises sunning on the roadside, the elk everywhere—and if you

missed the elk, you had to contend with the jackrabbits running across the road.

It's been a long time since I drove there. A quick check of the map shows a nearly perfect triangle of roads: Heber to Snowflake, past Woodruff to Holbrook, and back to Heber. This triangle takes in a colorful swath of high deserts, piñon and juniper forests and ponderosa pines at higher elevations, all in a part of the state that not

many people ever see.

They don't know what they're missing.

My wife, Lynn, and I start in Heber at the junction of State Route 260 and State Route 277 near Overgaard, a town that was badly affected by the 2002 Rodeo-Chediski fires. None of the burn is visible from the road, though. Neither is the cabin my parents owned for years, which they sold only when Mom couldn't take the elevation anymore.

Here at more than 6,600 feet, the ponderosa pines quickly give way to juniper and piñon, the roadside lined with thistles and yucca, before the landscape changes yet again, to young pines resembling a Christmas tree farm for very short elves.

The turnoff to Aripine—all my life, I thought that was a typo—recedes behind us, and the land changes again, opening to huge tawny grass meadows, and then, at about

## MELLOW YELLOW

Common sunflowers add a splash of color along State Route 377 between Holbrook and Heber.

6,000 feet of elevation, into rocks the reddish color of the caps we used to put in our six-shooters when we played Wild West. About 26 miles from Heber, a train chases us into Snowflake, where my first college girlfriend was from. This means my very understanding wife insists on driving now, because I keep scanning the sidewalk for a particular short, cute blonde.

Erastus Snow and William Jordan Flake founded Snowflake in 1878. The first settlers knew how to build and knew what their priorities were. Snowflake's 45 structures on the National Register of Historic Places include the home of James Madison Flake—son of the town's founder—which was built to accommodate the man's 24 children. At the 1893 John A. Freeman home, the bedrooms have no closets, because that would have meant paying more tax.

We're here on the wrong day for a tour of the massive

hydroponic tomato farm on the edge of town, and I do not see anyone who looks like my old girlfriend, so we drive past a small clock tower where all three clocks show a different time (none correct), go back to the town's traffic light, turn right, and head a mile east to the Old Woodruff Road.

I have no idea where the new Woodruff road is, nor why there would be one when the old road is so nice: 23 well-graveled miles to town, curvy enough to be interesting, the potholes hardly noticeable.

In moments, we're past the ranches and the pavement, and then, quite suddenly, into a landscape where the deer and the pronghorn antelopes play. Pronghorns, anyway. A couple herds of them—I've seen as many as 30 or 40 animals at once—work this territory, their flanks flashing white against the red rocks.

This open land is what Arizona looked like a thousand years ago, and it reminds us that the Painted Desert isn't the only place where our state went wild with color.

We stop at the edge of a

## travel tips

### Vehicle Requirements:

High-clearance, two-wheel drive vehicles.

**Warning:** Back-road travel can be hazardous. Be aware of weather and road conditions. Carry plenty of water. Don't travel alone, and let someone know where you're going and when you plan to return.

**Additional Information:** Holbrook Tourism Council, toll-free (800) 524-2459 or (928) 524-2459.

one-lane bridge, look down 50 feet to where the Little Colorado River is still frozen, despite 60-degree temperatures. Cacti cling to the cliffs, and I stop to look at plants, not even as big as the palms of my hands, thriving on the plateau. The veins in the leaves, a velvety green, ripple in the sunlight.

The town of Woodruff looks like it was painted by

### HABITAT FOR HISTORY

The James M. Flake Pioneer Home offers a history lesson about life on the Arizona frontier. Part of the public Historic Homes Tour in Snowflake, the house presents the original furniture, accessories and heirlooms of the James Madison Flake family, descendants of town co-founder William Flake.



**RETRO FLASHBACK**

A 1950s-era Studebaker offers a retro perspective for Holbrook's Wigwam Motel, situated on Historic Route 66. Originally opened in 1950, the hotel still attracts highway travelers with a sign that reads, "Sleep in a wigwam."



Norman Rockwell: a perfect small town, stretching out over a mile or so where the pavement suddenly begins, under the shadow of turning windmills and a field of sunflowers that didn't last into winter.

My parents once went house-shopping in Woodruff. They loved the town, its stone walls and cubist hedges. They loved the house. And my father even loved the fact that "when we went into the back yard, it was just covered with frogs. They were everywhere."

From the pavement, we take a left at the T-intersection

**PINEY PERSPECTIVE**

South of Heber, the Mogollon Rim is home to the largest ponderosa pine forest in the country.



onto U.S. Route 180, and drive about 7 miles toward Holbrook, with its shops selling chunks of petrified wood.

Lynn and I lived in Holbrook when we were newly married, and we know where to find our own wood. Holbrook is a bit shinier now than in our memories, but all the familiar landmarks remain: the giant dinosaurs in front of the rock shops, the teepees at the Wigwam Motel.

Today's last stretch is the 33 miles of State 377, headed south. As sunset's coming on, it's a revelation, beginning in the red rocks at the edge of Holbrook, roller-coastering through scrub and sage and a large alkali flat—at least I

think that's what it is; that's what my father told me the hundred times I asked him when I was a kid.

The trees begin to appear. For a while, it seems like a huge game of Risk, not knowing which color is going to take over: grass brown or the deep, tree green. Then, in the course of a mile or two in the last 15 minutes of road, we move from sage to ponderosa and I put my hands on the wheel just a bit tighter, because I have been surprised by elk too many times along here.

As we close the triangle, I tell my wife about the time we brought my Aunt Jessie up this way. She was maybe 95

years old, the greatest woman I've ever known.

"Oh," Jessie said, "oh, I've never seen so much sky." And then she pointed out the way the trees had twisted from wind, the way the grass caught the shadows of hiding bobcats, the boulder fields that looked like dinosaur graveyards.

We didn't have to explain to her the attraction of "empty." Aunt Jessie didn't miss a thing. She saw every detail of this land that most people speed through. ■■■

**MORNING HAS BROKEN**

A lone windmill, silhouetted against a cloud-shrouded sunrise, sits in the open prairie, south of Woodruff.



**route finder**

Note: Mileages are approximate.

- > **Begin in Heber** on State Route 260; turn left (northeast) at northern edge of town onto State Route 277. Drive about 30 miles to Snowflake.
- > **At Snowflake's stoplight** (Snowflake Boulevard and Main Street), continue east through the stoplight for approximately 1 mile to junction with Old Woodruff Road.
- > **Turn left (north)** onto Old Woodruff Road; drive approximately 23 miles to Woodruff.
- > **Leaving Woodruff**, continue north around the mountain, approximately 6 miles to the junction with U.S. Route 180.
- > **Turn left (west)** onto U.S. 180 and drive about 5 miles to the southern outskirts of Holbrook.
- > **From Holbrook**, drive south on Navajo Boulevard, which turns into State Route 77. Continue about 2 miles on State 77 to the junction with State Route 377.
- > **Turn right** (south) onto State 377. Follow 377 approximately 33 miles back to State 277. At the junction, turn right (southwest); it's about 5 miles back to the starting point of the triangle in Heber.



