

PASSWORD



THE EL PASO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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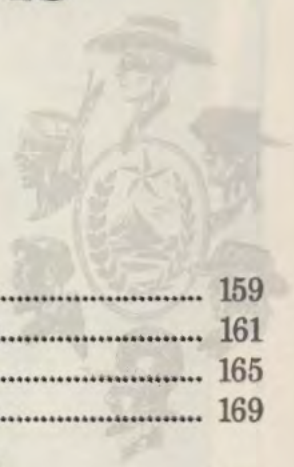
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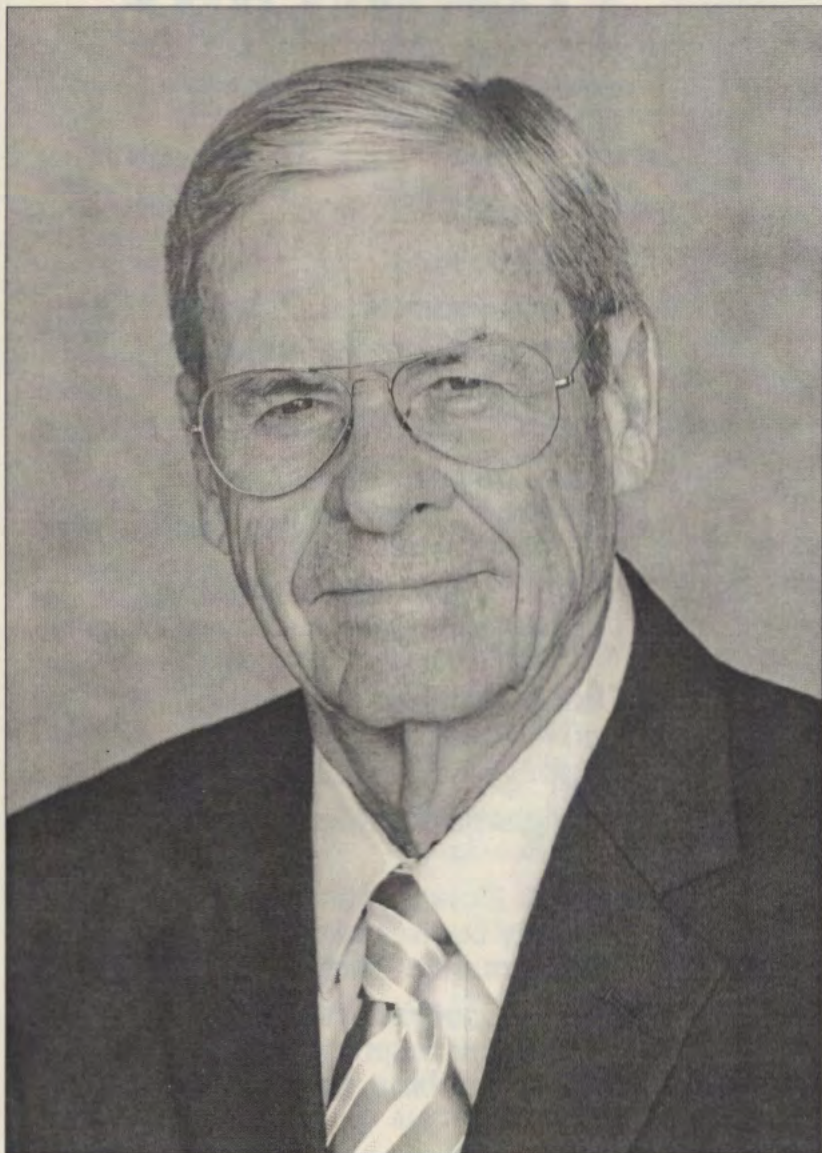
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LARRY FRANCIS

1933 -

Hall of Honor 2013

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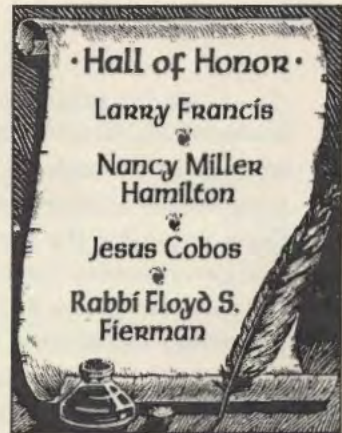
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• Hall of Honor •
2013

Larry Francis



ince his days growing up on Caples Circle, Larry Francis' life has been inextricably woven into the history of El Paso. At thirteen he met his wife, Marilyn Rodehaver Smith, at Coldwell Elementary School. At Austin High School he was an honor student who was involved in student council and varsity tennis. After college, graduate school and time spent serving in the Air Force, he returned to El Paso with Marilyn and first-born son, Rick, to start an electronics and communication business that further deepened his commitment to El Paso.

He was born in San Antonio on April 23, 1933 to Fred and Mary Alice Francis. His father was transferred to El Paso in 1941. Larry started school at Coldwell Elementary. He graduated from Austin High School in 1951 and enrolled in Texas A&M university where he received a B.S. and a M.S. in electrical engineering. Upon graduation he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Air Force. He completed his military obligation in 1959 and returned to El Paso. Upon his return to El Paso, he started the first of three businesses, Francis Communications. In 1965 he started SYT Corporation. He sold his SYT Corporation and retired in the early eighties. His original company was taken over by his son, Rick.

In September 1956, he was called into flight training at Lackland Air Force Base. Due to the glut of pilots, he was reassigned to the Wright Air Development Center. From 1956 through 1959, Francis worked as an engineer on a number of advanced electronics systems for future aircraft. In 1959 he presented a paper covering the latest engineering aspects of new flight data systems at the first annual Aeronautics and Space Symposium. The panel included Werner Von Braun, the German rocket scientist, and General Bernard Schriever, Commander of the Air Force Space Command.

Upon his return to El Paso in 1959, he started Francis Communications, which sold and serviced a variety of communications equipment throughout Texas and New Mexico. In 1965, capitalizing on his military engineering experience, he started the SYT Corporation for the purpose of designing and fabricating specialized governmental telecommunications equipment and systems. In the early seventies SYT moved into proprietary mobile telephone technology introducing the first direct telephone interface between mobile radios and the common carrier telephone system.

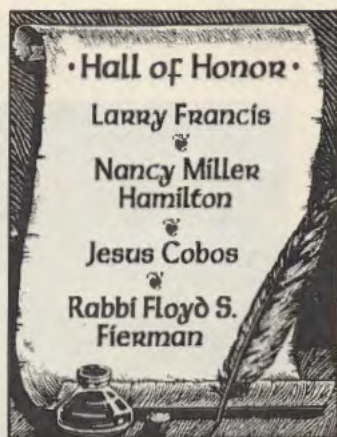
Lawrence Gregg Francis was the 45th mayor of El Paso. With his only previous public office being chairman of the Civil Service Commission, he defeated the incumbent mayor and ten other candidates to become mayor in 1993. He was re-elected in 1995 in a landslide. He took office with the intention to "Modernize El Paso." Familiar with the city employee structure during his tenure on the Civil Service Commission, he began to downsize the number of employees from more than 6,000 to less than 5,000. He streamlined city sanitation services and reduced the number of employees in the City Comptroller's Office from 370 to 75 employees. He took office with a budget deficit and by 1995 there was a budget surplus. The *El Paso Times* named him El Paso's top newsmaker in 1995 citing his achievements as resolving the intractable El Paso Electric bankruptcy case; restarting stalled expansion work at the zoo and at the airport; spurring redevelopment of Union Plaza; and ending the costly side-yard garbage collection service in favor of curbside pickup. His administration implemented major technology upgrades that included new computer servers and a new state of the art radio communication system for police, fire and EMS.

Larry Francis served on numerous boards and commissions during his career. He served on the Civil Service Commission of the City of El Paso, the Sun Bowl Host Committee, the Fort Bliss Air Defense Museum, El Paso A&M Club and the Joint Legislature Support Committee (University of Texas and Texas A&M). He was also involved in various church, Boy Scout and charitable fund raising efforts.

The Francis family has four children: Rick Francis, Linda Francis Lee, Brian Gregg Francis and Carolyn Francis Johnson. They also have six grandchildren.

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Nancy Miller Hamilton



Nancy Corrine Miller Hamilton was born August 22, 1929 in El Paso, Texas. She is the daughter of Harold F. and Corrine Miller. In 1968, she married Ralph E. Hamilton and became the stepmother of his children, James (Jay) and Jeannie.

She graduated from Austin High School and received her Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism and a Master of Arts degree in English from Texas Western College (now The University of Texas at El Paso-UTEP). She has spent her entire professional career in El Paso in the fields of writing, journalism, public relations, and local historian. However, her influence and involvement in Southwestern activities has resulted in national recognition in the fields of fine arts, journalism and liberal arts.

She spent nine years with the *El Paso Times* (1950-59), nine years with the El Paso Independent School District (1959-68), four years with the *El Paso Herald Post* (1972-76) and nine years in media relations for UTEP through 1985. She then became Associate Director of Texas Western Press at UTEP, serving until her retirement in 1990. She became Assistant Editor of *Roundup*, the magazine of the Western Writers of America, and served two years as president of that organization. She was Assistant Editor of UTEP's *Nova* and wrote more than 100 feature articles for that publication.

While at the *El Paso Herald Post*, she wrote numerous feature stories on local history which led to the monograph *Ben Dowell, El Paso's First Mayor* which was published by Texas Western Press. She was the editor of the El Paso County Historical Society's *Password* for three years. She co-authored (with Richard F. Selcer, David Bowser, and Chuck Parsons) the book *Legendary Watering Holes: The Saloons That Made Texas Famous*. She co-published



NANCY MILLER HAMILTON

1929 -

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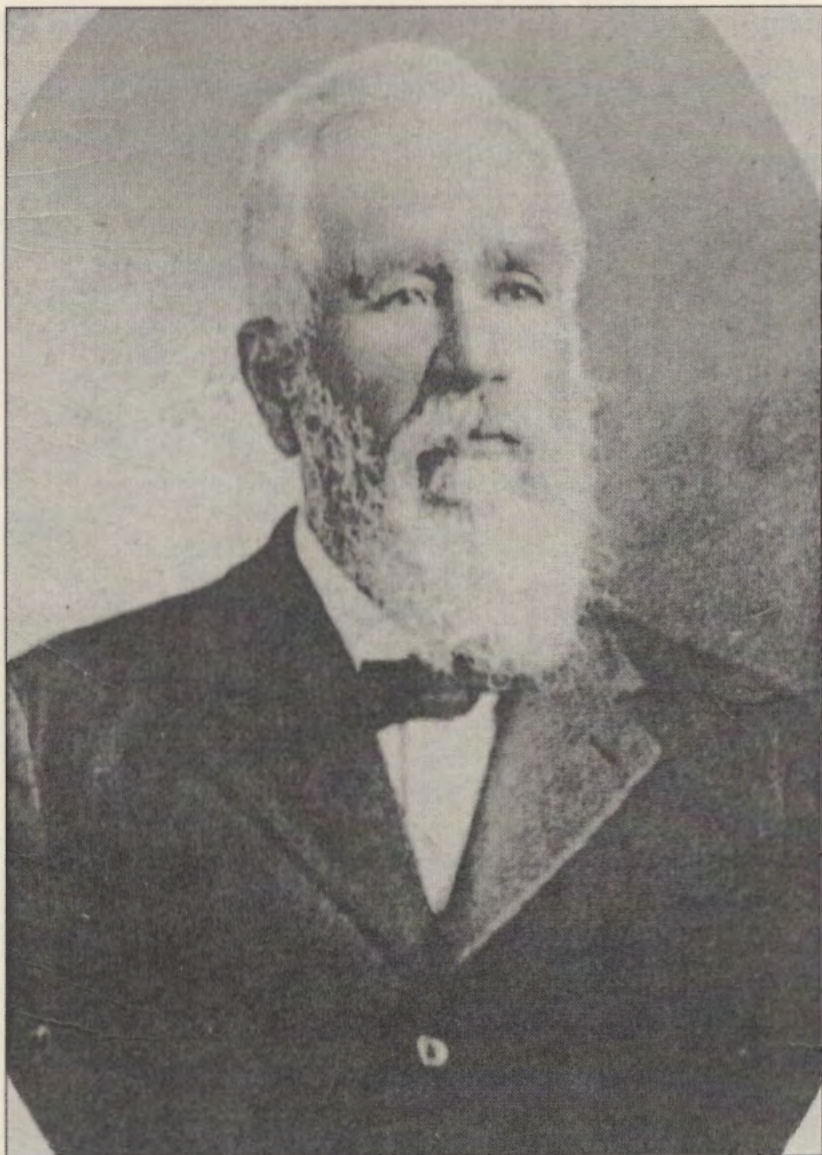
She is a past Sheriff of the local Mt. Franklin Corral of the Westerners International and long-time secretary-treasurer of the Pioneers Association of El Paso County. She has received the Phillip E. Danielson Award from the Westerners International, honorary membership in the Zeta Pi Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma and is listed in *Who's Who in Media and Communications*, *Who's Who in the South and Southwest* and *Who's Who in American Women*. She was selected as the Outstanding Ex-Student of Austin High School in 1990.

She has worked closely with UTEP. Nancy was on the original Gold Nugget Committee in 1983 and helped establish the criteria for the selection of the Gold Nuggets by the six UTEP colleges. She served as chairperson of UTEP's Heritage Commission from 2000 to 2004 and wrote the text for the Commission's tri-fold informational brochure. In her last four years at UTEP, she was the Associate Director of Texas Western Press. She has served as a member of the Hall of Fame Committee and the 90th Anniversary Committee. She serves as UTEP's representative to the order Museum Association and the Border Regional Archives Group.

Her professional contributions to the community have been enhanced through her collecting of Mexican folk art paintings known as *retablos*. Her *retablos* have been exhibited in numerous settings in El Paso and New Mexico. Her collection was exhibited at the Institute of Texas Cultures exhibition "Saints Preserve Us" in San Antonio. She also loaned six *retablos* for the Intercultura touring exhibit "The Art of Private Devotion." As a result of this exhibit, she started editing the *Retablo Newsletter* for collectors.

Her husband Ralph passed away in El Paso on May 3, 2007. Their daughter Jeannie Back lives in Grasston, Minnesota with her husband Bryan. Their son Jay lives in Skiatook, Oklahoma with his wife Peggy. Nancy has four grandchildren.

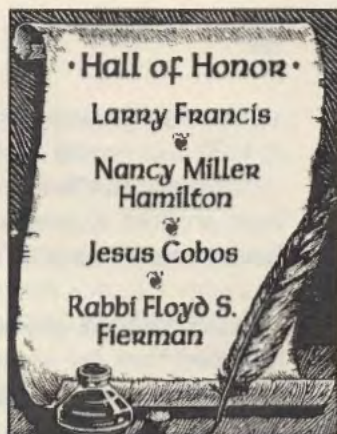




JESUS COBOS
1834 - 1920
Hall of Honor 2013

• Hall of Honor •
2013

Jesus Cobos



Jesus Cobos was a prominent citizen of San Elizario who participated in the commercial, political, religious and educational arenas of the lower valley of El Paso County. He was born in what is now Socorro, Texas (Mexico at the time) in 1834 to Vicente Cobos and Rosalia Cortes Pedrasa who were also born in San Elizario. The Cobos family children included Maria Francisca Rosalia, Augustina, Jesus Cobos II, and Nicasio.

In the nineteenth century, San Elizario was second only to El Paso del Norte (now Ciudad Juárez) among local towns. In 1850 when El Paso County was officially organized, San Elizario was selected the county seat. At that time San Elizario had a population of 1200 compared to two hundred in El Paso. In 1881 the town was bypassed by the railroad in favor of El Paso, and San Elizario began to decline in importance.

The 1870 census lists Jesus Cobos as a farmer although he appears to have had other business interests. He along with Don Marciano Rey I constructed homes in Fabens for the refugees fleeing the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Legend has it that Don Jesus was a rich man who brought bars of gold hidden in wagons from Mexico. He built "*jacales*" or huts at Fabens for the Mexican refugees and also sold land to them at 50 cents an acre. The story goes that he secreted his gold bars somewhere in the walls of the mud "*jacales*." The land on which the "*jacales*" were built was later sold to the Postmaster who demolished the huts and found the hidden gold. There are several variations of this story but all result in Don Jesus losing the gold.

He was also involved in local politics. He ran for the state legislature and was defeated by Louis Cardis. He ran again and was elected to the Texas State Legislature in 1877. He was elected

as County Commissioner representing San Elizario on November 4, 1884 and served until November 1, 1886.

During the Salt War of 1877, he along with some of his neighbors, worked to prevent the bloodshed of the conflict. The San Elizario Salt War of 1877 resulted from a political situation wherein Judge Charles Howard filed a claim to 320 acres covering the primary Salinas of the Guadalupe Mountains. He then closed the road that led to them and instituted fees for collecting salt. The citizens of San Elizario insisted that they had a right to collect freely salt from the Salinas. Howard intercepted a group of these citizens on their way to the Salinas and precipitated a riot. Howard was jailed for his actions but was released upon payment of \$12,000 bond. Several men signed the bond for his release including Jesus Cobos. Howard fled to New Mexico and returned a few weeks later and killed Louis Cardis, a popular leader of the group who claimed the right to gather salt, then fled again. Howard returned two months later with several associates and 20 Texas Rangers. In the ensuing battle, Howard and two associates were killed and the rangers were disarmed and expelled.

The daughter of Don Jesus, Rosalia, married Octaviano Larrazolo, who became Governor of New Mexico and later the first Hispanic United States Senator. The story goes that Don Jesus objected to his daughter marrying Larrazolo who was a school teacher in San Elizario. In order to keep his daughter away from Larrazolo, Don Jesus sent her to school at the Loretto Academy in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Despite his efforts to separate them, Rosalia Cobos and Octaviano Larrazolo were married on April 25, 1881. Rosalia died in 1891 at the age of 26 and Larrazolo married her cousin Maria Montes Garzia.

Don Jesus was a philanthropist. He donated 60 acres of land in San Elizario to the Sisters of Loretto so that they could maintain their school without having to solicit funds constantly from the townspeople. He helped to establish the first public school in Fabens, Texas in 1913, and it was named after him. In 1927 a new school was built and all English-speaking pupils attended this school. Non-English speaking pupils continued to use the Cobos School until it was demolished to make way for the new Fabens High School which was built in 1947.

Don Jesus purchased land for and helped establish the Santa Rosalia Mission Church on Main Street in Fabens. This was

around 1911. The church was later renamed Our Lady of Guadalupe. Jesus Cobos died in 1920. He was but one of the many lower valley leaders who emerged from San Elizario. These men were prominent citizens who gave of themselves altruistically to the thriving town of San Elizario in the 1800s. Their impact is felt to this day.

Much of the information for this nomination was found in the Montes family website (www.montes-family.com) and the book *Bells of San Elizario* by Amelia Montes Skaggs.





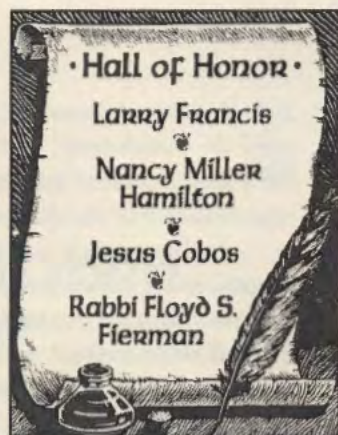
RABBI FLOYD S. FIERMAN

1916 - 1989

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Rabbi Floyd S. Fierman



Floyd S. Fierman was born in 1916 in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. Following his graduation from John Carroll University, he attended Hebrew Union College and was ordained as a Rabbi in 1945. From 1944 to 1949, he worked with Rabbi Solomon Freehof at Rodel Shalom Temple in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. During his Pennsylvania tenure he took a strong interest in historical Jewish religious education. While a student at Hebrew Union College, Fierman taught Rockdale Temple Sunday School and also taught at the Jewish Community Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. This interest in Jewish education served as a basis for his doctoral dissertation, which he earned from the University of Pittsburgh in 1949.

Fierman and his wife, Edythe, came to El Paso in 1949, where he served as Rabbi, and then Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Mount Sinai from 1949 until his death in 1989. It was a period of growth for the congregation, both in membership and the construction of a new building. His leadership in the community extended far beyond the Temple. He was actively engaged in combating racism and fighting for civil rights in El Paso. He was also dedicated to interfaith education and communication and to tracking the history of Jews in the Southwest.

While these accomplishments were great, Rabbi Fierman will be best remembered as a teacher and historian. He taught Philosophy at Texas Western College (later The University of Texas at El Paso) and published numerous works on the early Jewish settlers in the Southwest, including *Guts and Ruts: Jewish Pioneers on the Trail in the American Southwest* (1985) and *Roots and Boots: From Crypto-Jew in New Spain to Community Leader in the American Southwest* (1987). He also wrote for several scholarly journals including *Western States Jewish History*, *American Jew-*

ish Historical Quarterly, *American Jewish Archives*, and *Arizona and the Southwest*. His two-volume work on the Jewish families of El Paso is part of his legacy to this community as was his role as the founder of the El Paso Jewish Historical Society in 1980.

In his search for historically significant materials, Fierman photocopied documents from many regional repositories, such as the new Mexico State Records Center and Archives. He also maintained close contact with archivists and librarians from all over the country in his quest for materials and documents. He developed a particularly close relationship with the late Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus, historian and archivist at the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Floyd Fierman died on February 14, 1989 and is buried at the Temple Mount Sinai Cemetery.

— Author: Susan Novick





What do you call a man like Floyd Fierman?

By Leslie Fierman Zinberg



When you grow up with a man like Floyd Fierman as a Father, a man with so much talent and so much standing in the community and who did so many things so well, it was always a challenge, ... and a little confusing actually, to know how to refer to him.

When he was at Temple Mt. Sinai, sitting beautifully high up on the hill, he was certainly Rabbi Fierman. It was a place he built and loved, a place he took great pride in and served its congregation extraordinarily well for many years. It was his, where he would care for the members and from its pulpit he would deliver his sermons with intellect, sharp edge and passion ... and humor.

When he was at UTEP, teaching, he would be Professor Fierman, a role he enjoyed. An athlete himself, graduating from John Carroll University on a football scholarship, he could relate to his students on every level. It was not easy teaching the jocks on the teams PHILOSOPHY, but he did it.

When he was travelling the great Southwest, doing the research for the many essays and books and monographs he wrote about the varieties of people and ethnicities that emigrated and lived here, he was simply Dr. Fierman. It was work he loved and took great joy in doing, titling his books with names like *Guts and Ruts*, and *Roots and Boots*. He especially enjoyed the discovery of how folks from different religions and backgrounds coexisted. It was his dream that we could all live and work together, successfully and peacefully.

In the community of El Paso, he was easy to see every day ... driving around in his comfortable convertible with the top down, wearing his beret ..., and making his rounds of the city, seeing people in the hospitals and going from Ft. Bliss to homes to Sol's

BBQ. He knew and liked everybody; he embraced every religion. He considered himself to be on the side of the angels. He took his role as a leader in the community very seriously, and when he passed away, the *El Paso Times* referred to him as "The Conscience of El Paso."

His partner for life was my Mother, Edy, and she supported him in his work and loved him every day. She would want me to thank you for recognizing him this evening as does my brother, Gordon, who is here with me tonight.

My entire family thanks you for honoring him. He would have been very proud of this because it is about his work, about the things he dedicated his life to. He would take great pride knowing that his ideas will live on in his writing. The El Paso Historical Society was very important to my father; he felt it was an integral part of the city.

We miss him, his presence and guidance, his wit and smile, his humor and his words, his dignity and his warmth, every day. My husband Michael and sons, Judd and Rodd, still refer to him often, calling him "the human dictionary." He made a huge impact on their lives, and the lives of everyone who knew him.

And me ... the Rabbi's daughter. I loved him very much, and oh, for the record ... I called him Dad.





Olivas V. Aoy: The Castellar of New Mexico

By William Baxter

Olivas V. Aoy is best known in El Paso as the founder of the Mexican Preparatory School and the namesake of Aoy Elementary School. This article focuses on Aoy's life in northern New Mexico, in the decades prior to his arrival in El Paso.



In February 13, 1880, a group of visiting newspaper men made a trip from Santa Fe southward to the Cerrillos mines, where they observed the construction of a new rail link between Santa Fe and the small Rio Abajo town of Albuquerque. Among them was D.A. Millington, a writer for the *Winfield Courier* (Kansas), who provided one of the first newspaper accounts of the rail construction taking place in northern New Mexico. What most impressed Millington, however, was not the glistening rail lines but the bubbling personality of a local newspaper editor: "At Carbonateville we made the acquaintance of a Spaniard named Aoye [sic], who exhibited such wide knowledge, such progressive and radical views and eloquence of expression, that we christened him 'the Castellar of New Mexico.' From him we derived much valuable information. He is an editor, has been the leading one of Santa Fe, and now publishes the *Cerrillos Prospector*, at Carbonateville."¹ This "Castellar" (Lord of the Castle) was Olivas V. Aoy, a remarkable educator, editor, census taker, and unheralded secular saint of the American Southwest.

Olivas Aoy was born in Mahon, on the island of Menorca, Spain, probably in March 1823. Thirty years later, in 1854, he appeared in Havana, Cuba, as an uncommonly well-educated Franciscan friar (or perhaps former Franciscan, as it is not known

for sure whether he was ever formally ordained or when he left the Catholic Church). The Franciscan vows—poverty, celibacy and service—were the constants of Aoy's life, even if the Franciscan Order was not suited to his temperament. Another constant for Aoy was his self-effacing nature and his unwillingness to talk much about himself. His reticence made him a mystery even to those who considered him a friend, a mystery amplified by his ceaseless wanderings and his fondness for changing his name: Jaime Aoy Olivas Vila (thought to be his birth name), Jaime Vila, Olivas Villanueva, Olivas Villa Aoy, Olivas de La O, to name the most common variants. And though he touched the lives of many people for many decades, there are no known photographs or likenesses of him.

After many years in Havana, Aoy left Cuba (and perhaps also the Franciscan Order) and headed for the Yucatan, where he lived for two years among the Mayans. It is reported that he grew disillusioned with the pervasive violence in this culture and so he moved to New Orleans, where he was employed as a school teacher. From there he headed up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, Missouri, where he taught for a time at the College of the Christian Brothers.

It is not known for sure when Aoy arrived in New Mexico, but his name appeared for the first time in the 1870 U.S. census records for New Mexico, which listed him as an unmarried school teacher, age 44 (actually he was probably 47), residing in Lower Las Vegas.² He must have been drawn to the newspaper business because a year later, on July 21, 1871 the *Santa Fe Daily New Mexican* published the following notice: "*The Advertiser*, a new paper published at Las Vegas by Mr. Aoy, has come to hand. It is published in English and Spanish."³ The Spanish version was called *El Anunciador*. Millington's impression of him as a free thinker seems to have been correct, because Aoy's editorial of August 25, 1871 espoused some very un-Franciscan viewpoints: "From the present National idea of non-sectarian Schools, has to spring forth, the future Holy Infallible Church, of the Great Occidental Republic, whose Creed will be 'Science's Intuitive Axioms,' with demonstrative Knowledge instead of blind Belief and the genuine Prayer of Deeds, instead that, a mean[ing]less Talk."⁴ And four years later the *Santa Fe New Mexican* noted: "It is with pleasure that we acknowledge a pleasant call from Mr. Aoy, and with still greater pleasure that we can record him among the fearless outspoken

progressive editors of New Mexico. He has a bonafide interest in the substantial development of our material resources; in the wiping out of ancient prejudices passions and bigotries, the learning of the masses of our people their right as [and?] duties as freemen and their general elevation in the scale of American progress and civilization. There is need of a few more publishers of newspapers in New Mexico, who are imbued with that same generous spirit of onward and upward development—backed by the same unselfish, fearless, outspoken spirit in driving home the truth that characterizes the efforts of Mr. Aoy.”⁵

Aoy served for eight years as a publisher, school teacher, and Spanish tutor in Las Vegas. Then, just as the tracks of the new railroad were about to reach Las Vegas, as if he wished to stay one step ahead of the rails, he transferred the *Advertiser/Anunciador* to other Las Vegas entrepreneurs, who renamed it *La Independencia*. Aoy moved briefly to Santa Fe, but by June 1879 he had established himself at Carbonateville, the main camp of the booming Cerrillos Hills mining region, two dozen miles southwest of Santa Fe. There he began the first newspaper in the region, the *Cerrillos Prospector*. He remained in Carbonateville for a full year, turning out the *Prospector* weekly (and for a brief time daily).

Unfortunately, no copies of the *Cerrillos Prospector* are known to have survived, but fortunately Oscar Waldo Williams, a New Mexico surveyor and lawyer, left behind his impressions of its editor in July 1879: “The little camp of seventy or eighty souls [a multiple of that number of people were scattered throughout the nearby diggings] boasted of a weekly newspaper commensurate in size—two sheets about twelve inches square—carried on by a picturesque editor, who was called Padre Aoy. He was a dark-skinned little man of nervous manner and voluble speech who was generally referred to by the Mexicans as a *gachupín*—that is to say, in English, of Spanish birth. Because of a camp tradition that he had been formerly a priest, he was commonly called ‘Padre’. Now the Padre made a scanty living by camp subscriptions and by advertisements, the latter coming largely from Santa Fe business houses.”⁶

On July 10, 1879 Aoy became the first and last postmaster of Carbonateville, and on April 5, 1880 he became the first postmaster of Turquesa, New Mexico. This was a technical distinction as the only thing that changed was the name on the postmark.

Carbonateville, for postal purposes, had become Turquesa. After almost a year as postmaster, on June 22, Aoy was succeeded by Samuel W. Bonner.

Aoy was a colorful and popular figure in Carbonateville/Turquesa. He had neither the skills for nor the interest in mining, but he was included as one of the "discoverers" and owners of the Mollie F. lode claim, on the north side of the Cerrillos Hills in the Gonzales Mining District. Including him in this enterprise must have been a gesture of affection by his friends, as there is no evidence that Aoy ever worked the claim or that the Mollie F. ever produced anything of value.⁷

When the U.S. Census was taken in 1880, Aoy worked as an enumerator (census taker) for District 42, which stretched from La Cienega in the north to the new Cerrillos railroad station in the south, and included the small camp communities of Pino's Ranch, Roger's Bend, Delgado's Ranch, Bonanza City, Hungry Gulch, Purdin's Camp, Carbonateville, Poverty Hollow, and Poverty Flats. His census sheets are notable for the clarity of his handwriting and his attention to detail, but also for the large number of miners he is known to have missed. Traveling from camp to camp during the first twenty days of June 1880, he recorded somewhere between half and two-thirds of the area's dispersed population (we know this because other records clearly show a significantly larger number of miners in the area at the time). His own census entry, which he registered on June 8, listed him as a single male aged 54 (he was probably 57, but 54 is consistent with the age he gave in the 1870 census), and stated that both he and his parents were born in Spain.⁸

Aoy published the *Wallace Watchman* from May 1880 to October 1882,⁹ suggesting that he moved from Carbonateville/Turquesa to Wallace at some point in 1880. Since his census and postmaster responsibilities required his presence at Carbonateville at least through June 22, 1880, he probably lived for a couple of months in both places. Carbonateville and Wallace were about two hours apart, but the journey was not an easy one. For Aoy to travel from Carbonateville to Wallace Station, he would have had to walk an hour from Carbonateville to Cerrillos Station, where he would have taken a westbound train for approximately 11 miles. Altogether it would have taken around two hours. Making the entire Carbonateville-Wallace trip on foot (and a lot of travel in those days was done on foot) or horseback would have taken around 3 to 4 hours.

Wallace, which was later renamed Thornton and is today known as Domingo or Kewa Station, began as a small railroad camp that served as the accumulation center for rail ties that were being cut in the Jemez Mountains and floated down the Rio Grande to the Cochiti boom. In mid-1882, Wallace replaced Lamy as the Division Point for the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe (AT&SF) Railroad and thus became the layover station for train crews, who had time to kill and money in their pockets. The ever-increasing wildness of the town—its new mayor was an unabashed bunko man and a rough-and-tumble crowd was pouring in—may have contributed to Aoy's growing dissatisfaction with the place. The last issue of the *Wallace Watchman* under his name was published in October 1882.

A month later, in November 1882, Aoy was in Guaymas, the Mexican port on the Gulf of California. Guaymas was the then-purported Pacific Ocean terminus of the AT&SF system, as the Southern Pacific Railroad had already preempted the better ports in southern California. In Guaymas, Aoy came under the influence of Mormon missionaries, and by early 1883 he had become a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) and was living in Salt Lake City. The historical record regarding his four years at Salt Lake City is contradictory. There is some evidence that Aoy (or Oay, as his name was sometimes written), along with Meliton G. Trejo, Daniel W. Jones, and James Z. Stewart, translated the Book of Mormon into Spanish. Alternately, Aoy may have played a small role in its translation but a significant one in its preparation for publication. In any case, he eventually had a falling out with the LDS. One version of this falling-out story claims that Aoy helped produce a classical, polished Spanish version of the Book of Mormon, but then got angry when the Church regarded it as a direct communication of the Holy Writ rather than just as an especially competent translation. According to another version of the story, Aoy's break with the Church came when he started criticizing what seemed to him to be the inconsistent and unscientific preachments of the Church. Either way, it seems plausible that Aoy became disillusioned with LDS Elders, who he probably saw as being excessively doctrinaire and dogmatic, but there is no evidence he became alienated from Mormons in general. The LDS credits Aoy with having had a modest role in the translation of the Book of Mormon into Spanish, and at the time of his death in 1895, an LDS Elder claimed in

his eulogy that Aoy was "a member of the Church and died so."¹⁰

After leaving Salt Lake City, Aoy went to Santa Fe and from there briefly to Silver City, where he unsuccessfully tried to start a Spanish-language newspaper. His wanderings finally came to an end in mid-1887, when he arrived in El Paso. According to some accounts, he was heading to Mexico, but while waiting in El Paso for his luggage, he discovered the plight of the Spanish-speaking children in that town and knew instantly what he needed to do. He spent the last eight years of his life to giving the many Mexican and Mexican-American children of El Paso instruction in English that they might succeed in the town's English-language school system.

Aoy's small school house consisted of a rented room behind an assay office on San Francisco Street, which Aoy furnished and supplied using money he had earned in Salt Lake City. When his savings ran out, Aoy began a night school for adults wishing to learn Spanish, and he used the income earned from the night school to fund his day school. In January 1888, the El Paso School Board began to support Aoy's school, which they called the "Mexican Preparatory School," paying the rent of \$15 per month and providing him with a modest salary of \$35 a month (\$15 less than what regular schoolteachers received). An article written by a former student some years later claimed that Aoy lived on \$7 and used the remaining \$28 of his salary to support the school. As the Mexican Preparatory School grew in enrollments, the School Board decided to build a new brick schoolhouse, but Aoy did not live long enough to see it. He died on April 27, 1895, at age 73, before construction began. The new building was not completed until 1899 and was named Aoy Elementary School in his honor.

Aoy School marked its 125th year on June 6, 2012, and is the oldest continuously operated school in the El Paso area. The present Aoy School is located on Seventh and Kansas streets in El Paso. Altogether this was a remarkable legacy for a one-time census taker from Carbonateville.

NOTES

- 1 *Winfield Courier*, Kansas, February 26, 1880. Transcription of this article is available at <http://www.ausbcomp.com/~bbott/cowley/Oldnews/Papersup/cour8.htm>
- 2 The 1870 U.S. Census for New Mexico, dated July 1 states: "O.V. Aoy, school teacher, Lower Las Vegas; 44 y-o, b.Spain [fa foreign, mo foreign], citizen of US; solo in household." This record is available on line at <http://www.censusrecords.com/search?lastname=aoy&state=new%20mexico&censusyear=1870>
- 3 *Santa Fe Daily New Mexican* (July 21, 1871).
- 4 *The Advertiser* (August 25, 1871).
- 5 *Santa Fe Daily New Mexican* (June 4, 1875).
- 6 Oscar Waldo Williams, *Pioneer Surveyor, Frontier Lawyer: The Personal Narrative of O.W. Williams, 1877-1902* (El Paso: University of Texas at El Paso, 1966), pp. 92-93.
- 7 Santa Fe County Locations & Mining Deeds Book #15406 (April 2, 1880), p. 425.
- 8 The 1880 U.S. Census for New Mexico, dated June 8 states: "O.V. Aoy, printer, 54 y-o, single, born Spain [fa Spain mo Spain], resident Los Cerrillos Carbonateville solo." This record is available on line at <http://www.censusrecords.com/Search?FirstName=o%20v&LastName=aoy&State=New%20Mexico&CensusYear=1880>.
- 9 Pearce Grove, Becky J. Barnett, and Sandra J. Hansen, eds., *New Mexico Newspapers: A Comprehensive Guide to Bibliographical Entries and Locations* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), p. 378.
- 10 Cited by Conrad Bryson, "A Man Named Aoy," *Password* 25 (Summer 1990), p. 99.

WILLIAM BAXTER, now in retirement, lives with his wife and a passel of animals on a small estancia not far from the historical Carbonateville. He has written numerous articles on the history of the region and is near to finishing his second book.



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| May 20 | Proclamation by City of El Paso |
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| June | Mission Valley Tour with Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo Tribe and SEGHS |
| August | KID's Day at Burges House, Children's Historical Activities |
| October | Hispanic Month Celebration with Enterprising and Professional Women (EPW) and Pan American Round Table |
| November 2 | Hall of Honor Banquet honoring Historical figures of our County |
| PENDING | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposition/sale/conference of Political Posters by Rick Melendrez • Round Table on What is Chicano? and the History of Media in El Paso • Proclamation by El Paso County |

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Desegregation Memories

By Nancy Hamilton



n May 17, 1954, The Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* that racial segregation in the public schools was unconstitutional. The Brown case, grouped with several others, came to be known as "Brown I." As part of that ruling, the Court

invited further arguments in order to begin formulating specific implementation decrees.

The hearing of further arguments led to "Brown II," announced a year later, in which the memorable words were: "all deliberate speed," "prompt and reasonable start," "good faith," "equitable principles," and "practical flexibility." The Court did not mandate immediate implementation of desegregation and made it clear that it was a matter for local school districts. At that time, I was the education reporter for the *El Paso Times*. In 1955 I was twenty-five years old and had served my apprenticeship in the Society Department, writing up weddings, birth announcements, and club meeting notices. Working in the newsroom was much more interesting.

By the time of the Brown II ruling, I had already written about a locally filed lawsuit by a young woman seeking admission to El Paso's state institution, Texas Western College (since 1967 The University of Texas at El Paso). In March 1955 Thelma White, with the help of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, had filed suit with the local federal court because she had been denied admission to the Texas school. A ruling by Judge R. E. Thomason was expected in July. I wrote an account of Miss White's efforts to enroll, as told to me by a local official of the NAACP, Mrs. E. M. Williams.

As a native El Pasoan, I had always been segregated from the Black community, and it was Mrs. Williams who first intro-

duced to me some of their problems when we served together on a committee that was organized by Hibbard Polk, a public school official. The group was called the Juvenile Delinquency Committee and met in the basement of the YWCA on Franklin Street, a couple of blocks from the newspaper building. I don't know exactly why Mr. Polk asked me to serve, as I was young and single, except that I could provide publicity for the group. It was Mrs. Williams who impressed upon us that young people of her race could not attend movies, concerts, dances, teen-canteens, and other activities that were available to non-blacks. (Movie theater managers had told me state law required them to have a separate box-office for Blacks if they admitted them to a theater.) The young people had to make their own entertainment and their families were very much involved in trying to keep them in line and out of trouble. Since El Paso was a military town, there were many young people in the military who were also affected by the color lines.

Thus, when Mrs. Williams brought Thelma White's story to the *Times*, she told me of the honor student's experience in being turned down at Texas Western by J. M. Whitaker, the registrar. He had told them that a desegregation law "would have to be passed by the Texas Legislature before Thelma could be admitted," she said. "I told him I was very sorry that he could not admit her on account of her color." Mrs. Williams said that, after talking to A. A. Smith, acting president of the college, she had advised him, "Everybody else in the world could be admitted to the school but an American Negro."

She and Miss White had then traveled forty miles north to New Mexico A&M (now New Mexico State University), where "We found Christian people ... who treated us right regardless of the color of our skins." Miss White enrolled in that school, although her tuition rate was higher than it would have been in a Texas school, the nearest Texas school that admitted Blacks at that time was Prairie View, 600 miles away. Miss White had been valedictorian of her class at Douglass High School, the only school for Blacks in El Paso County.

Just about a year after the Brown I ruling, came Brown II. Relying on information from the Associated Press and an interview with a spokesman for the NAACP, I wrote a story that received a page 1 banner headline on June 21, 1955: "NAACP To Ask Desegregation Here" with a subhead: "Plan To Present Petition Tonight To School Board."

Earlier on Monday, the day I wrote the story, El Paso School Superintendent Mortimer Brown had called and asked me to go to Douglass School and meet with the principal, Edwin W. Mangram. He did not tell me why and I don't think the story on the Supreme Court decision had yet moved on the AP wire. At any rate, I went to the county's only school for Black students, where Mr. Mangram and the assistant principal, William Marshall, greeted me. We held a rather stiff conversation, tiptoeing around the issue at hand because I had not yet been informed about the petition to the School Board planned for Tuesday's meeting, but would learn of it after this interview.

They gave me a copy of a booklet, "The Development of Negro Education in El Paso," by Emmanuel Campbell, which emphasized the achievements of those who had attended there through 1945, the year of publication. Douglass housed grades one through twelve and an impressively high percentage of graduates of the high school went on to college, even though the nearest one they could attend in Texas was 600 miles away.

Upon returning to the newspaper office, I met with Dr. Vernon Collins, a 1913 graduate of Douglass who had become a respected physician and surgeon. He advised me that the NAACP planned to present a petition to the School Board at the regular meeting Tuesday evening. This was a tactic being tried by the organization in a number of cities as a follow-up to the Supreme Court decision. "The petition," he told me, "cites the recent decision of the Supreme Court which leaves the matter of integration up to the local schools." He added that he would not make specific recommendations to the board, noting that after time to study the petition, the board would be approached again to confer about it.

Meanwhile, a special committee of the State Board of Education had begun a series of meetings the previous week and was expected to report to the State Board in July. Its members were concerned with legal implications of the court decision.

In my story about the NAACP petition, I quoted "no comment" responses from El Paso School Board members Mrs. T. P. Clendenin, J. F. Hulse, M. L. Hutchins, E. D. Medrano, and Ted Andress; the president, C. M. Irvin, was out of town and Dr. Ralph Homan was also not available. In later years, schools would be named for Mrs. Clendenin, Irvin and others of his family who had served on the board, and Andress.

As of that date, the San Antonio school district was considering desegregation, possibly for September, but was awaiting an attorney's opinion on the plan. Several public junior colleges had already ended segregation, according to AP.

The School Board met on the ground floor of El Paso Technical Institute, where the offices of the school administration were located. The building at Rio Grande and Oregon streets in the early seventies became the downtown campus of El Paso Community College, but in 1955 it housed vocational education classes of high school level and adult homemaking classes around the corner in a wing that had originally been Sunset Elementary School.

In those times, years before the passage of the Open Meetings Act, the School Board was often accused—and rightly so—of being a “rubber-stamp” operation. Members would get together prior to a scheduled meeting and go over the agenda, ironing out their difficulties with any items and making their decisions in private. Then they would hold a public meeting, normally with nobody from the public present, sometimes with a reporter from my newspaper, and whip through the agenda, voting on the items without discussion. When Ted Andress chaired the group, he would accommodate me as a reporter by stopping to explain the items being considered.

The board additionally had a system of self-perpetuation. If a member's six-year term of office was about to expire and that member did not choose to run again, he or she would resign before the term was out and the board would appoint some trusted person to fill the vacancy and stand for election as an incumbent. The seven board positions were at-large; geographic representation would not come for many years.

On the night of the historic desegregation meeting, I was the only reporter present, along with a small delegation from the NAACP headed by Dr. Collins. Normally board meetings attracted no visitors at all and I was usually the only reporter. This was before television coverage and the *Herald-Post*, an evening newspaper, would have had to pay overtime to a reporter for covering a night meeting; they would write a follow-up story the next day.

When I returned to the office that afternoon, another reporter, Ramón Villalobos, who lived near St. Joseph's Parochial School, told me the local Catholic schools had desegregated two years earlier with no fanfare. I called Father Gerald McDonald, the parochial superintendent, and he confirmed this. Not a word of

protest had been heard about the including of Black students in his schools over those two years.

As I entered the board room for the meeting Tuesday evening, I sensed tensions in the air and an undercurrent of excitement, although the board members did not let their faces show their feelings that much. That evening, Mr. Address made the motion to observe the Supreme Court ruling by unconditionally and immediately desegregating the El Paso schools. There was one "nay." It was that of J. F. Hulse, a long-time board member and prominent attorney. A son of the Old South, Mr. Hulse found it too difficult to break with tradition and, upon hearing the board's decision, he submitted his resignation and left the meeting.

One reason the board was able to make the desegregation immediate was that the regular school year was ending that month. Summer school was already in place, so the actual change would not have an impact until fall classes started the day after Labor Day.

Another factor was that El Paso's Negro population traditionally had been very small. The 1950 census showed only 4,694 Black residents, or 2.4 percent of the total for El Paso County.

The Army had desegregated following an executive order by President Harry Truman in 1948, so Fort Bliss and other military installations in the area had Black families with school-age children, some of whom were already attending the parochial schools. Their presence could be expected to help ease into the change in the schools.

Meanwhile, the case of Thelma White was awaiting a ruling by Judge Thomason. In that case, Ted Address, the School Board member who had moved for desegregation, represented the State of Texas in court. He had questioned the college president, Dr. Dysart Holcomb, suggesting that a court ruling was unnecessary because The University of Texas Board of Regents, which had authority over Texas Western, had ruled ten days earlier that Negroes could attend the school. Miss White's attorney protested that the new policy was not adequate remedy and the judge agreed. As reported in the July 18, 1955 *El Paso Herald-Post*, he invalidated Texas constitutional provisions and statutes that required separate schools for Negroes. Texas Western, as a result of Miss White's suit, became the first white public institution of higher education in Texas to admit Black undergraduates; in September twelve were enrolled.

[At The University of Texas Law School, Heman (sic) Marion Sweatt had been denied admission in 1946, although no law school for Blacks was available in Texas. After lengthy legal proceedings, the United States Supreme Court ruled in 1950 that he should be admitted to the law school, which he attended for two years.]

The NAACP petition to the El Paso School Board was not the first petition to have been made to a governing body regarding education. In a little-remembered incident, a petition from students and faculty members to The University of Texas Board of Regents resulted in threatened punishments. A football game between the then College of Mines and Arizona State was scheduled in the fall of 1947. "The captain of the ASU team was African-American," recalled Mary Hill Malooly, then editor of the student newspaper, *The Prospector*. Dr. Dossie Wiggins, president of the college, announced that he could not play at Kidd Field because he was Black. The journalism instructor, Charles W. Scarritt, and the whole staff were incensed. The staff included me, the editor; Scott Thurber, managing editor; you (Nancy Miller Hamilton) assistant managing editor; Rubén Salazar, editorial page editor; Elmer Grounds, city editor; Les Turner, sports editor; and Hawley Richeson, in some capacity."

The staff decided to write an editorial opposing the ban, she continued, did a college poll in support of their position, and also polled the Miner football team. A player from Chicago was the only one who objected. Their faculty sponsor, Scarritt, encouraged the drafting of a petition to the board, asking that segregation not be applied to visiting athletic teams. "Dr. Wiggins was furious," continued Malooly. *The Prospector* was destroying all support from the El Paso business community, he contended. He called Mr. Scarritt, me, and Rubén, in for an interview. He kept repeating "What will R. E. McKee say?" (I have always doubted very much if R. E. McKee would have said anything.) We argued vehemently that if a Black could fight for his country, surely he could play at Kidd Field. Anyhow, he didn't play." The president demanded an apology to the Board of Regents and held out the threat of possible expulsion from the school. The students complied.

Malooly speculated that Rubén's editorial "was probably the first pro-integration piece in a Texas white university."

In May of 1948, Wiggins got his revenge on Scarritt by firing him. For college teachers, this was the worst time of year to be job-hunting. Ordinarily, positions were sought months earlier.

Scarritt, however, heard there was an opening at the University of Alabama. When he contacted the department there, he was hired. The chairman said, "Anyone who is fired at the end of the year by Dossie Wiggins must be a good man. He did the same thing to my son when Wiggins was president of Hardin-Simmons." Mary Hill (Malooly) transferred to Alabama, where she completed her degree in 1949. Salazar became a newsman with a career in El Paso, Mexico City, and Los Angeles. He championed civil rights causes and died while covering an anti-Vietnam War protest in Los Angeles, August 29, 1970, felled inside a building by a police tear gas canister.

Not only were El Paso's educational institutions early to eliminate segregation, but the City Council acted in June 1962, two years before the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, to outlaw discrimination in motels, hotels, theaters, and restaurants. The ordinance was introduced by Bert Williams, who later would serve as mayor. The current mayor, Ralph Seitsinger, vetoed the council's decision to become the first city in Texas to integrate public places. The four aldermen—Williams, Ted Bender, Ray Watt, and R. R. "Buck" Rogers, took another vote and overrode the veto.

RESOURCES

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Election of officers and directors is held at the October meeting. Exact dates, times, places and other pertinent information concerning all activities are announced in our newsletter, *El Conquistador*, which is published approximately fourteen days prior to each general meeting.

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- Hall of Honor Banquet
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- Karl P. and Helen P. Goodman Memorial Awards
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Rosa's Cantina: Was It Really the Inspiration for Marty Robbins' Song "El Paso"?

By Mark Cioc-Ortega



"El Paso" is one of Marty Robbins' most beloved ballads. Born Martin David Robinson in 1925, Robbins grew up in a large and troubled household in Glendale, Arizona (near Phoenix) before joining the U.S. Navy during the Second World War. His professional career as a singer,

songwriter, and actor began in 1947 and lasted until his death in 1981, by which time he was known around the world. Robbins fans remember him as a versatile performer and songwriter (not to mention avid race car driver!) who bridged the country and pop music scenes with numerous hits, including "A White Sport Coat (And a Pink Carnation)," "The Hanging Tree," "Don't Worry," "Devil Woman," "Begging To You," "Ruby Ann," "My Woman My Woman My Wife," to mention only a few. Non-fans will most likely recognize just one of his songs, his biggest hit: "El Paso."¹

Robbins wrote "El Paso" in December 1957, but did not record it until April 1959, as part of the album *Gunfighter Ballads and Trail Songs* under the Columbia Records label. The album, which included 12 songs, reached the record stores in September 1959 and quickly climbed up the *Billboard* charts. Much to the surprise of Robbins and Columbia, it was "El Paso" (the first song on the B side and seventh song overall) that got the lion's share of air time; the song was over four and a half minutes long, nearly twice the average length of country songs back then, making it an unlikely radio hit. But disc jockeys and listeners loved it. Released as a single, "El Paso" reached No. 1 on the *Billboard* charts in January



*Rosa's Cantina at 3454 Doniphan Drive in El Paso, Texas.
Courtesy of Mark Cioc-Ortega.*

1960 and won the Grammy Award for Best Country & Western Recording in 1961.

The song's lively melody contrasts vividly with its dark and brooding lyrics. The tune is catchy, fast-paced, and uplifting. That's what makes it such a great fighting song for UTEP's Marching Miner Regiment (who today can imagine a Miners football game without the brisk and brassy beat of Marty Robbins?). The lyrics, however, tell a tale of passion, violence, and death. Bi-ethnic love between an Anglo gunslinger and "a Mexican girl" named Felina (which he later spelled "Feleena"). Jealous rage and a barroom murder at Rosa's Cantina. Horse thievery and a flight from justice. Then remorse, grief, and a tragic return to the scene of the crime, where the gunslinger is surrounded and shot before dying in the arms of his beloved. That's why the song served so well as the leitmotif of the final episode of AMC's *Breaking Bad*, aptly entitled "Felina." Robbins' murderous hero sacrificed his life out of his obsessive love for Felina. AMC's anti-hero, Walter White, was trigger-happy for blue meth.

It is now often forgotten that Robbins later turned "El Paso" into the first part of a trilogy. The second ballad, "Feleena (From El Paso)," which came out in 1966, tells the story of Felina from her birth in New Mexico until that fateful day at Rosa's Cantina ("where a nice girl would never be seen"), when her flirtatious behavior inadvertently triggered a murder. "Feleena" reveals three things about her that were left vague or untold in the first ballad:



Marty Robbins. Gunfighter Ballads and Trail Songs. Columbia LP, 1959.

that she was a paid dancer at Rosa's Cantina (and thus would be expected to flirt with customers); that she was deeply in love with the gunslinging hero, even though he didn't seem to know it; and that she committed suicide and "fell 'cross the dead cowboy's chest," after she watching him get gunned down in front of her.

In the third ballad, "El Paso City," which came out in 1976, the narrator recalls a song "about a Texas cowboy and a girl and a little place called Rosa's" as he flies "thirty thousand feet above the desert floor" over El Paso. It's Robbins at his impish best, for at first the narrator claims that he cannot "recall who sang the song" and in fact can only vaguely recollect the sequence of events that resulted in three tragic deaths. But by the end of the tune, he sheepishly asks himself: "Could it be that I could be, The cowboy in this mystery, That died there in that desert sand so long ago." The trilogy cemented the legend: Marty Robbins was El Paso and El Paso was Marty Robbins.

Tradition has it that Rosa's Cantina, located at 3454 Doniphan Drive, formed the backdrop for Robbins' ballads. Located on the western outskirts of El Paso, the bar has "El Paso" memorabilia on its walls and a well-polished "this-is-the-real-Rosa's-Cantina" image. Type the words "Rosa's Cantina" on any web engine and you'll get a cornucopia of stories regaling it as *the* bar of Western folklore. "Rosa's Cantina is a neighborhood bar made famous—or perhaps notorious—by Marty Robbins and his song, *El Paso*," the hilariously named website *Drunken History* informs us.² "And its fame—as the only physical, real character of the story—continues well into the 21st century," adds a *Huffington Post* blog.³ Similar claims can be found in books as well. "I spent hours driving the streets of El Paso until I found the truth: Rosa's Cantina lives," declared Tom Miller in his rambling travelogue *On the Border*, published in 1981. "Inside Rosa's Cantina is magnificent. The dimly lit barroom is spacious, with enough room for Felina and a hundred other dancers.... Next to a plastic palm and below an American flag is the jukebox, with artists from Glenn Miller to Johnny Rodriguez, Eydie Gorme to the Righteous Brothers, the Platters to Freddy Fender. (Yes, Marty Robbins' 'El Paso' is there

J J Newberry Co Ernest W Francisco mgr 320 E Overland av
 J & M Club (Miguel Aranda) beer 3454 Doniphan dr
 --Jewelry (John Armendariz) 402½ W Oregon
 --Motor Co (Joe Vargas) used cars 1624 Texas av
 J M B Market (Jose M Blanco) gro 4620 Alameda av
 J R B Grocery (Juan R Benavidez) 301 N Martinez

The J & M Club in the 1959 City Directory. This is the first time the city directory showed a business listing at 3454 Doniphan Drive, future home of Rosa's Cantina.

"Juaun (Irene) cook Campus Queen r Juarez Mex
 "Santiago Z (Virginia C) constn wkr h607½ S El Paso
 "Virginia C Mrs mgr Hotel Ashley r607½ S El Paso
**ROSA'S CANTINA (Ernest A Erbe) Meet Your Friends
 Near Sunland Park - ½ Mile From The Race Track
 Fine Food, Cold Beer, 3454 Doniphan dr, Tel Key-
 stone 3-6171 (See Yellow Page 55)**
 "Food Market (Jose I Gonzalez) 4301 Rosa av
 Rosado David studt r3205 Pershing dr

Rosa's Cantina in the 1961 City Directory. This is the first time that the name Rosa's Cantina appeared in a city directory. The J & M Club became Rosa's Cantina in 1960 or 1961, presumably when Ernest A. Erbe took over as proprietor.

LOUNGES		5
BUCKAROO BAR		
	CLAUDE APPEGATE PLEASANT ATMOSPHERE	
8773 Alameda Ave.		UL 9-9029
ROSA'S CANTINA		
● FINE FOOD	● COLD BEVERAGES	
½ Mile From Sunland Park		
3454 DONIPHAN DR.		KE 3-6171

An Advertisement for Rosa's Cantina in the 1961 City Directory.

too.) Robert Zubia, an industrious and friendly man in his fifties, owns Rosa's Cantina. That was its name when he bought it in the early 1960s, he said, and had been for as long as he could remember."⁴

There are, however, compelling reasons to doubt these claims. To begin with, Marty Robbins himself made clear on numerous occasions that "there was nothing really true about the story."⁵ The gunslinging narrator (whose death the ballad chronicles) was wholly fictional. Rosa's Cantina was not based on any actual bar that Robbins had seen, knew about, or visited in El Paso. Felina was not a real person (though the name was a riff on Fidelina Martinez, a real girl Robbins knew from his elementary school in Glendale). Every aspect of the ballad—every character and every event—sprang entirely from Robbins' imagination. What is true is that the real town of El Paso served as the spark for his inspiration. "The song first occurred to Marty while driving his family home to Phoenix for Christmas in 1955," Diane Diekman wrote in her thoroughly researched biography, *Twentieth Century Drifter*: "Seeing the city limits sign, he decided El Paso was a romantic-sounding name, and he'd like to write a song about El Paso. By the time he'd reached the other side of the city, he'd forgotten the idea. The next Christmas he remembered 'Well, last year I said I was gonna write a song about El Paso.' But again, he drove through the city and forgot the idea before reaching the other side.

The third time through, in 1957, he reminded himself he'd said he was going to write a song about El Paso. Right at that moment, a line popped into his mind: 'Out in the west Texas town of El Paso, I fell in love with a Mexican girl.'⁶ This catchy line got his creative juices flowing.

"It was a funny sensation," he recalled later: "I'm driving across the desert from El Paso to Phoenix as I'm writing, y'see. The song came out like a motion picture, and I could never forget the words to it. I put them down after I got to Phoenix, but I couldn't forget it because it was like a motion picture. I didn't know how it was going to end. It just kept on coming out, and coming out, and the tune was coming out at the same time." He repeated this story to Ralph Emery, one of Nashville's most celebrated disc jockeys and country television stars: "It was real exciting, and I kept waiting for the end to come, to see what was going to happen. Finally, it ended when it wanted to. I really didn't have too much to do with that song. It just came out."⁷

Robbins was a regular performer in Nashville during the mid-1950s, so he was presumably driving from Tennessee to Arizona when he passed through El Paso. Interstate 10 did not yet exist, so most likely he would have driven through El Paso on the main thoroughfare, Highway 20 (Mesa Avenue). This route would not have taken him by way of 3454 Doniphan Drive (the location of today's Rosa's Cantina). Robbins always said that he invented the name Rosa's Cantina, but even if this bar had existed in the period 1955 to 1957, he would not have seen it from Highway 20 and unconsciously logged the name in his brain.

Moreover, city directories show no business listing at all for 3454 Doniphan Drive before 1959 and no mention of a bar or cafe named Rosa's Cantina anywhere in El Paso before 1961. The first business at 3454 Doniphan was a beer bar operating under the

Rosa Grocery (Luz and Mrs Refugio R Rodriguez)
S Oregon

Rosa's Cafe (Roberto Zubla) 3454 Doniphan dr
" Cantina (Roberto Zubla) beer 3454 Doniphan dr

" Food Market (Jose I Gonzalez) 4301 Rosa av

Rosado David R studt r3900 McKinley av

" Jose R (Ma Refugio) emp Pepsi Cola h2118 Olive
apt 181

" Luis N (Raquel V) prod mn Duffy's Draft Beverage

Rosa's Cantina in the 1963 City Directory. Roberto Zubia became the owner of Rosa's Cantina in 1961 or 1962.

name J & M Club. According to the 1959 city directory, the owner was Miguel Aranda, a former Asarco employee, who resided near the club at 332 Vista Hill Drive. He operated the J & M Club for a year or two before returning to his job at Asarco.

The 1961 city directory is the most interesting one. It indicates that the bar at 3454 Doniphan had come under the proprietorship of Ernest A. Erbe (it's not clear whether he was the owner or the manager) and it now bore the name Rosa's Cantina. By 1962, Rosa's Cantina had a new owner, Roberto Zubia, who resided at 410 Vista Hill Drive, just down the street from the original owner, Miguel Aranda. Rosa's Cantina remained for many decades under Zubia's ownership.

The evidence seems overwhelming: Marty Robbins explicitly states that he made up the name Rosa's Cantina and the city directories bear him out. A bar opened up under the name J & M Club in 1958 or 1959 and its name was changed to Rosa's Cantina in 1960 or 1961 (most likely by Ernest Erbe), three or four years after Marty Robbins first composed his ballad. Robbins' ballad inspired the name Rosa's Cantina, not the other way around.

Does it matter? Probably not. Westerners love their legends even more than they love the facts ("This is the West, Sir! When the legend becomes fact, print the legend!," the reporter Maxwell Scott explains to Ransom Stoddard in the great Western film *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*). Just as Marty Robbins is synonymous with El Paso, so "El Paso" is synonymous with Rosa's Cantina. The "El Paso" legend is now an El Paso "fact." The notion that Rosa's Cantina is "the real thing" is so deeply ingrained in popular culture that it's not likely to be dislodged by something as banal as the truth.

ENDNOTES

1. See especially the Billboard website, which has a short biography of Marty Robbins: <http://www.billboard.com/artist/309779/marty-robbins/biography>. A shorter version of this article appeared in the online weekly, *The Newspaper Tree* (29 January 2014), under the same title.
2. "Rosa's Cantina El Paso Texas," Drunken History: <http://www.drunken-history.com/rosas-cantina-el-paso>
3. "Rosa's Cantina: One of the Most Famous Bars in the World (Though You Wouldn't Know it)," *Huffington Post* (Posted 12/12/2013): http://www.huffingtonpost.com/clint-lanier-and-derek-hembree/one-of-the-most-famous-ba_b_4416345.html

4. Tom Miller, *On the Border: Portraits of America's Southwestern Frontier* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.com, Inc., 2000 [1981]), pp. 120-21.
5. Diane Diekman, *Twentieth Century Drifter: The Life of Marty Robbins* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), p. 67. Robbins added: "except I found out after I had written the song... that at the turn of the century there was a place in El Paso called Rosa's Cantina." Where he got this notion is not clear, but he may have relied on the business records of the El Paso County Clerk's Office, which generically lists a "Rosa's Cantina" in 1900, with no accompanying documentation. The County Clerk's records, however, are woefully incomplete (the business records for the current Rosa's Cantina, for instance, are only available back to the 1980s, long after it had been established). The El Paso city directories of 1895, 1900, and 1905 list no business whatsoever named Rosa's Cantina; and it is highly unlikely that a restaurant or bar would be left out of a city directory for such a long period of time.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 67.



Book Reviews

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY IN NEW MEXICO: PORTRAITS FROM FIVE HUNDRED YEARS. By Bruce A. Glasrud, ed. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2013. ISBN 9780-8263-5301. Paper \$29.95.

This is the latest in a fine series of collections compiled by Bruce Glasrud, retired dean at Sul Ross State University, whose previous works include studies of African-Americans in Texas, African-American women, and Buffalo Soldiers. Glasrud includes a wide variety of scholars and covers a broad range of New Mexican history from the Spanish colonial era well into the twenty-first century. Readers will find the articles thoroughly researched and written and, because each essay deals with a specific chronological period or theme, the book fits nicely into general history classes, or specialty offerings that deal with African-Americans, New Mexico or the West.

Renowned colonial historian David J. Weber introduces us to Esteban, a Black slave, the first known person of African descent to enter New Mexico. In 1537 he accompanied Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca on his epic trek through Texas and the upper Rio Grande Valley. Dedra S. McDonald reviews the relationship between Native Americans and people of African descent during the almost three hundred years that followed. She discusses the complexity of race under the Spanish system and speculates as to whether some of the well-known *mulatos* of the era were, in fact, the offspring of Africans and Indians, rather than unions with Europeans.

The book is a bit light on the Mexican era from 1821 to 1848, but Maisha Baton outlines the role of African-American women throughout the Territorial Period and early statehood while Mark J. Stegmaier details a unique Territorial slave code enacted in the late 1850s, a law that would "make Caligula blush." (56). The editor describes the lost literary efforts of Anita Scott Coleman. Several chapters deal with unique African-American communities throughout the state. Jeff Berg and M. A. Walton describe life in Vado, a small southern village off of Interstate 10 in Doña Ana County. George Long details an Albuquerque civil rights ordinance of the late 1940s. Horace Daniel Nash tells the story of how 24th Infantry African-American troops in Columbus blurred some of the social segregation lines in place at the time.

The book ends with a survey of recent New Mexican politics and the role of African-Americans from 1980-2010. The essay, by

D. Scott Glasrud and Joshua Merrill, highlights individual African-American leaders and their impact on government and legislation in the Land of Enchantment. They describe, among others, Dr. Charles Becknell, secretary of the state's first Department of Criminal Justice, Jane Powdrell-Culbert, the first Republican African-American woman to serve in the legislature, and Governor Richardson's 2003 appointment of Harold Bailey to head the state's Office of African-American Affairs (OAAA).

Bruce A. Glasrud's *African-American History in New Mexico* is a worthy addition to the library of students of New Mexican history and adds to the growing specialty literature of African-Americans in the West.

— George D. Torok
El Paso Community College

FROM THE PASS TO THE PUEBLOS: EL CAMINO REAL DE TIERRA ADENTRO NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL. By George D. Torok. (Santa Fe: Sandstone Press, 2012). Paper \$26.95.

Historical maps of New Spain are deceptive. They depict a Spanish Empire stretching across a vast swath of the Americas that includes the territory of modern-day Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and much of the United States. The on-the-ground political reality was often quite different, especially in the sparsely populated regions that now form northern Mexico and the American Southwest. Here there were just a handful of far-flung Spanish outposts—San Francisco (California), Santa Fe (New Mexico), San Antonio (Texas), among them—which were tied to the heartland of new Spain by military and trade routes known as *Caminos Reales*, or Royal Roads.

George Torok's carefully researched and well-written book offers an in-depth look at one of the most important of these routes, the 1,600 mile long El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (Royal Road of the Interior), which connected Mexico City in the south to San Juan Pueblo in the north, by way of Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Durango, Chihuahua, San Elizario, El Paso del Norte (Ciudad Juárez), Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and numerous other towns and villages. Torok's primary focus is on the El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail, the 400 mile stretch between San Elizario and San Juan Pueblo that now lies within the territory of the U.S.

Torok's introduction provides a superb overview of the Royal Road of the Interior's long and winding history, from its found-

ing in 1598 to its demise in the early 19th century, when Spain's New World Empire began to crumble. More a braid of roads than a single highway, the Royal Road was forged by Conquistadores as they pushed northward from Mexico City to the mining region of Zacatecas and beyond, largely following the ancient braided pathways that once connected the Aztecs and Pueblos. It was the path that Don Juan de Oñate took, and expanded upon, when he took control of "New Mexico" on behalf of the Spanish Crown, and it remains a vital north-south railroad and highway route to this day.

The book is divided into nine chapters, which focus on the main towns, attractions, ruins, landscape, archeology, and architecture along the National Historic Trail. These chapters can be used selectively as a reference book or travel guide, as each chapter is divided into a distinct stretch of the trail between San Elizario (on the Texas-Mexico border) and Santa Fe: the Chihuahuan Desert, Ciudad Juárez, El Paso, Mesilla Valley, Jornada del Muerto, Socorro Valley, Tiwa Country, Northern Pueblos, and Santa Fe. But it is best to read the book from start to finish, as it is only then that one can see how these distinctive regions, with their unique traditions and languages, came to be woven culturally and historically together as a result of being a part of the Royal Road.

— Dr. Mark Cioc-Ortega
University of California
Santa Cruz



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3. Fort Bliss
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5. The original court house
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